



Local Plan 2036 – Examination Hearing Update

July 18th 2018 – A session of the hearing looking at the Huntingdonshire Proposed Local Plan 2036 was held to look specifically at the planning levels: Key Service Centre, Small Settlements and the one that affects us here in Bluntisham; Local Service Centre. On behalf of the Parish Council, Philippa Hope attended and on behalf of the Colne Road Group – Darren Young and Paul Davies attended.

The three planning levels are all categorised based on the level of services that are available in each location. For clarity, HDC's definition of these levels of services according to the PLP 2036 are as follows:

Key Service Centre

4.95 There are a number of large villages, outside of spatial planning areas, that offer a range of services and facilities to meet the daily needs of their residents and to some extent the residents of other villages nearby. At the least these include a:

Primary school, bus service operating Monday to Saturday, doctor's surgery, convenience shop and at least one other shop, public hall and a public house

Local Service Centre

4.100 There are a number of large villages, outside of spatial planning areas, that offer a range of services and facilities to meet the daily needs of their residents and to some extent the residents of other villages nearby. The local service centres contain a lower level of service provision than the key service centres but all offer at least:

Primary school, public house, doctor's surgery, convenience shop and a public hall.

Small Settlement

4.105 There are many settlements across Huntingdonshire that have very limited or no services or facilities available. Such settlements are identified as Small Settlements. Small Settlements are less sustainable than settlements in the Spatial Planning Area settlements, Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres due to the need to travel to access services and facilities elsewhere on a regular basis. As such the Local Plan makes no allocations for development in Small Settlements. However, the strategy does set out a role for a limited amount of sustainable development in contributing to the social and economic sustainability of Small Settlements and in supporting a thriving rural economy. Given the variation in size and availability of services and facilities between Small Settlements it is recognised that varying levels of development

All of the service provision in all of these levels was, by HDC's admission, last comprehensively audited in 2014, checks were carried out last summer via a combination of site visits, local knowledge and online checks. A discussion centred on Key Service Centres and local service centres made it apparent that the evidence gathering was very black and white and limited to current provision rather than capacity to sustain growth.

Bluntisham – Local Service Centre Status

The inspector confirmed that he had read the submission to the plan that we put forward setting out our objections to the change in status to local plan, and we were given opportunity during the hearing to make further submissions regards the change in status, these include but are not limited to the following:

- A timeline of consultation and how we were given 7 days' notice between the new LSC status being added to the plan and the full council vote to approve the plan for submission.
- How we were never clearly advised of this change by HDC planning and that we felt that it was unsound as Bluntisham does not have the facilities or capacity to conform to the LSC level.

- That HDC planning call for sites was sent out in August 2017, post the receipt of two planning applications for large scale development at Colne Road and Station Road.
- The HELAA document contained these sites and but failed to acknowledge they were already subject to opposition from the Parish Council and Colne Road Group and that our opposition was on material planning grounds and lack of infrastructure.
- That the local Primary school had formally objected to the proposed development rather than approved as was stated by the HDC planning department and evidence was provided of this during the hearing.
- That proper scrutiny of the services available in Bluntisham had not been carried out to ascertain current capacity.
- That a Branch Surgery (operating for 1.5hrs/wk.), that is a tenant at the Village Hall and cannot be considered to be a Doctor's Surgery.
- That the Infrastructure Delivery Plan update in December 2017 was based on modelling and not reality.
- That there is at least £3.6M of essential infrastructure improvements within the IDP that have no funding stream.
- None of the proposed development in Bluntisham would deliver any Section 106 payment as they are both below the 200 dwelling threshold after which S106 money is payable by the developer.
- Chatteris Secondary School is not included within the IDP and is out of district.
- That there were no capacity assessments carried out when the new IDP was put together.
- Why were other villages not included in the status when they had the same "level" of service provision, why were larger villages like Stilton considered to be a Small Settlement when they offer a greater level of services than Bluntisham albeit without a Doctor's surgery.
- Bluntisham would be shouldering 60% of the new housing allocation in the LSC planning level.
- That the proposed new developments would potentially increase the population of Bluntisham by 23%.
- It was highlighted that transport analysis needs to be undertaken on the three entrances to the village rather than "within" the village. This is to understand the broader transport impact given the additional developments approved and proposed locally in Needingworth, Somersham, Colne, Earith and Bluntisham

As a result of the points that we raised, and the support that we got from around the table, the QC representing HDC offered that more details should be provided. The inspector confirmed that this was necessary but stated this brief be extended to include all the village's that have been moved in to the LSC category and all other villages that are currently in the small settlement category. With a view to looking at them all to see if those on the margins should also be termed as LSC's and to ensure that we here in Bluntisham fit the brief. Suffice to say that all the evidence that we put before them both in our submissions and during the hearing clearly points to the fact that we don't and we never have fitted their brief. The inspector suggested that site visits be undertaken, that the current level of service provision be audited thoroughly and that the capacity for growth also be looked in to.

This is a positive development and probably the best outcome that we could have hoped for at this stage. This evidence gathering will be done by HDC planning and will be completed by the end of August and before the next hearings scheduled for mid-September. This does not mean that we have achieved our aim of being moved back to a small settlement, but it is most certainly the first official step on that path.

Update 24.07.2018 - We have since been in contact with the Inquiry Programme Officer and can confirm the next steps. The review will be taking place over the next three weeks, we would hope that HDC planning will consult with us but there is no guarantee that they will do so. Once the review is completed, we will be given sight of it and able to submit a statement by 31.08.2018. The inspector will then consider the review, the inspector might schedule another session to discuss this or he may be content to consider it in writing, either way we will be informed. If there is another session we will attend and speak again on behalf of the village. If the Inspector after this process considers modifications are required to make the plan sound he has the authority to do so and any such changes would be consulted on before he issues his final report.

Again thank you to those that attended on the day and thank you for your continued support. As soon as we know more we will update you again.