1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document summarises the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of proposals for a Hybrid Planning Application for the development of a mixed-use urban extension at Wintringham Park on the eastern edge of St Neots.

1.2 The Hybrid Application seeks outline planning permission for the development of the site with all matters reserved except means of access. The Hybrid Application also seeks full planning permission for the construction of new roads, hard and soft landscaping, the creation of SUDS and associated infrastructure and engineering works within the northern part of the site. The applicants are the Wintringham Park Partnership comprising Urban&Civic, Nuffield Dominions Trust and Nuffield Oxford Hospitals Fund.

1.3 The following plan submitted with the application identifies the boundaries of the planning application:

WIN001/001 Site Location Plan

1.4 The purpose of an EIA is to assess the likely significant environmental effects of a development proposal. These effects have been assessed as “adverse” or “beneficial”; and of “major”, “moderate”, “minor” or “negligible” significance, in accordance with recognised EIA methodology and applying professional judgement.

1.5 The “significance” of each effect takes into account both its “magnitude” and the “sensitivity” of the receptor affected. For example, a change of “large” magnitude affecting a receptor of “high” sensitivity would generally result in an effect of “major” significance. Conversely, a change of “small” magnitude affecting a receptor of “low” sensitivity would generally result in an effect of “minor” significance.

1.6 The full findings of this EIA are reported in an Environmental Statement (ES). This concise document summarises the main findings of the ES in non-technical language, for a wide readership.

1.7 The ES supports the hybrid planning application to Huntingdonshire District Council for the Proposed Development. Comments on it should therefore be directed to Huntingdonshire District Council. The significant environmental effects the application have been considered separately and in combination in this environmental statement.

1.7.1 The ES is available on Huntingdonshire District Council’s website http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/ and can be viewed in person during office hours at the following address:
Wintringham Park
Hybrid Planning Application

Planning Development Control
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
PE29 3TN
Email: developmentcontrol@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01480388424

1.8Copies may also be obtained on request from:

David Lock Associates Ltd.
50 North Thirteenth Street
Central Milton Keynes
Bucks.
MK9 3BP
Email: mail@davidlock.com
Tel: 01908 666276

1.9Charges apply in relation to paper copies of the full ES as follows:

CD of the full ES: Free of Charge
Hard copy of Non-Technical Summary of ES: Free of Charge
Hard Copy of Main Text (Volume 1): £80.00
Hard Copy of complete ES (including Plans and Appendices): £250.00

2.0THE APPLICATION SITE AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THE SITE

2.1Wintringham Park is located on the eastern edge of St Neots, approximately 1.5 miles (2.5 km) to the east of the town centre. St Neots has a population of circa 32,730 people and is the largest town in Huntingdonshire District. The town lies close to the borders of Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire and is situated approximately 18 miles west of Cambridge, 14 miles south of Huntingdon and 12 miles north east of Bedford.

2.2St Neots has a good range of services and facilities as well as a number of employment opportunities serving the town and its immediate catchment
2.3 The Site encompasses 162.3 hectares of principally agricultural land bounded to the north by the B1428 Cambridge Road, to the south and east by the A428, to the south west by the A1046 Potton Road and to the west by the East Coast Mainline Railway. The Site lies wholly within the jurisdiction of Huntingdonshire District Council.

2.4 At a local level, the Site is served by Cambridge Road which provides links to the major strategic routes including the A428. This provides links to the strategic highway network including the A1 to the west. The Site is highly accessible by a range of modes of transportation. It is situated adjacent to the A428 providing excellent access to the strategic road network. The nearest railway station to the Site is St Neots Railway Station, approximately 1 mile to the north west of the Site.

2.5 To the east of the Site, beyond the East Coast Mainline Railway, there is a mix of industrial and residential areas within the Eynesbury Ward of St Neots. To the north of the site, beyond Cambridge Road, lies the first consented phase of the Loves Farm development which is now substantially complete.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.6 The planning application seeks planning permission for the following development:

*Hybrid planning application comprising:*

1) Application for outline planning permission for development of a mixed use urban extension to include; residential development of up to 2,800 dwellings (C3), up to 63,500 sqm of employment development (B1-B8), District Centre including shops, services, community and health uses (A1-A5, D1 & D2), Local Centre (A1-A5), Temporary Primary School, Two Permanent Primary Schools, open space, play areas, recreation facilities and landscaping, strategic access improvements including new access points from Cambridge Road & A428, associated ground works and infrastructure. All matters reserved with the exception of means of access; and

2) Application for full planning permission for the construction of new roads, hard & soft landscaping, creation of SUDS and all associated infrastructure and engineering works including creation of haul routes.

2.7 The Parameter Plan for the application (reference WIN001/002 REV H Parameter Plan) sets out the layout for the proposed development, fixes the boundary between built development and green infrastructure and fixes the location of the different land
uses. The Parameter Plan also provides the general indication of the alignment of the primary route which will comprise the key movement corridor for the site.

Principal access will be achieved through the following.

a. Cambridge Road Western Access – provision of a fourth arm at the existing roundabout junction of Cambridge Road / Dramsell Rise.

b. Cambridge Road Eastern Access – construction of a new junction on Cambridge Road.

c. A428 Northern Access – construction of a new T-Junction designed to allow all movements with the exception of right turning vehicles leaving the Site.


e. Potton Road Access – construction of a new T-junction designed to allow all movements.

f. Provision of a Primary Route through the site to link (a) and (b) with (e) as the key movement corridor for the site. The alignment and design of the Primary Route will be planned through Key Phase Design.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The Proposed Development is being brought forward against a backdrop of support for, well-conceived sustainable development proposals in the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the established local policy context as well as emerging local policy supporting the eastern expansion of St Neots as the most sustainable means of accommodating Huntingdonshire District’s and Cambridgeshire’s housing needs.

