

St Neots Healthcheck

Stage 3 Final Report



EDAW | AECOM



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Executive summary

This report represents the final of three project reports planned for a Healthcheck of St Neots Town. The project has been commissioned by Huntingdonshire District Council and has been underway since September 2008 and is envisaged to conclude in July 2009.

The purpose of a market town healthcheck is to:

- identify the economic, environmental, social and accessibility strengths and weaknesses of a market town and its surrounding countryside;
- identify the impact of changing local circumstances; and
- provide a sound basis for creating an action plan for revitalisation.

A fundamental element of the Healthcheck exercise is the commitment to working with local stakeholders and for the project to be guided by a steering group made up of a selection of those stakeholders. The first stage of this project established a stakeholder partnership structure in which the project can operate.

St Neots will potentially accommodate a significant proportion of Huntingdonshire's new housing as required by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and as set out in the Local Development Framework (LDF), between 5,000 and 5,800 new homes by 2026. A large part of this is likely to be potentially accommodated in an eastern expansion to the town east of the existing railway lines. This healthcheck is therefore being undertaken with housing growth in mind and also an appreciation of a number of other projects such as the Priory Centre and Waterfront, St Neots Enterprise Centre and Local Creative Industries, St Mary's Urban Village and the Old Fire Station site.

St Neots has a significant role to play in terms of developing and delivering a thriving Huntingdonshire, both now and in the future. It is the largest town in Cambridgeshire and in population terms is the largest settlement in the district. The Huntingdonshire Core Strategy predicts potential future housing growth, the majority of which will fall within an urban extension, 25 hectares of new employment land and up to 9,000sq.m of comparison retail provision. St Neots needs to accommodate this growth without detriment to existing communities, but more importantly the growth should benefit both existing and new communities by providing additional infrastructure, community facilities and employment opportunities.

As this report contains a lot of analysis across the various project topics, we will not repeat our analysis and conclusions in this executive summary. Instead, to gain a quick overview of the stage 1 and 2 analysis please turn to chapters 9 and 10 of the report where key issues and conclusions are compiled. Having undertaken an analysis of the town's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the project team have engaged with stakeholders at two project workshops to gain local knowledge and feedback on the project findings. This third stage report presents a refined version of the first and second stage report analysis and also presents a vision for St Neots supported by a range of topic related vision objectives and a set of projects and initiatives that will enable the vision to be achieved.

The second stage report contained a draft vision statement which was presented to the stakeholder group and this has been moved forward through this third stage report. This report presents both the draft vision statement but also the feedback we received from stakeholders and a with this leads on to a refined vision statement related to those key issues of importance raised.

Across each of the four topic areas the report then develops a set of key vision objectives which have again been presented to stakeholders and refined through that process. The objectives each contain examples of projects that are seen as either critical, necessary or desirable in delivering that objectives and therefore the vision. While the stage 2 report presented a draft set of vision related projects, this report present a more detailed review of those projects set out in a draft Action plan. This action plan starts to prioritise those suggested projects and provide the further information required to move towards implementation. We hope to spend the majority of our third stakeholder workshop looking at these specific project ideas in more details.

The report also summarises the four topic specific chapters through a summary of the big opportunities identified through the Healthcheck. This includes a summary of the most important potential development areas in and around St Neots and a consideration of the key assets St Neots have which will help to enable the visions objectives and associated project. After this, the report presents a selection of big projects and ideas which the Healthcheck project team belief will make a fundamental change to St Neots and answer some of the key issues highlighted in the project.

The Healthcheck Report is concluded with a review of the next steps in terms of the objectives of the third stakeholder workshop and the steps required to finalise this report. Draft Implementation steps have also been highlighted for consideration by the project steering group and stakeholders at the next workshop.

1. Healthcheck Overview

EDAW AECOM has been commissioned to undertake a Healthcheck of St Neots in order to assist the Council in planning for a sustainable urban extension in the town. EDAW AECOM are working with regular study partners Drivers Jonas and AECOM (formerly known as Faber Maunsell) with their specialist knowledge of economic, retail and transport issues to undertake this study.



PROJECT CONTEXT

In order to meet the ambitious housing and employment targets set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy the emerging Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) Core Strategy, has the challenging task of identifying suitable areas for growth within the District.

Areas identified for growth should not only be able to accommodate such growth without detriment to existing communities, but also ensure that, wherever possible, such growth should benefit existing communities by providing additional infrastructure, community facilities and employment opportunities.

Building on the work undertaken to inform the emerging Core Strategy and Local Investment Framework, St Neots has been identified as an ideal opportunity to potentially accommodate a sustainable urban extension providing between 1,480 and 2,300 new homes by 2026. An urban extension to St Neots was chosen in preference to major development at other towns because this development has the greatest prospect of reducing the need to travel and encourage travel by more sustainable modes.

Following recent calls from the Government, it is also anticipated that the extension at St Neots could potentially benefit from an 'eco-quarter' designation.

Fundamental to the above, however, is establishing a strong vision for St Neots, developed in partnership with the community and encompassing an ambitious action plan for growth.

A 'health check' of the town would therefore enable a full assessment to take place in which the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities facing the town can be identified and any opportunity for additional growth to be reviewed to ensure it can be achieved in a sustainable manner that helps to boost the existing town and add to the Government's anticipated eco-quarters agenda.

St Neots has already experienced substantial growth in recent years to a population of over 31,000, making it the largest town in Cambridgeshire. St Neots is also one of the principal centres in the District's employment market. With

pressures on existing employment areas, land in sustainable locations needs to be safeguarded as well as realising demand to bring forward new employment land allocations. A strategic potential scale extension could comprise a mixed use scheme, including residential, employment and leisure uses and therefore fulfil a large proportion of the employment land required for the district and the St Neots area in particular. This may help strengthen St Neots economy and raise its profile in the district and across the wider sub-region and region.

HEALTH CHECK APPROACH

A market town healthcheck process was devised by the Countryside Agency as a tool to assist in producing a local action plan that 'guides and plots concrete regeneration activity'. In addition, however, there is scope for the healthcheck process itself to be used to involve communities and strengthen relationships.

The Countryside Agency defined the principles of the healthcheck process:

- to be consultative and participatory, with the process itself and any outcomes fully owned by the community; and
- to be led by a partnership that reflects all key stakeholders in the community.

The purpose of the Countryside Agency's market town healthcheck is to:

- identify the economic, environmental and social strengths and weaknesses of a market town and its surrounding countryside;
- identify the impact of changing local circumstances; and
- provide a sound basis for creating an action plan for revitalisation.

As recognised by HDC, there are clear relationships between the work being undertaken through the Local Investment Framework (LIF) to identify the infrastructure requirements arising from future growth and the assessment of the suitability and SWOT of St Neots to accommodate further growth. By assessing the current 'health' of St Neots it will enable HDC to collaboratively, with the community, establish a strong vision for the future growth of the town and define positive actions/outcomes that could/should be undertaken to ensure St Neots benefits from further growth and becomes a more sustainable place and thriving community.

Building on the guidelines established by the Countryside Agency in their toolkit for market towns health checks, we see four key tasks to this exercise, grouped into three stages:

Stage 1:

- Establishing a stakeholder partnership group
- Completing a Healthcheck

Stage 2:

- Creating a Vision

Stage 3:

- Preparing an Action Plan

The Healthcheck project breaks down its analysis and vision making into the following project themes:

- Economic and Retail
- Environment
- Social, Community and Leisure
- Transport

Integral to the entire process, however, will be a strong element of stakeholder consultation through a stakeholder partnership group to ensure a comprehensive assessment that picks up on all local knowledge and culminates in a

partnership vision for St Neots with identified actions and partners established for delivering this vision through future growth.

Stage 1 - Establishing a stakeholder partnership group

The first task in undertaking the study is to establish a stakeholder group to work in partnership with HDC and the healthcheck project team throughout the study and beyond. Membership of this group is advised by Huntingdonshire DC and will build on existing partnership structures including St Neots Town Council, St Neots Town Centre Initiative, community interest groups and relevant service and infrastructure providers.

This group will be consulted at regular intervals throughout the study both through one-to-one correspondence and through wider stakeholder workshops and stakeholder opportunities to feedback on the three project reports.

Three stakeholder workshops are envisaged for this study as follows:

- a. **Workshop 1 - Temperature Checking:** The first workshop is held shortly after the start of the project to introduce stakeholders to the purpose, approach and programme of the project and to test the emerging findings of the healthcheck baseline exercise;
- b. **Workshop 2 – Visioning:** The second workshop will bring stakeholders together again to collaboratively agree a vision and objectives for St Neots based on the outcomes of the health check exercise; and
- c. **Workshop 3 – Delivery:** The final workshop will be held towards the end of the study in order to agree an Action Plan with stakeholders based on potential actions related to the vision objectives and assign responsibility for delivery.

Stage 1- Completing a Healthcheck Baseline

The second task of the study will be to undertake the health check. The idea of the health check is to paint a picture of the town in its current state to form the basis of the further visioning and action plan exercises.

The health check includes a statistical analysis drawing on available databases such as the ONS Census, Annual Business Inquiry and Index of Multiple Deprivation data. The check also includes a review of existing policies, proposals and studies as identified by HDC and partners.

This exercise is primarily a factual, quantitative analysis to provide the evidence base for more qualitative discussions with partners. Although fundamentally a desk-top exercise, the health check exercise will however rely on input from the partnership group especially in relation to existing studies, policies and proposals and as a means of fact checking the baseline evidence. The purpose of this 'health check' is to begin to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTs) facing St Neots at the current time as well as to explore the SWOTs that further growth may bring.

One example of the healthcheck tasks would be to carry forward the economic analysis and town centre audit work that has already been done to identify the SWOTs that arise in planning for new retail development in the town centre, and within the urban expansion area where new local shopping and related community facilities will be required. This is only one example however as the task will need to focus on all four of the topic areas mentioned earlier covering the environment, economy, social and community issues, transport and accessibility across St Neots. This then generates a holistic picture of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for both the town centre and the wider area.

The results of this exercise and the stakeholder arrangements are drawn together into a stage 1 report, in a format that can be presented to the stakeholder partnership group in preparation for creating a vision and drawing up an action plan. Once the desk-top health check is completed, a first stakeholder workshop is held. This half day event brings all members of the stakeholder partnership group together to discuss and agree the healthcheck.

The healthcheck project team present the findings and outcomes of the SWOT analysis to the stakeholder group through written report and a workshop presentation to refine through local knowledge and opinion. The outcomes of

the workshop then feed into a revised version of the health check. This first workshop also provides an opportunity for the partnership group to meet and agree the future meeting arrangements and terms of reference of the group.

Stage 2: Creating a vision

Building on the findings of the health check, the healthcheck project team then work to develop a draft vision statement for the future of St Neots to be presented and agreed with the stakeholder partnership group. The vision statement will be built upon a review and consideration of the SWOT analysis undertaken within the healthcheck baseline, feedback from the stakeholder group and from direction discussions at project workshops.

This draft vision statement is formed on a realistic appreciation of the potential strengths and opportunities that exist for the town as well as accounting for any weaknesses and threats that would need to be overcome. The intention of the 'Vision' is to provide the strategic framework by which the growth of St Neots should be undertaken. The vision will be underpinned by a series of theme related objectives which work towards achieving that vision. These objectives can then form the guidelines towards selecting and prioritising appropriate projects and initiatives to form an action plan to work towards the vision.

The healthcheck project team present the draft vision for St Neots and the associated topic related objectives and actions to the stakeholder group through a second written report and a second workshop presentation to then discuss and refine through local knowledge and opinion. Again the outcomes of the workshop then feed into a revised version of the vision and associated objectives and actions.

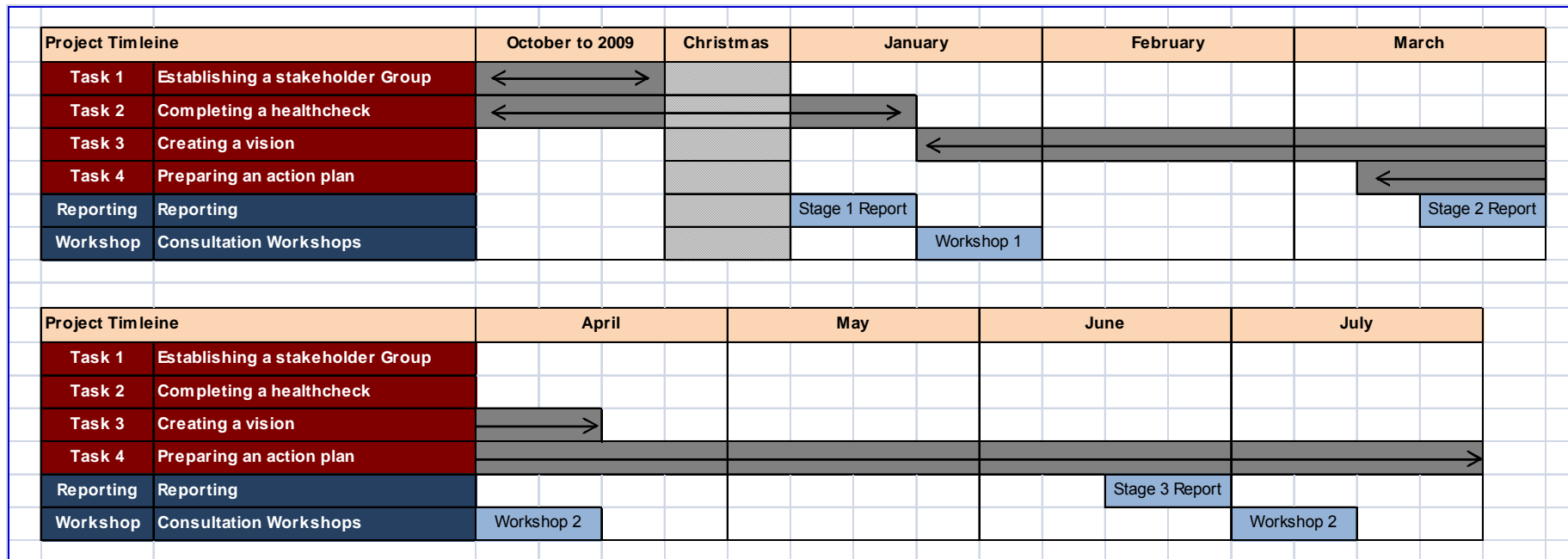
Stage 3: Preparing an action plan

While the second stage will have begun the process of developing an action plan through the initial identification of vision objectives and potential projects for consideration, the third stage of the project will require the healthcheck project team, with the help of the stakeholder group, to review these projects and to refine these down to a set of prioritised plans which directly contribute towards achieving the agreed vision objectives. These will form the basis of a draft action plan. Consideration will then need to be made towards the potential implementation requirements associated with each of the actions within the plan.

The third project workshop will allow the healthcheck project team to present this refined action plan to the stakeholder group, allowing any further changes to be considered and to move towards a general endorsement of the plan and its content.

PROJECT TIMELINE

It was originally envisaged that the creation of a project action plan would be completed by mid March 2009. The stage 1 report was completed for the beginning of 2009 and informed an initial stakeholder workshop held in January. The original plan for a project completion by March 2009 has subsequently been changed to a less challenging deadline of July 2009 to allow additional time for stakeholders to review the latest stage report and feedback comments to the project team. The timeline below updates that shown in the stage 1 and stage 2 reports and aspires to carry out the third stakeholder workshop in early July 2009.



2. A Stakeholder Partnership

A fundamental element of the towns Healthcheck will be working with local stakeholders and being guided by a project steering group made up of a selection of those stakeholders. As set out in the previous chapter, the first stage of this project has been establishing a stakeholder partnership structure in which the project can operate. This chapter briefly explains how this has been undertaken and the proposed structure. This has been updated in parts following the stage 1 report and workshop feedback from stakeholders.

APPROACH TO ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIP

In order to establish a stakeholder structure we first undertook a desktop exercise to collate a fully comprehensive list of all potential stakeholders at the following levels:

- Local (St Neots Town)
- District
- County

EDAW have spent the last year (2008) undertaking another project for Huntingdonshire District Council. This Local Investment Framework (LIF) has reviewed the potential infrastructure requirements associated with maintaining sustainable economic and housing growth in line with current growth trajectories and establishing the likely costs of this infrastructure requirement. As part of this project we have also worked closely with district and county stakeholders across the various service providers, from utility and transport providers to the Health service and local social infrastructure service providers. EDAW held a number of project workshops where the project outputs were presented and scrutinised by the stakeholders. As a result, and as a benefit to this Healthcheck project, we already have an established district and county list of stakeholders with which we have already worked and therefore these LIF stakeholders have been included in the St Neots Healthcheck Stakeholder lists.

However because the LIF was a district level project, the various market towns within the district were not examined in specific detail and therefore the LIF stakeholder workshops did not include a detailed local town stakeholder presence. As a result we needed to take a fresh look at the potential local stakeholders we could use for this project. Again we have been lucky as St Neots has a well established Town Centre Management Group called the St Neots Town Centre Initiative (STNTCI) and existing neighbourhood community arrangements such as the Eynesbury Neighbourhood Management Board. HDC advised EDAW to review the existing management and stakeholder arrangements operating through the STNTCI and neighbourhood groups to see whether this project could use the existing stakeholder arrangements rather than reinventing a similar structure. An overview of the STNTCI is presented below. We are proposing to use the existing management group from the STNTCI as a steering group for this Healthcheck project and to use the members of the working groups from the Initiative as a considerable contribution to the local stakeholder presence on the project. This is then complimented by those services and neighbourhood management groups not specifically covered by the STNTCI (this is illustrated in the diagram on the next page)

It should be noted that we are not only using the St Neots Town Centre Initiative working group members to provide all of our local stakeholders, although they do provide a large number, in addition we have looked to include local neighbourhood groups and those organisations which are not represented by the STNTCI working groups such as the NHS Cambridgeshire, the Eynesbury Neighbourhood Management Group and local emergency service providers to ensure both wider interests and areas are represented and capitalise on local expertise and dedication.

THE ST NEOTS TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVE

The STNTCI has a close partnership with the Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce. Externally they are closely linked with HDC as sponsor and the County Council. Through their membership they can network to involve all of their partners. This process has worked very well in all of their previous projects.

We initially reviewed the STNTCI website and gained our understanding of their structure. We have subsequently spoken to the chairman of the STNTCI and he has clarified that the structure on the website is a few years out of date and is now broadly as follows:

The Initiative includes a Management Group which consists of around 15 people who meet once a month to review all activities and programmes and regularly to hear key speakers on Town issues.

In addition to the management group a number of Working Groups carry out the detailed project work, these are as follows:

- Financial Planning;
- Promotion and Tourism;
- Transport;
- Redevelopment and Environment;
- River Care Group – recently formed;
- Business and School Links, and
- New Creative Enterprise steering Group

The STNTCI also has 2 clubs to network across a wider group:

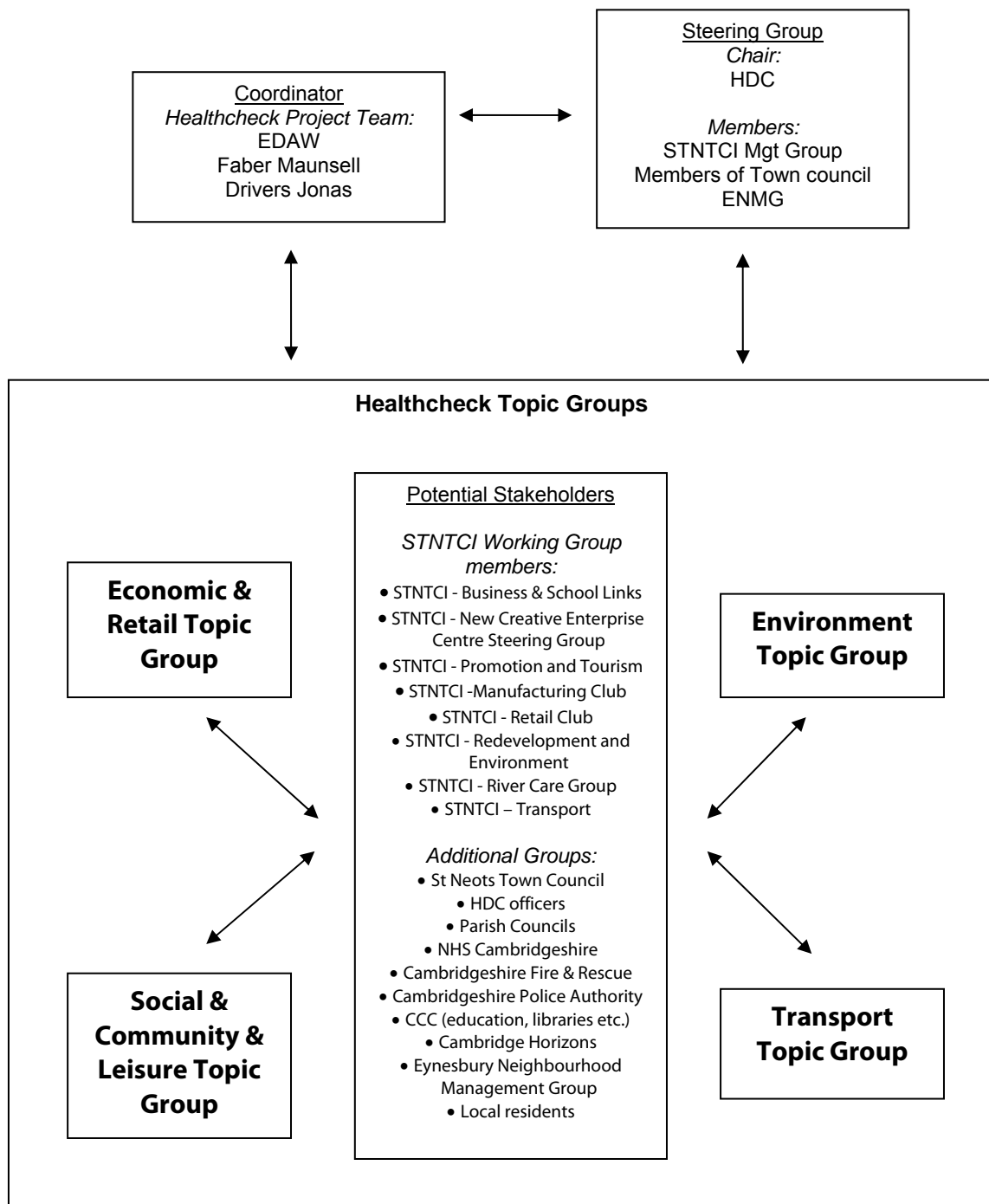
- Manufacturing Club (with 3 sub groups – HR, waste minimisation, business continuity)
- Retail Club

EDAW see a number of these working groups as having the potential to play a strong role in the Healthcheck process. The full coverage of these working groups has been explored to see if the scope of the Healthcheck topics and required stakeholders are already included within these groups.

PROPOSED STAKHOLDER PARTNERSHIP

As mentioned earlier we have established a Project steering group derived from the existing management group from the STNTCI, but supplemented as appropriate with the additional organisations identified below (including Town Councillors and Eynesbury Neighbourhood Management Group). The steering group is to be chaired by HDC while the project is coordinated by the Healthcheck Project Team (EDAW, Faber Maunsell and Drivers Jonas). Having completed the third stage of the project (developing an action plan) it is envisaged that the Vision and Action Plan will be jointly owned by all stakeholders and partners and the steering group has a potential longer-term role to guide implementation of the projects and actions with the direction of HDC. The exact implementation approach for this healthcheck will be explored in stage 3 of the project.

The diagram on the following page illustrates the stakeholder and steering group structure.



STAKEHOLDERS INPUT TO THE HEALTHCHECK

It is vital to ensure stakeholders are integral throughout the Study to ensure a vision and action plan rooted in local context. The ultimate aim, however, is to secure a committed and comprehensive partnership body that will exist beyond the life of the study who can deliver growth in a sustainable fashion.

The initial involvement of the project stakeholder steering group has included a project structure and overview presentation from HDC in order to introduce the group to the project and also to request the support of those steering group members and to enable them to inform their various working group members (our local project stakeholders) of the project.

The stage 1 report was undertaken by EDAW predominantly through desktop analysis of existing documents, selected primary research and analysis but also, where appropriate, direct consultation was undertaken with specific stakeholders identified on the project stakeholder list as being able to assist in answering baseline questions where EDAW's local knowledge could not match that of the local stakeholders.

The stage 1 report was then circulated to stakeholders prior to the stage 1 workshop on the 19th of January. This enabled stakeholders to attend the workshop with an understanding of what work had been undertaken to date and allowed detailed feedback to be made to the project team. Following the stage 1 workshop we invited stakeholders to feedback any detailed comments, corrections and suggestions to the project team which we could then feed into the production of this stage 2 report. All feedback from stakeholders has been fully recorded in a database and where comments could be actioned we have made every endeavour to include these in the stage 2 report. Chapters 3 to 7 of this report have been edited in line with stakeholder feedback on local facts and suggested amendments to SWOT tables. In addition, Chapter 8 of this report has also detailed additional project suggestions from stakeholder feedback which had not already been highlighted through the SWOT tables and workshop feedback summaries. As will be seen in chapters 9 to 13 of this report, we have also considered stakeholder feedback (alongside other resources such as the SWOT analysis, workshop discussion groups and existing strategies and plans) to assist in the production of a draft vision statement, vision objectives and actions.

In the same approach to that of the stage 1 report, this stage 2 report will be circulated to all those stakeholders that attended the initial stakeholder workshop on the 19th of January and also a wider group of stakeholders identified as overlooked from the initial workshop administration and subsequently invited to the stage 2 workshop in early April. As explained throughout this report, the vision statement, objectives and action plans presented in the report are drafts and act as a starting point for discussion and refinement among the project team and the stakeholders at both the stage 2 workshop but also through detailed feedback expected in the weeks following the workshop.

The intention is that the report should be read and scrutinised by the stakeholders before attending the workshop. EDAW will be presenting an overview of the report at the workshop itself and will welcome feedback from stakeholders in the topic group discussion sessions. More details on the workshop approach are outlined in chapter 14 'Next Steps'.

3. St Neots Today & Tomorrow



Having introduced the project context and approach, this chapter sets out a brief overview of both the existing condition and characteristics of the Town but also our understanding of the potential changes to St Neots in the foreseeable future. We present the current characteristics of the town under the following sub themes:

- Environment
- Social, Community and Leisure
- Economic and Retail
- Transport

As mentioned earlier this chapter should not be expected to provide detailed in-depth analysis of the current and future character and status of St Neots but instead to introduce the Town and how it may change or be influenced by changes. The following chapters examine the four themes in more detail.

Figure 3.1: St Neots location in the Region

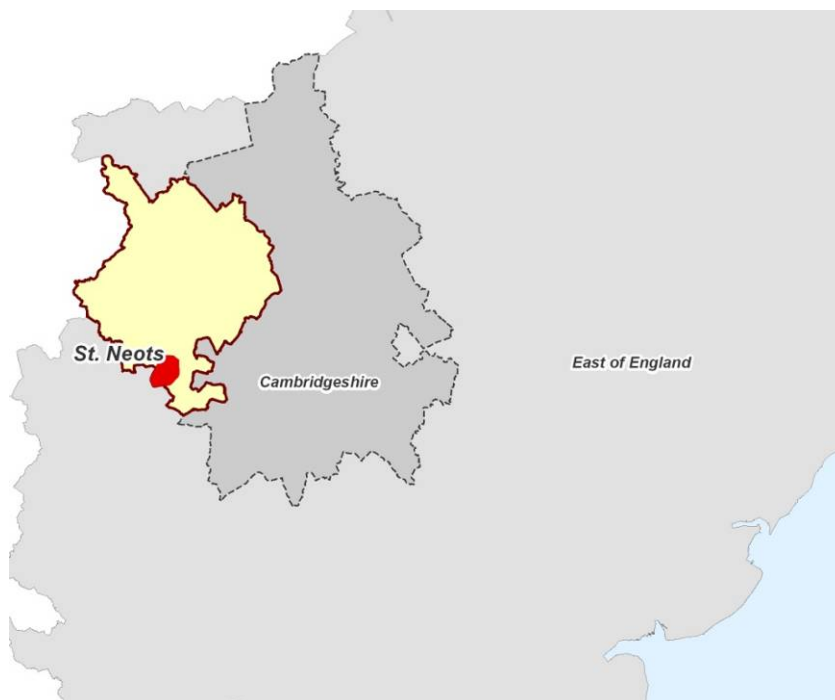
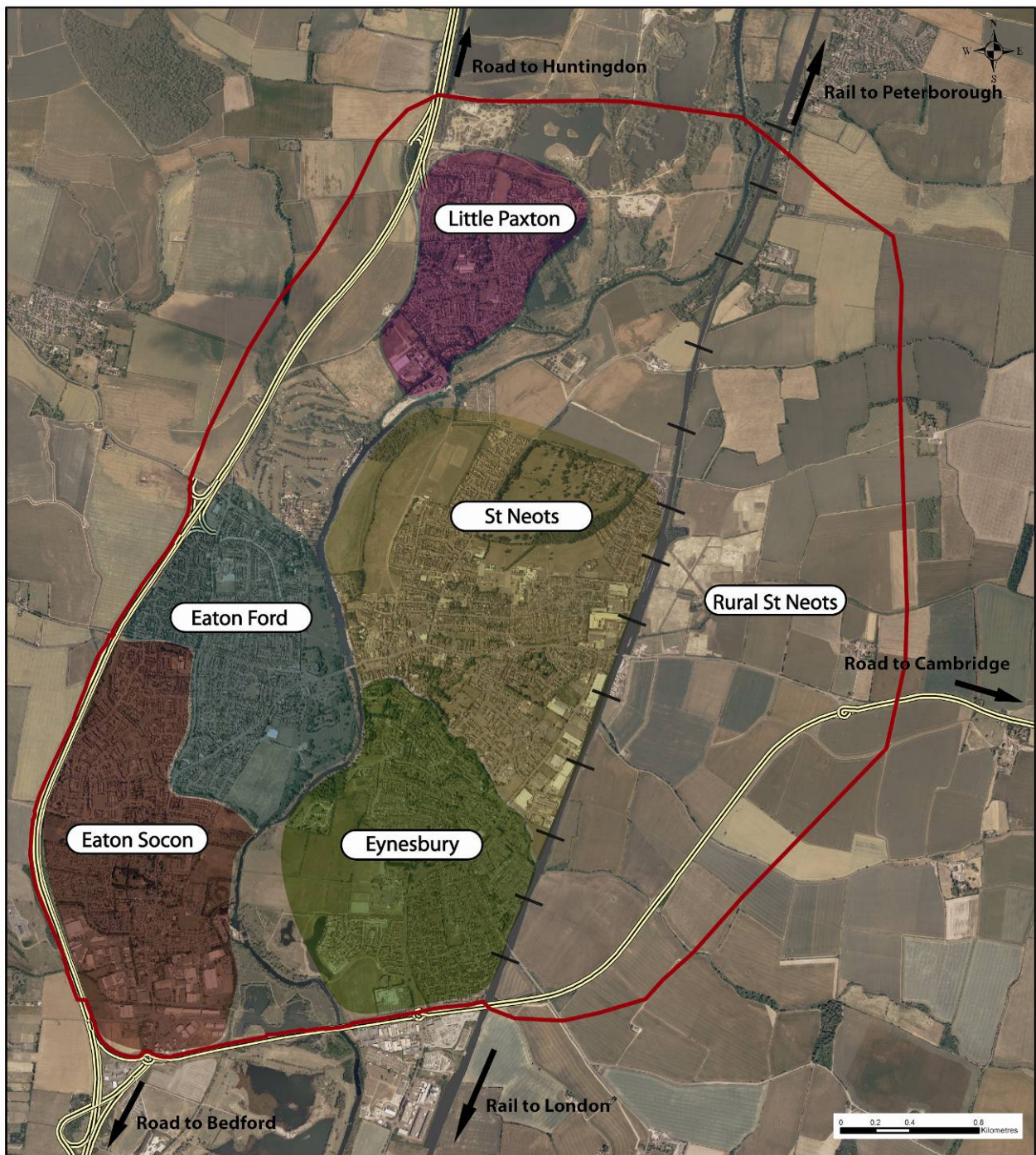


Figure 3.2: Simple overview of neighbourhoods in Study area



Data Source: Ordnance Survey / EDAW / Huntingdonshire District Council
 Map Source: © OS Crown copyright. All rights reserved 100022322, 2008

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ST NEOTS TODAY

Environment

St Neots lies to either side of the River Great Ouse, which provides the most defining feature of the local landscape. The River Great Ouse is one of the major rivers of the East of England and is a CWS (County Wildlife Site) in recognition of its importance to wildlife within the county.

