

Questions and answers

What is the vote on the 6th May for?

Registered voters who live in the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan (Map 1 in the Plan) will be asked this question:

Do you want South Cambridgeshire District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Histon & Impington to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

If a majority of those voting, vote “yes”, the Plan will be “adopted” by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC).

Thereafter, when considering all planning applications for development in the area covered by the Plan, SCDC will be required to see whether the application is in accordance with the Plan (as well as national planning guidelines and SCDC’s Local Plan).

The Neighbourhood Plan therefore will have a material impact on the determination of such planning applications.

What is the value – the benefit – of the Neighbourhood Plan to people living and working in Histon and Impington?

There has been considerable community input into the policies in the Plan. This community engagement, including for example the 2 000 plus responses to the 2016 survey, resulted in establishing the priorities the community considered important for guiding the shape of future development in the villages.

The Plan’s value is that it is the only way we as a community can directly, and proactively influence planning permission decisions affecting our villages and deliver on our villages’ collective priorities.

The Plan gives us a voice to shape our community that we do not otherwise have.

(As a reminder, the priorities that emerged from the consultation were:

- To protect the essential character (the ‘village character’) of the community.
- To encourage the growth and success of the retail, leisure and other commercial businesses of the villages.
- To ensure the villages' community infrastructure (clubs and societies, open spaces and events) develops and adapts to emerging and changing demographic needs.
- To develop a network of sustainable, accessible transport links within and around the villages to create safe and inviting routes for all and especially for pedestrians and cyclists.
- To support the community in continuing to make the villages safe, secure, supportive and welcoming for all.

- To ensure a sufficient supply of sustainable and high quality housing (including affordable homes and small and larger units which address changing demographic demand) within the villages.)

Of course, we as individuals and the Parish Council as a consultee can comment on individual planning applications. But, in the absence of a Neighbourhood Plan, when SCDC considers a planning application its first responsibility is to determine whether or not the application complies with national planning guidelines and SCDC's district-wide Local Plan.

These documents form the basis of SCDC's consideration of objections to an application from the public and the Parish Council: SCDC does not have to take account of the wishes of objectors except to the extent that these match with national planning guidelines and the Local Plan.

If the Neighbourhood Plan were adopted, SCDC would also have to consider its policies at this time, thus giving voice to the priorities of our community.

What is the definitive version of the Neighbourhood Plan?

Version 4: Referendum version: the vote only applies to this version.

Recent changes in the villages are not reflected in the Plan. Why is this?

The Plan was developed over several years following a process laid down in law. Following the Independent Examination in winter 2019/20, the Neighbourhood Plan was finalised with the intention that its adoption would be put to the vote in late spring 2020.

As part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the government postponed all such votes until 6th May this year.

The Plan has not been updated as it will be in effect until 2031 over which period there will be a number of changes in the villages. Such changes can be captured when the Plan is reviewed.

People commenting on planning applications have referred to the Plan. Does the Plan have any relevance before the vote?

Following adjustment in line with the Independent Examiner's requirements, the local planning authority, SCDC, has to give the Plan "significant weight" when determining planning applications in advance of the vote.

How have people living in the community been consulted?

The Parish Council first sought opinions on the value and possible content of a neighbourhood plan in an open meeting held in autumn 2013.

A professional research company, Enventure, ran focus groups and a community-wide survey in 2016. Over 2 000 responses were received.

Draft policies were prepared in the light of this and consulted on in September 2017; the policies were further modified as a result.

A full consultation with residents on the draft Neighbourhood Plan was undertaken over a six-week period (October 1st to November 16th, 2018). Subsequently, for some Policies workshops were held in January / February 2019 with consultation respondees to further understand points raised.

The revised Plan and its supporting documents were submitted to SCDC in June 2019 whereupon SCDC ran a further six-week public consultation.

What happens if the vote is against adopting the Neighbourhood Plan?

Should the vote go against adopting the Plan, none of the policies in the Plan will be in force.

Consequently, when SCDC determine planning applications they will have no obligation to take account of the views which have been put forward by members of the community and captured in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Instead, SCDC will assess planning applications for Histon and Impington against the UK government's National Planning Policy Framework and SCDC's South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

It should be noted the latter reflects a broad view of planning priorities across South Cambridgeshire. So, while it does capture some aspects of specific interest to Histon and Impington, in some matters the policies will reflect more the interests of other communities in the District – but these will nevertheless be used to judge suitability of development in our community.

If the vote is in favour of adopting the Neighbourhood Plan, under the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 30), the Neighbourhood Plan policies take precedence over existing 'non-strategic' policies in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, until such time as they are superseded by local plan strategic or non-strategic policies.