The mix of land uses give St Neots its character as much of the corridor is built up with housing and industrial estates, alongside open fields, meadows and some woodland. Surrounding this is predominantly agricultural land, with large areas of former gravel pits given over to lakes and wetlands.

There are Conservation Areas in central St Neots and Eaton Socon, with distinctive built landmarks. Its distinctive areas include the Market Square and riverfront, Island Common and Priory Park. However, there is a general feeling that the historic buildings should be utilized more effectively and improved to 'show off' the town's heritage.

The study area is divided into four key districts. In the North East is St Neots. The historic architecture is on the scale of other Huntingdonshire Market Towns and demonstrates its importance as a trading and commercial centre from the 17th century onwards. Late 19th and early 20th century expansion to the original settlement lay to the north and east of the medieval core. These neighbourhoods are typified by regular, rectangular street patterns laid out within earlier town enclosures. The Market Square is dominated by retail shops and the area around St Marys Church is dominated by residential (cottages and larger houses). The area around Huntingdon Street and New Street is dominated by smaller retail units and commercial premises, in contrast to the area around Riverside Development and Priory Lane which is dominated by commercial premises and a Waitrose store. The outskirts of the main town centre are mainly residential streets.

In the southeast is Eynesbury, which retains its village quality although it is all but 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 St Neots town centre conservation area contains some social housing that was a feature of Eynesbury's early 20th century morphology. The style, materials and layout of this estate are characteristic of the area. The area contains a wide variety of buildings from different ages and of varying status, with small cottages and terraces, larger houses and council housing to the south of the village centre.

In the northwest and southwest are Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon respectively. They both retain a rural quality. Eaton Socon feels like a village with a Parish Church. The northwest extension of the historic core illustrates its part history as a stopover on the Great North Road. This area includes areas of green space, a range of housing typologies and historic buildings such as the Old Vicarage in Eaton Socon, The Cage and White Horse in Eaton Socon. Figure 3.3 on the following page illustrates the features of St Neots Green Corridor.

In the surrounding areas, the Paxton Pits (a SSSI and CWS and a local environmental landmark) has a wide range of habitats, including lakes, wet woodland, wet grassland and an arable area. There is a car park for approximately 50 cars and a small visitors centre which is used to host meetings, talks and displays. Volunteers provide teas and coffees throughout the year.

In relation to local green infrastructure, there is an under provision of allotments and a slight under provision of formal space within the town, based on the Huntingdonshire District Council open space standards. However, the town does provide adequate informal space. Figure 3.4 is based on information provided by HDC taken from the Open Space Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment and Audit dated August 2006. The audit categorises open spaces as follows: Informal Open Space (Parks and Gardens, Natural Open Spaces, Amenity Green Spaces); Provision for children and young people; Outdoor Sports Facilities (Includes golf courses, tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches); and Allotments. There is also a lack of facilities for cyclists (including cycleways and parking racks), and a lack of well-lit and well-directed pedestrian routes and walkways to help improve pedestrian safety and accessibility. There is a perception that pedestrians are vulnerable and this has encouraged greater levels of car use.

Figure 3.3: illustration of St Neots Green Corridor



Source: HDC Countryside Services

Social, Community and Leisure

In recent years the population of St Neots, which stood at 30,500 at the time of the 2001 Census, has increased to some degree. It has grown by 700 people to 31,200 in the past five years to 2006. The majority of this growth has been seen in the Eynesbury area where the majority of new homes have been built in the last 5 years. In term its population profile, St Neots contains high proportions of retired and younger populations compared to the national and regional profiles.

There are approximately 11,300 homes in St Neots (Census, 2001), which is approximately 20% of all houses in Huntingdonshire. Many households in the town own their own home (75%). Most dwellings are houses or bungalows although, compared to the district as a whole, St Neots is densely developed as there is a higher proportion of flats and apartments. When compared to the national picture both town and district contain a higher proportion of houses and bungalows.

Local GP practices are at physical capacity and would find it difficult to accommodate more patients. NHS Cambridgeshire at present exploring the possibility of providing temporary accommodation to relieve pressure on existing facilities. There is no NHS hospital in St Neots, although there is one nearby in Huntingdon (Hinchingbrook). Papworth hospital is a specialist heart hospital to which people are referred and is planned to be moved Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge. Across the district there are a greater proportion of residents with coronary heart disease or cancer than across the country as a whole.

St Neots Town Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council operate in the area and cumulatively cover the full breadth of council services. The town council manage facilities and services including cemeteries, allotments and town centre management. The district council manage facilities and services including planning, council housing, leisure services, refuse collection and local roads. The county council manage facilities and services including education, libraries, social services and main roads.

Eynesbury has been identified by EU Commission as a deprived area (in terms of economic, social, education and employment indicators) and it is important that growth in St Neots helps to address this.

There are many community infrastructure facilities in St Neots, such as:

Schools

- Crosshall Infant School;
- Crosshall Junior School;
- Priory Park Infant School;
- Priory Junior School;
- Middlefield Community Primary School;
- St Mary's Primary School;
- Winhills Primary School;
- Little Paxton Primary School;
- Eynesbury Church of England Primary School;
- Bushmead Primary School;
- The Roundhouse Primary School (Loves Farm)
- Samuel Pepys Special School;
- St Neots Community College;
- Longsands College.

Primary Care Services:

- Almond Road Surgery;
- Cedar House Surgery;
- Eaton Socon Health Centre;

Community Centres and similar venues

- The Priory Centre;
- St Neots community centre;
- St Neots Library;
- St Neots Museum;
- Numerous school halls and churches.

Sports and leisure facilities:

- St Neots Leisure Centre;
- St Neots Rugby Club;
- St Neots Golf Club;
- St Neots table tennis club;
- Ten-pin bowling complex;
- Little Paxton Sailing Club;
- Eaton Socon Cricket Club;
- St Neots Football club and training facilities;
- Eynesbury Rovers Club (football)
- Eaton Socon Football Club
- Eaton Ford Indoor Bowling Club
- St Neots Tennis Club
- St Neots Rowing Club;
- Numerous parks and play areas, including Riverside Park which hosts a number of events including music;
- Other smaller facilities.

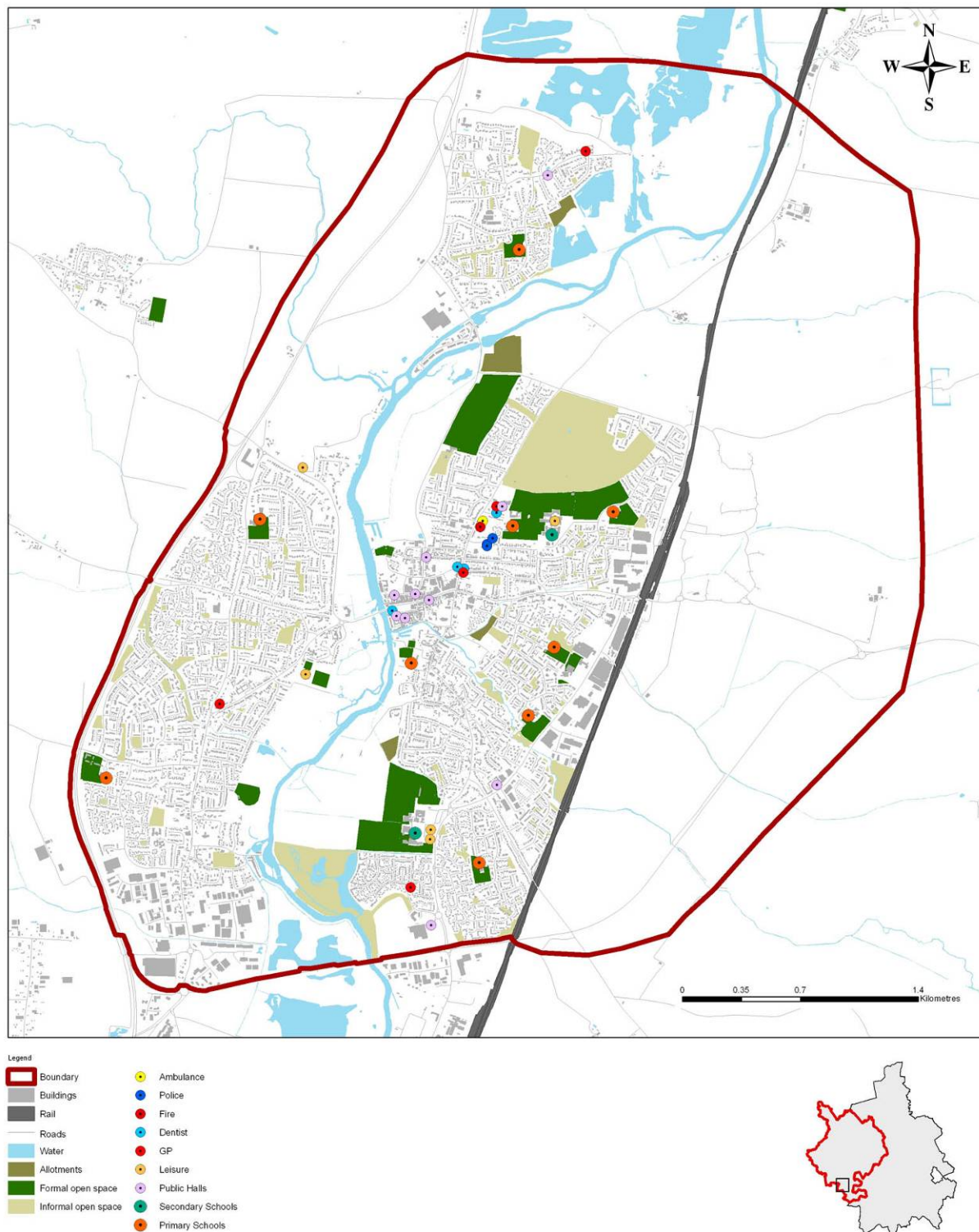
There are also notable absences of the following community facilities:

- Cinema;
- Purpose built theatre.

St Neots benefits from numerous events and activities that help bring the community together, including:

- St Neots Folk Festival;
- Regional Real Ale Festival;
- May Fair on the Green, Eaton Socon;
- Ascensiontide Arts & Music Festival Fair;
- St Neots Christmas Lights switch-on ceremony;
- St Neots Regatta.

Figure 3.4: illustration of some key Social Infrastructure in St Neots



Data Source: Ordnance Survey / EDAW / Huntingdonshire District Council

EDAW | AECOM

Map Source: © OS Crown copyright. All rights reserved 100022322. 2008

Economic and Retail

Employment, Unemployment and Worklessness

In 2006 employment in St Neots stood at 11,000 and the town provided employment opportunities for 54% of its resident employment base (of the remaining 45%, 18% work in Huntingdonshire). At the district level there is some evidence that people commuting out of the district are more likely to access better paid employment opportunities, however specific data concerning St Neots is unavailable.

Employment within the town is largely dependent on Manufacturing, Retail and Wholesale, and the Public Sector which each account for between 22% and 23% of the local employment base. Employment is also concentrated within small workplaces (with fewer than 50 staff). While the proportion of people employed in larger firms is lower than nationally, the four workplaces employing over 200 people still account for over 15% of the local employment base.

In recent years, employment growth has significantly outpaced England and the East of England (growing by 11% between 2003 and 2006, compared to 3% and 2% for the East of England and England respectively), however this growth has been largely dependent on the growth of public sector employment within the town.

St Neots benefits from relatively low levels of unemployment and worklessness and long term unemployment is much less significant than nationally. In 2008 the claimant count unemployed accounted for 1.7% of the working age population compared to 2.5% across England; 5% of claimants had been claiming for more than 12 months, compared to 11% nationally.

The Business Base

VAT Registrations data is available at the district level and indicates that Huntingdonshire has a relatively stable business base with low levels of business turnover (i.e. business registrations and de-registrations as a proportion of the total business base).

While a low rate of business de-registrations may be desirable, the very low rates (85 VAT registrations and 63 VAT de-registrations per 1,000 VAT registered business compared to 95 and 75 respectively across England) may reflect the absence of competitive pressures within the district. This is a particular concern as the economy moves into recession, as the uncompetitive local businesses will be particularly vulnerable.

As identified above, the St Neots business base is largely associated with smaller businesses, however a small number of large employers do account for a significant levels of local employment.

With regard to business services, six of the major high street banks provide business banking services and a number of groups provide networking opportunities for local businesses. There are also two specific business clubs within the town (for manufacturing and retailing companies).

Conference centre facilities are located on the edge of the town however business facilities within the town are extremely limited. The Priory Centre provides the only meeting space within the town, but is not able to provide catering.

Training and Education

There are two secondary schools within St Neots, however the key challenge identified by employers relates to the lack of practical and employment related skills held by school leavers. Associated with this issue are the locally ageing workforce and shortage of potential replacement labour.

In response the STNTCI has worked to develop links between employers and education providers to promote the development of skills requested by local businesses. It also promotes take-up of work experience among pupils and businesses to assist young people in developing the practical workplace based skills demanded by employers and to promote vocational training as a route to local employment.

The area is also under-represented in graduate (with only 15% of residents educated to level 4 or higher, compared to 20% nationally), which is likely to reflect the availability of employment opportunities and in particular the local sectoral mix.

A campus of the Huntingdonshire Regional College is located within St Neots; however this is predominantly focused on construction. Students of many other disciplines are required to travel to the main campus in Huntingdon.

Retail and Commercial Uses

The role and performance of St Neots town centre has been described in the Huntingdonshire Retail Study Update 2007. The shopping centre of St Neots is focussed on the historic centre of the town adjacent to the river crossing. The town centre is compact and attractive and benefits from a large number of historic and listed buildings. The whole of the centre is a designated conservation area.

The retail core of the town centre is primarily focused along either side of the town's high street. The historic Market Square is an important focal point for the town centre but on the periphery of the shopping centre. Whilst the position of St Neots in the national centre rankings has deteriorated in recent years, this appears to be a trend followed by other similar-sized centres in Cambridgeshire/East Anglia.

The town centre's convenience sector offer is healthy, including large Waitrose, Somerfield and Marks and Spencer foodstores, all of which lie within or adjacent to the core shopping area. Comparison shopping facilities in the centre are more limited and in particular there is a need to bolster the town centres representation of fashion, clothing and footwear stores. Until the recent downturn the number of retailer requirements for the town had been steadily increasing; and retail yields and rents had improved considerably as noted by Huntingdonshire Retail Study 2007.

The town centre has a relatively low level of vacant units in the main street frontages. There is an extensive amount of car parking on the edge of the shopping centre but some pedestrian vehicular conflict in the High Street in particular.

Overall, St Neots is a healthy and attractive town centre, but we have noted the opportunity to improve the fashion and food and drink sectors. In addition, as is often the case in historic centres there are indications that available units are not always suited to the trading requirements of retail operators.

Tourism

Local tourism is very limited in scale and is unlikely to have any measureable influence on local employment. However, local steps have been taken to promote tourism within the town, including a Town Trail in St Neots and the production of a local Brochure (currently being updated by the STNTCI) of local tourism activities and local businesses. The town is also served by a Tourist Information Office which is open six days a week. There are four further trails in Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon as well as 12 blue plaque and 8 heritage boards in the Eatons, which have produced some interest from tourists. The Public Right of Navigation through St Neots also provides an important tourism asset, bringing water based visitors to the town from for example the boaters, rowboats, trip boats and canoeists.

St Neots has a number of assets that provide the potential to promote local tourism, which include the St Marys Church, the local Museum, the Riverside and adjacent parks. Furthermore, the town's strong road and rail connections may support the role of St Neots as a stopping point for people undertaking longer journeys.

The Town Council produces a Town Guide which is available from Town Council Offices, the Tourist Information Centre and the Library. Copies are also distributed to local hotels. A new edition will be issued in the Spring of 2009.

There are also a number of constraints to the local growth of tourism which include: the lack of appropriate coach parking spaces within the town; the single crossing across the river within the town and the associated congestion; and the out of town location of the train station. The town also lacks any central hotel accommodation, although there are some facilities on the outskirts such as the Premier Inns and Wyboston Lakes. There is also the Nags Head Hotel in Eynesbury. Overall though, this will significantly constrain the growth of overnight tourism.

Transport

St Neots is located 19 miles to the west of Cambridge and is accessed via the A428. The A1 passes directly to the west of St Neots and provides a direct route to Huntingdon and Peterborough to the north, and Stevenage and London to the south. The A421 runs south west to Bedford, whilst the B645 connects St Neots to Kimbolton and Rushden to the northwest.

The A428 and A1 form a southerly and westerly ring road around St Neots and Eaton Socon reducing the need for through traffic to pass through the town centre. The town centre is accessed from these primary roads via the B1428, B1048, B1043 or the B1041.

St Neots is well served to the North and South by excellent rail links, for example trains to London take approximately one hour. However, connectivity by rail to the east and west is difficult – for example it takes one change and a journey time of 1:20 to reach Cambridge. Local coach and bus services do however provide alternative methods of public transport.

The diagram below identifies travel times by road and rail to key locations. As has been discussed above, besides journey times to the north and south, St Neots is significantly better connected by road compared to rail.

Table 3.1: St Neots distance and travel times to surrounding towns

Towns and Cities	Location Relative to St Neots	Distance	Travel Time	
			By Road	By Rail
Rushden	West	27 miles	0:40	not possible
Northampton	West	35 miles	0:53	2:30 (2 changes)
Bedford	Southwest	14 miles	0:21	2:30 (2 changes)
Milton Keynes	Southwest	31 miles	0:48	2:15 (2 changes)
Letchworth	South	24 miles	0:32	0:45 (1 change)
London (Kings Cross)	South	59 miles	1:28	1 hour
Cambridge	East	19 miles	0:30	1:20 (1 change)
St Ives	North	18 miles	0:29	not possible
Huntingdon	North	13 miles	0:23	0:08
Peterborough	North	29 miles	0:36	0:24

Source: EDAW analysis

With up to 14,000 car journeys recorded along the High Street per day, transport by car is clearly the dominant mode of transport within the town and town centre congestion is regarded as a significant issue, compounded by the single crossing across the river. It should be noted however that the Public Right of Navigation provides transport connectivity to Bedford heading upstream and to Huntingdon, Ely, Cambridge and beyond heading downstream.

Connectivity to surrounding villages by public transport is poor, with some bus services only operating on the weekly market day. This may reflect insufficient local demand, but is likely to present significant accessibility issue for vulnerable groups.

ST NEOTS TOMORROW

Planned Changes to the Town

Looking forwards, it is possible to identify a series of changes that may affect St Neots. An urban extension has been proposed for the town to accommodate a significant proportion of the district's growth requirements and a number of improvements to the town centre and surrounding areas have been identified.

This section presents a summary of the major changes affecting St Neots moving forwards and the following section identifies how these proposals affect some of the key issues identified when undertaking the Healthcheck.

Housing and Employment

The housing growth proposals for St Neots are laid out in detail below, however in summary the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy indicates that the majority of growth across the district will be concentrated within the Huntingdon and St Neots Spatial Planning Areas. Through a combination of the planning commitments and the LDF proposals, housing growth of between 5,000 and 6,000 units is could be expected for St Neots as detailed in table 3.3. A large proportion of these new homes will fall within an urban extension, located to the east of the railway line and to the north and south of Cambridge Road. Significant development is already underway to the north of Cambridge Road, and the precise level of development to the south are still under consideration.

To support the population growth associated with this housing development the core strategy allocates 25 ha of employment land (of 85 ha district wide). This will be made up of B1 (General Business and Office Space), B2 (General Industrial), and B8 (Storage and Industrial) uses and located within the urban extension to the east of the town.

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 the town. The employment land proposals are intended to support a balanced community which is less reliant on out-commuting than would be the case in the absence of the employment land allocation. Locating the land within the urban extension is specifically intended to integrate the sites with the new housing developments.

Urban Extension Potential – Eco Quarter

The Eastern Expansion area described above will potentially be a 'Eco Quarter' similar to the Eco Town concept and could potentially be powered and heated by a reconfigured Barford Power Station¹ (the existing Gas power station to the south east corner of the Town). This could be turned into a Combined Cooling, Heat and Power station (CCHP) which would link into the nearby eastern expansion for heat and power.

Priory Centre and Waterfront

This area of land is being considered as an opportunity to optimise the River frontage by the Priory Centre and the surrounding area (including Waitrose). The Centre currently turns its back on the River and provides little access to the Town Centre. Inspire East were commissioned to look at creating a concept for dialogue in this area – i.e. a Charter. This would provide a set of objectives for the waterfront area and the surrounding area. The public consultation results showed that people want better access to the waterfront from the Priory Centre, provision of cafes/bars/restaurants/shops for leisure and an enhanced Priory Centre (to include a cinema, community venue and performing arts venue). People also want a pedestrian river crossing, signage and direct access to the Priory waterfront. There is the potential to open up the river to the town making it a waterways hub and destination to increase visitors from the water by improving/increasing mooring capacity and in developing a waterfront atmosphere.

This work now needs to be taken forward into planning a new waterfront area.

¹ Subject to further investigation.

St Neots Enterprise Centre and Local Creative Industries

Funded by the Council, DCLG, Local Government and East of England Development Agency, the centre provides high grade internal fittings and fixtures, external landscaping, car parking and renewable energy schemes. It includes a working garden on the roof, links to the Longsands College (media technology and information communication technology) and the Huntingdonshire Regional College local site – which is a centre of excellence for manufacturing and management with photography and design facilities. The centre forms a wider strategy for the district to nurture new businesses and cultivate specialist skills for local people. Creative industries offer the potential to be a major factor for sustained economic growth in Huntingdonshire.

St Mary's Urban Village

The St Marys Urban Village Masterplan, Eynesbury, examined the redevelopment opportunities on land to the west of St Mary's Church, between High Street and Brook Street. It recommended that the site be redeveloped as a mixed use site; largely residential, but with some commercial and community uses. Development would enhance the setting of listed buildings and renovate those buildings with interest or potential. It would also open up public routes north / south and east / west and create public spaces within the site.

Site of Old Fire Station

The area in question in fact includes the site of the old fire station (the fire station has now been demolished), the recycling centre/tip (closing and moving to the edge of the town) and a car park area and some land owned by the Town Council, behind the Lidl store. The original concept was for mixed development plus additional free car parking to meet the demand from the east side of Town. More recent thinking includes a multiplex cinema or one of the Government's new 24/7 NHS health centres.

Potential Housing and Population Change

Housing Growth

The Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework identifies two growth scenarios for St Neots, with the variation between the two reflecting the potential development scenarios for the land south of Cambridge Road (the B1428). Under Scenario 1, 1,500 units are proposed for this site prior to 2026, rising to 2,300 units under Scenario 2. However, the variation between these two scenarios occurs after 2021.

It should be noted that the housing trajectories presented below only look as far as 2026. Additional further capacity for development has been identified on the land to the south of Cambridge Road, and the total number of completions on this site post 2026 may exceed the numbers provided here.

Table 3.2: St Neots Core Strategy Housing Trajectory Scenarios

	By 2011	By 2016	By 2021	By 2026
Scenario 1	915	2,560	4,841	5,021
Scenario 2	915	2,560	4,841	5,841

Source: Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

The figure below illustrates the spread of development sites across St Neots. There is limited brownfield land available for development within St Neots, however a number of small sites have been identified within the centre of St Neots; in addition to sites located to the far north and south of the town. Further details on the housing development sites are provided in table 3.3. However the vast majority of housing growth will be accommodated by an urban extension located to the east of the town, to the north and south of Cambridge Road. Work to the north of Cambridge Road is already underway.

Figure 3.5: Illustration of Housing Development Sites under Consideration

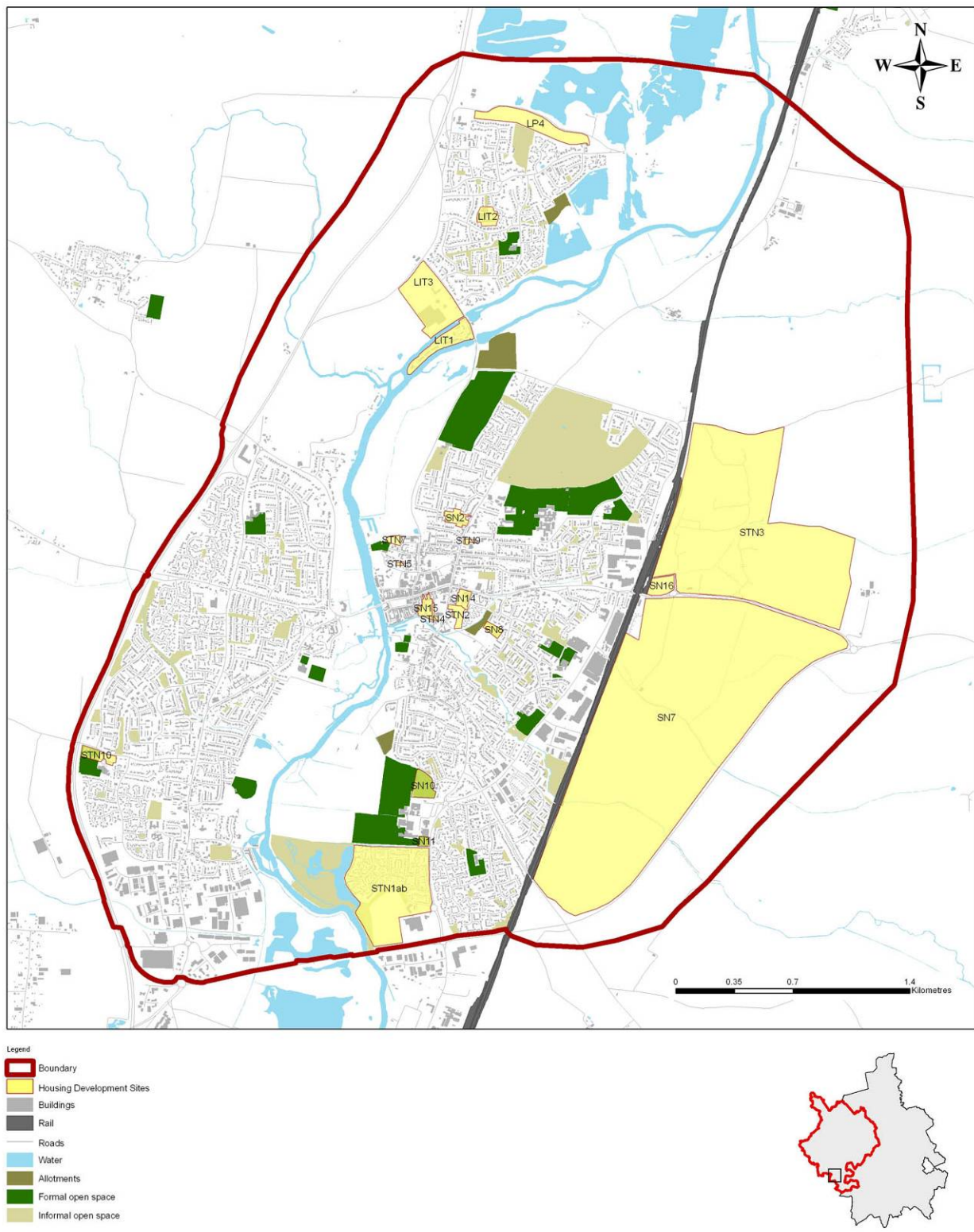


Table 3.3: Housing Development Sites under Consideration

Site Code	Site Name	Site Type	Potential Homes (by 2026 in High Growth Scenario)
LP4	LP4	LDF Site Allocation	25
SN10	Alfred Hall Memorial Field	LDF Site Allocation	85
SN11	Land Adjacent to St Neots Leisure Centre	LDF Site Allocation	15
SN14	Harrisons Garage	LDF Site Allocation	55
SN15	St Marys Urban Village	LDF Site Allocation	45
SN16	Loves Farm - Small	LDF Site Allocation	85
SN2	Huntingdon Street	LDF Site Allocation	45
SN8	Sandfields Road	LDF Site Allocation	15
SN7	South of Cambridge Road (full 3250 figure)	LDF Site Allocation	2300
LIT1	Island Site LP	Planning Commitments	62
LIT2	Bydand Lane	Planning Commitments	52
LIT3	Riverside Mill LP	Planning Commitments	426
STN10	Bushmead Road	Planning Commitments	68
STN1ab	Barford Road	Planning Commitments	270
STN2	Church St	Planning Commitments	43
STN4	Windmill Row	Planning Commitments	21
STN5	West St	Planning Commitments	23
STN7	Youth Centre	Planning Commitments	27
STN9	42 Huntingdon St	Planning Commitments	24
STN3	Loves Farm - Large	Planning Commitments	2100

Population Change

The housing supply will affect the size of St Neot's population; however it is highly unlikely that all of the new homes will be filled by households moving into the area. To forecast the likely population of St Neots in 2026, it is necessary to first understand what natural population change will occur in St Neots over this period and to then model the impact of the housing developments.

The population of St Neots to 2026 will be influenced by a combination of factors, including:

- births
- deaths
- net migration

Net migration will in turn be influenced by the supply of housing and associated factors, including a decreasing average household size.

If the total number of households exceeds the total supply of housing, we would expect some households to move elsewhere to find appropriate accommodation. Conversely, if the total supply of households is lower than the total supply of housing, we would expect households to move into the area to fill those vacant properties.

The table below identifies the growth forecasts under both housing development scenarios. These forecasts are based on Cambridge County Council demographic projections of the natural population change occurring within St Neots over this time and the population growth associated with the new housing developments.

Table 3.4: Anticipated Population impacts form potential housing growth in St Neots at Core Strategy Development Levels

	By 2011	By 2016	By 2021	By 2026
Scenario 1	2,341	6,312	12,010	12,460
Scenario 2	2,341	6,312	12,010	14,508

Source: Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

Between 2006 and 2026 the average household size across Huntingdonshire is expected to fall from 2.4 people per dwelling to 2.16 per dwelling.

District level demographic projections indicate that the age profile of Huntingdonshire will shift towards older people by 2026 and in some places decline. However the direct population impacts associated with the housing planned for St Neots will far outweigh any natural reduction and as seen in the age cohort specific table below is likely to create larger cohorts of children and 25 to 40 year olds as might be expected from new families occupying new homes.

Table 3.5: Forecast Age Specific Population Impacts

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
0-4	1,157	1,347
05-10	1,669	1,944
11-15	1,126	1,311
16-19	589	686
20-24	848	988
25-39	4,173	4,859
40-64	2,318	2,699
65-74	312	363
>75	267	311
Total Population	12,460	14,508

Source: Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

Infrastructure requirements associated with St Neots Growth

As stated earlier in this report, EDAW have spent the last year (2008) undertaking another project for Huntingdonshire District Council, the 'Local Investment Framework' (LIF) has reviewed the potential infrastructure requirements associated with maintaining sustainable economic and housing growth in line with current growth trajectories and establishing the likely costs of this infrastructure requirement. The following section presents the types of projects that have been identified as necessary in order to match St Neots economic and housing growth.

Transport

Huntingdonshire District Council has recently commissioned a detailed traffic model of St Neots which overcomes weaknesses in the existing transport model relating to the transport implication of the eastern urban extension. However, the existing analysis identified the following implications on transport infrastructure associated with the proposed housing growth:

Table 3.6: Transport Infrastructure Requirements

Type of Project	Project Description
Bus	Cambridge-St Neots Transport Corridor
Bus	New Bus Service serving Love's Farm and South of Cambridge road, St Neots
Rail	St Neots Station Improvements
Roads	A428/Cambridge Road Junction Improvement
Roads	A428/Barford Road Junction Improvement
Roads	St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy High Street Improvements
Walking & Cycling	Completion of St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy Schemes

Source: Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

As identified above, these findings will be reviewed upon completion of the St Neots Traffic Model.

Utilities

Discussions with the Utility companies undertaken in developing the Local Investment Framework have established that the proposed growth will necessitate the strategic upgrade of infrastructure by the Utility companies. The timing the Utility companies propose for these upgrades require regulator approval before their implementation, which could have an impact on the extent of growth or the timing of growth within the affected areas.

It is considered likely that not all strategic upgrades will be approved by the regulators, on the basis of value for money, and the Core Strategy has taken this into account by focussing the majority of the growth in the central and southern part of Huntingdonshire.

Table 3.7: Utilities Requirements

Type of Project	Project Description
Electricity	New 10-12MW Primary Substation
Water & Sewage	Increase in discharge consent for 2000 new homes
Water & Sewage	Further increase in discharge consent for full extent of proposed growth. For cost estimate purposes only, allowance to be made for possible upgrade to WWTW
Water & Sewage	New Strategic Sewer

Source: Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

Green Infrastructure

The following Green Infrastructure requirements were identified by the Local Investment Framework. They were informed by the recently commissioned Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Cambridge Horizons Green Infrastructure Study.

Table 3.8: Green Infrastructure Requirements

Type of Project	Project Description
Green Corridors	Cambridge to St Neots Green Corridor
Green Corridors	Ouse Valley Strategic Green Space Corridor
Green Corridors	St Neots Green Space Corridor
Green Corridors	Ouse Valley to Cambourne Corridor -Additional crossing of River Great Ouse near Paxton Pits
Green Corridor	St Neots to Little Paxton Green Corridor
Major Sites	Land East of St Neots

Source: Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

Economic Regeneration Projects

Achieving the jobs growth targets set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy is critical to the achievement of all the other sustainable development objectives of growth. Without employment growth, demand for new dwellings will not be generated and wider social regeneration will not be realised. Ensuring that the conditions are right to support the Employment Growth agenda is essential.

Table 3.9: Identified Economic Regeneration Projects

Project Name	Costs and Timescale	Lead Partner
Regeneration of St Neots Town Centre - the Priory Quarter.	£100,000 Commencing 2008/9	HDC
St Neots Space for Creativity Enterprise Phase 2 (specifically St Mary's Urban Village/ Fire Station site).	£2,500,000 2010-12	HDC
New visitor centre at Paxton Pits	£2,000,000 Timescale tbc	HDC
St Neots Skills Campus (Introduction of carpentry, plumbing and electrical trades training)	£350,000	Hunts Regional College

to the St Neots area.	Timescale tbc	
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Source: Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

For those projects where a timescale has been determined, the focus of the investments in St Neots is over the next three to four years. In relation to funding:

- The Regeneration of the Town Centre and St Neots Space for Creativity Enterprises both have confirmed funding
- St Neots Green Corridor is currently awaiting confirmation of Housing Growth Funding (HGF)
- St Neots Skills Campus is awaiting confirmation of funding from EEDA and HRC
- The Paxton Pits Visitor Centre is currently unfunded.

Local Social Infrastructure

A detailed profile of social infrastructure requirements under each growth scenario is provided in the Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework. For conciseness, this section contains a headline summary of the overall infrastructure requirements only.

The higher levels of provision under Scenario 2 reflect the greater level of population growth associated with the higher level of housing.

Table 3.10: Social Infrastructure Requirements: Housing Growth Scenario 1

Type of Project	Project Description
Education	9 x new 52-place Nurseries
Education	1 x new Children's Centre
Education	3 x new 2FE Primary School
Education	1 x new 1FE Primary School
Education	1 x new 6FE Secondary School *
Education	Extend 1 current Secondary School
Healthcare	2 x new 4GP Primary and Social Care Facility
Community Facilities	1 x new Small multi-purpose community facility (300sq.m)
Community Facilities	1 x new Medium multi-purpose community facility (500sq.m)
Community Facilities	1 x new Small Community Library (350sq.m)
Open Space	20.1ha Outdoor sports, pitches, courts and greens
Open Space	4ha Allotments and community gardens
Open Space	22.4ha Informal open space
Open Space	3.2ha Children and young people's play space
Leisure and Recreation	1 x new multi-purpose leisure facility with sports hall and pool
Emergency Services	New Safer Neighbourhood Team Space (100 sq.m) to accommodate SNT consisting of 6 Officers

Source: Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

Table 3.11: Social Infrastructure Requirements: Housing Growth Scenario 2

Type of Project	Project Description
Education	11 x new 52-place Nurseries
Education	2 x new Children's Centres
Education	3 x new 2FE Primary School
Education	2 x new 1FE Primary School
Education	1 x new 6FE Secondary School *
Education	Extend 1 current Secondary School
Healthcare	2 x new 4GP Primary and Social Care Facilities
Community Facilities	3 x new Small multi-purpose community facility (300sq.m each)
Community Facilities	1 x new Small Community Library (350sq.m)
Open Space	23.4ha Outdoor sports, pitches, courts and greens
Open Space	4.6ha Allotments and community gardens
Open Space	26.1ha Informal open space
Open Space	3.7ha Children and young people's play space
Leisure and Recreation	1 x new multi-purpose leisure facility with sports hall and pool
Emergency Services	New Safer Neighbourhood Team Space (100 sq.m) to accommodate SNT consisting of 6 Officers

Source: Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

** It should be noted that the suggestion that St Neots will require an additional 6 Form Entries of secondary school provision is strictly a reflection of the total new demand forecast from the additional residential units. While one option would be to develop an additional secondary school, an alternative option would be to restructure the provision that is already present across the town*

4. Healthcheck Baseline – Economic and Retail

The following sub-sections summarise the key issues identified through the baseline analysis. These are then presented within a SWOT analysis which links the issues to the proposals for St Neots moving forwards.



KEY ISSUES RAISED THROUGH BASELINE ANALYSIS

Sub Topic 1 - Employment, Unemployment and Worklessness

- St Neots has a strong employment rate, in line with district average.
- Almost half of residents (46%) work locally, however significant commuting to the rest of Huntingdonshire (18%) and Bedford (8%).
- Local employment is manufacturing dependent (specifically the manufacture of plastic products). This sector has bucked national and regional trends, growing significantly in the past three years.
- St Neots is also over-represented in small workplaces (fewer than 50 staff) and micro workplaces (fewer than 10 staff)

Table 4.1: Employment SWOT

Employment, Unemployment and Worklessness	
Strengths	
High levels of employment in working age population	Within St Neots, 78% of the working age population are in employment compared to only 69% nationally.
Low levels of entrenched worklessness	In addition to achieving high levels of employment, of those unemployed, the proportion claiming for more than 12 months (5%) is less than half the national level (11%).

Significant employment opportunities are provided locally	Given the size of the town and the employment offer, a large proportion of local people (46%) work outside of the town. However over half are employed locally, identifying the importance of the local business base to the St Neots economy.
Weaknesses	
Dependence on Manufacturing	Local employment is heavily dependent on the manufacturing sector. It employs 23% of the local workforce, which is more than double the national level. While sub-sectoral growth is likely to continue, manufacturing is a declining sector nationally and St Neots may face the challenges associated within economic restructuring in future years.
Public sector driven employment growth	Recent employment growth in St Neots has been dependent on the public sector, which may reflect weaknesses in the local labour market and business base. However, over the coming months, such employment growth may be more resilient than private sectors employment as it is not subject to commercial pressures.
Opportunities	
Expansion of Employment Land	The allocation of 25 ha of employment land within the eastern urban extension presents the opportunity to diversify the local employment base, particularly within higher value added sectors, including the creative industries.
Diversification of Employment Base	Diversification of employment base from increased tourism if for example the Priory Waterfront redevelopment were pursued
Threats	
Regional Growth Sectors	The town centre employment specialisms are not aligned with the regional growth sectors, which may present a misalignment between locally held skills and the skills demanded by employers moving forwards.

Sub Topic 2 – The Business Base

- The business base across Huntingdonshire is relatively stable – with a lower rate of VAT registrations and de-registrations than regionally and nationally. This stability has increased over the past three years.
- St Neots is well represented among the major retail banking firms with six high street branches and an additional business banking branch of one bank.
- Huntingdonshire District Council also provides access to GRANTnet which provides local businesses with information on locally available sources of funding.
- The move to a regional model of Business Link and BERR's Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP) has reduced the variety of grants.
- There are a range of events held for local businesses, including the Huntingdonshire Chamber which provided a range of informal networking events for local businesses; the Town Centre initiative which provides manufacturing and retail based clubs for local businesses; the Local 601 Club which provides monthly evening networking events for local businesses; and the Huntingdonshire Business Network which provides district wide networking opportunities for local businesses.
- There are limited external business facilities within St Neots. There are no hotels within the town and the Priory Centre provides the only meeting space within the town centre, which is also non-catering.

Table 4.2: Business Base SWOT

The Business Base	
Strengths	
Local Business Networks	St Neots hosts a number of networks and forums which bring representatives from local business together with each other and other key local stakeholders. This includes activities undertaken by the STNTCI whose sub-groups include representatives of local businesses plus representatives from local schools and similar providers.
Small Business Base	St Neots is well represented by small businesses. This will largely reflect the smaller scale of the local employment base, however it also highlights the level of entrepreneurship in the local economy. While a significant proportion of local employees are employed within a few businesses, many more are employed within the more diverse small business base.
Weaknesses	
Low levels of business turnover	While low levels of business start-ups and failures may reflect a mature marketplace, it may also reflect a lack of competitive pressures faced by local businesses. High levels of competitive promote business competitiveness and an uncompetitive environment may result in less competitive and productive companies remaining unchallenged.
A lack of local business facilities	A large conference venue is located on the edge of St Neots however there is a distinct absence of appropriate facilities (such as meeting rooms) available to local businesses within the town centre.
Opportunities	
Potential to develop and diversify small business base	St Neots' representation among smaller businesses has the potential to grow in response to the employment land allocation in the eastern urban extension and activities to promote higher value employment sectors, including the creative industries.
Threats	
National Recession	While a national issue, the recession may be felt particularly hard by local businesses which may have been insulated from the competitive pressures often more prevalent in larger economies. Any further restructuring of the national economy away from manufacturing may have significant implications for the St Neots business base, given its over-representation in this sector.
Significant Employment in a small number of workplaces	Employment is heavily concentrated in a small number of workplaces and the contraction or failure of a single one of these will have serious implications for the future health of the St Neots economy. In addition to direct employment, there will be associated downward supply chain and income related multiplier effects.

Sub Topic 3 – Training and Education

- There are two secondary schools in St Neots.
- St Neots is clearly under-represented in higher level skills, suggesting that local graduates are less likely to be retained.
- The STNTCI has identified that many school leavers do not have the 'practical skills' necessary for the workplace and has promoted a work experience programme to help overcome this.
- Vocational adult learning is provided by the Huntingdonshire Regional College. It is able to provide some courses from its St Neots site, however this site is predominantly a campus for construction skills. The majority of courses are provided from Huntingdon, which is easily accessible by a short train journey. Both Longsands and St Neots

Community College provide evening classes for adults; however these are often limited to lifestyle courses, such as photography and foreign languages.

Table 4.3: Training and Education SWOT

Training and Education	
Strengths	
Existing dialogue between training providers and employers	Existing dialogue and relationships between local business and training providers, via the STNTCI and other forums will promote the delivery of locally relevant training; specifically the take-up of qualifications. In many cases this will simply involve the most appropriate guidance being provided to young people when deciding which courses and training to pursue.
Weaknesses	
Shortage of vocational skills among school leavers	The sectoral mix of St Neots is dependent on vocational based training and the more recent emphasis on academic qualifications is promoting a misalignment between the demand and supply of skills.
Opportunities	
Engineering Diploma	The roll-out of the Engineering Diploma provides a significant opportunity for promoting locally relevant vocational training within local schools and colleges. The nature of the diploma should also promote further collaboration between local young people, employers, and delivery providers. It is hoped that the Diplomas will help raise the perceived value of vocational qualifications.
Giving business a louder voice	The shift towards greater vocational training and the strengthening of existing relationships provides the opportunity for businesses to promote the skills they require to operate competitively in the modern and increasingly knowledge based economy.
Threats	
Replacement demand for the aging workforce	The aging population of St Neots will increase the degree to which local businesses must replace the skills lost as individuals retire. If the relevant skills described above are not effectively promoted among the younger population, local businesses will find it increasingly difficult to operate competitively.

Sub Topic 4 – Retail and Commercial Uses

- Employment in the retail sector (across St Neots) was 1,700 in 2006. This accounts for 16% of total employment, compared to only 12% across the region and 11% nationally.
- There were 170 retail units within St Neots town centre in 2006.
- An additional 9,000 sq m of retail space will be provided in St Neots. This will be concentrated within the town centre and complementary and appropriate development as part of a significant mixed use urban extension on greenfield land to the east of the town.
- St Neots has continued to decline in the town centre retail rankings, in line with other district centres within the Cambridgeshire / East Anglia area. (Huntingdonshire Retail Study Update, 2007)
- Huntingdonshire District Council's Core Strategy allocated 25 ha of employment land, which will be built on greenfield land to the east of the town for B1, B2, and B8 uses.

Table 4.4: Retail and Commercial Property SWOT

Retail and Commercial Property	
Strengths	
Significant local employer	While the retail sector is relatively small, it is locally significant and accounts for a significant proportion of local employment.
Convenience sector	<p>The Retail Assessment identifies a healthy retail convenience sector within St Neots.</p> <p>St Neots is an attractive and historic town centre.</p>
Weaknesses	
Quality of vacant units	<p>While the proportion of vacant retail units in the town centre is below the national average, these units are not well suited to the requirements demanded by modern comparison retailers.</p> <p>There could be seen to be a shortage of designated retail sites within the town centre although the potential for new retail sites is a possibility following re-designation of sites or redevelopment of existing areas.</p>
Opportunities	
Pre-recession demand for high street space among retailers.	Potential to expand provision of food and drink and fashion retail.
Proposed Retail Growth	The core strategy identifies the requirement for 9,000 sq m of retail space within the town. The delivery of this space should assist in providing the premises demanded by national and high profile retailers.
Threats	
Competition from larger centres	In line with similar sized towns within the East of England, St Neots has lost ground to the larger centres, such as Cambridge, Bedford, and Peterborough.
National Recession	The drop in demand associated with the national recession will affect expansion plans of retailers and other businesses. St Neots must ensure that it is positioned to take full advantage of the return of demand when the country enters its recovery.

5. Healthcheck Baseline - Environment

The following sub-sections summarise the key issues identified through the baseline analysis. These are then presented within a SWOT analysis which links the issues to the proposals for St Neots moving forwards.



KEY ISSUES RAISED THROUGH BASELINE ANALYSIS

Sub Topic 1 – Character and Vitality of the Town

- St Neots lies on the River Great Ouse, which forms part of a green corridor bisecting the town.
- Parts of central St Neots and Eaton Socon are designated Conservation Areas that include a number of distinctive and historic buildings.
- The scheduled monuments (the Benedictine Priory and the Maltings – former John Days Brewery) are located in the centre of town, adjacent to the Market Square, although the former is not visible and in fact the exact site has not been verified.
- The listed buildings are predominantly clustered within the town centre, - St Marys Street, Brook Street, The High Street, Church Street. Market Place. There is also a clustering of listed buildings running along Great North Rd in Eaton Socon.

Table 5.1: Town Character SWOT Analysis

Character and Vitality of the Town	
Strengths	
Historic Buildings and Monuments	Parts of central St Neots and Eaton Socon are classified as Conservation Areas and there are a number of distinctive landmarks located within the town.
The Riverside	The River Great Ouse provides the most distinctive feature of the local landscape and a range of opportunities for promoting the character of the town.
Weaknesses	
Local Built Heritage	The local historic buildings and monuments are not necessarily all in use or being used to their full potential. The historic buildings should be brought back into innovative uses the retail environment should cater more for the character of the town.
Pollution	There are concerns regarding the amount of air and noise pollution within the town centre, as a result of the traffic levels and congestion within the town. There are also issues of litter and noise pollution.
Opportunities	
Promoting Riverside Routes	<p>Better use can be made of the natural wildlife corridor created along the River Great Ouse Valley. This may involve fronting uses onto the River; providing parks with safe, high quality children's play equipment, cafes and other facilities; river and riverside entertainment including festivals and regattas; boat hire on the river; boat tours along the River Great Ouse; public mooring facilities for visitors by boat and the Priory Centre to make full use of its river frontage.</p> <p>There is also a lack of pedestrian and cycling routes and facilities, which could be provided, along more attractive routes in the corridor to allow people to use these modes of transport.</p>
Heritage	Heritage and cultural opportunities that could be gained in redeveloping the waterfront area and making a feature out of the remains of the priory and incorporating this into the redevelopment.
St Mary's Urban Village	The proposals for St Mary's Urban Village improve the area's treatment of its historic buildings. It will also provide additional public spaces within the area.
Threats	
Town Expansion	The delivery of the additional retail space and measures taken to cater for the increased traffic associated with the housing growth must be carefully managed and sympathetic to the town's distinctive and historic environment. Given the town's current issues of congestion, emphasis must be placed on providing high quality pedestrian, cycle and public transport networks.

Sub Topic 2 – The Town and Wider Countryside

- The main connection between the town and countryside is the River Great Ouse Valley
- The town is in proximity to 2 SSSIs (St Neots Common and Little Paxton Pits) and 2 Local Nature Reserve (Paxton Pits and Begwary Brook). Begwary Brook is outside of Huntingdonshire and access is limited at present due to poor track conditions.
- Approximately 10% of the study area is Agricultural Land at Grade 1 (the southern part of Eaton Socon, western portion of Eynesbury and the flood plain, and a small section of Paxton Pits), 20% is Agricultural Land at Grade 2 (the western boundary of the study area in Eaton Socon, an area to the northwest of St Neots Town Centre, and

a small area in the southeast of Eynesbury) and 25% of the study area is Agricultural Land at Grade 3 (the floodplain between Eaton Socon, St Neots and Eynesbury).

Table 5.2: Town and Wider Countryside SWOT

The Town and Wider Countryside	
Strengths	
The River Great Ouse Valley	The main link between the town centre and the countryside via the River Great Ouse Valley is a strong established link with proposals being developed and implemented to manage and enhance the corridor.
SSSIs	The SSSIs and areas of local conservation importance hold great potential as recreational and biodiversity areas. These environmental strengths need to be built upon to develop their potential further in the long term, whilst ensuring their sensitivity is protected.
Weaknesses	
Opportunities	
Road Access	There is the potential to downgrade the Bypass hugging the south of the Town and instead linking the Cambridge Road to the A1 by a new link road to the east of the future Eastern Expansion.
The Paxton Pits	The Paxton Pits to the North of the Town will continue to be extracted and then switched over to recreational use as lakes and nature reserves.
River Access	Increase sustainable transport means, utilising the footpaths and river / trip boats, water taxi's and canoe routes to provide the opportunity to link the town to the wider countryside via the river.
Threats	
The Eastern Urban Extension	The Eastern Urban Expansion (5,000 new homes) will replace large areas of agricultural land and maintaining the towns proximity to the wider countryside will need to be carefully managed.

Sub Topic 3 – The Environment and Quality of Life

- The council have in place a plan to reduce the amount of the Council's own waste over the next five years, going to landfill by 15%.
- The Council is implementing energy-saving initiatives in all Council buildings and encouraging employees to be vigilant about the energy they use while going about their work. The Council also supports residents to install energy saving measures such as cavity wall insulation and loft insulation and will improve standards of energy efficiency in all new dwellings built in Huntingdonshire.
- Tesco has submitted plans to Huntingdonshire District Council to build a combined heat and power station at the Barford Road branch in Eynesbury. The heat produced can then be used to provide heating for the Tesco store. This application was recently approved by Huntingdonshire District Council.

Table 5.3: Environment SWOT

Environment and Quality of Life	
Strengths	
Local Leadership	<p>The Council has produced a five year environment strategy for Huntingdonshire 'Growing Awareness - A Plan for Our Environment' which outlines the environmental commitments the council aims to tackle including the issues of climate change, the earth's rapidly depleting resources and protection of the natural environment.</p> <p>It covers 12 main environmental issues such as energy efficiency and renewable energy, travel and emissions, adapting to climate change, waste, water use, biodiversity and open space and maintaining a clean and safe Huntingdonshire.</p> <p>The local people are given the opportunities to tackle climate change through recycling, refuse and reuse initiatives within the town. This is a five year plan (published October 2008) and should be reviewed regularly.</p>
Weaknesses	
Open Spaces	Improvements needs to be made to the number and quality of open spaces, and play areas for the local people to meet a range of needs and age groups.
Pedestrian and Cycle Routes and river access	New cycle and pedestrian routes and access and use of the river are needed that are legible, safe and well lit to encourage local people to make use of more sustainable modes of transport.
Opportunities	
Urban Extension – Eco Quarter	<p>The potential to develop the eastern urban extension as an eco-quarter presents significant opportunities for delivering environmentally sustainable growth and providing a showcase for sustainable development more generally.</p> <p>In addition, Tesco have also submitted plans to build a combined heat and power station at the Barford Road branch in Eynesbury which have now been approved by HDC</p>
Threats	

6. Healthcheck Baseline – Social, Community and Leisure

The following sub-sections summarise the key issues identified through the baseline analysis. These are then presented within a SWOT analysis which links the issues to the proposals for St Neots moving forwards.



KEY ISSUES RAISED THROUGH BASELINE ANALYSIS

Sub Topic 1 – Population

- There are 31,200 residents living in the St Neots area, 10% of which live in nearby Little Paxton. It is the largest market town in Cambridgeshire;
- The population has grown by approximately 700 residents in the last 5 years and will undergo a significant increase in forthcoming years. Based on recent housing growth, the population in Eynesbury has grown considerably.
- The direct population impacts of the proposed housing growth (see Sub Topic 2) are likely to produce between 12,460 and 14,508 additional residents by 2026, of which nearly 5,000 may be aged 15 or under. This will materially affect the social, community and leisure demands of the town.

The proportions of residents in St Neots exhibiting the characteristics shown below when compared to the country and region are as follows:

- More are aged 65 or over compared to the national average, but less compared to the district average;
- More are aged 14 or under compared to the national and regional averages, but less compared to the district average;
- The increased levels of younger and older people imply a greater need for age appropriate social infrastructure, such as schools and care centres;
- More are employed compared to the national and regional averages, but less are employed in professional and managerial posts. The unemployment rate is rising as a result of the economic downturn; and,

- Across the district there are a lower proportion of pensioners living alone compared to the national and regional averages.

Table 6.1: Population SWOT Analysis

Population	
Strengths	
Employment levels	There are fairly high levels of employment, albeit unemployment is rising due to the economic downturn.
Weaknesses	
Skills shortage	The local economic structure of the population does not reflect national trends and is skewed away from professional and managerial posts. There are relatively high levels of semi-skilled and unskilled employees, implying a skills shortage.
Opportunities	
Additional services	Increasing population levels provide the opportunity for additional services due to the greater critical mass and catchment population.
Threats	
None	There are no threats.

Sub Topic 2 – Housing

- Between 5,000 and 5,800 homes are planned for development in St Neots for the period 2006-26;
- Average earnings across the district would not enable the purchase of a house in St Neots, based on standard mortgage criteria. Even with a substantial deposit, the cheapest accommodation on offer would be too expensive. This highlights the importance of affordable housing to provide for people on low incomes.

The proportions exhibiting the characteristics shown below when compared to the country and district averages are as follows:

- More households own their own home compared to the national average, but less compared to the district average;
- Less households rent socially rented homes compared to the national average, but more compared to the district average;
- There are significantly more houses and bungalows in the district compared to the national average, which implies that it is less densely developed;
- St Neots is more densely developed than Huntingdonshire, but less so than the national average;
- Homes in St Neots tend to be smaller than the district average and larger than the national average, although there are more very large units in St Neots than the district (5-8 bedroom properties);
- There is a wide range of support options for the elderly and disabled in their own and council run homes. Some of this housing may not all be up to modern standards though (e.g. outdated sheltered housing);
- Less homes are empty in the district compared to the national average; and,
- The condition of social rented housing in St Neots is significantly better than the national average.

Table 6.2: Housing SWOT Analysis

Housing	
Strengths	
Range of properties	Wide range of properties in and around St Neots.
Generally good supported and sheltered housing	There is a wide range of sheltered and supported housing, as well as much support for those seeking to remain in their own homes.
Decent housing stock	The local area has a low proportion of non-decent dwellings. Many steps are being taken to improve the remaining poor housing stock.
High home ownership	There is a high level of home ownership.
Weaknesses	
Expensive housing	Housing is not affordable for the majority of local residents.
Homeless people	There are a significant number of homeless people in Huntingdonshire.
Housing need.	There are significant levels of housing need among the local population.
Remaining unmet need for supported housing	There are still considerable levels of unmet need for supported housing and a significant resource requirement to adapt people's homes to meet their needs.
Opportunities	
Additional supply may reduce house prices.	The housing target in St Neots will boost the level of housing considerably and may increase the affordability of housing in the area.
Economic downturn may make housing more affordable.	<p>The recent economic downturn should also see house prices reduce. This is an opportunity for those seeking housing.</p> <p>Given the lack of readily-available mortgage finance, intermediate housing could play an important role in providing housing for some people on low/moderate incomes</p>
Threats	
Little incentive to build given current market.	The current residential market will make the current housing targets difficult to deliver at the existing rate.
Long time frame.	Relatively long time frame for change.
Small unit size.	Existing housing is already smaller compared to the rest of the district. New housing may focus on smaller units and fail to achieve a balanced housing market and fully cater for families.

Sub Topic 3 – Health and Public Safety

Health and social care

- GP practices in St Neots are at physical capacity and would find it difficult to accommodate more patients;
- There are 4 NHS dentist surgeries in St Neots and, according to the Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework, two additional Primary and Social Care facilities may be required following the predicted housing growth. These facilities should include dentistry facilities.
- NHS Cambridgeshire is exploring the possibility of providing temporary accommodation in one of their clinics, which would relieve some pressure from local GP practices. Although the location of a planned new facility is yet to be agreed, somewhere in the town centre is preferable due to the high accessibility levels.
- In the longer term NHS Cambridgeshire may consider development of a Primary and Social Care Facility on the outskirts of the town, close to the main area(s) of population growth.

- The nearest hospital to St Neots is in Papworth Everard, which is approximately 8 miles from the town centre. This is a specialist centre for coronary heart disease and sleeping disorders and does not provide general hospital/ Accident & Emergency facilities. Hinchingbrook NHS Hospital is more accessible due to the train links.
- There are greater incidences of coronary heart disease and cancer amongst Huntingdonshire residents than the regional and national averages.
- Drugs and drug related crimes are higher than the District average.
- St Neots contains an Air Quality Management Area as it is marginally above the national target of 39µg/m3 for nitrogen dioxide.
- A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) focusing on the new growth in St Neots was carried out by the PCT with HDC and a number of other partners in 2005 and reviewed again in 2007. Its primary focus was the health of the local population and it recognises that new developments could have wide ranging effects upon the determinants of health and the provision of health services.

Community safety

- Total crime increased 10% in the period 2006-7 within St Neots;
- Vehicle crimes have decreased by 36%;
- Phoenix Square, Market Square and Queens Gardens are noted as particular Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) hotspots;

Table 6.3: Health and Public Safety SWOT Analysis

Health and Public Safety	
Strengths	
Low pollution levels.	Particulate pollution levels (PM10) are below target levels.
Low crime rate.	The district currently has vehicle crime and dwelling burglary rates which are much lower than the regional and national averages.
Strong police presence.	St Neots is protected by two Safer Neighbourhood Teams and one Police Station.
Fast ambulance response rate.	The national ambulance standard for 8 minute response times is 75%, which is met by the East of England Ambulance Trust.
Weaknesses	
GP surgeries cannot easily accept new patients.	There are a wide range of health and social services available in St Neots, although current GP facilities are at capacity.
Drugs and drug related crimes	There are higher rates of drug-use and drug related crimes in the St Neots area than the Huntingdonshire average.
No NHS hospital in St Neots.	There is no NHS hospital in St Neots, although Huntingdon is easily accessible by road and rail.
Relatively high heart disease and cancer rates.	There are higher rates of coronary heart disease and cancer in the district than nationally.
Nitrogen dioxide levels.	Nitrogen dioxide levels in central St Neots are marginally above target levels.
High crime rates in certain hotspots.	St Neots Priory Park has the highest level of crime and anti-social behaviour problems. ASB problems tend to occur around Phoenix Square and Market Square Crime hotspots are Church Street, Cambridge Street, High Street, South Street and Priory Lane.

Opportunities	
Improve crime hotspots.	There is an opportunity to tackle localised ASB issues and make these areas safer.
Additional services, based on housing growth.	Additional housing growth is likely to trigger demand for additional healthcare centres, which would be high quality facilities that provide a greater range of primary care, dentistry and social facilities than traditional GP surgeries.
Additional services, based on current demand.	Short-term provision of primary care facilities may be provided to prevent unmet demand.
Favourable national policy.	Government policy helping to bring some health care services nearer to patients.
Threats	
Finding suitable integration projects.	Finding suitable integration projects.
Engaging with ASB youths.	Engaging with ASB youths.
Unfavourable residential market.	Unfavourable residential market.
Poor management of crime hotspots.	Poor management of crime hotspots.

Sub Topic 4 – Local Government and community organisations

Local Government Structure & Access

- St Neots Town Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council operate in the area and cover the full breadth of council services;
- The area has an active Local Strategic Partnership that involves a wide range of agencies;

Community involvement

- The turnout at the 2003 District Council election was roughly 5% below the average for Shire Districts;
- The turnout at the 2005 UK General Election was roughly 5% above the national average.
- All developing policies and major strategies are subject to community involvement.

Table 6.4: Local Government and Community Organisations SWOT Analysis

Local Government and Community Organisations	
Strengths	
Local Town Council	The Town Council offices are easy to reach.
Council call centres	All Council's (except St Neots Town Council) have a call centre to deal with issues.
Satisfactory consultation	The consultation process is satisfactory and conforms to national guidelines.
Local issues considered	Local issues are considered in local strategies and community planning.
Several organisations	There are several community organisations with some influence.
Active LSP.	There is an active Local Strategic Partnership with representation from many different groups.

Many local clubs	There are many local societies and clubs.
Weaknesses	
District Council difficult to reach for some.	The District Council, which provides the majority of services, is located in Huntingdon, not St Neots.
County Council difficult to reach for some.	The County Council, which provide services including education and libraries, is located in Cambridge, not St Neots.
Difficult to engage entire community.	Hard to reach residents and those who don't like meetings and form filling often don't contribute to consultations.
Opportunities	
Increase election turnout.	Better engage local residents to increase turnout at local elections.
Visiting officers from District and County Council departments.	Provide occasional representatives from District and County Council offices to Town Council offices to increase accessibility to full range of services.
Threats	
Community division.	Potential future division of community into opposing interests groups.
Inaction.	Lack of action by residents.
Alienation.	Alienation through thoughtless action or inaction.

Sub Topic 5 – Sport, Leisure and Open Space

Sports and leisure facilities

- There is a wide range of facilities in St Neots, including specialist football, golf, cricket, rugby, bowling, sailing and rowing facilities. There is also a skate board park in St Neots which is popular with young people.
- St Neots Leisure Centre is the main public sporting facility and is in reasonable condition, but is not fully DDA compliant due to the architectural design of this 1970s structure;

Open Spaces

- St Neots benefits from plentiful parks, many of which contain children's play areas and outdoor sporting facilities; and,
- Despite the presence of local parks, meadows and allotments, St Neots suffers from an overall shortfall of open space per resident based on national standards.
- The cemeteries are nearly full and new facilities should be planned for the future.

Table 6.5: Sports, Leisure and Open Space SWOT Analysis

Sports, Leisure and Open Space	
Strengths	
Paxton Pits Nature Reserve, Green Corridor park and meadow complex.	These open spaces are local amenities and key open spaces for St Neots. Paxton Pits is actively promoted by HDC and Friends of Paxton Pits.
Plentiful sports and leisure facilities.	There is a wide range of sports and leisure facilities. They are accessible and affordable to a wide range of residents.
Popular leisure centre.	St Neots Leisure Centre is popular and attracts a high number of visitors.
River Corridor	The river corridor and existing Rights of Way on and off water
Weaknesses	
Leisure centre not fully DDA compliant.	St Neots Leisure Centre is in reasonable condition but is not fully DDA compliant.
Shortfall of open space per resident.	Despite the presence of local parks, meadows and allotments, St Neots suffers from an overall shortfall of open space per resident based on HDC standards
Cemeteries	The cemeteries are nearly full and new facilities should be planned for the future.
Opportunities	
Additional formal parks and other open spaces.	It is likely that the high level of housing growth will increase the amount of formal parks, gardens and amenity spaces.
Waterway use	Develop circular routes and increased participation of activities on the water to maximise the potential that this type of resource can provide.
Threats	

Sub Topic 6 – Culture and Heritage

- Whilst there is no purpose built theatre or cinema in St Neots, the Priory Centre does promote a number of arts and cultural events;
- St Neots museum follows the historic development of the town from prehistoric times to the present day.
- The town benefits from a wide range of annual events to attract many sectors of the community, including music, ale and arts festivals, as well as a regatta and carnival. This includes annual events in the Eatons, such as May Day celebrations and an annual Open Garden event;
- The main community venue is the Priory Centre, although there is also a wide range of school halls that are available for community use at certain times;
- There are many churches in St Neots. The nearest mosque and synagogue are in Cambridge, reflecting the relatively small proportion of local residents following Judaism and Islam.