Will South Cambridgeshire's Local Plan be replaced soon?

Work is currently underway on replacing SCDC's Local Plan with a Greater Cambridge Local Plan. It is possible this will dilute further the Histon and Impington communities' interests when planning applications are considered as the Local Plan policies will be framed in the wider interest of both Cambridge itself and the South Cambridgeshire District.

The UK government has proposed changes to the planning system. What is the future prospect for a Neighbourhood Plan?

In the August White Paper "Planning for the Future", the government's Proposal 9 stated "Neighbourhood Plans should be retained as an important means of community input ...".

Of course, over time the form and content of neighbourhood plans may change. The Histon and Impington Neighbourhood Plan, if adopted, would be used in determining planning applications locally for the foreseeable future.

The Plan refers to new housing, particularly affordable housing. Does the Plan allow for this housing to be built in the Green Belt?

The availability of affordable housing is a concern within the community as evidenced by the 2016 survey.

The Plan makes no statement about development within the Green Belt because it is outside its remit.

There are national policies relating to the Green Belt and affordable housing and the Plan cannot influence them.

The Plan is very clear about only supporting new development of limited scale and close to one of the two community centres.

If the Plan is adopted, what effect will it have on existing parking arrangements in Restricted Streets?

There will be no impact on existing parking arrangements in the Restricted Streets (Map 10). The Plan will only affect parking requirements when considering planning applications for new developments – for both new buildings and extensions to existing buildings.

To be clear: if the Plan is adopted this will not result in new parking restrictions (yellow lines) on any street.

The Plan could restrict development in Restricted Streets. Is this justified?

There are already parking provision requirements in the SCDC Local Plan which are taken into consideration when planning applications in the villages are assessed. The Neighbourhood Plan addresses car parking in roads which are either already very congested, or which could become congested.

The concern is around ensuring both:

- Public transport can flow freely (otherwise the operator may seek to change the routing)
- Emergency vehicles (ambulances, fire engines) or critical service vehicles (such as waste collection vehicles) can access properties.

The Plan (page 55) therefore seeks to restrict increased levels of parking on streets where such access could become a problem.

However, the Plan specifically allows exemption from the requirement that all parking provision must be provided off the running carriageway where “the specific development proposal in question is not likely to have any adverse impact on amenity, the passage of buses and service vehicles, or road safety through the creation of additional on-street parking”.

Why is attention being given to car parking provision when this appears contrary to the sustainability aims and the climate change emergency commitment made by the Parish Council?

The Plan seeks to promote cycle use, for example by requiring that cycle parking should be conveniently sited so the use of a cycle as the first choice for short trips is encouraged.

Moreover, cycle parking should be accessible, easy to use, safe, secure, covered, fit for purpose, attractive and designed to fit into the character of the local area.

Nevertheless, there is currently a significant level of car ownership in the village (some of which is only used intermittently). Unless someone works in Cambridge the bus network is not ideal as a way of getting to work, and even if it is, a car is almost essential for social trips. On top of this, a growing proportion of young adults (more than 30% in some studies) are living with parents and want their independence.

At the last census 40% of households in the village had 2 or more cars, with a small percentage having 4 or more.

On the one hand there are no- and one-car households – which may stay that way whilst they live in the villages. On the other hand, some households will not only have personal / family cars but also trade vans, and perhaps even a caravan / motor home in addition.

The Plan seeks to manage parking provision, in the context of planning applications, only to the extent of aiming to preserve the essential character of the village whilst recognising the current realities of car ownership.

Are the walking and cycle routes identified in the Plan fixed? Could other routes be provided?

The Plan identifies existing routes – though it does not distinguish those specifically suited to cycling.

The Plan also identifies several radial and circular aspirational routes. As noted in the Plan, the maps show one of several possible alignments for these aspirational routes and are not to be construed as representing a preferred route. The alignment of specific routes will be developed with the land owners concerned.

However, there is nothing in the Plan which prevents other routes being identified, and with land owner agreement, being established.

Should there be provision of routes for horse riders?

Whilst the Independent Examiner noted “I see no evidence of a widespread desire in the community to cover the topic of horse riding” he also noted “the Parish Council is open to the suggestion that a policy relating to horse riding could be included in a review of the Plan”.

It remains the case that horse riding could be included in a review of the Plan.

What does the Plan do to reduce the noise and air pollution from the A14?

The Plan’s main impact will be to protect through the planning system the A14 mitigation measures that are already in place.

The Plan cannot make Highways England provide any additional mitigation measures. Should these be required, these will need to be sought by other means.