The Priory Centre

The Priory Centre occupies a central site in St Neots. A recent questionnaire showed that local people would like the site improved in the following ways:

- Increased access to the waterfront;
- Walking/cycling links;
- 86% of respondents would like a new enhanced multi-use Priory Centre. It is important to note that this is the view of the sample respondents, and may not be reflective of the view of all residents;

- 47% are in favour of a multi-screen cinema, though comments reveal that many want a cinema but not necessarily on the waterfront;
- New cafés, bars and restaurants;
- Greater river use.

Table 6.6: Culture and Heritage SWOT Analysis

Culture and Heritage	
Strengths	
Many events and activities.	There are many events and activities that reflect to the area's cultural and heritage associations.
Many community venues.	There are many community venues in the area, including The Priory Centre. There is also a wide range of school halls that are available for community use at certain times.
Opportunity to comment on local events and issues.	A local newspaper and radio station allows residents to find out about and comment on local events and issues.
Weaknesses	
No local theatre or cinema.	There is no purpose built theatre or cinema in St Neots.
Opportunities	
Increase community engagement.	The wide ranging events and activities provide many opportunities for the community to become actively involved in local culture and heritage.
Redevelop/refurbish Priory Centre.	The Priory Centre occupies a central site and future growth in the town could enable the redevelopment or refurbishment of this facility.
Create greater access to waterfront, provide cycle links, etc.	Redevelopment or major refurbishment could provide all or some of the following: access to the waterfront; walking/cycling links; enhanced facilities; cinema; new cafés, bars and restaurants, improved/increased moorings, possible pump -out, showers and toilet facilities etc.
Provide new religious establishments.	Provide religious establishments for non-Christian faiths should sufficient emerging residents practise these religions. These could potentially take the form of multi-faith centres.
Importance of leisure, entertainment and hospitality industries in the success of the town	The customer base for businesses involved in the leisure, entertainment and hospitality industries is located in and around St Neots. There is therefore a great opportunity to boost these industries to the benefit of the town, potentially more so than the tourism industry.
Threats	
Economic downturn.	Failure to meet the housing growth targets because of the economic downturn may make it difficult to achieve funding for improvements to the Priory Centre site.

7. Healthcheck Baseline - Transport

The following sub-sections summarise the key issues identified through the baseline analysis. These are then presented within a SWOT analysis which links the issues to the proposals for St Neots moving forwards.



KEY ISSUES RAISED THROUGH BASELINE ANALYSIS

Sub Topic 1 – Ease of Transport to and from the Area

- St Neots is well connected to the national and regional trunk road network
- Rail connectivity is strong from north to south, but journeys elsewhere are often difficult
- The out of town location of the train station is poorly suited to modal shift and access for many of those without a car, including residents of Eynesbury and the Eatons.
- Public transport connectivity to many surrounding villages is often poor.

Table 7.1: Ease of Transport to and from the Area SWOT

Ease of Transport to and from the Area	
Strengths	
North-South Rail Connectivity	St Neots lies upon a railway line that provides frequent and fast services to the north and south (including London). Journey times to Huntingdon are under 10 minutes, under 30 minutes to Peterborough and 1:20 to central London.
Trunk Road Connectivity	St Neots is located adjacent to the A1 and is bypassed to the south and west.
Weaknesses	
Proximity of train station	While train services are good, the station is located on the edge of St Neots and connectivity to other modes of public transport could be strengthened. The distance of the train station from many residential areas and poor quality bus services between the two is a weakness.

Clarity of bus stops	Whilst bus provision is reasonable within the town some bus stops are not clearly marked, so it can be difficult to tell exactly where a bus will stop.
Connectivity to Outlying Villages	Public transport connections to a number of local villages are weak, providing accessibility issues for vulnerable groups. There is no bus service on the A428.
Opportunities	
Local Road Improvements	The idea of diverting the A428 southwards to join the A1 at the Black Cat roundabout has been proposed. This would downgrade the status of the existing a428 St Neots southern bypass to local distributor and would assist with accommodating the additional traffic movements associated with the expansion area.
Threats	
Further modelling required to identify transport infrastructure requirements	The existing transport model is unable to effectively model the impacts of the eastern urban extension. Findings from a revised transport model are due imminently and will provide greater detail on potential capacity issues on the local road network.

Sub Topic 2 – Ease of Access to Services

- Poor access to the town from many outlying villages, presenting accessibility issues for vulnerable people.
- The town centre is reasonably well served by buses and bus stops.
- There are reasonable off-road cycle routes to the east of St Neots' centre, and proposed routes which will improve the off-road cycle path offer.

Table 7.2: Ease of Access to Services SWOT

Ease of Access to Services	
Strengths	
Central Location of Bus Stops and Routes	The town centre of St Neots is well served by five bus stops within the Market Square.
Weaknesses	
On-Road Cycle Routes	There is a lack of on-road cycle routes,
Access from outlying villages	Access is in many cases poor by public transport, and car ownership in many of the surrounding towns and villages would be a necessity.
Opportunities	
Off-Road Cycle Routes	The town centre is well connected by off-road cycle routes, but at present they do not form a network and there is opportunity to further improve the cycle path offer.
Transport Accessibility Plan	HDC's Local Strategic Partnership has approved an Accessibility Action Plan the findings of which should identify actions for improving public transport and overall accessibility to the town.
River Corridor	Use of the river corridor provide multifunctional transport routes.
Threats	
Increased traffic from development	Additional development is likely to create additional levels of traffic and it is important that they are designed to keep this to a minimum and promote walking and cycling.

Sub Topic 3 – Ease of Movement around the town

- The layout of St Neots town centre is relatively compact.
- A number of accident blackspots have been located in the town, namely along the High Street, at the High Street/ Huntingdon Street/ Church Street/ Cambridge Road junction, and along Huntingdon Street.
- A shortage of cycle paths has been identified across the town
- A strategy is in place to upgrade the existing Traffic Management System

- 14,000 private vehicles access the High Street on a daily basis and over 52,000 vehicles enter or leave St Neots each day. Congestion is therefore a particular issue for the town, exacerbated by the location of car parks and the single crossing across the river within the town centre.

Table 7.3: Ease of Movement SWOT

Ease of Movement	
Strengths	
Town Layout	The compact nature of the town means that most people are able to move around the town relatively easily. However, there are a number of issues, as described below.
Weaknesses	
Accident Blackspots	A number of accident blackspots have been located within the town centre as noted above, where pedestrians and cyclists have been identified as being at particular risk.
Congestion	The number of private vehicles accessing the High Street to find a car parking space adds to congestion. The single crossing across the river exacerbates the issue.
Pedestrian Safety	All pathways on High Street and adjacent streets are narrow, uneven and of varying quality. Narrow sections cause overcrowding and cause pedestrians to step onto the roadway to avoid others which is dangerous. Uneven, broken surfaces present a trip hazard causing problems.
Pedestrian Priority	Few street within the town centre have pedestrian priority, however a number of potential areas have been identified in the project worksheets, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Priory lane - The area around the Priory Centre - Pedestrian walkways between the High Street and Brook Street
Vehicle and Pedestrian Conflict	There are a number of examples of vehicle and pedestrian conflict within the town, including the large number of open car parks in the Town Centre and the market square.
Movements within the town	Potential issues have been identified for those that are less able due to the structure of the town centre (in comparison to areas such as Huntingdon,). Furthermore, the town lacks a shop mobility scheme and many of the public transport vehicles in use have not been designed with adaptable features.
Cycle Paths	While cycle paths currently serve the residential areas of St Neots they are not effectively joined and brought through the Town Centre area effectively. The provision of both on- and off-road cycle paths will be important in the future of St Neots
The River Great Ouse	The single town centre crossing over the river presents a significant barrier to movement around the town.
Opportunities	
Upgraded Traffic Management System	<p>A new strategy will extend the Accident Remedial Scheme by upgrading the existing Urban Traffic Control system within St Neots to include the four main town centre junctions that are the most significant barriers to traffic flow.</p> <p>This system would control the traffic passing through the town centre, facilitating flow and reducing congestion particularly around junctions.</p>
Threats	
Town Centre Congestion	The growth of St Neots and any successful attempts to promote tourism and retail within the town will increase the incidence of congestion within the town, without the effective introduction of Traffic Management Systems and additional measures to reduce local dependence on the car. This threat has the potential to severely undermine the success and vitality of the town centre.

8. Stage 1 Summary

Having completed Stage 1 of the Healthcheck Process we had three valuable resources from which to form our further judgements and proposed draft vision and draft objectives for St Neots. These were as follows:

1. **Detailed SWOT analysis** of each topic related to St Neots based on a desktop review of available studies and strategies. This has been presented in the stage 1 and stage 2 reports and the project team have received valuable stakeholder feedback on the accuracy and presentation of these SWOTs and have continued to present a revised version within this stage 3 report.
2. **Topic group discussions** carried out at the Stage 1 stakeholder workshop, reviewing the Stage 1 report content and making initial suggestions towards key opportunities, objectives and potential projects to be considered in the Healthcheck process (notes from these discussions are presented in this chapter)
3. **Stakeholder feedback** from the Stage 1 report containing comments on accuracy and judgements made by the project team but also providing numerous detailed suggestions of objectives and potential projects / initiatives that should be considered by the project team.

This chapter presents summaries of each of these resources from which we can then move towards formulating a draft vision statement and specific objectives and actions to facilitate that vision.

1. DETAILED SWOT ANALYSIS

St Neots has many key strengths which will help to attract development partners and investors to help realise the future growth potential, these include:

- Strong local governance and leadership from the HDC, STNTCI, Town Council, Neighbourhood Management Groups and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Fairly high levels of employment in working age population, although unemployment is rising due to the economic downturn.
- Significant local employment opportunities
- Local Business Networks
- Existing dialogue between training providers and employers
- A range of housing types
- Generally good supported and sheltered housing, although there remains a significant unmet need.
- High home ownership
- Good North-South Rail Connectivity, although the train station could be more accessible to/from the town centre
- Trunk Road Connectivity
- Central Location of Bus Stops and Routes
- Off-Road Cycle Routes, although a lack of on-road routes
- Historic Buildings and Monuments
- The Riverside
- Access to the Great Ouse Valley
- Local tourism assets
- Plentiful sports and leisure facilities.

- Popular leisure centre.
- Low pollution levels.
- Low crime rate.
- Strong police presence.
- Fast ambulance response rate.

In addition to these strengths there are a number of positive opportunities arising from the growth agenda which could help to address issues in the area, these include:

- Giving business a louder voice
- Pre-recession demand for high street space among retailers.
- Priory Centre and Waterfront
- Development south of the High Street
- St Mary's Urban Village
- Urban Extension – Eco Quarter
- Additional services, based on housing growth and current demand
- Additional formal parks and other open spaces.
- Local Road Improvements
- Upgraded Traffic Management System
- Tourism and leisure improvements

These characteristics and qualities provide a sound basis for the next stage of the project in preparing a Vision for St Neots and an Action Plan of projects, priorities and interventions that will be needed in order to cement these strengths and unlock these opportunities.

The following sections highlight the key issues under each of the four Healthcheck themes.

Economic and Retail

The Employment and Business Base

- The proposed housing and associated population growth should generate a more diversified workforce and skills base, providing opportunities for strengthening the local business base
- The 25 ha potential employment land allocation will provide space to support the growth of existing businesses and promote business start-ups; further improving the town's entrepreneurial stock
- However, local business support will become increasingly important as the national recession proceeds and local businesses face increasing competitive pressures.

Training and Skills

- The roll-out of the Engineering Diploma provides a timely opportunity to promote the vocational skills demanded by local businesses. This is particularly important in light of the ageing workforce and issues in sourcing appropriate replacement demand.

Retail

- The potential provision of 9,000 sq m of retail space will provide the opportunity to deliver the type of retail units demanded by national and high profile retailers
- However, in light of the increasing dominance of the larger towns and cities within the East of England, St Neots must develop its own distinctive offer, perhaps linked to its broader assets.

Tourism

- There is the opportunity to redevelop the Priory Centre and Waterfront.

- There is a rich fabric of local heritage activity in St Neots, Eaton Socon, Eaton Ford and Eynesbury, from which a vibrant tourism market should be developed.
- St Neots also faces a number of constraints to tourism, including: insufficient hotel and B&B accommodation; the lack of appropriate coach parking spaces within the town; the single river crossing within the town and the associated congestion; and the out of town location of the train station.

Environment

- Linked to the tourism issues, there is the opportunity to promote the use of the riverside wildlife corridor to provide recreational uses and paths for pedestrians and cyclists
- There is the potential to deliver the urban extension as an Eco-Quarter, promoting and showcasing environmental sustainability.
- The proposed housing growth provides the opportunity for improving the quality of formal open spaces and addition cycle and pedestrian routes across the town.

Social, Community, and Leisure

- The forecast population growth provides opportunities for delivering additional services within the town, including healthcare centres, formal parks and gardens, and public amenity space.
- The potential housing growth will also boost the availability of housing to local people and may overcome some of the affordability issues faced by residents.
- However, it is important that the development is carefully managed to avoid issues such as placing additional pressures on local crime hotspots and promoting community division associated with interest groups.
- In regard to social infrastructure, the proposed housing growth will provide an additional source of revenue to contribute to the funding pot.

Transport

- The town benefits from strong regional and national links through the strong trunk road and north/south train connectivity. However, on a local scale many of the surrounding villages have poor transport links with the town.
- Congestion is an existing problem in the town centre, compounded by the single river crossing within the town and the location of car parks. Town centre traffic flows must therefore be carefully managed if they are not to be exacerbated by the proposed housing growth.
- There is the potential in the longer-term to divert the A428 southwards to join the A1 at the Black Cat roundabout. This would downgrade the status of the existing A428 St Neots southern bypass to local distributor and would assist with accommodating the additional traffic movements associated with the expansion area.
- There are a number of issues relating to movement around the town which include: improvements to identified accident blackspots, namely along the High Street, at the High Street/ Huntingdon Street/ Church Street/ Cambridge Road junction, and along Huntingdon Street; improving pedestrian priorities within the town; and providing better access for people with disabilities.

2. TOPIC GROUP DISCUSSIONS – STAGE 1 WORKSHOP

As explained earlier, the stage 1 workshop included discussion groups specific to the four topic areas. These groups generated a set of discussion points which are presented here to demonstrate those points which were deemed important enough to feedback to the wider stakeholder group at the end of the workshop session.

It is important to note that the points presented in this section of the report are not necessarily agreed by the majority of stakeholders and simply reflect issues and ideas that featured prominently in the discussions that took place at the stage 1 workshop. They do not necessarily reflect aspirations or plans held by St Neots Town Council, Huntingdonshire District Council or the St Neots Healthcheck project team.

Economic and Retail

Important issues and potential objectives

- *Alignment with regional growth sectors* – a closer alignment from future employment growth with the Cambridge model may be more appropriate.
- *Employment land* - In addition to creating new employment land there is a need to improve the quality of existing industrial employment areas. (This is particularly important for manufacturing land, which is a key local economic driver and should not be dismissed)
- *Retail sites* - Numerous issues are included under this point, with some feeling too much retail floorspace is allocated by the HDC LDF Core Strategy and others feeling the Town needs significant increases in retail sites to allow any real change to the offer of the Town. The urban extension will require retail provision but must complement the town centre offer and sites need to be safeguarded in the town centre for future use and not lost to residential development.
- *Manufacturing Businesses* – While the dominance of manufacturing industries in St Neots can be seen as a negative element, the group argued that in today's changing global economy this could become a positive asset if the appropriate steps were taken to retain high value and complementary manufacturing. A number of existing manufacturing sites and derelict sites need replacement and retention for industry.
- *The evening economy* – Development of the night time economy could play an important role in strengthening the viability of the town centre and providing a stronger local employment base.
- *Vibrancy of the Town Centre*: The town centre is dominated by shops and could be better supporting by complementary facilities such as cafes and the improved use of public realm
- *Skilled workforce* – The town could benefit from improved skills in the local workforce appropriate to match both local and regional employment opportunities.
- *Unique selling point (USP)* – The town would benefit from a clear selling point, potentially through branding the town to further improve its image and establish itself as a destination for specific things, whether that is the unique retail experience, environmental assets, potential to link into the Eco-Quarter etc.
- *"The best offer"* – To ensure the town has a complete offer across various topics so visitors can come to St Neots to do everything; locate business, shop, use leisure and entertainment facilities, enjoy the environment etc.
- *Connectivity and accessibility* – The economy of the town will benefit and grow with improved permeability through the town and accessibility into the town from the local, district and regional centres. Alternatives to the car will be fundamental to achieving this.

Potential projects, Initiatives,

- Safeguard development sites in the Town Centre for additional retail provision
- Potential for a Combined Heat and Water Plant at Barford Power Plant (providing the opportunity to target industries where this is an important asset e.g companies with high energy costs)
- Potential branding ideas for the Town to market itself under – The “market town” or “Historic town” or “Bird watchers town” etc.
- Environmental tourism projects – utilising the environmental assets of the area (such as Paxton Pits Nature reserve and the St Neots Green Corridor)
- Manufacturing – Deal with derelict sites and clean up existing manufacturing sites.
- A unique shopping environment – this could be achieved through the development of a concentration of distinctive, independent small shops which are unique to St Neots and would attract shoppers from afar.
- Development of a Cinema - In keeping with the idea of developing a night-time economy, the commercial feasibility of this would need to be carefully assessed
- Utilise the benefits of the Conservation Areas and listed buildings
- Improved / promoted B&B provision to support a vibrant day and night time economy.

Environment

Important issues and potential objectives

- *How to retain and protect the natural environment but also encourage access and permeability* - Protect and enhance existing green areas, recognise that green corridors have habitat and biodiversity value which need to be respected, while at the same time recognising that not all green spaces are purely for biodiversity use e.g. Millennium Green, Riverside Park, St Neots Common, Lammas Meadow, Islands Common and Sports Pavilions.
- *Need to classify Open and Green spaces differently to cover different attributes and potential* – e.g. biodiversity assets (SSSI), amenity assets (Riverside Park) and the accessibility of different open space (i.e. Nature Reserves as distinct from Commons).
- *Key Open and Green spaces could help bring the new and existing communities together* – e.g. Henbrook Linear Park, Paxton resources.
- *Environmental resources and Green Infrastructure could play a key role in the St Neots Vision* – i.e. bringing together environmental assets (biodiversity resources, wind power, hydro-electric potential) with the future development needs for energy and water could lead to key synergies and demonstration projects.

Potential projects, Initiatives,

- New open space at Loves Farm should focus on quantifiable and identifiable space that can be used by the communities, including a range of formal, informal and natural/biodiversity open spaces.
- The Eco-Quarter project could have the potential to benefit existing communities on the boundary of the site by scaling technology and networks in order to assist in tackling the issue of carbon in existing urban areas.
- The plans for CHP technology at the 6th form college could also join up with the existing surrounding communities to help address wider energy needs and carbon emissions.
- St Neots could benefit as a potential pilot project under an HDC district-wide green infrastructure review to look at the impacts of reduce, re-use, recycle and renewables as part of sustainable living.
- Henbrook Linear Park could have the potential to provide a link from the Eco-Quarter to the town centre, by linking in with the existing underpass this would provide a 15-minute walk time from to the town centre. Efforts

and initiatives to get people out of their cars need to be considered, e.g. use of the navigable waterways and water taxis (potentially from car parks in the wider area), cycleway provision on key transport routes linking key points of attraction, centralising car park provision to eliminate the need for smaller sites and steer traffic out of the town, improving walking environment from Riverside car park.

Social, Community, and Leisure

Important issues and potential objectives

- *Deprivation* - A need to address the deprivation currently occurring in parts of the study area (such as Ducks Lane in Eynesbury) repeatedly featured in the workgroups discussion topics.
- *Balanced mixed development* - This was discussed as being needed across the Town, whether in the Town Centre or in the planned urban extension (Eco-Quarter). This will help to attract young graduates and families into the Town to maintain its long term viability.
- *How to integrate new development and the existing communities* – How will the new developments to the east be integrated and how will the barrier effect of the railway be addressed? How can Little Paxton be linked with St Neots?
- *Some communities may be missed out* – e.g. one group of local people are the Gypsy & Traveller communities who have a 20 plot site within the local area. HDC need to look at the needs for future sites and this should not be precluded as a result of the Healthcheck process.
- *Events Programme* – While the town currently enjoys a number of events and these need to be utilised and linked with the 'Offer' and 'Unique Selling Point' of the Town. A programme of events through the year could generate continued interest in the town from different interest groups and potential consumers / investors etc.
- *Co-located social infrastructure facilities* – Opportunities were discussed around which social infrastructure types could potentially use shared sites and even shared buildings. Healthcare, social care, early year facilities and libraries were named as strong candidates for co-location. In addition new leisure facilities could be developed as part of a new secondary school and accessible through the extended schools programme. Particular social infrastructure requirements as the town grows were noted as town parks, leisure centres and youth clubs.
- *Training and business links* – The current accessibility of the Regional College was questioned and whether the current apprenticeships offered in St Neots were catering for the wide variation in demand from the study areas younger population.
- *Utilising the Towns natural assets* – Assets such as the River Great Ouse need to be recognised and utilised due to the positive effect they play on the existing and future communities in addition to the local economic benefits they generate through visitor numbers
- *Eynesbury - Specific* gaps in the provision of services and social infrastructure in Eynesbury were highlighted through the discussion group. The combined issue of multiple deprivation found in parts of Eynesbury make this issue particularly important.
- *Leisure, Entertainment and hospitality* – The future of the town centre was seen by some as benefiting more from the successful development of leisure, entertainment and hospitality proposals rather than developing tourism on the existing assets of the town.

Potential projects, Initiatives,

- A new cemetery will be required – The current provision is nearly full (will be in 10 years)
- Challenged schools – How to assist the improvement of schools – through working together to ensure that catchments are broken down

- Extended Schools Programme – Improved use to benefit the schools and the existing and new communities to access additional facilities, increased awareness (improved communications and information) and accessibility
- Development of new leisure and swimming pool provision linked to any new secondary school proposals required to match population growth in the urban extension (Eco-Quarter)
- Additional Primary Care facility capacity for existing communities and also for new residents of housing growth
- Greater use of the University of the 3rd Age, there are strong links already established here with the community which can be utilised for use across various projects and initiatives.
- Events Programme Ideas – Folk festivals, Music festivals, Beer/Ale festivals, Art shows, May Day festivals etc.
- Regional College campus located in St Neots to provide improved access to local Training opportunities other than manufacturing apprenticeships.
- Additional Affordable housing provision
- Additional community facilities to cater for gap in provision for existing areas (particularly in Eynesbury and Eaton Socon).
- Youth Clubs which currently don't exist in St Neots

Transport

Important issues and potential objectives

- *Connecting St Neots to the Eco-Quarter* – Substantial measures will need to be put in places to overcome the existing permeability barrier between the Eco-Quarter extension site and the existing town (such as the railway lines and the limited underpasses).
- *Traffic in the town centre* – The ambience of the town as a pleasant destination for shopping and other activities are hindered due to the high level of car traffic attempting to pass through the middle of the town. The number of cars using the town centre to travel long distances will need to be addressed as well as those making short distance journeys.
- *The central bridge* – The current bridge crossing the River Great Ouse in the town centre is dominated by the car traffic that uses the bridge. Improvements could be made to the bridge to increase the pedestrians and cyclist ability to use the bridge.
- *Northern Crossing* – A northern crossing (located somewhere between the central bridge and the Mill Lane crossing) would benefit the town in a number of ways including the reduced traffic pressure on the central bridge and town centre. A northern traffic crossing is controversial and hindered by cost and environmental considerations. A smaller pedestrian and cycle crossing could benefit the communities of Eaton Ford and St Neots and reduce traffic in the town centre indirectly through a reduced need to travel by car. Therefore 2 options: Either a road bridge or a pedestrian and cycle bridge.
- *Car Parking around the Railway Station* – The considerably high costs of rail station parking spaces (3 times as high as other parts of town) has caused an overspill of parking on surrounding residential streets and this could worsen as growth takes place unless measures are introduced.
- *Bus service to villages* – The network and route of bus services from study area to the surrounding villages is poor and does not encourage the use of public transport over private car use. The group did recognise that this was largely the result of financial viability of routes.
- *Public Transport integration* – It was felt by some that the Bus network, timetables and stops were not as effectively integrated with the rail station as could be possible.
- *Banned left turn at New Street* – The point was raised that the inability of traffic to make left turns from New Street onto the High street was further increasing the traffic levels travelling through the Town centre

Potential projects, Initiatives,

- Long Stay Parking Spaces - reducing the number of long stay spaces in the town centre to instead be located at the edge of the town to reduce unnecessary parking and traffic in the town centre (HDC is currently implementing a car parking strategy for St Neots).
- Pedestrianisation – retaining and improving where necessary the existing pedestrian sections through the town centre and the opportunity to increase pedestrianised areas
- Gateway car parks – there is currently a gateway car park on the west side of the river – requiring shoppers to park and walk into the town – not enough people do this at the moment – potential to look at more than one Gateway car park, for example interceptor car parks at the North, East, south as well as the west.
- Park and ride – Potential to look at a park and ride at the east of the town connected to Cambridge services – This would need at least three functions to be financially viable:
 - Serve commuters from outside St Neots using St Neots Train Station
 - Serving homes in Eastern Eco Quarter expansion wanting access to Cambridge
 - Linking with local loop bus service serving the whole of St Neots
- Widening of the central bridge – this could be achieved through increasing the width of the bridge possibly through adding extra pedestrian and cycle only sections to each side of the bridge
- Northern crossing (Pedestrian and cycle) – linking Eaton Ford with Longsands area this could reflect the similar bridge developed at the south of the study area and would benefit adult and children attending the school and reduce the need for parents to drive and increase congestion.
- Village bus services – One easy fix would be to change the timings of first drop offs in the town in the morning, currently arriving in town at 10.15am – this is too late for the working population.
- Signage review – clarity of signage and wayfinding measures could be improved across the town and will need to be reviewed as growth develops additional areas, facilities and routes.

3. STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK – STAGE 1 REPORT

Having made the stage 1 report available to stakeholders, following the stage 1 workshop, the project team invited stakeholder to issue feedback and comments on the draft report. The project team has collated all comments and suggestions received and used these, where possible, to refine the content of the stage 1 report chapters (which are re-presented in the earlier chapters of this stage 3 report). This feedback from stakeholders also contained a number of useful suggestions which we can also be considered for inclusion in the later vision objectives and projects. The purpose of this section of the report is to present some of these key suggestions. It should be noted that due to the varying level of detail provided, and in order to keep this report digestible we have not included all suggestions in their entirety. Comments that are already covered by the SWOT and the feedback from the workshop discussion groups is not repeated below.

Again it is important to note that the points presented in this section of the report are not necessarily agreed by the majority of stakeholders and simply reflect issues and ideas that have been suggested by individual stakeholders and that have not already featured in the stage 1 workshop feedback and SWOT analysis In this report. They do not necessarily reflect aspirations or plans held by St Neots Town Council, Huntingdonshire District Council or the St Neots Healthcheck project team.

Economic and Retail

- *Cinema* - Various multi-plex cinema operators located in the surrounding towns could reduce the attractiveness of St Neots as a location for a large scale Cinema (although that requires testing). However smaller cinema operators might be attracted to provide bespoke operations linked to other cultural / commercial activities in the town. For example a redevelopment of the Priory Centre could include screening facilities
- *Riverfront regeneration* - There is an urgent need now and in the future development for purpose built, modern standards, venue for concerts, functions, conferences etc. This could form part of any proposals for a re-vitalised River front area
- *The Waitrose Area* - The potential development/regeneration of the Priory Centre, Library and Waitrose area could contribute to the enhancement of the town's facilities, recreation and visitor attractions.
- *Retail Space* - Difficulties are created by the compact nature of the town and the difficulty in allocating space for the larger retailers. Some difficult decisions have to be taken very soon to allow for the future extension of the retail offer.
- *Retail offer* - Some examples of the lack of retail provision balance include the absence of a butcher, greengrocer, quality bakery or wet fish shop (It should be noted however that these features especially wet fish shops are becoming increasingly rare in many market towns across the country).
- *St Marys Village* - The current scheme proposed for St Marys Village achieves the preservation of listed buildings and could offer employment opportunities. However the residential development could also be seen to restrict the towns future retail growth which requires quality retail premises (which the site could offer with its architectural and historical features). The site is however subject to a published development brief from HDC.
- *Tourism* - Potential to develop a sustainable tourist policy for St Neots that could help maintain and improve the quality of life for locals as the town grows in the next 20 years.
- *Linking transport solutions to retail development* - The town's environment and accessibility to consumers (and subsequent vitality of the town) requires sufficient parking spaces, flowing traffic and ease of access. Poor access to the Town centre will continue to contribute to the decline of brand leaders and reduce the variety and quality of retail provision

Environment

- *Natural Assets* - The development of the Green Corridor, including the big expansion to the Paxton Pits Nature Reserve are major assets for the Town and its catchment area. The Town Centre has a fine Market Square by the bridge and opposite the attractive Riverside Park. Few Towns can have such a fine combination of assets in its centre which can be utilised
- *The Priory Centre* - The redevelopment of the Priory Waterfront gives a unique opportunity to create something remarkable in terms of green area and riverside access with the other commercial and leisure potential in this area.
- *Build Environment* - Much more could be done to improve the attractiveness of the Town Square and High Street facade.
- *Build Environment* - Value and attention should be placed upon the enhancement and use of the architectural features to give back a sense of historical identity.
- *Heritage* - St Neots Parish has 1,000 years of history, and Eaton Socon and Eynesbury Parishes can be traced back more than 2,000 years, though little of this far heritage is visible. A Priory Waterfront development project would offer the opportunity to utilise the medieval Priory of St Neots with its ruins under the area involved. A project for the future could involve a virtual reality history to use for education and tourism.
- *Streetscape* - Street furniture, signs and obstructions could be reduced to remove the visual clutter in the town centre and adjacent streets. Reduction of street signage and clutter has been proved in many towns in the U.K. to promote better driver awareness and concentration whilst driving with a reduction in accidents

Social, Community, and Leisure

- *Formal Gardens* - Formal gardens are often bequeathed to towns by former residents but this town does not have any formal gardens. Opportunities for Formal gardens in the existing or urban extensions could be considered.
- *Education* - Is there potential to improve facilities at some of the older school buildings and to enable them to operate at full-capacity? With the number of surplus places across St Neots the use of existing capacity should be explored before building new facilities.
- *Timing of social infrastructure* - It will be important to ensure that the required social infrastructure is in place prior to further residential developments and developed alongside the growth of those areas.
- *Leisure centre demands* - The sports centre located near Barford Road, Eynesbury is over subscribed and casual public use is difficult during all days of the week. A modern facility would benefit the town residents (both existing residents and those from an urban extension)

Transport

- *The southern bypass* - St Neots southern bypass, A428, very badly needs a cycle path or footpath as this is a popular cycle and pedestrian route.
- *Traffic from new housing* - It will be important to ensure that the road links between the urban extension and the Loves farm development do not become bottlenecks like the bridge crossing the River Great Ouse
- *Car parks and congestion* - If the majority of the traffic that has a town centre destination could be diverted directly to car parks instead of having to pass through the High Street or the Market Square the current congestion would be reduced increasing the allowance for future growth.
- *Coach station* - Long distance coach travel could be further encouraged and attracted to the town. A purpose built bus/coach terminus would enable this. This project could greatly relieve the town traffic congestion enabling a smoother flow of traffic.

9. Stage 2 Summary

After Stage 1 of the project we produced a draft stage 2 report which presented the feedback from the previous chapter but also presented a draft vision statement and a set of draft objectives and potential actions associated with that vision statement across each of the four topic groups. This stage 2 report was shared with the stakeholder group, discussed at the stage 2 stakeholder workshop and has subsequently received feedback and comments after the workshop.

In completing this stage 3 report we want to present a record of that second workshop and the comments received for all stakeholders to review (particularly for those who were unable to attend the second workshop). This chapter is similar therefore to the previous chapter presenting the notes from each workshop group, and a summary of the comments received since. The content of the workshop group discussions were not in exactly the same structure but broadly covered a general discussion on key issues, feedback on the draft objectives and if time permitted, some feedback on the draft action plans.

2. TOPIC GROUP DISCUSSIONS – STAGE 2 WORKSHOP

In a similar format to the initial stakeholder workshop the stage 2 workshop included discussion group's specific to the four topic areas. These groups generated a set of discussion points which are presented here to demonstrate those points which were deemed important enough to feedback to the wider stakeholder group at the end of the workshop session. A significant proportion of the workshop discussions covered the draft vision statement presented in the Stage 2 Report. These are not included in this chapter but instead are drawn upon in the next chapter where the draft vision statement is reviewed in line with the stakeholder comments.

It is important to note that the points presented in this section of the report are not necessarily agreed by the majority of stakeholders and simply reflect issues and ideas that featured prominently in the discussions that took place at the stage 2 workshop. They do not necessarily reflect aspirations or plans held by St Neots Town Council, Huntingdonshire District Council or the St Neots Healthcheck project team.

Economic and Retail

Important points raised in general discussion

Brownfield Land and the Town Centre

- General consensus that brownfield land within and close to the town centre should be retained for non-residential uses. For example the current residential proposals at TC Harrison Ford Garage, which were not supported by stakeholders.
- Mixed uses may be appropriate in some cases for new development sites.
- It will be important to ensure that the offer meets the current and likely needs of retailers – and these brownfield sites may provide the opportunity to offer such facilities. This is particularly important when attracting national retailers.
- The market square is currently used as a car park for much of the week and it would be possible to find better uses which improve the offer within the town centre.
- Stakeholders identified a need to diversify the town centre offer – particularly the requirement for a broader food and drink offer (other than pubs).
- It may be possible to provide a cinema that is linked to other forms of provision (such as retailing or food and drink), rather than a standalone cinema on the edge of the town centre.
- Would be interesting to look at pedestrianising parts of the town centre to improve accessibility and safety for visitors?
- Stakeholders recognised the importance of the Priory Quarter in improving the offer and attractiveness of the town centre.
- The absence of park and ride (of even park and walk) facilities may limit the potential for tourism and / or visitor spending within the town.
- The bus service does not meet local needs – and the consequent lower usage will contribute to the congestion in the town centre.
- There is no need for more large scale food retailers – the retail offer should instead be diversified further.
- The proposed development is currently isolated from the rest of the town, which will present challenges to delivering integrated growth.
- There will be a need to provide retail hubs within the Eco-quarter development, as access to the town centre alone may not be adequate for local need.

Employment

- The town has insufficient business move on space for growing local businesses
- Should equal efforts be made to protect the employment sites we have already (such as those along Cromwell Road) as well as promoting new areas.
- It may also be possible to achieve higher employment densities within existing business sites in addition to providing more employment land.
- There is a recognised shortfall of manual and skilled trade's people within the town. This is limiting the growth potential of local businesses.
- Education – facilities for adult learning are essential in order to meet the skills gap.
- St Neots is a pretty town – which should help to attract a growing workforce.
- Many residents will commute to work in Bedford – it is important not to discount this from the analysis.

- The town is highly accessible by road and rail – which could act as a major selling point when attracting investment.

Business Attractions

- St Neots benefits from stable workplaces and a stable workforce on which new businesses may draw.
- Opportunities to sell St Neots as an area attractive to efficient and sustainable business growth
- Green Assets – In addition to its rural location, the town has strategic assets such as the Combined heat and power Plant.

Young People

- There are limited jobs and prospects within the town, which presents particular challenges to attracting and retaining skilled young people.
- The local sport and leisure facilities may play a role in improving the attractiveness of the area to younger people.
- Growth of the evening economy should help to attract and retain younger people.

Group feedback and contributions to Draft Objectives

- Strive for integrated growth – obvious separation between town and Eco-Quarter needs to be tackled
- Promote the energy and sustainability components of the vision

Group feedback and contributions to Draft Action Plan Projects

- The Priory Quarter redevelopment
- Improve quality of parking in the area to the north of Peacocks
- Vocational training and re training opportunities for all people
- Improve the perceptions of the town as somewhere that can provide an all day experience (retail and leisure) and support this through the development of a more diverse town centre.
- Improved local bus services to better connect the St Neots offer to the local and district population.
- Employment – Importance of some retention of land for non residential uses

Environment

Important points raised in general discussion

- The Environment is missing as a USP in the Vision.
- Opportunity to enhance the central focus of the river and the flood plain
- We must protect the natural assets as well as enhance the qualities and/or encourage access to these spaces. This needs to be balanced and managed.
- Critical to integrate all environmental aspects including green environment, water environment, climate change environment, green infrastructure and green connectivity.
- Current barriers to integration – Railway, Roads and the River
- We need to Masterplan / link key areas in a sustainable manner (e.g. cycle and pedestrian routes)
- It is important to be aware of the dual use issues e.g. natural biodiversity values verses the access and permeability. Dual use can create tensions between different interests and therefore, it will be critical to determine what we are attempting to join up and why

Group feedback and contributions to Draft Objectives

- Build on the Environment as a key aspect of St Neots USP
- Huge potential for integration of objectives in practical projects.
- Need to ensure a balance of efforts on existing initiatives as well as new ones
- During and after the economic downturn there is an opportunity to approach new build schemes with innovative, sustainable and individual design (which has been lacking to date).
- Environmental priorities will need to be balanced taking into account for example: flood risk, housing, biodiversity, demand for allotments and accessibility
- Considering the different types and use of natural and formal space:
 - Family and young person activities
 - School routes
 - Commuter and shopper routes
 - Leisure
 - Food production

Group feedback and contributions to Draft Action Plan Projects

The following projects were highlighted by the group as being of particular importance to achieving the objectives and overall vision for St Neots:

- Effective planning of water resources are required
- Ensuring the required capacity of sewerage infrastructure is in place to support the proposed levels of growth.
- Additional strategically planned sites for open space and the environment are required to benefit the new and existing population.
- Need to selectively target promotion of St Neots environmental assets more actively. For example Paxton Pits.
- Biggest challenge is realising that environmental assets are more than physical infrastructure and can be a significant driver for development & change. This needs a change of mindset from those planning, designing and

procuring green infrastructure to ensure that these are internally joined up where possible and integrated into wider development opportunities.

- Must first raise awareness of existing opportunities and qualities as instant/short term wins.
- The Eco Quarter presents significant potential as an exemplar of what can be delivered

Social, Community, and Leisure

Important points raised in general discussion

- Housing: The importance of delivering the right offer (type, tenure and affordability).
- Healthy lives: creating opportunities for walking and cycling and leisure and cultural activities.
- Community infrastructure: improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of community facilities and services.
- Skills and industry: need to protect what is already there and attract more.
- Leisure: need to create more leisure opportunities for all ages.
- Identity: need to create a strong identity for St Neots whilst appreciating the need to be sensitive to the different identities of the different communities already living there.
- Open space: exploit resource by improving access, safety and quality.
- Reduce crime and ASB: particular need to address the fear of crime.
- Short, snappy vision versus USP: need to identify the USP of the town to create a concise and effective vision.
- Based on SMART priorities: need to ensure that progress against vision can be measured and monitored.
- Objectives and actions: need to identify objectives and translate these into actions.
- Private sector: the private sector has a key role to play in development; but relationship needs to be managed carefully.
- Partnerships: need to foster and support better partnership working between all stakeholders to ensure collective action towards meeting growth and building capacity.

Group feedback and contributions to Draft Objectives

- Need to rationalise objectives to ensure resources are focussed on those with the greatest priorities.
- St Neots is already facing issues from previous growth and change and we need to ensure it is fully prepared to accept additional growth.
- Community infrastructure needs to be provided alongside housing to address the current infrastructure deficit and prevent any future deficit.
- Potential to improve quality and access to existing facilities to address some of this deficit.
- Need to provide greater opportunities for training and to better link these with employment opportunities (possibly a role for the County Council).
- Employment opportunities need to be created, providing potential shift in economy towards more high-tech offer, this will require quality sites to attract employers, up-front. With the benefit of offsetting commuting.
- The market town identity is strong and needs to be developed further; however, there are distinct neighbourhoods within the town that need to be recognised.
- Also needs careful balance between rural and urban identities.

- Need to provide a greater range of and access to open space in all areas as well as other recreational and leisure facilities (e.g. cinema, theatre, swimming pool, restaurants).
- Need for a better town centre leisure offer.
- Address the family factor: need to create a better offer for families (residents and visitors) including facilities, security and housing.

Group feedback and contributions to Draft Action Plan Projects

The following projects were highlighted by the group as being of particular importance to achieving the objectives and overall vision for St Neots:

- Potential for purpose-built youth centres?
- Address the limited river crossing and railway that both create barriers between communities at the moment.
- The demographics of the area need to be analysed to ensure the needs of hidden communities are identified.
- Ageing Population - Support services need to be increased and planned along with other facilities to address needs of ageing population.
- Knowledge sharing between the different agencies and organisations playing a role in delivering growth is key. This will avoid duplication, increase efficiency and will create a more joined-up approach to growth.
- Explore potential for co location of community infrastructure to improve efficiency in future provision and provide better access and viability of individual facilities.

Transport

Group feedback and contributions to Draft Objectives

- Essential to provide sufficient transport capacity to support the growth proposals
- Critical to address congestion issues currently affecting St Neots
- Exclude unnecessary traffic movements from town centre
- Opportunity to improve the current connectivity to surrounding villages
- Priority to pedestrians and cyclists
- Well planned and integrated transport strategy. There is a choice between a number of options:
 - Tackling congestion
 - Encouraging a modal shift
 - Improving public transport capacity
 - Improving a Bus service
 - Accommodating the School run
 - Reallocating / re-prioritising road space (to accommodate cycling for example)
 - Rethinking bus stop locations (i.e in the Market square)

Group feedback and contributions to Draft Action Plan Projects

The following projects were highlighted by the group as being of particular importance to achieving the objectives and overall vision for St Neots:

- The proposals for a Northern road crossing linking Eaton Ford with the Longsands area should be explored in further detail.
- The use of Interceptor car parks at the edge of the town to reduce unnecessary traffic flows through the centre of St Neots.
- A better understanding of the Bus Service is required to understand why some routes are successful and others not – undertake a local Bus Service Study

3. STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK – STAGE 2 REPORT

Again in a similar format to the stage 1 report we made the stage 2 report available to stakeholders, following the stage 2 workshop, the project team invited stakeholder to issue feedback and comments on the draft report. The project team has collated all comments and suggestions received and used these again, where possible, to further correct and refine the content of the earlier stage report chapters (which are again re-presented in this stage 3 report). This feedback from stakeholders also contained a number of useful suggestions which can also be considered for inclusion in the later vision objectives and projects. The purpose of this section of the report is to present some of these key suggestions. It should be noted that due to the varying level of detail provided, and in order to keep this report digestible we have not included all suggestions in their entirety.

Again it is important to note that the points presented in this section of the report are not necessarily agreed by the majority of stakeholders and simply reflect issues and ideas that have been suggested by individual stakeholders. They do not necessarily reflect aspirations or plans held by St Neots Town Council, Huntingdonshire District Council or the St Neots Healthcheck project team.

Economic and Retail

- The aspiration of some residents of St Neots to have a cinema in the town.
- The potential to seek funding (E.U. etc) to help to attract business.
- The existing retail and commercial facilities should be encouraged to provide what the consumers really require.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on revitalising and better use of available units. The listed Grades of buildings should become an asset not a hindrance.
- The Town Centre would be able to attract traditional quality providers if access and pedestrian safety is improved.
- The Town Centre should not “Close down” after 5pm trading hours. By providing a mix of evening/night time entertainment facilities a Town Centre could become a centre to which people would resort.
- The old issue and the current issue and the future issue is the lack of choice for larger retail units such as 3,000 to 5,000 sq ft and 1,000 to 3,000 sq ft.

Environment

- For most people the natural environment of the Riverside Park is its main attraction. Care should be taken when suggesting that the park and the rest of the Green Corridor should be used for environmental tourism, as there is a limit to the number of people it can accommodate before the tranquil atmosphere and wildlife habitats are upset.
- Bicycle and pedestrian routes should be lit (for safety reasons) and surfaced with consideration to the landscape they are in, e.g. resist the temptation to light up and tarmac Barford Road Pocket Park, which would destroy the habitat and atmosphere of this meadow environment.

Social, Community, and Leisure

- Community Infrastructure to be in place in initial stages
- If proposals for the Priory Waterfront and use of the riverside were to go ahead, it has to be done with consideration for the residents of Eaton Ford housing estate across the water, many of whom bought their properties because it is a quiet area.

Transport

- Public transport links for new residential development
- Development Sites to the East of the town have the potential to offer parking relief for increased traffic originating from the East of Town.

10. Vision Statement

One of the most important elements of this Healthcheck project is the establishment of a vision statement for St Neots. It is the intention of the project team that this vision will match the aspirations and views of the project stakeholders and steering group. Vision statements are inherently difficult to create with the challenge of stating both a comprehensive but also succinct vision and the difficulty of polarised stakeholder opinions and priorities. However, the vision must remain balanced across the numerous topics included within this Healthcheck and not dominated by the agendas of a few.



This chapter develops the concept of a vision statement within the Healthcheck project. The project team created a draft vision statement for consideration by the stakeholders and steering group in the Stage 2 project report and this was discussed in detail at the Stage 2 Workshop. This chapter re-presents the content of that original chapter but also presents further ideas as suggested in the workshop by stakeholders and is then able to present an updated vision statement which can again be discussed at the Stage 3 Workshop.

The vision for St Neots should be looking to the future as well as addressing the current issues for the community. The natural tendency when creating a vision is often to reflect on specific issues which need to be addressed in the short-term. Considering where the town is going in the long-term however and trying to ensure that is a meaningful aspiration is more of a challenge. As presented throughout this project, St Neots will potentially accommodate a significant proportion of Huntingdonshire's new housing proposals in future years and any vision will need to embrace this change, identifying the potential opportunities this growth can bring to St Neots while simultaneously being aware of and mitigating against any emerging difficulties.

It is important also to consider the spatial vision which has been established through the HDC LDF Core Strategy which states:

“In 2026 Huntingdonshire will have retained its distinct identity as a predominantly rural area with vibrant villages and market towns. Residents will be happier, healthier and more active and will enjoy an improved quality of life with improved access to a wider range of local jobs, housing, high quality services and facilities and green infrastructure.”

Whilst the vision statement can be aspirational the vision objectives and associated action plans will also need to be realistic, grounded in the technical baseline research and group discussions taken place throughout the Healthcheck process. Before attempting to state a draft vision statement we have presented some overarching points which have re-occurred throughout the project to date and can feed into a vision statement. These points and the final wording of the draft statement will be open for discussion at the stage 2 workshop.

The four chapters that follow this vision statement set out the related vision objectives which the project team have established through the various project resources available. The bullet points listed below present shortened versions of these topics related objectives and it was a consideration of these statements has helped to generate the original stage 2 draft vision statement.

Key principles from objectives considered in development of stage 2 draft Vision Statement:

Economic and retail:

- Growth of **sustainable** employment
- Local skills base aligned to **employment opportunities**
- A **vibrant** town centre
- A **distinctive** St Neots brand

Environment

- Growth is **integrated** with existing built areas and communities
- **Maintaining, protecting and enhancing** the landscape
- Encouraging access, **healthy living** and **community cohesion**
- Exploiting the **Eco-Quarter potential** across existing and new communities

Social and community

- **Balanced housing** market suiting the needs of local people.
- Access to appropriate **community infrastructure**
- **Strengthen links** between academia and local industry.
- Compelling **leisure and entertainment** offer.
- Strengthen and promote the **identity of St Neots**.
- Access to high quality **open space**
- **Reduce crime** and fear of crime

Transport

- Transport accessibility and **capacity to support growth**
- Addressing the **traffic congestion**
- Pedestrians and cyclist **accessibility**
- Addressing **connectivity** to surrounding villages
- Integrated and **balanced transport** services

Stage 2 Draft Vision Statement:

“St Neots, a unique and vibrant market town providing a variety of opportunities to meet the social and economic needs of new and established communities.”

General comments on Vision from stakeholders:

The Stage 2 Workshop allowed us to present that draft vision statement to the stakeholder group and to discuss and refine where possible. As introduced in Chapter 9, the stakeholder group contributed a considerable amount of specific feedback on the draft vision statement and these can be summarised below:

- Start with people, not place – how can we address needs of existing communities and retain the population?
- We need to address crime and anti-social behaviour and create a safe environment in which to live and enjoy leisure. Also need to address fear of crime – often worse than crime itself.
- Need to ensure balanced growth that protects the strong environmental offer at the same time as creating employment opportunities and protecting and enhancing local industry.
- St Neots faces competition from other areas; need to identify reasons to “Choose St Neots” instead of somewhere else. This includes:
 - Providing affordable homes
 - Exploiting the natural and built heritage (old and new)
 - Exploiting St Neots’ USP including rurality and waterfront setting
- The river is another part of St Neots’ USP and its potential for leisure and social activities needs to be exploited further.
- Transport connections are key. Traffic and congestion needs to be addressed. We need to increase accessibility by improving bus, cycle and pedestrian links, particularly the role for walking and cycling to reduce traffic through town (need to address narrow pavements); do we consider potential for access-only town centre?
- We need to ensure sustainability through energy efficiency. The eco-quarter development should be balanced with existing needs.
- The town needs a cultural and social offer to attract and retain families, including an evening economy. We need to address the perception that there is nothing here.
- We need to improve and increase the youth offer in St Neots, including activities and facilities for children, young people and families.
- St Neot’s needs a proper identity. The vision for St Neots needs to be snappy.-
- Need to identify the most important things to change:
 - Addressing congestion,
 - Supporting industry,
 - Crime and antisocial behaviour - Fear of town centre in the evening – potential for alcohol free zone in town centre?
 - Poor and declining retail offer but attractive environment
- St Neots is already dealing with unintended consequences of success – how do we manage further growth?
 - A Need for sympathetic architecture
 - Not just integrating transport, need to integrate everything
 - Need for self sustaining town (don’t need to travel elsewhere for services)

As this discussion was taking place our team were also noting down the key issues that were being highlighted by stakeholders. We have simplified these and presented them below in a diagram to aid the development of the draft vision statement towards a refined vision statement which can be agreed by the stakeholder group.



A refined Vision Statement

Family – St Neots: a place for all ages

- The family dynamic is missing from the population of St Neots, it is not seen as a town to move to and raise children with supporting infrastructure and a varied leisure/entertainment/retail offer that would retain all age groups.
- A higher visibility of families in St Neots could help tackle issues of anti-social behaviour and night-time drinking which currently make the town centre off-putting to certain age groups, and provide a much needed customer base for improved retail opportunities and a varied leisure to offer alongside the existing licensed premises.
- In 2026 St Neots could be seen as the town to bring up a young family with quality homes, schools and play facilities....

Longevity - St Neots: a place for tomorrow

- St Neots should also be a place to stay and move to after education and university, so encouraging the next generation of families to develop. This means improving the employment offer either in St Neots or accessible from St Neots to stem the drain of talented people to Cambridge, Peterborough and other areas.
- In 2026 St Neots could be seen as the town to move to after college or university with quality jobs and a vibrant leisure and entertainment offer...

Diversity – St Neots: a place to live, work, shop and enjoy

- St Neots has a unique setting and feel as a market town which means it should be the place of choice for people to move to, work in, visit and enjoy. Many treasures of St Neots are hidden or only known of to 'true' locals. This perception needs to be countered so that the opportunities for new homes & jobs, new and improved community facilities, improved transport infrastructure, new leisure and entertainment choices are enjoyed by both existing and new communities.
- In 2026 St Neots could be seen as the pre-eminent Market town in Huntingdon catering for all needs and tastes through a critical mass of opportunities and facilities which are not matched elsewhere in the District....

Environmental / Green – St Neots: a place where the old meets the new

- The Environment of St Neots is one of its unique selling points. The sense of rurality is incredibly attractive to both existing and new residents. The built heritage and Market Town status provides a sense of important and distinction, while the River and waterfront setting provide aspirational, leisure and cultural opportunities,
- The Environment in its widest sense is also an intrinsic part of St Neots' future, The Eco-Quarter will be an exemplar of sustainable design, building and living; while the projects which integrate the Eco-Quarter with the existing built-up areas will ensure that the benefits of sustainability can be enjoyed by everyone.
- In 2026 St Neots could lead the way in best-practice sustainability projects and interventions which ensure that the unique qualities and assets of St Neots are preserved for the generations to come...

St Neots Healthcheck Vision Statement:

St Neots is:

- A place for all ages
- A place to live, work, shop and enjoy
- A place for tomorrow
- A place where the old meet the new

St Neots is.....the place.

To meet this vision, St Neots will need to meet a number of vision objectives. The following chapters present a number of objectives and associated actions and initiatives across the four topic areas for consideration by the project stakeholders.

11. Objectives and Action Plans – *Economic and Retail*

In order to propose objectives for the Economic and Retail topic we first present a re-cap of those key points which have been researched or suggested through the project to date and presented in the earlier chapters of this report.

OBJECTIVES PROJECT RESOURCES

Weaknesses and threats identified by SWOT which can form objectives for change

- Promote higher value employment opportunities by aligning employment specialisms with regional and sub-regional strategic growth sectors.
- Develop the local entrepreneurial base by supporting the town's small business base and particularly their start-up and grow-on needs.
- Maintain and develop links between education and business to maintain and develop the competitiveness of local industry.
- Strengthen the role of the town centre through a broadened offer and improved facilities.
- Promote the visitor economy by improving access, making better use of environmental and historic assets.

Objectives suggested and refined during the workshop groups and stakeholders

- Closer economic alignment with the Greater Cambridge Sub-Region
- Improved quality of existing employment areas, including the replacement or retention of existing derelict sites and the promotion of higher density employment uses within existing sites.
- Provide additional space for local growing businesses.
- Improved skills in the local workforce appropriate to match both local and regional employment opportunities, particularly among the skilled trades and manufacturing. Provide local facilities for adult learning within the town.
- Promote the attractiveness of the town to younger people to retain skills locally.
- Promote the vibrancy of the town centre through non-retail provision such as cafes, improved public realm and developing an evening economy. This could be focused around a redeveloped Priory Quarter. Retain the town centre sites for non-residential uses to support the vibrancy of the town centre and provide the range of units demanded by growing local and national retailers.
- Identify alternative public uses for the market square outside of market day which promote the town centre offer. This could be associated with improved parking arrangements elsewhere and the promotion of park & ride / walking.
- Supplement the town centre offer with retail hubs located within developments, particularly where access to the town centre is more restricted.
- Reduce car dependency and promote to reduce town centre congestion.
- Identify and promote the town's Unique Selling Point, which may incorporate St Neots':
 - strong transport connectivity

- quality of environment and quality of life
- relatively stable workforce
- environmental assets, including its rural location and the Combined Heat and Water Plant.

Objectives from the HDC Core Strategy & Spatial Vision

- Planning for a 'Low Carbon Future' by making the most efficient use of land and limiting climate change.
- To facilitate business development in sectors that have potential to meet local employment needs and limit out commuting
- To strengthen the vitality and viability of Huntingdonshire's town centres as places for shopping, leisure and tourism
- To enable business development in rural areas, in locations and on a scale which helps to provide local jobs, limits commuting and minimises or mitigates against adverse environmental impacts
- Supporting the local economy and businesses by providing opportunities for lifelong learning and skills
- development and by enabling the integration of a mix of uses that provide employment opportunities suitable for local people;
- Provide 25ha of employment land within the town's mixed use urban extension, In a significant mixed use urban extension for B1, B2 and B8
- Provide at least 9,000m² of retail comparison floorspace mainly within the town centre and complementary and appropriate development as part of the mixed use urban extension
- Market towns will be encouraged to respond to pressure from competing centres outside the district in order to further strengthen the District's economy, provide more choice and reduce the need to travel. Appropriate development opportunities will be identified within and close to the town centres to accommodate further investment. Further improvements to the public realm to make the town centres more attractive will be encouraged.

Objectives from the HDC Local Economic Strategy Medium Term Plan, 2008-15

- Enable the growth of small and medium sized businesses
- Improve business infrastructure, including; an improved public and private transport network, land and premises for economic growth, improved ICT broadband capacity
- Ensure that local skills levels support economic prosperity
- Promote viable and vibrant town centres
- Attract and retain investment into the local economy
- Support key growth sectors including Creative Technologies, Environmental Sciences and Technologies, High Value Manufacturing, and High-Tech Enterprises

PROPOSED ECONOMIC AND RETAIL OBJECTIVES

1. *Promote the growth of high quality and sustainable employment*

- St Neots has a strong manufacturing base, which will continue to remain strategically important to the local economy. However, its longer term sustainability requires that employment becomes increasingly focused on higher value activities, which may be reflected in the mix of sub-sectors or occupations in the local economy, and overcomes existing and projected skills shortages within the local employment catchment area,
- Greater alignment with the sub-regional (i.e. Greater Cambridge Sub-Region) and regional growth sectors would present considerable opportunities for promoting higher value industrial activities within the town.
- St Neots greatest assets include its small business base and stable workforce, which will form a cornerstone of sustainable economic growth within the town.

2. *Ensure that the local skills base is aligned with locally strategic employment sectors*

- The success of the business base is dependent on the quality of the local labour market as the scale of St Neots suggests employees will continue to be drawn from the local workforce.
- Strong relationships already exist between local businesses and education providers, however as the requirement for replacement labour demand increases and employment becomes increasingly focused on higher value / quality activities, the scale of the challenge will increase.
- The national shift towards vocational qualifications should strengthen the position of St Neots employers, however it is increasingly important that local education providers offer courses that are relevant to locally available employment opportunities.

3. *Enhance the vibrancy of the town centre*

- There is significant potential to strengthen the role of the town centre, through broadening the retail offer and introducing a range of leisure and recreational uses.
- Introducing an evening economy to the town centre will encourage a more diverse range of people to use the town and provide greater opportunities for retaining local spend.
- There is also the potential to make far better use of the historic, built, and natural environment within the town. For instance, much better use could be made of the riverside and the adjacent green corridor and additional uses could be identified for the Market Square, which is used as a car park for much of the week.
- The town's environmental, heritage and retail offer combined with strong road and rail links gives St Neots a good opportunity to further develop the tourism potential of the town through a focused tourism strategy and the necessary hospitality provision. This tourism strategy would need to include a water space strategy to best make use of and access to the river corridor.

4. *Develop a distinctive St Neots brand to promote visitor spend and inward investment*

- The vision of St Neots should be based around a distinctive brand or 'unique selling point' to ensure that St Neots stands out from the plethora of market towns within this part of the country.
- There are significant opportunities to promote the opportunities for leisure and recreation such as use of the river corridor within the town for both residents and day visitor alike.
- Such opportunities have strong linkages with broadening the offer of the town centre, as these all contribute to the draw of the town centre.
- St Neots has the assets to create a centre for creativity, 'The Creative Exchange', this would build on the specialisms of the two secondary schools and the broader HDC Creative Industries plan

ACTION PLAN PROJECT RESOURCES

Potential projects identified by the workshop groups and stakeholder feedback

- Safeguard and promote development sites in the Town Centre for additional retail provision, including space which meets the needs of national retailers.
- Potential for a Combined Heat and Water Plant at Barford Power Plant (providing the opportunity to target industries where this is an important asset e.g companies with high energy costs)
- Potential branding ideas for the Town to market itself under – The “market town” or “Historic town” or “Bird watchers town” etc.
- Environmental tourism projects – utilising the environmental assets of the area (such as Paxton Pits Nature reserve and the St Neots Green Corridor)
- Manufacturing – Deal with derelict sites and clean up existing manufacturing sites and promote higher density uses.
- A unique shopping environment – this could be achieved through the development of a concentration of distinctive, independent small shops which are unique to St Neots and would attract shoppers from afar.
- Development of a Cinema - In keeping with the idea of developing a night-time economy, the commercial feasibility of this would need to be carefully assessed. Alternative models may include a bespoke operator linked to other cultural / commercial activities or a facility integrated with other town centre uses, such as retail.
- Utilise the benefits of the Conservation area and listed buildings
- Improved / promoted B&B provision to support a vibrant day and night time economy.
- Cinema - smaller cinema operators might be attracted to provide bespoke operations linked to other cultural / commercial activities in the town. Riverfront regeneration - modern standards, venue for concerts, functions, conferences etc.
- The Waitrose Area - The potential to development/regeneration of the Priory Centre, Library and Waitrose area.
- Diversified uses for the Market Square, outside of market day
- Retail offer - butcher, greengrocer, quality bakery or wet fish shop (although project team realise this is affected by market realities). Tourism - sustainable tourist policy for St Neots that could help maintain and improve the St Neots quality of life.

Existing projects identified by HDC LIF as necessary to support growth

- *Regeneration of St Neots Town Centre* - the Priory Quarter.
- *St Neots Space for Creativity Enterprise* (Phase 2 - specifically St Mary's Urban Village/ Fire Station site).
- *New visitor centre at Paxton Pits*
- *St Neots Skills Campus* (introduction of carpentry, plumbing and electrical trades training to the St Neots area)

Existing projects from STNTCI – Heritage development

- *Lost Priory Project* – which hopefully anticipates development of the Waterfront area
- *Eynesbury Heritage Project* - uncovers Eynesbury History and will support the Eynesbury Neighbourhood Management project
- *School Learning Project* - expanding the schools element and potential to do two mini digs in local schools.

PROPOSED ECONOMIC AND RETAIL ACTION PLAN PROJECTS

1. *Promote the growth of high quality and sustainable employment*

- **Business support** - Coordinating business support and align it with the local priority sectors (specifically Creative Industries, Environmental Science and Technologies, High Value Manufacturing, High Tech Enterprises)
- **Targeted investment** - Target inward investors in strategically important sectors; linking into the St Neots brand and the broader Cambridgeshire offer.
- **Business Start up units** - Providing a mix of flexible units with the 25 ha employment land allocation which specifically caters for businesses requiring start-up and grow-on space.
- **Ensuring supply of high quality employment sites** - Improve the quality of existing employment sites to encourage higher quality investment – specifically dealing with derelict sites, cleaning up existing manufacturing sites and promoting higher density uses. Providing high quality employment space within the same allocation that meets the requirements of potential inward investors.
- **Business Networks** – Recognising the success of the existing retail and manufacturing networks in St Neots, continue to strengthen and expand the role of local business networks in St Neots
- **Creative industry workspace** - Support the establishment of the creative industries centre on the Longsands College campus and further workspace in St Mary's Urban Village and the urban extension to the east.
- **Promote use of renewables including a CHP Plant** - Promote the potential Combined Heat and Water Plant at Barford Power Plant as one of the towns USPs; to support the Environmental Science and Technologies sector, in addition to energy intensive industries.

2. *Ensure that the local skills base is aligned with locally strategic employment sectors*

- **Skills development** - Promote the take up of the engineering diploma and similar vocational qualifications
- **Adult learning** – promote the take-up of adult learning by identifying / providing appropriate training facilities within the town. It may be possible to link such facilities to existing or proposed employment sites to enhance links between local education provision and the requirements of local employers.
- **Attracting skills to St Neots** - Utilise the St Neots brand and local quality of life factors to attract and retain higher numbers of skilled people. A specific focus should be placed on the attraction and retention of younger people.
- **Business & Education links** - Promote and strengthen existing networks between employers and education delivery providers – and specifically work with employers to identify existing and potential skills gaps. This could also include utilising work experience and vocational placements to improve the work-readiness of school leavers and young people.

3. *Enhance the vibrancy of the town centre*

- **Retail offer** - Diversify the town centre retail offer to include food & drink and high fashion units
- **Balance of retail offer** - Manage the growth of retail hubs within in the urban extension to ensure that these meet the needs of local communities, particularly those located furthest from the town centre, but do not overwhelm or detract from the current or proposed town centre offer.
- **A unique shopping offer** - Development of a concentration of distinctive, independent small shops which are unique to St Neots and would attract shoppers from further afield.
- **Evening economy** - Promote a vibrant evening economy based on hospitality, leisure, and entertainment uses. This could include for example the provision of a stand alone or integrated cinema facility.
- **Comparison goods** - Improve the quality of comparison goods retailing in the town centre.

- **Town centre ambience** - Reduce traffic along the high street and introduce Traffic Management Systems at crowded junctions as appropriate. Potential to increase Pedestrianisation in key parts of the town.
 - **Additional town centre retail sites** - Exploring the potential to retain and promote development sites in the town centre for retail uses. Alternatively explore the potential to reconfigure elements of the town centre (such as the Waitrose car park and Priory Centre) to create new sites for large scale retail development.
 - **Linking evening economy with employment** - Develop strong physical links between the town centre and future employment sites to support the viability of the town centre evening economy
 - **Retail unit specification** - Ensure that all future retail developments are of an appropriate specification to attract high profile national retailers
 - **Waterfront area regeneration** – Redeveloping the existing Priory Centre and waterfront area between the central bridge and the marina to exploit the town's riverside location
 - **Identify alternative uses for the market square** – enhancing the use of the public realm within the town centre on non-market days. This would need to be associated with improvement to the town centre parking arrangements and the promotion of public transport and walking / cycling routes into the town centre.
 - **Tourism development** – a review of the towns environmental, heritage and other assets which could form an integrated and sustainable tourism strategy for the town, combined with a review of the current accommodation capacity and quality in and around the town. This tourism strategy would need to include a water space strategy to best make use of and access to the river corridor. The current heritage development work being undertaken by the STNTCI as noted earlier will contribute towards this tourism development.
4. *Develop a distinctive St Neots brand to promote visitor spend and inward investment*
- **Brand development** – opportunity to identify the unique selling points that St Neots has at present and could develop as the town grows. Developing a brand or image for the town which can aid promotion, inward investment and other objectives supporting the St Neots vision.

Economy and Retail Objectives and Action Plan						
Project Number	Project Name	Objective	Project Type	Description	Vision Priority	Timing (completed)
			Tangible/ Partnership or Initiative work / Further feasibility work, Strategies, Policies, Masterplanning etc		Critical / Essential / Desirable	Project Underway / ASAP (Next year) Short Term Potential (next 5 years) Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years) Longer Term Potential (>10 years)
EC1	Business support	1. Promote the growth of high quality and sustainable employment	Partnership or Initiative work	Coordinating business support and align it with the local priority sectors (specifically Creative Industries, Environmental Science and Technologies, High Value Manufacturing, High Tech Enterprises)	Essential	ASAP
EC2	Targeted investment		Partnership or Initiative work	Target inward investors in strategically important sectors; linking into the St Neots brand and the broader Cambridgeshire offer.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC3	Business Start up units		Tangible	Providing a mix of flexible units with the 25 ha employment land allocation which specifically caters for businesses requiring start-up and grow-on space.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC4	Ensuring supply of high quality employment sites		Tangible	Improve the quality of existing employment sites to encourage higher quality investment – specifically dealing with derelict sites and cleaning up existing manufacturing sites and promote higher density uses. Providing high quality employment space within the same allocation that meets the requirements of potential inward investors.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)
EC5	Business Networks		Partnership or Initiative work	Recognising the success of the existing retail and manufacturing networks in St Neots, continue to strengthen and expand the role of local business networks in St Neots	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)
EC6	Creative industry workspace		Tangible	Support the establishment of the creative industries centre on the Longsands College campus and further workspace in St Mary's Urban Village and the urban extension to the east.	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC7	Promote use of renewables including a CHP Plant		Tangible	Promote the potential Combined Heat and Water Plant at Barford Power Plant as one of the towns USPs; to support the Environmental Science and Technologies sector, in addition to energy intensive industries.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)
EC8	Skills development	2. Ensure that the local skills base is aligned with locally strategic employment sectors	Partnership or Initiative work	Promote the take up of the engineering diploma and similar vocational qualifications	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)
EC9	Adult Learning Facilities		Tangible	Promote the take-up of adult learning by identifying / providing appropriate training facilities within the town. It may be possible to link such facilities to existing or proposed employment sites to enhance links between local education provision and the requirements of local employers.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC10	Attracting skills to St Neots		Partnership or Initiative work	Utilise the St Neots brand and local quality of life factors to attract and retain higher numbers of skilled people. A specific focus should be placed on the attraction and retention of younger people.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC11	Business & Education links		Partnership or Initiative work	Promote and strengthen existing networks between employers and education delivery providers – and specifically work with employers to identify existing and potential skills gaps. This could also include utilising work experience and vocational placements to improve the work-readiness of school leavers and young people.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)
EC12	Retail offer		Tangible	Diversify the town centre retail offer to include food & drink and fashion units	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)
EC13	Balance of retail offer		Tangible	Manage the growth of retail hubs within in the urban extension to ensure that these meet the needs of local communities, particularly those located furthest from the town centre, but this does not overwhelm or detract from the current or proposed town centre offer.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC14	A unique shopping offer		Tangible	Development of a concentration of distinctive, independent small shops which are unique to St Neots and would attract shoppers from further a field.	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)

Economy and Retail Objectives and Action Plan						
Project Number	Project Name	Objective	Project Type	Description	Vision Priority	Timing (completed)
			Tangible/ Partnership or Initiative work / Further feasibility work, Strategies, Policies, Masterplanning etc		Critical / Essential / Desirable	Project Underway / ASAP (Next year) Short Term Potential (next 5 years) Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years) Longer Term Potential (>10 years)
EC15	Evening economy	3. Enhance the vibrancy of the town centre	Tangible	Promote a vibrant evening economy based on hospitality, leisure, and entertainment uses. This could include for example the provision of a stand alone or integrated cinema facility.	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC16	Comparison goods		Tangible	Improve the quality of comparison goods retailing in the town centre	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC17	Town centre ambience		Tangible	Reduce traffic along the high street and introduce Traffic Management Systems at crowded junctions as appropriate. Potential to increase Pedestrianisation in key parts of the town.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC18	Additional town centre retail sites		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Exploring the potential to retain and promote development sites in the town centre for retail uses. Alternatively explore the potential to reconfigure elements of the town centre (such as the Waitrose car park and Priory Centre) to create new sites for large scale retail development.	Essential	ASAP
EC19	Linking evening economy with employment		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Develop strong physical links between the town centre and future employment sites to support the viability of the town centre evening economy	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)
EC20	Retail unit specification		Tangible	Ensure that all future retail developments are of an appropriate specification to attract high profile national retailers	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)
EC21	Waterfront area regeneration		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Redeveloping the existing Priory Centre and waterfront area between the central bridge and the marina to exploit the town's riverside location	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC22	Tourism development		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	A review of the towns environmental, heritage and other assets which could form an integrated and sustainable tourism strategy for the town, combined with a review of the current accommodation capacity and quality in and around the town. Include a Water Space Strategy.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC23	Market Square		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Identify alternative uses for the market square - enhancing the use of the public realm within the town centre on non-market days. This would need to be associated with improvement to the town centre parking arrangements and the promotion of public transport and walking / cycling routes into the town centre.	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)
EC24	Brand development (and coordination)	4. Develop a distinctive St Neots brand to promote visitor spend and inward investment	Tangible	opportunity to identify the unique selling points that St Neots has at present and could develop as the town grows. Developing a brand or image for the town which can aid promotion, inward investment and other objectives supporting the St Neots vision.	Essential	ASAP

Economy and Retail Objectives and Act						
Project Number	Project Name	Potential costs	Delivery Responsibility	Cross Links with other Projects (i.e. complements other project or uses shared site)	Conflicts with other Projects	External Triggers
		£ (<100k) ££ (<1 million) £££ (<5 million) ££££ (>5 million)				Project cannot commence until for example: landownership issues are resolved, political agreement, stakeholder agreement etc
EC1	Business support	££	Business Link? (funded through EEDA) NWES	EC3 Business Start-up Units EC4 Ensuring High Quality Employment Sites EC6 Creative Industries Workspace EC8 Skills Development		*Can commence immediately. Business support infrastructure exists through the regional business link.
EC2	Targeted investment	££	HDC / EEDA	EC4 Ensuring High Quality Employment Sites EC8 Skills Development		*Requires the completion of appropriate employment sites (EC2 & EC3)
EC3	Business Start up units	£££	HDC	EC1 Business Support EC4 Ensuring High Quality Employment Sites EC6 Creative Industries Workspace EC8 Skills Development		*To be brought forward alongside standard employment land within the urban extension.
EC4	Ensuring supply of high quality employment sites	££	HDC	EC1 Business Support EC3 Business Start-Up Units EC6 Creative Industries Workspace		*Potential to commence immediately.
EC5	Business Networks	£	STNTCI	Cross Cutting Theme Linking to all business support projects		*Immediate commencement - building on existing networks
EC6	Creative industry workspace	££	HDC	EC1 Business Support EC3 Business Start-Up Units		*Longsands College & St Mary's Urban Village
EC7	Promote use of renewables including a CHP Plant	£££	NPOWER, HDC, Eco-Quarter Developers	EC23 Brand Development		Carbon Tax and Policy Deadline
EC8	Skills development	£	HDC	EC1 Business Support EC2 Target Investments EC11 Business & Education Links		*National Implementation of Vocational Diplomas
EC9	Adult Learning Facilities	££	HDC	EC1 Business Support EC2 Target Investments EC8 Skills Development EC11 Business & Education Links		*Identification of appropriate training facilities
EC10	Attracting skills to St Neots	£	STNTCI / Town Council / HDC	EC2 Targeted Investment EC4 Ensuring Supply of High Quality Employment Sites EC23 Brand Development		*Linked to development of town centre and appropriate employment space
EC11	Business & Education links	£	Regional Skills Partnership / HDC	EC6 Creative Industry Workspace EC8 Skills Development		*No external triggers
EC12	Retail offer	£££	HDC	EC14 A Unique Shopping Offer		National Economy and related demand
EC13	Balance of retail offer	££	HDC	Links to other spatial policies		*Developed in line with urban extension
EC14	A unique shopping offer	££		EC12 Retail Offer		*Developed in conjunction with the St Neots brand.

Economy and Retail Objectives and Act						
Project Number	Project Name	Potential costs	Delivery Responsibility	Cross Links with other Projects (i.e. complements other project or uses shared site)	Conflicts with other Projects	External Triggers
		£ (<100k) ££ (<1 million) £££ (<5 million) ££££ (>5 million)				Project cannot commence until for example: landownership issues are resolved, political agreement, stakeholder agreement etc
EC15	Evening economy	££		EC19 Linking Evening Economy with Employment EC23 Brand Development		*Developed in conjunction with town centre and employment offer
EC16	Comparison goods	£££		EC12 Retail Offer		*Developed in line with broader town centre offer
EC17	Town centre ambience	£££	HDC	Link to traffic projects EC21 Waterfront Regeneration EC23 Market Square		*Developed in line with broader town centre offer
EC18	Additional town centre retail sites	£££	HDC	EC12 Retail Offer		*Developed in line with broader town centre offer Site assembly Issue
EC19	Linking evening economy with employment	££	HDC	EC15 Evening Economy		*Developed in line with broader town centre offer
EC20	Retail unit specification	£	HDC	EC12 Retail Offer		*Developed in line with broader town centre offer
EC21	Waterfront area regeneration	£££	HDC	EC24 Brand Development		*Delivery dependent on outcome of feasibility studies and Masterplans.
EC22	Tourism development	£		EC21 Waterfront Area Regeneration EC23 Market Square EC24 Brand Development		*To be developed in line with proposals for market square and the Priory Quarter and the St Neots Brand
EC23	Market Square	£££		EC21 Waterfront Area Regeneration EC22 Tourism Development EC24 Brand Development		*Delivery dependent on outcome of feasibility studies and Masterplans.
EC24	Brand development (and coordination)	££		EC14 A Unique Shopping OfferEC21 Waterfront Area Regeneration EC22 Tourism Development EC23 Market Square EC24 Brand Development		*To be developed in line with proposals for market square and the Priory Quarter and the broader local tourism offer.

12. Objectives and Action Plans – *Environment*

In order to propose objectives for the Environment topic we first present a re-cap of those key points which have been researched or suggested through the project to date and presented in the earlier chapters of this report.

OBJECTIVES PROJECT RESOURCES

Weaknesses and threats identified by SWOT which can form objectives for change

- Local built heritage are not necessarily all in use or being used to their full potential.
- Town expansion (and increased traffic levels) must be carefully managed and sympathetic to the town's distinctive and historic environment.
- East expansion (Eco-Quarter) will need to maintain and carefully manage the town's proximity to the wider countryside.
- Improvements need to be made to the number and quality of open spaces and play areas to meet a range of need and age groups.
- New cycle and pedestrian routes need to be created that are legible, safe and well lit to encourage use of sustainable modes of transport.

Objectives suggested and refined during the workshop groups and stakeholders

- Ensuring that all communities are considered.
- Integrating new development with the existing communities
- Retaining and protecting the natural environment but also encouraging access and permeability.
- Classifying different types of natural and formal spaces for biodiversity, amenity, food production and accessibility purposes and for different users such as families /young people, commuters and shoppers,
- Using key Open and Green spaces to help bring the new and existing communities together.
- Using environmental resources and Green Infrastructure to deliver Eco-Quarter benefits to existing and new communities. The Eco Quarter presents significant potential as an exemplar of what can be delivered
- Build on the Environment as a key aspect of St Neots USP
- Need to ensure a balance of efforts on existing initiatives as well as new ones
- Must first raise awareness of existing opportunities and qualities as instant/short term wins.
- Environmental priorities will need to be balanced taking into account for example: flood risk, housing, biodiversity, demand for allotments and accessibility
- During and after the economic downturn there is an opportunity to approach new build schemes with innovative, sustainable and individual design (which has been lacking to date).

Objectives from the HDC Core Strategy & Spatial Vision

- The traditional hierarchy of Market Towns and larger villages serving the smaller settlements within their rural hinterland will be maintained with increasing emphasis on the promotion of sustainable communities.
- The character of our towns, villages and their historic cores will be protected and enhanced with care taken to ensure new development is well integrated with its surroundings.
- The landscape of Huntingdonshire will be protected and enhanced. Housing growth, particularly in the Huntingdon and St Neots areas, will be supported by the protection and enhancement of areas of green space around them including the Ouse Valley, the woodlands around Grafham Water and Brampton and the wetland and woodlands of the Great Fen Project. Further opportunities for improved recreation of these areas and to enhance their biodiversity will be identified together with access to the areas of population.
- To maintain, enhance and conserve Huntingdonshire's characteristic landscapes, habitats and species and historic built environment
- To identify opportunities to increase and enhance major strategic green space
- To conserve and enhance the special character and separate identities of Huntingdonshire's villages and market towns.
- To promote developments that conserve natural resources, minimise greenhouse gas emissions and help to reduce waste
- To reduce climate change and its effects by minimising greenhouse gas emissions through the use of low carbon and renewable energy sources, reducing the amount of energy used, incorporating adaptation measures in development and facilitating adaptation of biodiversity

PROPOSED ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES

1. *To ensure that new development in St Neots is integrated with the existing built areas and existing communities.*
 - The character of St Neots, Eynesbury, Eaton Socon, Eaton Ford and Little Paxton should be protected and enhanced by ensuring that new development is physically, socially and environmentally integrated with these communities.
 - The benefits of the growth proposals for St Neots should not be isolated solely within the new development areas. Combining the needs of the existing and new communities could allow larger, more significant and more imaginative responses to current weaknesses and challenges in the area.
 - The existing built environment and streetscape could be significantly improved to increase the attractiveness of the Town Square, the High Street façade, and key routes between the existing and new areas to benefit both existing and future communities.
 - The challenge is to identify these opportunities and think creatively about whether existing resources or potential projects should be adapted to gain maximum benefit from the growth proposals for St Neots.
2. *To maintain, protect and enhance the landscape, habitats, species and historic built environment of St Neots while also encouraging access, healthy living and community cohesion.*
 - The quality and type of Open and Green Spaces in and around St Neots is significant, including from SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves, Parks and Gardens, Natural Open Spaces, Amenity Green Spaces, Allotments and Outdoor Sports Facilities. These spaces can provide opportunities for biodiversity, amenity and informal/formal recreation, recognising that these different opportunities may not be mutually exclusive.
 - The new communities from the growth proposals for St Neots will need to benefit from recreation, amenity and natural open space, which could be integrated with the improvement or provision of facilities for the existing communities.
 - Green Infrastructure in the new developments, in the existing areas and potentially connecting the communities together, could help to encourage healthy lifestyles choices of walking and cycling instead of car travel, and informal/formal recreation and sport activity. These opportunities need to be easy to access and use so that they fit into everyday behaviour and provide a real alternative to car-based activities.
3. *To fully exploit the Eco-Quarter potential for low carbon and renewable energy sources across the existing and new communities to reduce climate change and minimise greenhouse gas emissions.*
 - Securing carbon savings from new development cannot on its own reduce the total carbon footprint of the St Neots area, significant reductions can be made by retrofitting technology into existing urban areas or adapting technology in new development areas to serve neighbouring existing areas.
 - Green Infrastructure and environmental resources in St Neots and the wider area could have a significant relationship with the growth proposals in terms of the feedstock for energy generation and the potential to export energy to a wider area,
 - The potential projects at St Neots could be used as exemplar or demonstration projects for the rest of Huntingdonshire.

ACTION PLAN PROJECT RESOURCES

Existing Projects reported to the STNTCI Redevelopment and Environment Group

- St Neots History Project
- Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association (BPHA) Green Initiative – New tenants interested in a potential green project including the development of a database of wildlife.
- Eynesbury Osier Wet Woodland Project
- Green Corridor Projects
- Riverside Park Flood Defences
- Eynesbury Meadow Project – including planned biodiversity audit
- St Neots in Bloom – Campaign to encourage local gardening
- Riverside Park – specific project ideas

Existing proposals suggested within the emerging Riverside Park Plan

It is important to note that the Riverside Park Plan is currently being created and the proposals suggested have variable support.

- Car park – Investigate access from Crosshall Road by car and more disabled parking
- Footpath improvements - Check fully accessible for wheelchair users, footpath changes at the entrance, where the cars use, ramps at all access points which are not reasonably level (respondent uses disability buggy), wider paths leading to the park; wider paths
- New bridge - New footbridge over the river between the town itself and the park; new foot/road bridge from Regatta Meadow to town; another road bridge from Regatta Field to ease congestion over main bridge; a footbridge/cycle bridge from Regatta Meadow to Priory Centre
- Pedestrian road crossing - A crossing at the junction/roundabout away from the town side.
- River Bridge improvements - Another ramp near steps from Bridge on Regatta Meadow for ease of access; ramp incorporated into the existing steps to facilitate bikes, buggies etc getting to the bridge; hard to get pushchairs up bridge from north side; pushchair/wheelchair access from the park to St Neots Bridge
- Signage - Signposted walks & routes around the park (follow the arrows etc). On the outskirts, signage to other facilities available within the town, where the shops are, banks and cash machines, where food is available, where the pubs are, what day is Market Day and where is it situated, when is the Farmers Market. Transport facilities, taxi numbers etc.
- Vehicle access - Easier access for mini buses; Better traffic flow
- Activities (children) - Organised games for youngsters say, between 8-15yrs. E.g. football, cricket, running races etc, during the school holidays, more children's play areas, rock/wall climbing for children.
- Activities (water) - Boats in the park, model boating lake, boat trips, river trips, outside swimming pool; swimming area, paddle pool area; outdoor pool,
- Cycling - Bike racks for security of the public's bikes would be of benefit; cycle stands, Separate cycle paths alongside walking paths; cycle path.
- Environment - flower beds, more specimen trees in the northern Regatta Meadow, bird watching hut, clear out ditches and manage grass cutting, bird boxes, more shade in sandy play area (South side of park), regular maintenance of trees/vegetation with some parts could be left as wild meadow, large willows (south of bridge) need pollarding on a regular basis.

- Entertainment - Concerts for 12-25 year olds, return of the Riverside Festival, open air theatre shows in summer months, summer evening picnic concerts; more band concerts to October/all year, band stand with lights and power.
- Furniture - seating and picnic tables on Regatta Meadow; few more seats along footpaths; seats and rubbish bins; few more picnic tables; Few more seats around pond/river/open areas; more picnic tables in more areas; additional picnic tables beside the river.
- River frontage - More moorings, the Priory Centre could front the river with cafe/bars on river walkway.
- Security - Better security CCTV; Police monitoring the car park more regularly; extra policing due to the vandalism of the café, extra lights behind the café, park keeper visibility, voluntary park warden during busy times; more patrols to reduce vandalism in the evening; more supervision in the play-areas for the children.
- Toilets - Additional toilets by south-side play park (Rocket Park), separate block of toilets (north of bridge)

Existing projects identified by HDC LIF as necessary to support growth

- *Green Corridor Projects* (Cambridge to St Neots, Ouse Valley Strategic Green Space, St Neots Town Centre Green Space Corridor, Ouse Valley to Cambourne Corridor)
- *St Neots to Little Paxton Green Links*
- *Green Infrastructure projects east of St Neots* (Additional open spaces – pitches, courts, greens, allotments, community gardens, informal open space and children and young people's play space) as well as connections to the various green corridors converging on St Neots from the North and to the East.

Potential projects identified by workshop groups and Stakeholder feedback

- *Water Resources* - Effective planning of water resources are required
- *Sewage Capacity* - Ensuring the required capacity of sewerage infrastructure is in place to support the proposed levels of growth.
- *Strategic Open Spaces* - Additional strategically planned sites for open space and the environment are required to benefit the new and existing population.
- *Focused promotion of Environmental Assets* - Need to selectively target promotion of St Neots environmental assets more actively. For example Paxton Pits.
- *Joining up environmental projects with other projects* - Biggest challenge is realising that environmental assets are more than physical infrastructure and can be a significant driver for development & change. This needs a change of mindset from those planning, designing and procuring green infrastructure to ensure that these are internally joined up where possible and integrated into wider development opportunities.
- *Short term projects* - Must first raise awareness of existing opportunities and qualities as instant/short term wins.
- *The Eco-Quarter* - The Eco Quarter presents significant potential as an exemplar of what can be delivered

PROPOSED ENVIRONMENT ACTION PLAN PROJECTS

1. *To ensure that new development in St Neots is integrated with the existing built areas and existing communities.*
 - **Henbrook Linear Park** – This has the potential to provide a link from the Eco-Quarter to the town centre, by linking in with the existing underpass this would provide a 15-minute walk time from to the town centre.
 - **Reduced car use** - Efforts and initiatives to get people out of their cars need to be considered, e.g. use of the navigable waterways and water taxis (potentially from car parks in the wider area), cycleway provision on key transport routes linking key points of attraction, centralising car park provision to eliminate the need for smaller sites and steer traffic out of the town, improving walking environment from Riverside car park.
 - **St Neots to Little Paxton Links** - Investigate measures to improve links from Little Paxton to St Neots.
2. *To maintain, protect and enhance the landscape, habitats, species and historic built environment of St Neots while also encouraging access, healthy living and community cohesion.*
 - **Classification of assets** - Need to classify Open and Green spaces differently to cover different attributes and potential – e.g. biodiversity assets (SSSI), amenity assets (Riverside Park) and the accessibility of different open space (i.e. Nature Reserves as distinct from Commons).
 - **Focused promotion of Environmental Assets** - Need to selectively target the promotion of St Neots environmental assets more actively. For example Paxton Pits.
 - **Open Space access for communities** - New open spaces at Loves Farm and other new housing developments should focus on quantifiable and identifiable space that can be used by the communities, including a range of formal, informal and natural/biodiversity open spaces. Also any potential to improve access and provision of open space for existing communities. The project team notes that existing proposals are in place for green infrastructure projects to support the Eco-Quarter development to the east of St Neots.
 - **St Neots Riverside Park Projects** – Support and development of the specific projects listed earlier. Subject to finalisation of the Riverside Park Plan.
3. *To fully exploit the Eco-Quarter potential for low carbon and renewable energy sources across the existing and new communities to reduce climate change and minimise greenhouse gas emissions.*
 - **Shared Infrastructure capacity** - The Eco-Quarter project could have the potential to benefit existing communities on the boundary of the site by scaling technology and networks to starting tackling the issue of carbon in existing urban areas.
 - **CHP Projects** - The plans for CHP technology at the 6th form college could also join up with the existing surrounding communities to help address wider energy needs and carbon emissions. Potential for the Barford Power Station to utilise the CHP and link into the homes, employment sites and community infrastructure across the Eco-Quarter.
 - **Green infrastructure review** - St Neots could benefit as a potential pilot project under an HDC district-wide green infrastructure review to look at the impacts of reduce, re-use, recycle and renewables as part of sustainable living.

Environment Objectives and Action Plan							
Project Number	Project Name	Objective	Project Type	Description	Vision Priority	Timing (completed)	Potential costs
			Tangible/ Partnership or Initiative work / Further feasibility work, Strategies, Policies, Masterplanning etc		Critical / Essential / Desirable	Project Underway / ASAP (Next year) Short Term Potential (next 5 years) Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years) Longer Term Potential (>10 years)	£ (<100k) ££ (<1 million) £££ (<5 million) ££££ (>5 million)
EN1	Henbrook Linear Park	1. To ensure that new development in St Neots is integrated with the existing built areas and existing communities.	Tangible	This has the potential to provide a link from the Eco-Quarter to the town centre, by linking in with the existing underpass this would provide a 15-minute walk time from to the town centre. Also includes a green corridor link and SUDS network	Critical	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	££
EN2	Reduced car use		Partnership or Initiative work	Efforts and initiatives to get people out of their cars need to be considered, e.g. use of the navigable waterways and water taxis (potentially from car parks in the wider area), cycleway provision on key transport routes linking key points of attraction, centralising car park provision to eliminate the need for smaller sites and steer traffic out of the town, improving walking environment from Riverside car park. Green Travel plans could be provided to residents of existing and new communities	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
EN3	St Neots to Little Paxton Links		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Investigate measures to improve links from Little Paxton to St Neots.e.g Hayling Avenue and Gordon Road open to cyclists.	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
EN4	Classification of assets	2. To maintain, protect and enhance the landscape, habitats, species and historic built environment of St Neots while also encouraging access, healthy living and community cohesion.	Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Need to classify Open and Green spaces differently to cover different attributes and potential – e.g. biodiversity assets (SSSI), amenity assets (Riverside Park) and the accessibility of different open space (i.e. Nature Reserves as distinct from Commons).	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
EN5	Focused promotion of Environmental Assets		Tangible	Need to selectively target promotion of St Neots environmental assets more actively. E.g circular routes (improve and create), pocket parks, riverside park	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
EN6	Open Space access for communities		Tangible	New open spaces at Loves Farm and other new housing developments should focus on quantifiable and identifiable space that can be used by the communities, including a range of formal, informal and natural/biodiversity open spaces. (The project team notes that existing proposals are in place for green infrastructure projects to support the Eco-Quarter development to the east of St Neots) and links to wider countryside (strategic)	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	£££
			Tangible	Also, potential to improve access and provision of open space for existing communities where current quality is poor and provide where provision is low.	Essential	Project Underway	£
EN7	St Neots Riverside Park Projects		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Support and development of the specific projects listed in the main report. Costs may include required land purchase.	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£££
EN8	Paxton Pits Nature Reserve 2		Tangible	Enhancing Visitor Facilities e.g car park, visitor centre, bridges, education provision, ranger services.	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	£££
EN9	Shared Infrastructure capacity	3. To fully exploit the Eco-Quarter potential for low carbon and renewable energy sources across the existing and new communities to reduce climate change and minimise greenhouse gas emissions.	Tangible	The Eco-Quarter project could have the potential to benefit existing communities on the boundary of the site by scaling technology and networks to start tackling the issue of carbon in existing urban areas.	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	£££
EN10	CHP Projects		Tangible	The individual CHP technology at the 6th form college could also join up with the existing surrounding communities to help address wider energy needs and carbon emissions. e.g schools and leisure facilities. Potential for the Barford Power Station to utilise CHP and link into the homes, employment sites and community infrastructure across the Eco-Quarter.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	££££
EN11	Green infrastructure review		Tangible	St Neots could benefit as a potential pilot project under an HDC district-wide green infrastructure review to look at the impacts of reduce, re-use, recycle and renewables as part of sustainable living.	Desirable	Project Underway	££

Environment Objectives and Action Pla					
Project Number	Project Name	Delivery Responsibility	Cross Links with other Projects (i.e. complements other project or uses shared site)	Conflicts with other Projects	External Triggers
					Project cannot commence until for example: landownership issues are resolved, political agreement, stakeholder agreement etc
EN1	Henbrook Linear Park	HDC, CCC, SNTC, STNTCI (Redevelopment &Environment group, River Care Group), ENMG	T9 - MTTS Cycling and walking proposals T12 - Southern Pedestrian and cycle bridge plans T15 - HDC Accessibility Action Plan		
EN2	Reduced car use	HDC, CCC, SNTC, STNTCI (Redevelopment &Environment group, River Care Group)	EN1 - Henbrook Linear Park EN3 - St Neots to Little Paxton Links		* For the more radical ideas such as water taxi further feasibility work would be required to understand costs verses benefits (both economical and also environmental)
EN3	St Neots to Little Paxton Links	HDC, CCC, SNTC, Little Paxton Parish Council, STNTCI (Redevelopment &Environment group, River Care Group)			
EN4	Classification of assets	HDC, Flora & Fauna, Wildlife Trust, NENG, EA	EC24 - Brand Development		
EN5	Focused promotion of Environmental Assets	HDC, SNTC, Ramblers Association, Sustrans, CC	EC24 - Brand Development		*Stakeholder agreement into those assets which should be promoted * Appropriate protection and restrictions will need to be in place before additional promotion of assets which would suffer from
EN6	Open Space access for communities	HDC, Local Developers delivering new housing areas, Wildlife Trust, CC			
		HDC, SNTC, STNTCI (Redevelopment &Environment group)	S16 - new Open Space Provision		
EN7	St Neots Riverside Park Projects	HDC			
EN8	Paxton Pits Nature Reserve 2	HDC, Landowners,. Little Paxton Parish Council,	Walking and cycling River Crossings		
EN9	Shared Infrastructure capacity	HDC, Local Developers delivering new housing areas, Utility Companies			
EN10	CHP Projects	HDC, Local Developers delivering new housing areas, Utility Companies, Npower, 6th Form College	EC7 - Promote use of renewables including a CHP Plant		*Feasibility / viability will need to be reviewed before any projects would be considered
EN11	Green infrastructure review	HDC	EC24 - Brand Development		

13. Objectives and Action Plans – *Social, Community, Leisure*

In order to propose objectives for the Social, Community and Leisure topic we first present a re-cap of those key points which have been researched or suggested through the project to date and presented in the earlier chapters of this report.

OBJECTIVES PROJECT RESOURCES

Weaknesses and threats identified by SWOT which can form objectives for change

- There are a significant number of homeless people in Huntingdonshire.
- There are significant levels of housing need among the local population, including supported housing.
- New housing may fail to achieve a balanced housing market if new housing does not cater for families.
- GP facilities are currently at capacity.
- The rates of drug-use and drug related crimes are higher locally than across the district.
- Nitrogen dioxide levels are marginally above target levels.
- The rates of coronary heart disease and cancer are higher across the district than nationally.
- St Neots Priory Park, Phoenix Square and Market Square have the highest levels of crime and anti-social behaviour locally.
- St Neots Leisure Centre is not fully accessible for disabled people (not fully DDA compliant).
- St Neots suffers from a shortfall of open space per resident based on local space standards.
- There is little capacity in local cemeteries.
- There is no purpose-built theatre or cinema in St Neots

Objectives suggested and refined during the workshop groups and stakeholders

- Ensure that deprived areas, such as Eynesbury, benefit from growth in the wider area.
- Community infrastructure needs to be provided alongside housing to prevent any future deficits and address the current infrastructure deficits (for example in Eynesbury)
- Ensure growth in all areas of the town create balanced and mixed developments that attract young graduates and families. Ensure St Neots it is fully prepared to accept additional growth.
- Develop an events programme that is marketed to celebrate the identity and unique qualities of the town.
- Co-locate social infrastructure facilities to make them more viable and create local community hubs.
- Need to provide a greater range of and access to open space in all areas as well as other recreational and leisure facilities (e.g. cinema, theatre, swimming pool, restaurants).
- Offer a wide range of training and business links to fully cater for the younger population.

- Ensure all communities benefit from the town's natural assets.
- Enhance the town's leisure, entertainment and hospitality offer.
- Potential to improve quality and access to existing facilities to address some of this deficit.
- The market town identity is strong and needs to be developed further; however, there are distinct neighbourhoods within the town that need to be recognised and also the careful balance between rural and urban identities.
- Address the family factor: need to create a better offer for families (residents and visitors) including facilities, security and housing.

Objectives from the HDC Core Strategy & Spatial Vision

- To secure the appropriate provision of health, education, training, and community, leisure and open space facilities with housing growth.
- To ensure that the types of dwellings built are suited to the requirements of local people, are resilient to projected impacts of climate change and that an appropriate proportion is 'affordable' to those in need
- To enable specialist housing needs of particular groups to be met in appropriate locations
- To maintain and enhance the availability of key services and facilities including communications services
- To identify opportunities to increase and enhance major strategic green space
- To secure developments which are accessible to all potential users, and which minimise risks to health as a result of crime (or fear of crime), flooding or pollution and climate change
- To make best use of existing infrastructure and provide a framework for securing adequate land and infrastructure to support business and community needs

PROPOSED SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND LEISURE OBJECTIVES

1. *To ensure new development in St Neots creates a balanced housing market that suits the requirements of local people.*
 - This will require the continued identification of appropriate sites for additional supported housing and facilities to cater for homeless people.
 - Ensuring that new housing development provides a range of smaller housing sizes to cater for young and elderly residents, as well as larger housing to cater for families.
 - Ensuring the need for affordable housing is included with new housing developments.
2. *To encourage healthier lifestyles within all communities and reduce the adverse health impacts of new developments.*
 - Through the appropriate provision of primary and social healthcare facilities and professionals is delivered in all areas of the town.
 - Ensuring the provision of high quality footpaths, cycle paths and public transport where possible to promote healthy living and reduce pollution generated from traffic congestion.
3. *To ensure all communities, particularly deprived areas, have access to an appropriate range and quality of community infrastructure facilities.*
 - This will require the balance of demand of all social infrastructure to be matched by an appropriate supply of infrastructure, in the appropriate locations to ensure catchment areas and walking distances are accounted for.
 - New proposals for social infrastructure will need to be timed so as to function in time with the critical mass of demand generated from new housing development. Facilities opened too early as well as too late will not benefit new communities.
4. *To encourage access to skills and strengthen links between academia and local industry.*
 - Through the development of links between the Regional College and local businesses through, for example, a programme of apprenticeships.
5. *To provide a compelling leisure offer that improves St Neots standing and increases activity in the town centre.*
 - Linked with the objectives of the economy and retail, St Neots could benefit from a developed leisure and entertainment offer boosting the local economy, providing more services for the local communities and advancing the brand/image of the town.
6. *To strengthen and promote the identity of St Neots.*
 - Through the development of an events programme that is marketed to celebrate the identity and unique qualities of the market town.
7. *To provide adequate access to additional high quality open space in the town centre and development areas.*
 - Ensure that new development is designed with a hierarchy of inter-connected green spaces that link the town's existing natural assets with new local parks, allotments, streets and open spaces.
 - To ensure that existing deficiencies in open space provision are addressed and new housing is matched with the appropriate scale and access of open space.
8. *To reduce both crime and fear of crime where appropriate across St Neots.*
 - Ensure new development adheres to the principles of Secured by Design and promotes natural surveillance and activity at street level.

- Identify appropriate design and security measures to reduce anti-social behaviour St Neots open space and parks

ACTION PLAN PROJECT RESOURCES

Potential projects identified by the workshop groups and Stakeholder feedback

- New cemetery, as one is already full and the other two are almost at capacity (estimated to be full in 10 years).
- Potential for purpose-built youth centres
- Community facilities to address current under-provision in Eynesbury and Eaton Socon.
- Allow communities to access certain school facilities (such as IT equipment, sports facilities and meeting rooms) at appropriate times through the Extended Schools Programme. Where this is already operational improve awareness to maximise benefit.
- Co-locate new school provision in the Eco Quarter with new swimming and leisure facilities to enable use by local population and pupils.
- Provide additional Primary Care facilities for existing and new communities.
- Promote University of the 3rd Age to build on strong links with the community already established.
- Develop an events programme that is marketed to celebrate the identity and unique qualities of the town.
- Create stronger links between the Regional College and local businesses through an expanded programme of apprenticeships.
- Provide additional affordable housing.
- Addressing the limited river crossing and railway that create barriers between communities
- The demographics of the area need to be analysed to ensure the needs of hidden communities are identified.
- Support services need to be increased and planned along with other facilities to address needs of ageing population.
- Active knowledge sharing between the different agencies and organisations playing a role in delivering growth will create a more joined-up approach to growth.

Existing projects identified by HDC LIF as necessary to support growth

- *New Nursery facilities and Children's centres*
- *Additional primary schools*
- *An additional secondary school or restructuring of existing provision to match additional demand*
- *New Primary and social care facilities*
- *Additional community facilities*
- *Additional library facility space*
- *Additional open space – pitches, courts, greens, allotments, community gardens, informal open space and children and young peoples play space.*
- *Additional leisure and swimming pool provision*
- *Safer Neighbourhood Team spaces*

Note - RTPI Good Practice Guidance Note 5 ('Delivering Healthy Communities') provides guidance towards the integration of public health and spatial planning and should be considered as these projects are taken forward.

PROPOSED SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND LEISURE ACTION PLAN PROJECTS

1. *To ensure new development creates a balanced housing market that suits the requirements of local people.*
 - **Balanced Housing proposals** - Mechanism to ensure a review of emerging housing development proposals are undertaken at the early stages of planning to ensure they meet the housing objectives in the St Neots Healthcheck,
2. *To encourage healthier lifestyles within all communities and reduce adverse health impacts of new developments.*
 - **Primary and social care facilities** - Provide additional primary and social care capacity for both St Neots and the Eco Quarter. Exploring the current and planned service delivery proposals for St Neots and how the Eco-Quarter proposals can assist in an integrated strategy. Support services will be particularly important to address the needs of the ageing population.
3. *To ensure all communities, particularly deprived areas, have access to an appropriate range and quality of community infrastructure facilities.*
 - **The Priory Centre** - Redevelop The Priory Centre to provide a central community venue that fosters a sense of local pride and identity. Various options include
 - Modify the existing Buildings
 - Redevelop the building and area to the North
 - Remove the centre and develop the site commercially
 - **Community and Youth Facilities** - Provide dedicated community centres and youth facilities at key locations in Eynesbury, St Neots, Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford, as well as in the areas of growth.
 - **Extended School Full Service Model** - Allow communities to access school community facilities at appropriate times through the Extended Schools Programme. Where this is already operational, expansion of services included can be explored and awareness raised to maximise benefit.
 - **New secondary school in Eco-Quarter** – in line with identified need for an additional secondary school in the eastern expansion area, explore the potential to provide new leisure (including swimming pool) and community facilities available to both new and existing communities in Eynesbury and St Neots. This could potentially free up the existing leisure centre site for alternative use.
 - **Cemetery capacity** – Review the existing capacity of the cemetery with regard to future demand and housing growth.
 - **Services for the Ageing Population** - Support services need to be increased and planned along with other facilities
 - **Demographic Review of St Neots** - Ensure an up to date understanding is held of the existing and planned population characteristics to ensure infrastructure and services are appropriately planned.
4. *To encourage access to skills and strengthen links between academia and local industry.*
 - **Apprenticeship programmes** - Create stronger links between the Regional College and local businesses through an expanded programme of apprenticeships.
 - **Community links** – Promoting the University of the 3rd Age to build on strong links with the community already established.
5. *To provide a compelling leisure offer that improves St Neots standing and increases activity in the town centre.*
 - **Cinema provision** – Exploring the potential to provide a purpose-built cinema or a space within a shared facility to use projection technology at the most appropriate location in the town.

- **Theatre provision** – Exploring the potential to provide a purpose-built theatre or a space within a shared facility at the most appropriate location in the town.
6. *To strengthen and promote the identity of St Neots.*
- **Events Programme** - Develop an events programme to cover the years calendar identifying possible festivals, gallery openings, sports events etc.
7. *To provide adequate access to high quality open space in the town centre and development areas.*
- **Existing town centre park quality and access** – To review the current accessibility of the High Street to existing formal parkland and explore options to increase actual or perceived accessibility through new or enhanced routes.
 - **New open space provision** – To safeguard the required amount of land within the eastern expansion area to ensure the appropriate level and access to open space and parkland is provided for new communities.
 - **Existing residential open space access** – To review the current accessibility of St Neots residential areas to the various open space classifications (allotments, Childrens playspace, parkland, playing fields etc) and to highlight areas requiring intervention.
8. *To reduce both crime and fear of crime where appropriate across St Neots.*
- **Design out crime** - Ensure new housing development in the eastern expansion (and other new house sites) is developed with the principles of Secured by Design and promotes natural surveillance and activity at street level.
 - **Security in Parks** - Identify appropriate design and security measures to reduce anti-social behaviour in Priory Park, Phoenix Square and Market Square.

Social and Community Objectives and Action Plan							
Project Number	Project Name	Objective	Project Type	Description	Vision Priority	Timing (completed)	Potential costs
			Tangible/ Partnership or Initiative work / Further feasibility work, Strategies, Policies, Masterplanning etc		Critical / Essential / Desirable	Project Underway / ASAP (Next year) Short Term Potential (next 5 years) Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years) Longer Term Potential (>10 years)	£ (<100k) ££ (<1 million) £££ (<5 million) ££££ (>5 million)
S1	Balanced Housing proposals	1. To ensure new development creates a balanced housing market that suits the requirements of local people.	Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Mechanism to ensure a review of emerging housing development proposals are undertaken at the early stages of planning to ensure they meet the housing objectives in the St Neots Healthcheck,	Essential	ASAP	£
S2	Primary and social care facilities	2. To encourage healthier lifestyles within all communities and reduce adverse health impacts of new developments.	Tangible	Provide additional primary and social care capacity for both St Neots and the Eco Quarter. Exploring the current and planned service delivery proposals for St Neots and how the Eco-Quarter proposals can assist in an integrated strategy.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£££
S3	The Priory Quarter	3. To ensure all communities, particularly deprived areas, have access to an appropriate range and quality of community infrastructure facilities.	Tangible	Redevelop The Priory Centre to provide a central community venue that fosters a sense of local pride and identity. Various options include: - Modify the existing Buildings - Redevelop the building and area to the North - Remove the centre and develop the site commercially	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	££££
S4	Community and Youth Facilities		Tangible	Provide dedicated community centres and youth facilities at key locations in Eynesbury, St Neots, Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford, as well as in the areas of growth.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£££
S5	Extended School Full Service Model		Partnership or Initiative work	Allow communities to access school community facilities at appropriate times through the Extended School Full Service Model. Where has started to be operational then expansion to full service model can be explored and improvements to awareness to maximise benefit.	Desirable	Project Underway	£
S6	New secondary school in Eco-Quarter (inc. leisure and community facilities)		Tangible	In line with identified need for an additional secondary school in the eastern expansion area, explore the potential to provide new leisure (including swimming pool) and community facilities available to both new and existing communities in Eynesbury and St Neots. This could potentially free up the existing leisure centre site for alternative use. Also look at potential to relocate St Neots Community College to Eco-Quarter and expand size.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	££££
S7	Cemetery capacity		Tangible	Increase capacity of the cemetery with regard to future demand and housing growth.	Essential	ASAP	£
S8	Services for the Ageing Population -		Tangible	Support services need to be increased and planned along with other facilities i.e participatory budgeting	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	££
S9	Demographic Review of St Neots -		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Ensure an up to date understanding is held of the existing and planned population characteristics to ensure infrastructure and services are appropriately planned.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
S10	Apprenticeship programmes	4. To encourage access to skills and strengthen links between academia and local industry.	Tangible	Create stronger links between the Regional College and local businesses through an expanded programme of apprenticeships.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£

Social and Community Objectives and Action Plan							
Project Number	Project Name	Objective	Project Type	Description	Vision Priority	Timing (completed)	Potential costs
			Tangible/ Partnership or Initiative work / Further feasibility work, Strategies, Policies, Masterplanning etc		Critical / Essential / Desirable	Project Underway / ASAP (Next year) Short Term Potential (next 5 years) Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years) Longer Term Potential (>10 years)	£ (<100k) ££ (<1 million) £££ (<5 million) ££££ (>5 million)
S11	Community links	5. To provide a compelling leisure offer that improves St Neots standing and increases activity in the town centre.	Tangible	Promoting the University of the 3rd Age to build on strong links with the community already established.	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
S12	Cinema provision		Tangible	Exploring the potential to provide a cinema at the most appropriate location in the town.	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£££
S13	Theatre provision		Tangible	Exploring the potential to provide a theatre or theatre space at the most appropriate location in the town.	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£££
S14	Events Programme	6. To strengthen and promote the identity of St Neots.	Tangible	Develop an events programme to cover the years calendar identifying possible festivals, gallery openings, sports events etc.- possible use of STNTCI Priorities newsletter with greater scope and coverage	Desirable	Project Underway	£
S15	Existing town centre park quality and access	7. To provide adequate access to additional high quality open space in the town centre and development areas.	Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	To review the current accessibility of the High Street to existing formal parkland and explore options to increase actual or perceived accessibility through new or enhanced routes.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
S16	New Open space provision		Tangible	To safeguard the required amount of land within the eastern expansion area to ensure the appropriate level and access to open space and parkland is provided for new communities.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
S17	Existing residential open space access		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	To review the current accessibility of St Neots residential areas to the various open space classifications (allotments, Children's playspace, parkland, playing fields etc) and to highlight areas requiring intervention.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
S18	Design out crime	8. To reduce both crime and fear of crime where appropriate across St Neots.	Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Ensure new housing development in the eastern expansion (and other new house sites) is developed with the principles of Secured by Design and promotes natural surveillance and activity at street level.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
S19	Security in Parks		Tangible	Identify appropriate design and security measures to reduce anti-social behaviour in Priory Park, Phoenix Square and Market Square.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£

Social and Community Objectives					
Project Number	Project Name	Delivery Responsibility	Cross Links with other Projects (i.e. complements other project or uses shared site)	Conflicts with other Projects	External Triggers
					Project cannot commence until for example: landownership issues are resolved, political agreement, stakeholder agreement etc
S1	Balanced Housing proposals	HDC working with Housing Developers			*Political agreement on appropriate levels and type of Housing delivered in and around St Neots *Developers ability to deliver developments will need to be considered
S2	Primary and social care facilities	Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust	S4 - Community and Youth Facilities S8 - Services for the Ageing Population	competing demand for limited Town centre development sites.	* Stakeholder agreement required on appropriate balance between development of existing facilities and new facilities to the East of St Neots * political and stakeholder agreement required on most appropriate location for Primary care facility development to serve the existing population. - potential use of old Fire Station Site - this has competing land use potentials * 2 approaches - the recent polyclinic approach or traditional healthcentre
S3	The Priory Quarter	SNTC, HDC	S4 - Community and Youth Facilities S12 - Cinema Provision		* Political and Stakeholder agreement required on most appropriate use of Priory Centre Site and surrounding areas. * A clear Masterplan or development framework for the Priory Quarter would be required to explore and refine the existing options.
S4	Community and Youth Facilities	SNTC, HDC, CCC	S5 - Extended School Programme		*Available funding will need to be identified *Stakeholder agreement on the most appropriate type of community or youth facilities that would benefit St Neots and would be most financially viable
S5	Extended School Full Service Model	CCC, HDC, School headmasters and Governors, School Promoters	S4 - Community and Youth Facilities S8 - Services for the Ageing Population		*Existing Plans at schools in St Neots would likely need to be revisited to accommodate extended service model. *Appropriateness of school design and facilities will determine feasibility across education sites.
S6	New secondary school in Eco-Quarter (inc. leisure and community facilities)	CCC, HDC, Developers delivering new growth area	S4 - Community and Youth Facilities		* New Secondary School in Eco-Quarter could potentially be designed with Extended Full Services in mind and include Leisure and community facilities. * Existing St Neots Community College could be relocated to Eco-Quarter with new buildings and facilities and expanded to accommodate new pupils as well as existing pupil numbers. *Important for effective links to be in place to get people through under the transport line barriers
S7	Cemetery capacity	SNTC			*If Additional Capacity requirements are identified this will potentially require a review of suitable additional sites in St Neots
S8	Services for the Ageing Population -	SNTC, HDC	S5 - Extended School Programme		
S9	Demographic Review of St Neots -	HDC, CCC, PCT	S4 - Community and Youth Facilities		*Could be linked into a potential wider District Level review of existing and future demographics associated with existing population and also population arising from new developments - with particular focus on understanding changes at the smaller geographies
S10	Apprenticeship programmes	HDC, Huntingdonshire Regional College (The Apprenticeship Centre), STNTCI Business and School Links, STNTCI Manufacturing Club			n.a

Social and Community Objectives					
Project Number	Project Name	Delivery Responsibility	Cross Links with other Projects (i.e. complements other project or uses shared site)	Conflicts with other Projects	External Triggers
					Project cannot commence until for example: landownership issues are resolved, political agreement, stakeholder agreement etc
S11	Community links	SNTC, HDC, U3A			*University of Third Age operators may require additional funding or resources to increase their activities.
S12	Cinema provision	SNTC, HDC, Cinema Operators, St Neots Cinema Project Group	S3 - The Priory Quarter S4 - Community and Youth Facilities S13 - Theatre Provision	competing demand for limited Town centre development sites.	* political and stakeholder agreement required on demand and feasibility of a cinema (whether standalone or as part of a wider offer) . * political and stakeholder agreement required on most appropriate location for a cinema *competing demand on Town Centre locations
S13	Theatre provision	SNTC, HDC, Theatre Operators,	S3 - The Priory Quarter S4 - Community and Youth Facilities S12 - Cinema Provision		* political and stakeholder agreement required on demand and feasibility of a Theatre (whether standalone or as part of a wider offer) . * political and stakeholder agreement required on most appropriate location for a Theatre
S14	Events Programme	SNTC, STNTCI (Promotion & Tourism Group)			n.a
S15	Existing town centre park quality and access	HDC	S19 - Security in Parks		* Potentially exists as a piece of work by HDC or currently planned as a piece of work by HDC - requires confirmation
S16	New Open space provision	HDC working with Developers	S19 - Security in Parks		*Competing demand for limited land released to the East of St Neots will require strong policy implementation to ensure appropriate levels of open space are safeguarded.
S17	Existing residential open space access	HDC	S19 - Security in Parks		* Potentially exists as a piece of work by HDC or currently planned as a piece of work by HDC - requires confirmation
S18	Design out crime	HDC working with Developers, Cambridgeshire Police, St Neots Police, St. Neots & District Neighbourhood Watch			n.a
S19	Security in Parks	St Neots Police, St. Neots & District Neighbourhood Watch	S16 - New Open Space Provision		n.a

14. Objectives and Action Plans – *Transport*

In order to propose objectives for the Transport topic we first present a re-cap of those key points which have been researched or suggested through the project to date and presented in the earlier chapters of this report.

OBJECTIVES PROJECT RESOURCES

Weaknesses and threats identified by SWOT which can form objectives for change

- The town benefits from strong regional and national links through the strong trunk road and north/south train connectivity. However, on a local scale many of the surrounding villages have poor transport links with the town.
- Congestion is an existing problem in the town centre, compounded by the single river crossing within the town, and town centre traffic flows must be carefully managed if they are not to be exacerbated by the proposed housing growth.
- There are a number of issues relating to movement around the town which include: improvements to identified accident blackspots, namely along the High Street, at the High Street/ Huntingdon Street/ Church Street/ Cambridge Road junction, and along Huntingdon Street; improving pedestrian priorities within the town; and providing better access for people with disabilities.

Objectives suggested and refined during the workshop groups and stakeholders

- Connecting St Neots to the Eco-Quarter – overcoming permeability issues.
- Traffic and resultant congestion in the town centre – addressing the number of short and long distance journeys travelling through the town centre and reducing unnecessary traffic movement.
- The central bridge – improvements and increased capacity for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Northern crossing – improving the links between Eaton Ford and St Neots to reduce use of central bridge. –point noted however that the benefits have not been tested and there are significant environmental impact and cost considerations.
- Car parking around the Railways Station – addressing the overspill parking in streets surrounding rail station.
- Bus service to villages – addressing poor bus service provision to surrounding villages (frequency, routes and timings)
- Banned left turn at New Street – questioning the efficiency of restricted routes in town centre
- Traffic from new housing - It will be important to ensure that the road links between the urban extension and the Loves farm development do not become bottlenecks like the bridge crossing the River Great Ouse
- Essential to provide sufficient transport capacity to support the growth proposals
- Priority to pedestrians and cyclists
- Public transport integration – a comprehensive and integrated public transport system for the whole area which includes:
 - Tackling congestion
 - Encouraging a modal shift

- Improving public transport capacity
- Improving a Bus service
- Accommodating the School run
- Reallocating / re-prioritising road space
- Rethinking bus stop locations (i.e in the Market square)

Objectives from the HDC Core Strategy Spatial Vision

- To enable required growth to be accommodated in locations which minimise the need to travel and maximise the use of sustainable transport modes, while catering for local needs
- To enable business development in rural areas, in locations and on a scale which helps to provide local jobs, limits commuting and minimises or mitigates against adverse environmental impacts
- To increase opportunities for pursuing a healthy lifestyle, by maintaining and enhancing recreation opportunities and encouraging walking and cycling

Existing Objectives from the St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy

- To create a transport system that is accessible to all.
- To protect and enhance the built and natural environment.
- To develop integrated transport and to promote public transport, walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of transport.
- To make travel safer.
- To maintain and operate efficient transport networks.
- To provide a transport system that supports the economy and the growing population of the County.

PROPOSED TRANSPORT OBJECTIVES

1. *Providing the necessary transport capacity and accessibility to support economic and housing growth*
 - Appropriate provision of road, pedestrian and cycle links between Loves Farm and the Eco-Quarter and the existing urban area will be essential to ensure these urban extensions become an integrated and sustainable addition to the town.
 - Sustainable public transport capacity and network expansion improvements to match the growth in housing and employment sites necessary to ensure the growth of St Neots does not create increased pressure on the transport system
2. *Addressing the traffic congestion and associated issues in St Neots*
 - The current levels of traffic flowing through the town centre from the local neighbourhoods of St Neots will need to be reduced through encouraging local journeys to be made on public transport or through walking and cycling. This will become increasingly important in light of housing growth around St Neots.
 - Long distance car journeys through St Neots will need to be discouraged from using the town's central bridge through the provision of alternative routes or measures.
 - Measures to encourage visitors to use the local public transport system or pedestrian routes when arriving at the town will be necessary to prevent increased traffic pressure as a possible result of the desired growth in retail and economic activity.
3. *Prioritising the accessibility for and needs of pedestrians and cyclists*
 - In line with the wider objective to encourage healthy lifestyles, opportunities to enable more resident and workers of St Neots to access their jobs, homes and services through walking and cycling should be explored and developed.
 - In conjunction with the objective to reduce traffic congestion, reducing the need to travel by private car through the improvement of local pedestrian and cycling routes, linkages and bridges should be encouraged. Cycle routes are encouraged as set out in the Market Town Transport Strategy.
 - Successful town centres, neighbourhood centres (particularly in the case of an urban extension) and residential neighbourhoods will benefit from improved pedestrian priorities (whether through additional Pedestrianisation or through the use of 'Home Zone' principles) and from providing better access for people with disabilities.
4. *Addressing the limited local connectivity to surrounding villages*
 - To support the economic and social sustainability of villages surrounding St Neots measures should be explored to improve the current levels, networks and frequency of public transport provision serving the surrounding villages
5. *Providing a well planned and integrated transport strategy balancing public and private transport and supporting the economic, environmental and social objectives for St Neots*
 - Ensuring all aspects of transport and accessibility are joined up across St Neots with a shared vision and an agreed set of priorities.
 - Ensuring every neighbourhood within St Neots (both those within the existing town and those planned to the east of the Town) have the same level of access to public transport and pedestrian and cycle opportunities.

ACTION PLAN PROJECT RESOURCES

Project ideas generated from the analysis of opportunities (SWOT) and from stakeholder workshop and feedback

- There is the *potential to divert the A428 southwards* to join the A1 at the Black Cat roundabout. This would downgrade the status of the existing a428 St Neots southern bypass to local distributor and would assist with accommodating the additional traffic movements associated with the expansion area.
- *Long Stay Parking Spaces* - reducing the number of long stay spaces in the town centre to instead be located at the edge of the town to reduce unnecessary parking and traffic in the town centre.
- *Pedestrianisation* – retaining and improving where necessary the existing pedestrian sections through the town centre and the opportunity to increase pedestrianised areas
- *Gateway car parks* – there is currently a gateway car park on the west side of the river – requiring shoppers to park and walk into the town – not enough people do this at the moment – potential to look at more than one Gateway car park.
- *Park and ride* – Potential to look at a park and ride at the east of the town connected to Cambridge services – This would need at least three function to be financially viable:
 - Serve commuters from outside St Neots using St Neots Train Station
 - Serving homes in Eastern Eco Quarter expansion wanting access to Cambridge
 - Linking with local loop bus service serving the whole of St Neots
- *Widening of the central bridge* – this could be achieved through increasing the span of the bridge possibly through adding extra pedestrian and cycle only sections to each side of the bridge
- *Northern crossing (Pedestrian and cycle)* – linking Eaton Ford with Longsands area this could reflect the similar bridge developed at the south of the study area and would benefit adult and children attending the school and reduce the need for parents to drive and increase congestion.
- *Northern crossing (Cars and Buses)* – linking Eaton Ford with Longsands area as an alternative or addition to the a Northern pedestrian and cycle crossing this would provide for cars and buses and would play a large role in relieving the congestion from traffic crossing the central bridge. Suggested routes include from the A1, behind the island site and connecting with the current route from Mill Lane east and the A428.
- *Village bus services* – One easy fix would be change the timings of first drop offs in the town in the morning, currently arriving in town at 10.15am – this is too late for the working population.
- *Signage review* – clarity of signage and wayfinding measures could be improved across the town and will need to be reviewed as growth develops additional areas, facilities and routes.
- *The southern bypass* - St Neots southern bypass, A428, very badly needs a cycle path or footpath as this is a popular cycle and pedestrian route.
- *Car parks and congestion* - If the majority of the traffic that has a town centre destination could be diverted directly to car parks instead of having to pass through the High Street or the Market Square the current congestion would be reduced increasing the allowance for future growth.
- *Coach station* - Long distance coach travel could be further encouraged and attracted to the town. A purpose built bus/coach terminus would enable this. This project could greatly relieve the town traffic congestion enabling a smoother flow of traffic.
- *Eco Quarter resident travel plans* - The best time to persuade people to change their travel habits is when they move house or job. The new residents of the eco-settlement could be offered green travel planning advice when they first arrive and be provided with a welcome pack showing them local green routes.

- *Town centre one-way system* – A town centre ring road in a similar style to that of Huntingdon. Suggested by numerous stakeholders and at workshops. Difficult issues to overcome however would include the need for demolition, the environmental impact and the severance of the town centre for the rest of the town.
- *Mill Lane Bridge Improvements* – The amount and weight of vehicles currently using this route. The bridges are too narrow and damage to the parapets of both bridges need to be made safe. Repair works should be undertaken to improve this route.
- *Little Paxton Nature Reserve traffic* – Expansion of the nature reserve has the potential to increase traffic along Little Paxton High Street. Potential to reduce this impact by removing signage to the reserve on Old Great North Road at the junction with Little Paxton lane and the High Street. The traffic could instead be diverted via the Gravel Pit Road.

Current Transport projects highlighted by STNTCI Transport Group meeting

- *Loves Farm Section 106 transport and accessibility projects* - including improved links between the new housing area and St Neots Train Station.
- *Southern Pedestrian and cycle bridge plans* – Construction of a new cycle / footbridge and approaches linking Eaton Socon with the college on the opposite bank of the River Great Ouse. £3.5million funding now firm and ring fenced for the project and planning consent now being sought; this will include an environmental statement as this is a sensitive area. There are some landownership issues to resolve. There would be an 18 month planning process that would end with a government inspector enquiry but the project had a strong case.
- *Little Paxton bus services* - improvements to bus services to little Paxton since recent exchange of views and Parish Council will be able to maintain bus stop timetables and information boards.
- *St Neots Train Station* - The booking office is under construction, with a new larger booking hall. The taxi office is moving to the north end of the building with dedicated taxi bays. The new car park extension to the south side is started and another extra parking area to the north will start soon, both to be operational by the spring of 2009.

Additional healthcheck project team transport and accessibility ideas for consideration

- *Homes Zones* - a way of "reclaiming" local streets from a traditional domination by cars and a way to restore the safety and peace in neighbourhoods that are becoming overwhelmed with speeding traffic. This concept works through the physical alteration of streets and roads in an area forcing motorists to drive with greater care and at lower speeds
- *Addressing the Market Square* – currently used as an informal coach and bus terminal for the town although an alternative location for this activity could be explored elsewhere.
- *A central bus station* – the lack of a central bus station in the town centre is seen as one of the main factors that prevent people from using the public transport network. This could be explored through the identification of an appropriate and accessible bus station site.

Existing projects included within the St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy and HDC projects

- *Accessibility Action Plan* – In response to the noted issues of accessibility of the town from surrounding villages, the Transport and Access Sub-Group of the Local Strategic Partnership is working to develop an 'Accessibility Action Plan'. Its emerging actions concern public transport and overall accessibility issues, however the group has not confirmed a date for the publication of the emerging issues.
- *Accident Remedial Scheme* – building on the existing Accident Remedial Scheme (ARS) that has already been implemented in the area. The new strategy will extend the ARS by upgrading the existing Urban Traffic Control (UTC) system within St Neots to include the four main town centre junctions that are the most significant barriers to traffic flow. These junctions would be linked both to each other and to crossings already on the UTC system, providing a coherent traffic movement system through the town. This system would control the traffic passing

through the town centre, facilitating flow and reducing congestion particularly around junctions. Traffic would be allowed through the town in convoys, with queues being stored just outside the central area. The coordination of the lights would mean that once a convoy was moving through the town centre, it would not be stopped frequently by traffic signals. The main junctions included are as follows:

- Market Place/ New Street/High Street
- Tebbutts Road/Tan Yard/New Street,
- Tebbutts Road/Huntingdon Road
- Huntingdon Road/High Street/Cambridge Street

In addition the following crossing will be included into the system:

- Market Square near the River Bridge
- Market Square near Market Place
- High Street Near Church Walk
- *Secure cycle parking* - Improved cycling parking is now available at St Neots Railway Stations. The requirement for cycle racks has been identified in the following locations: Riverside Car Park, Market Square, Tesco Store, LIDL Store and Priory Park
- *Home to School Transport Strategy* - Many schools in St Neots have taken part in the safer routes to school scheme and have adopted travel plans. This work will continue under the new strategy, with particular reference to the recent Home to School Transport strategy.
- *Cycling and walking proposals within MTTS* – including:
 - Southern pedestrian and cycle bridge
 - Central bridge cycle lanes
 - Ten additional cycle/pedestrian routes to complement the existing route network. These include the Little Paxton to the Town Centre link and the Priory to the rail station link.
- *Southern Pedestrian and cycle bridge plans* – As mentioned above and in more detail under the projects highlighted by STNTCI group.
- *Public Transport Improvements* – Bus maps and timetable provision, new format bus timetables, Real time passenger information (RTPI), integration of RTPI with Train platform information
- *Lorry Management* – Road networks subject to weight restrictions and Strategy producing HCV route map.
- *Parking Action Plan measures* - Measures across the various car parking requirements include for example:
 - Tan Yard car park to become all short stay spaces
 - Review parking charges across Town to control demand
 - Potential increase in Cambridge Road long stay spaces (to replace Tan Yard reduced capacity)
 - Review potential for one hour on street parking in places
 - Continue to secure appropriate car parking to match new development.
 - Possibility of car park to south of town centre and also potential for park and ride after feasibility reviewed (long term)

Existing projects identified by HDC LIF as necessary to support growth

- *Cambridge-St Neots Transport Corridor*

- *New Bus Service serving Love's Farm and South of Cambridge road, St Neots*
- *St Neots Station Improvements*
- *A428/Cambridge Road Junction Improvement*
- *A428/Barford Road Junction Improvement*
- *St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy High Street Improvements*
- *Completion of St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy Schemes*

PROPOSED TRANSPORT ACTION PLAN PROJECTS

1. *Providing the necessary transport capacity and accessibility to support economic and housing growth*
 - **Loves Farm Section 106 transport and accessibility projects** - Including improved links between the new housing area and St Neots Train Station.
 - **Increased Rail Capacity** - Increase the capacity of rail services in light of growth proposals at St Neots
 - **Improving the A428** - Divert the A428 southwards to join the A1 at the Black Cat roundabout, therefore downgrading the status of the existing southern bypass to a local distributor and assisting with accommodating the additional traffic movements associated with the expansion area.
2. *Addressing the traffic congestion and associated issues in St Neots*
 - **Additional Car Parking measures** - As detailed earlier there is currently a car parking strategy which can be complimented by consideration of potential Gateway car parks (interceptor car parks) at the North, East, South and West of the Town and potential Park and ride options to the East of St Neots. Also additional or more effective parking required at the Rail Station
 - **Northern Crossing (Car and Bus)** – Linking Eaton Ford with Longsands area creating a second central route crossing to relieve proportion of traffic flowing through centre of town.
 - **Mill Lane Bridge Repairs** – traffic levels and weight have led to damage to existing bridges. Permanent repairs required to make safe and ensure longevity.
 - **MTTS Lorry Management** - Road networks subject to weight restrictions and Strategy producing HCV route map.
 - Numerous projects listed under each of the other transport objectives will also contribute towards this objective.
3. *Prioritising the accessibility for and needs of pedestrians and cyclists*
 - **Northern crossing (Pedestrian and cycle)** – linking Eaton Ford with Longsands area benefitting adults and children attending the school and reduce the need for parents to drive and increase congestion.
 - **Widening of the central bridge** – this could be achieved through increasing the span of the bridge possibly through adding extra pedestrian and cycle only sections to each side of the bridge
 - **MTTS Accident Remedial Scheme** –the existing Urban Traffic Control (UTC) system within St Neots to include the four main town centre junctions that are the most significant barriers to traffic flow.
 - **MTTS Secure cycle parking** - Riverside Car Park, Market Square, Tesco Store, LIDL Store and Priory Park.
 - **MTTS Cycling and walking proposals** – including the Little Paxton to Town Centre link and the Priory to Rail Station link.

- **Homes Zones** - physical alteration of streets and roads in an area forcing motorists to drive with greater care and at lower speeds
 - **Pedestrianisation** – retaining and improving where necessary the existing pedestrian sections through the town centre and the opportunity to increase pedestrianised areas
 - **Southern Pedestrian and cycle bridge plans** – Construction of a new cycle / footbridge and approaches linking Eaton Socon with the college on the opposite bank of the River Great Ouse.
 - **MTTS Home to School Transport Strategy** - Many schools in St Neots have taken part in the safer routes to school scheme and have adopted travel plans.
4. *Addressing the limited local connectivity to surrounding villages*
- **Village bus service improvements** – One easy fix would be change the timings of first drop offs in the town in the morning, currently arriving in town at 10.15am – this is too late for the working population.
 - **HDC Accessibility Action Plan** – In response to the noted issues of accessibility of the town from surrounding villages its emerging actions concern public transport and overall accessibility issues.
5. *Providing a well planned and integrated transport strategy balancing public and private transport and supporting the economic, environmental and social objectives for St Neots*
- **A central Coach / Bus station** – This could be explored through the identification of an appropriate and accessible bus station site.
 - **A428 improvements** – These would include the introduction of a cycle and footpath on this route and improvements to the junction with Cambridge Road and Barford Road.
 - **Bus Service Study** - A better understanding of the Bus Service is required to understand why some routes are successful and others not.
 - **Local bus service improvements** – MTTS initiatives such as bus map and timetable provision, new format bus timetables, Real time passenger information (RTPI), integration of RTPI with Train platform information and improvements to Little Paxton bus service
 - **Signage review** – clarity of signage and wayfinding measures could be improved across the town and will need to be reviewed as growth develops additional areas, facilities and routes.
 - **St Neots Train Station improvements** - larger booking hall, dedicated taxi bays, car park extension to the south and another area to the north.

Transport Objectives and Action Plan							
Project Number	Project Name	Objective	Project Type	Description	Vision Priority	Timing (completed)	Potential costs
			Tangible/ Partnership or Initiative work / Further feasibility work, Strategies, Policies, Masterplanning etc		Critical / Essential / Desirable	Project Underway / ASAP (Next year) Short Term Potential (next 5 years) Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years) Longer Term Potential (>10 years)	£ (<100k) ££ (<1 million) £££ (<5 million) ££££ (>5 million)
T1	Loves Farm Section 106 transport and accessibility projects	1. Providing the necessary transport capacity and accessibility to support economic and housing growth	Tangible	Improved links between the new housing area and St Neots Train Station.	Essential	Project Underway	£££
T2	Increased Rail Capacity		Tangible	Increase the capacity of rail services in light of growth proposals at St Neots	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	££££
T3	A428 Downgrading to distributor road		Tangible	Divert the A428 southwards to join the A1 at the Black Cat roundabout, therefore downgrading the status of the existing southern bypass to a local distributor and assisting with accommodating the additional traffic movements associated with the expansion area.	Essential	Longer Term Potential (>10 years)	££££
T4	Additional Car Parking measures	2. Addressing the traffic congestion and associated issues in St Neots	Tangible	Potential Gateway car parks (interceptor car parks) - there is currently a gateway car park on the west side of the river – requiring shoppers to park and walk into the town – not enough people do this at the moment – potential to look at more than one Gateway car park. Also additional or more effective parking required at the Rail Station	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£££
			Tangible	Potential Park and ride options - Potential to look at a park and ride at the east of the town connected to Cambridge services – This would need at least three function to be financially viable. - Serve commuters from outside St Neots using St Neots Train Station - Serving homes in Eastern Eco Quarter expansion wanting access to Cambridge - Linking with local loop bus service serving the whole of St Neots	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	££££
T5	Northern crossing (Car and Buses)		Tangible	road crossing for cars and buses similar to pedestrian crossing listed below	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	££££
T6	Mill Lane Bridge Repairs		Tangible	traffic levels and weight have led to damage to existing bridges. Permanent repairs required to make safe and ensure longevity.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	££
T7	MTTS Lorry Management		Tangible	Road networks subject to weight restrictions and Strategy producing HCV route map.	Essential	Project Underway	£
T8	Northern crossing (Pedestrian and cycle)		Tangible	Linking Eaton Ford with Longsands area benefiting adults and children attending the school and reduce the need for parents to drive and increase congestion.	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	£££
T9	Widening of the central bridge		Tangible	Increasing the width of the bridge possibly through adding extra pedestrian and cycle only sections to each side of the bridge	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	£££

Transport Objectives and Action Plan							
Project Number	Project Name	Objective	Project Type	Description	Vision Priority	Timing (completed)	Potential costs
			Tangible/ Partnership or Initiative work / Further feasibility work, Strategies, Policies, Masterplanning etc		Critical / Essential / Desirable	Project Underway / ASAP (Next year) Short Term Potential (next 5 years) Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years) Longer Term Potential (>10 years)	£ (<100k) ££ (<1 million) £££ (<5 million) ££££ (>5 million)
T10	MTTS Accident Remedial Scheme	3. Prioritising the accessibility for and needs of pedestrians and cyclists	Tangible	<p>The existing Urban Traffic Control (UTC) system within St Neots to include the four main town centre junctions that are the most significant barriers to traffic flow.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market Place/ New Street/High Street - Tebbuts Road/Tan Yard/New Street, - Tebutts Road/Huntingdon Road - Huntingdon Road/High Street/Cambridge Street <p>In addition the following crossing to be linked into system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market Square near the River Bridge - Market Square near Market Place - High Street Near Church Walk 	Essential	Project Underway	££
T11	MTTS Secure cycle parking		Tangible	Riverside Car Park, Market Square, Tesco Store, LIDL Store and Priory Park.	Desirable	Project Underway	£
T12	MTTS Cycling and walking proposals		Tangible	Including the Little Paxton to Town Centre link and the Priory to Rail Station link.	Desirable	Project Underway	£££
T13	Homes Zones		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	physical alteration of streets and roads in an area forcing motorists to drive with greater care and at lower speeds - This could be implemented into future schemes such as the Eco-Quarter Masterplan	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	££
T14	Pedestrianisation		Tangible	<p>Retaining and improving where necessary the existing pedestrian sections through the town centre and the opportunity to increase Pedestrianised areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market Place (surrounding Market Square) - High St. north of Market Square - High St. north of St Mary's Village 	Desirable	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	£££
T15	Southern Pedestrian and cycle bridge plans		Tangible	Construction of a new cycle / footbridge and approaches linking Eaton Socon with the college on the opposite bank of the River Great Ouse.	Essential	Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years)	£££
T16	MTTS Home to School Transport Strategy		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	Many schools in St Neots have taken part in the safer routes to school scheme and have adopted travel plans.	Desirable	Project Underway	£
T17	Village bus service improvements	4. Addressing the limited local connectivity to surrounding villages	Tangible	One easy fix would be to change the timings of first drop offs in the town in the morning, currently arriving in town at 10.15am – this is too late for the working population. Village bus services should also include links to the railway station.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
T18	HDC Accessibility Action Plan		Further feasibility work or Strategies or Policies or Masterplanning etc	In response to the noted issues of accessibility of the town from surrounding villages, the Transport and Access Sub-Group of the Local Strategic Partnership is working to develop an ‘Accessibility Action Plan’. Its emerging actions concern public transport and overall accessibility issues, however the group has not confirmed a date for the publication of the emerging issues.	Essential	Project Underway	£
T19	A central Coach / Bus station		Tangible	This could be explored through the identification of an appropriate and accessible bus station site. There needs to be better use of bus stops and lay over areas. Buses are using town centre stops for lay over and this should be done elsewhere.	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	££

Transport Objectives and Action Plan							
Project Number	Project Name	Objective	Project Type	Description	Vision Priority	Timing (completed)	Potential costs
			Tangible/ Partnership or Initiative work / Further feasibility work, Strategies, Policies, Masterplanning etc		Critical / Essential / Desirable	Project Underway / ASAP (Next year) Short Term Potential (next 5 years) Medium Term Potential (5 - 10 years) Longer Term Potential (>10 years)	£ (<100k) ££ (<1 million) £££ (<5 million) ££££ (>5 million)
T20	A428 Cycle and Pedestrian improvements	5. Providing a well planned and integrated transport strategy balancing public and private transport and supporting the economic, environmental and social objectives for St Neots	Tangible	These would include the introduction of a cycle and footpath on this route and improvements to the junction with Cambridge Road and Barford Road. The pedestrian and cycle facilities should be segregated.	Essential	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	££
T21	MTTS Local bus service improvements		Tangible	MTTS initiatives such as bus map and timetable provision, new format bus timetables, Real time passenger information (RTPI), integration of RTPI with Train platform information and improvements to Little Paxton bus service	Essential	Project Underway	£
T22	Signage review		Tangible	clarity of signage and wayfinding measures could be improved across the town and will need to be reviewed as growth develops additional areas, facilities and routes.	Desirable	Short Term Potential (next 5 years)	£
T23	St Neots Train Station improvements		Partnership or Initiative work	larger booking hall, dedicated taxi bays, car park extension to the south and another to area to the north. Should have included a roundabout outside the station to assist vehicles to u-turn.	Essential	Project Underway	£££

Transport Objectives and Action Plan					
Project Number	Project Name	Delivery Responsibility	Cross Links with other Projects (i.e. complements other project or uses shared site)	Conflicts with other Projects	External Triggers
					Project cannot commence until for example: landownership issues are resolved, political agreement, stakeholder agreement etc
T1	Loves Farm Section 106 transport and accessibility projects	CCC, HDC, First Capital Connect, J J GALLAGHER	T21-St Neots Train Station improvements		Currently committed to and underway through Section 106 Agreement *Should not be delayed by development slow down and shortage of S106 funds. Should be helped with public funding.
T2	Increased Rail Capacity	Rail Companies, CC			*Dependant on Rail Company business plans
T3	A428 Downgrading to distributor road			Potential this would compromise the chances of getting a northern crossing as it will be adding a new southern crossing. If so, stakeholders would rather have a northern crossing than the diversion of the A428.	* Agreement required from large group including Highways Agency, County Council, District Council, Town Council etc. * Potential issues with land ownership south of St Neots
T4	Additional Car Parking measures	HDC			* Availability of suitable sites on the East side of Town * Agreement from stakeholder on appropriate use of those sites
		HDC, Local Developers, Local bus service providers			* Availability of suitable sites on the East side of Town * Agreement from stakeholder on appropriate use of those sites * Requires joined up agreement from the various bus and coach service providers.
T5	Northern crossing (Car and Buses)	CCC,	T6 - Northern crossing (Pedestrian and Cycle)		* Environmental Impact Issues and Cost issues *Requires transport modelling to assess benefits of crossing on traffic in St Neots
T6	Mill Lane Bridge Repairs	CCC,			
T7	MTTS Lorry Management	CCC,			Currently committed to and underway through St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy (STMTTS)
T8	Northern crossing (Pedestrian and cycle)	CCC, Sustrans, HDC, Local Developers,	T4 - Northern crossing (Car and Buses)		* Funding is likely to be a major issue as still has stood in may of this proposal in the past * Agreement from wide stakeholder group and particularly related to environmental concerns as crossing likely to cross environmentally sensitive areas * Likely to be land ownership issues depending on route of crossing
T9	Widening of the central bridge	CCC, HDC, SNTC, Possible future developers of adjoining sites	T4 - Northern crossing (Car and Buses) T6 - Northern crossing (Pedestrian and Cycle)	Not required if Project T4 is undertaken	* Agreement from adjoining land owners would be essential * Would require engineering solution and designs * Agreement across wide stakeholder group

Transport Objectives and Action Plan					
Project Number	Project Name	Delivery Responsibility	Cross Links with other Projects (i.e. complements other project or uses shared site)	Conflicts with other Projects	External Triggers
					Project cannot commence until for example: landownership issues are resolved, political agreement, stakeholder agreement etc
T10	MTTS Accident Remedial Scheme	CCC,			Currently committed to and underway through St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy (STMTTS)
T11	MTTS Secure cycle parking	CCC, HDC, SNTC, Sustrans	T10 - MTTS Cycling and walking proposals		Currently committed to and underway through St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy (STMTTS)
T12	MTTS Cycling and walking proposals	CCC, HDC, SNTC, Sustrans	EN1 -Henbrook Linear Park T9 - MTTS Secure cycle parking		Currently committed to and underway through St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy (STMTTS)
T13	Homes Zones	CCC, HDC, local developers (and associated masterplanners)	T12 - Pedestrianisation		* Requires policy position from District Council / County Council which could influence future development designs at the outset * Requires positive publicity and educating general public (likely health and safety concerns linked to proposals of reduced barriers)
T14	Pedestrianisation	CCC, HDC, STTC	T11 - Homes Zones		* Requires agreement from large stakeholder group with local retailers in particular * Requires traffic routes and parking solutions to accompany the proposal *Pedestrianised area could be increased if a town centre one-way system were introduced to reduce traffic in High Street.
T15	Southern Pedestrian and cycle bridge plans	CCC, Sustrans, HDC, Local Developers,	EN1 -Henbrook Linear Park T6 - T6 - Northern crossing (Pedestrian and Cycle)		Currently committed to and underway
T16	MTTS Home to School Transport Strategy	-			Currently committed to and underway through St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy (STMTTS)
T17	Village bus service improvements	Bus service providers - Huntingdon and District / Cambus / Cavalier			* Related to financial viability of route timing changes by bus service provider
T18	HDC Accessibility Action Plan	Transport and Access Sub-Group of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	EN1 -Henbrook Linear Park		Currently committed to and undertaken by Transport and Access Sub-Group of the LSP
T19	A central Coach / Bus station	Network of local bus service providers, Coach service providers,	T 19 - MTTS Local bus service improvements		*Land ownership issues related to appropriate site identification

Transport Objectives and Action Plan					
Project Number	Project Name	Delivery Responsibility	Cross Links with other Projects (i.e. complements other project or uses shared site)	Conflicts with other Projects	External Triggers
					Project cannot commence until for example: landownership issues are resolved, political agreement, stakeholder agreement etc
T20	A428 Cycle and Pedestrian improvements	HDC, CCC, Highways Agency			
T21	MTTS Local bus service improvements	Network of local bus providers, First Capital Connect, HDC and SNTC	T17 - A central Coach / Bus station		Currently committed to and underway through St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy (STMTTS)
T22	Signage review	SNTC, HDC, CCC	T16 - HDC Accessibility Action Plan		* Would benefit from a comprehensive review of signage requirements and wayfinding strategy rather than incremental introduction on new signage over time
T23	St Neots Train Station improvements	First Capital Connect	T1 - Loves Farm Section 106 transport and accessibility projects		N/A - First Capital Connect undertaking works

15. Big Opportunities for St Neots

This chapter looks to summarise the last four chapters and highlight some of those actions listed under the four topics which represent the most significant of the opportunities for St Neots. We also suggest a number of projects which could help to achieve more than one of those actions combined through utilising the assets and sites available to St Neots. The chapter does this by providing the following:

- A list of the significant development sites across St Neots which could help to deliver some of the objectives and associated projects listed in the previous four chapters
- A list of some of the key assets across St Neots which have repeatedly been highlighted as able to help deliver the healthcheck vision and objectives.
- A list of the big opportunities (key projects) which the healthcheck project team feel would make significant steps towards achieving the long term vision and objectives identified by this project. These include some of those projects which are identified to have multiple links with other projects and could potentially utilise the development sites and/or assets set out in this chapter.

Key Development Sites or areas with the potential to help deliver the vision

There are a limited number of development sites across St Neots and a large number of those are allocated or committed to deliver future housing as presented earlier in chapter 3. There are however a few opportunity sites which should be highlighted as they could potentially help to deliver some of the objectives of the Healthcheck Vision. It should be noted that some of these sites do not currently have proposals to change from their current use and this will need to be further investigated if these opportunities were looked at in more detail. It should also be noted that a number of these sites have already attracted competing proposals and suggestions from various stakeholders and organisations.

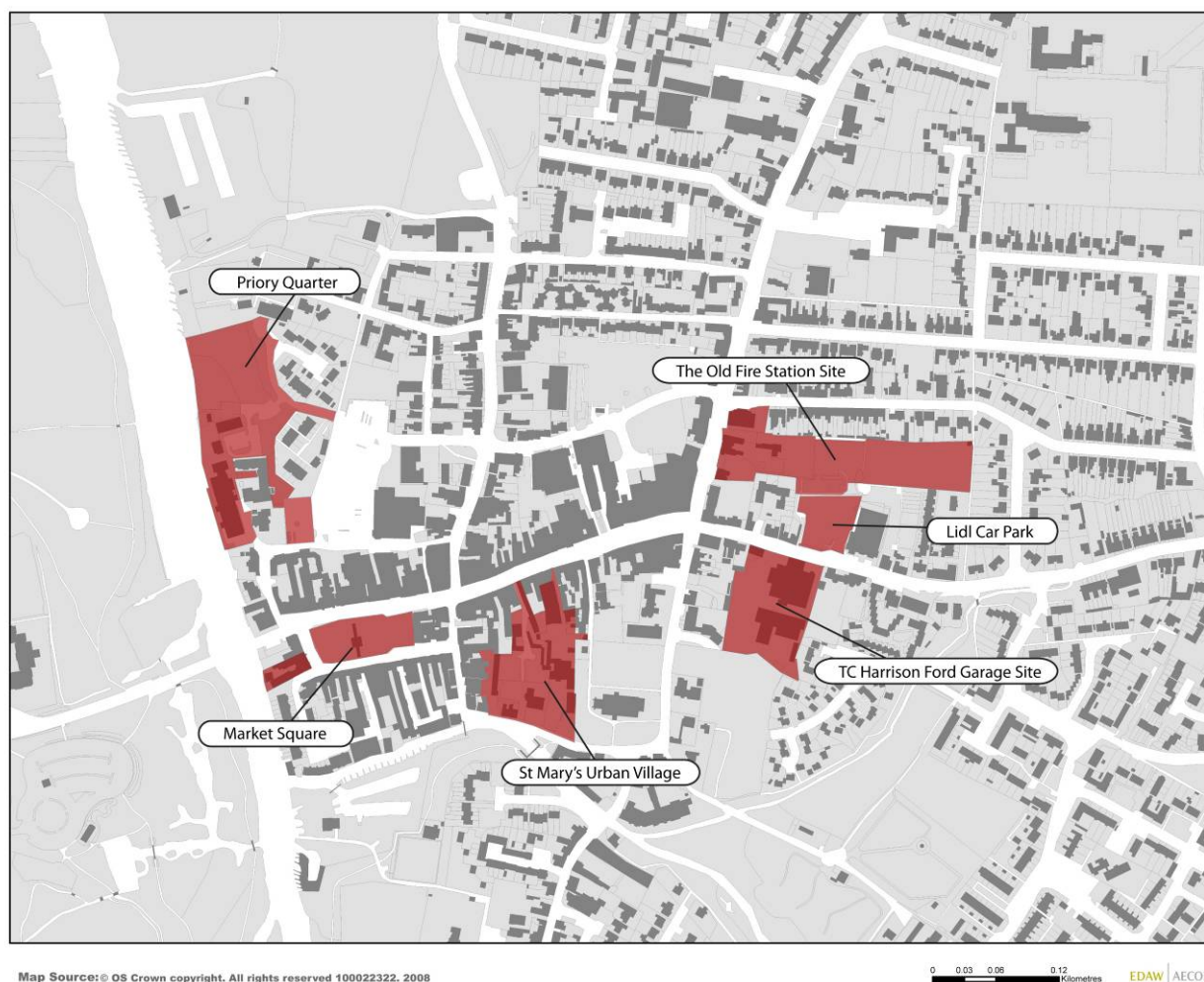
The list below presents some of the established development or regeneration sites across St Neots

- The Priory Quarter (the Priory Centre and surrounding uses such as the boat club)
- St Mary's Urban Village
- The Old Fire Station site
- TC Harrison Ford garage site
- The Eco-Quarter (land to the east of the railway and south of Loves Farm)

The list below presents some of the less definite and potential sites across St Neots

- Lidl car park site
- Edge-of-centre sites on the northern side of the shopping area - Including extensive ground level car parking (possibly in part surplus) in the vicinity of Waitrose, BT buildings and Somerfield.
- St Neots Leisure Centre site (but only through a potential to relocate or re-provide in the Eco-Quarter maintaining capacity and accessibility to existing and new residents).
- St Neots Community College (as above - only through potential to relocate into the Eco-Quarter maintaining capacity and accessibility to existing and new residents).

Figure 15.1: Illustration of key town centre development sites with potential to help deliver the vision



Key Assets in St Neots to help deliver the Vision

The earlier chapters of the report undertook an extensive SWOT of St Neots and in doing so highlighted a number of important strengths and opportunities associated with the town. Rather than re-presenting those in this chapter we are instead highlighting a few of the key assets identified during the project which will be crucial in delivering a number of the actions listed in the previous chapters and the big ideas listed in the next section. These assets are:

- The various development sites listed on the previous page
- The Waterfront and river bank areas (natural and built)
- The Green Corridor through St Neots
- The Market Square
- St Neots Enterprise Centre
- The existing business and workforce base
- The existing communities and the associated grass roots organisations representing these communities

Big Ideas which could be explored for St Neots

The following points are being suggested by the Project team as projects which either already exist or have emerged through the development of this Healthcheck process and action plans but suggest to us some of the most exciting and visionary ideas St Neots has the potential to deliver. It is important to stress that these are simply highlighted as opportunities worth consideration and further discussion, they do not represent the plans or recommendations of Huntingdonshire District Council.

- **Improved secondary school provision for existing and new communities** - With the housing growth in the Eco-Quarter to the East of St Neots, additional secondary school provision will be required. This is identified to be in the scale of 6 form entries by the Local Investment Framework (as set out in chapter 3). This presents a number of alternative opportunities. The additional capacity could be provided through a new, state-of-the-art, 6 FE secondary school within the Eco Quarter. It could alternatively be provided in conjunction with one of the existing 6 FE secondary schools in St Neots through a redevelopment and modernisation program, creating a larger 12 FE secondary school providing the capacity for the new housing growth but also providing capacity for those existing pupils. Consideration would of course be required of pupil catchment areas and the relationship with the recently funded southern pedestrian bridge which links Eaton Socon to Eynesbury.
- **New Community Hub in Eynesbury (in conjunction with the above ideas)** - In conjunction with the potential to upgrade the secondary school and leisure centre in Eynesbury, consideration could also be given to the development of a bespoke Community Hub containing those facilities identified through this Healthcheck as needed in the area such as an improved health centre and youth and community facilities.
- **Henbrook Linear Park** – An exciting opportunity to create a dedicated green corridor between the future community hub within the Eco-Quarter and the existing St Neots Town Centre. This could combine waterways and a park setting with dedicated pedestrian and cycle routes allowing people to move between these two centres reducing their impact on the local transport network.
- **Low Carbon Opportunities** – The Barford Power Plant to the south of St Neots has the potential to be reconfigured into a Combined Heat and Power Station and its close proximity to the Eco-Quarter and other large scale developments and neighbourhoods in Eynesbury provides the perfect opportunity to increase the carbon savings associated with those area and help St Neots move forward as a more sustainable town.
- **A Bolstered Retail Offer at the Eastern Gateway** – Utilising a proportion (through mixed use schemes) of some of the sites identified at the beginning of this chapter such as the Lidl Car Park Site, the TC Harrison Ford Garage Site and the Old Fire Station Sites provides St Neots with the space to address the demand for additional and different retail provision and gives the Eastern end of the High Street (also known as the Eastern Gateway) an opportunity to flourish.
- **The Priory Quarter and Market Square** – This key area of the town offers the opportunity to deliver a new town centre offer linked to the waterfront and green corridor to the west and a revitalised St Mary's Urban Village and Eastern Gateway to the east. A number of proposals and opportunities have been suggested for the Priory Centre including a refurbishment approach and alternatively a complete redevelopment. This redevelopment could include the provision of a wide range of services and facilities required in the Town Centre including the much researched demand for cinema and theatre provision (such as art house cinema using adjustable equipment and space allowing the sharing of space with complimentary uses). The Priory Quarter and Market Square could provide the location for a revitalised evening economy through a mixture of leisure and recreational facilities and a balanced offer of eating and drinking establishments.
- **Improved River Crossings** – A number of the transport related issues and associated objectives and actions originate from the town's arrangement around the river and lack of appropriate crossings. The committed delivery of a much needed southern crossing for cycling and pedestrians will help to alleviate some of these connectivity problems but additional measures in the centre of the town with an increased central bridge width for additional pedestrian and cyclists and a northern crossing (for both cars, buses, cyclists and pedestrians) would really bring together those neighbourhoods separated by the river and reduce traffic flows through the town centre considerably.

- **Interceptor Car Parks and a Park and Ride System** – Traffic moving through the town centre creates a large number of those weaknesses currently experienced in St Neots. Through a system of strategically located interceptor car parks at the North, East, South and West of the town, a reduction in the number of unnecessary town centre car journeys could be reduced significantly. To the east of the town and through the development of the Eco-Quarter lies an opportunity to provide a park and ride facility to provide for both the existing levels of traffic originating from settlements east of St Neots and the new communities of the Eco-quarter. This park and ride system would be linked into the local St Neots bus network as well as specific links to St Neots Rail Station.
- **A downgraded A428** – The Eco-Quarter would benefit considerably from a downgraded A428 providing additional capacity at the local level. The A428 could instead be diverted south towards the A1 Black Cat roundabout. The downgrading of this road would then open up the areas directly to the south of the current A428 alignment (south of St Neots) to enable Eynesbury and Eaton Socon to integrate more effectively with this area. The downgrading would also allow an improved pedestrian and cycle provision along this route.

16. Way Forward & Implementation

This report concludes the third stage of the project. We see the following steps as necessary to move towards the conclusions of this Healthcheck process.

STAGE 2 WORKSHOP

HDC and the Healthcheck project team have maintained the same invitation list to the stage 3 project workshop as the previous workshop and hope to engage with a wide group on the 1st of July. The workshop will concentrate the majority of the workshop time into refining the Action plans presented in this report. The aims of the stage 3 workshop discussion groups are as follows:

- To again dedicate a proportion of the whole group's time to a review of the amended vision statement suggested in this stage 3 report.
- To not specifically focus on the issues facing St Neots as these have dominated the previous two Stakeholder workshops but instead to really concentrate the four break-out groups on reviewing the projects included in the action plans in this report. This will not only require a discussion and review of the detail of each of the projects but more fundamentally it will ensure that key project ideas have been included and in other cases may require some projects to be removed.
- As presented earlier, each of the four topics have an associated action plan and against each project (grouped by vision objective) the project team have highlighted the following associated information which will need to be scrutinised by the groups:
 - Project Type – A tangible project, Partnership / Initiative work or alternatively Further feasibility work / Strategies / Policies / Masterplanning etc
 - Vision Priority – Is this Critical, Essential or Desirable
 - Likely Timing of such a project – is it currently underway, short term (under 5 years), medium term (5 to 10 years) or long term (more than 10 years)
 - Potential Costs – for example under £100k, under £1 million, under £5 million or over £ 5 million
 - Potential Delivery Responsibility
 - Cross Links with other Projects (i.e. complements other project or uses shared site)
 - Conflicts with other Projects
 - External triggers which are required to enable the project to take place.
- We will expect each of the topic groups to present their amended objectives and project lists back to the wider group at the end of the session.

STAGE 3 REPORT FINALISATION

Having undertaken the stage 3 workshop, we will then:

- Make amendments to the stage 3 report in line with stakeholder workshop discussions and specific draft report feedback. These amendments will essentially cover chapters 10 through to 15 (the vision, objectives, action plans and review of opportunities and synergies).
- We envisage that through the workshop process, stakeholder feedback and steering group review we will be able to refine down the action plan projects to create an agreed and simplified Action Plan which can be taken forward by the various working groups.
- As introduced in the next section we have included initial thoughts on implementation to review how the project vision and agreed projects and initiatives can be taken forward in a partnership approach. These will be refined through discussions with HDC and the Project Steering group to ensure the content and actions highlighted in this report are taken forward and make a positive contribution to St Neots over the coming years.

DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

As outlined in Chapter 2, it is envisaged that the Vision and Action Plan will be jointly owned by all stakeholders and partners with the St Neots Healthcheck Steering group taking a longer-term role to guide implementation of the projects and actions with the direction of HDC. The key principles for implementation are set out below for discussion at the third workshop on 1 July 2009.

Assumptions underpinning the Implementation recommendations:

- There is a commitment from the stakeholders who have been engaged in the Healthcheck project to continue this engagement after the final report is delivered and assist with practical delivery of the various action plans and projects;
- This commitment is shared by HDC and the St Neots Town Centre Initiative who will need to provide resources to maintain the momentum of the Healthcheck process; and
- Additional stakeholders will be invited to join the Healthcheck implementation over time, including development interests for the key development sites, new commercial interests to the town and new community groups established as a result of the growth agenda.

The key tasks which will be involved in implementing the Healthcheck Action Plans are as follows:

- To implement the Action Plan projects by either implementing the project as it is currently defined; or preparing a brief for the project e.g. a feasibility study to define the project in more detail or a scope of works to implement/construct the project.
- To secure funding (where appropriate) to implement the Action Plan projects. This could mean coordinating various existing funding sources into one pot dedicated to the project; making funding bids to HDC, Cambridge County Council, EEDA, EERA (or similar); or securing funding through negotiation with developer interests in partnership with HDC;
- To decide the relative priorities of the Action Plan projects, especially if funding is limited and there are key critical or essential projects which need to be delivered with maximum cost/benefit return to the vision for St Neots.
- To provide progress reports on delivery of the Action Plan projects against agreed priorities, timescales and costs.

Recommended implementation arrangements:

The recommended roles and responsibilities for implementation are identified below. These build on the stakeholder engagement process established as part of the Healthcheck process and would maintain wide stakeholder involvement that has been instrumental to delivery of the Healthcheck Report.

Role	Recommended for:	Responsibilities	Next steps
Action Plan/Project topic leads	Healthcheck Topic Group leads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment • Transport • Economic & Retail • Social, Community & Leisure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day to day management of Action Plan projects • Prepare Action Plan project briefs • Prepare Action Plan project funding bids 	Seek nominations for Topic Group leads
Action Plan Co-ordinator	3 options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STNCTI Mgt Group • HDC representative • Independent nominee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive feedback from topic leads • Report to Steering Group and manage Steering Group process • Co-ordinate & submit Action Plan project funding bids • To negotiate with developer interests for additional funding or 'assistance in kind'. 	Discuss and agree the most appropriate Co-ordinator arrangements
Action Plan Steering Group	Healthcheck Steering Group (retaining additional membership of Town Councillors and Eynesbury Neighbourhood Management Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive regular progress reports from the Co-ordinator • Agree priorities for implementation e.g. if funding is scarce in the short term the group will agree the key critical or essential projects which deliver maximum cost;benefit return 	Prepare terms of reference for the Steering Group: to include the methodology and process for agreeing priorities for implementation and deciding between projects where required.