4.0 SOCIO ECONOMIC

4.1 Within the application area, no adverse socio-economic effects are predicted, taking into account the timely provision of supporting facilities as the development is built out. That timely provision would be secured by conditions and legal obligations attached to any grant of outline planning permission.

4.2 Moderate beneficial effects on the local economy are predicted. Major beneficial effects on the local housing market are reported. Beneficial effects on open space provision, education provision, and community facility provision are also predicted,
again taking into account the timely provision of the proposed education facilities, public open space and local centre/community uses as the development is built out.

5.0 TRANSPORT

5.1 The transport effects of the proposals have been carefully assessed, along with other planned development within Huntingdonshire to test the impact of the proposals.

5.2 The transport effects arising during the construction phase and the likely construction traffic movements have been assessed. Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP) will manage the impact of construction traffic so construction stage impacts will be negligible and short term.

5.3 The Proposed Development includes new pedestrian and cycle routes connecting with the existing walking and cycling networks in the area, as well as providing for the enhancement of bus services into the Site. The main components of the transport mitigation measures include the implementation of a Travel Plan, a package of local junction improvement works and provision for upgrades to pedestrian/cycle connections around the site together with new crossing in key locations.

5.4 Following the completion of the development various effects have been tested. This includes potential severance effects on existing movements, pedestrian amenity, road safety, fear and intimidation and travel delay. Mitigation measures will minimise the post completion effects such that the residual effects are considered to be negligible.

6.0 NOISE AND VIBRATION

6.1 Potential construction noise and vibration impacts are temporary in nature. Practical construction noise control measures will be secured through the implementation of CEMPs. Taking into account the proposed mitigating measures, the construction stage effects upon existing property are assessed as minor.

6.2 Due consideration has also been given to the relationship of the development, and the uses within it, to other noise and vibration sources in the area including the proximity of road corridors, the adjacent railway line and surrounding land uses. A range of mitigating measures can be incorporated into the detailed design and construction of the development. Notwithstanding this, the effects arising would be negligible.
7.0 AIR QUALITY

7.1 The potential for impacts on local air quality have been tested in the context of existing conditions at the site and within the surrounding area. The assessment has had regard to other planned development.

7.2 Potential construction phase impacts will be associated with dust and spoiling of surfaces. Mitigation is to be secured by planning conditions, legal requirements or as required by regulations.

7.3 Air quality impacts arising from the operational phase have also been assessed with regard to human health and ecological effects. Operational phase impacts will be associated with emissions from road traffic associated with the development proposals.

7.4 No significant effects on local air quality have been identified within the assessments.

8.0 ECOLOGY AND NATURE CONSERVATION

8.1 The potential effects relating to ecology and nature conservation have been assessed as part of the ES. Effects during the construction stage are primarily those relating to temporary factors arising from the construction process, such as construction noise or dust production, and which will cease to apply during the longer-term post-construction stage. Construction stage effects are mainly negligible. A Construction Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy and CEMPs will provide a package of environmental safeguards to protect habitats and biodiversity during construction.

8.2 Negative post-completion effects will arise from land take for development and impacts resulting from activity such as recreation, noise and light disturbance. Positive effects will also comprise those relating to habitat enhancement; the overall long-term enhancements including maturing of the new planting; creation of new habitats providing habitat for wildlife; creation of sustainable drainage features, green infrastructure and open space; implementation of management and environmental mitigation strategies; and education. These will give rise to broad ranging and long term beneficial effects.
9.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CHARACTER

9.1 The landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development have been considered in full, with respect to the existing physical landscape and potential changes to its character and the visual amenity of the area.

9.2 Potential landscape effects have been assessed with regard to the impacts upon local landscape character types. The visual effects have been assessed on the basis the potential impacts upon key public viewpoints of the site within the surrounding area.

9.3 Development of this scale will inevitably have landscape and visual impacts including unavoidable changes to the character of the site, but the overall significant effects are limited to a relatively restricted area of localised surrounding countryside and townscape. Adverse impacts arising are to be minimised through the retention of existing vegetation as part of the development proposals, provision of new structural landscaping elements and the management of lighting in connection with detailed design proposals at the reserved matters stages.

10.0 CULTURAL HERITAGE

10.1 A detailed assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development on the cultural heritage of the application site and its surroundings has been undertaken. As part of this, the potential impact upon the setting of historic features and assets surrounding the site, such as listed buildings, has been considered.

10.2 No significant effects have been identified during the construction period and such impacts would be temporary. The permanent effects of the Proposed Development would not be significant in terms of cultural heritage.

11.0 ARCHAEOLOGY

11.1 The likely impacts of the proposed development on archaeology within Wintringham Park have been assessed in full. The assessment used as its basis a programme of archaeological investigation commissioned for the Wintringham Park development. This provides some evidence for activity during the Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman periods at the Site. A programme of excavation and recording will be implemented in order to mitigate the archaeological effects of the Proposed Development. Each phase of development in the area would be stripped under archaeological supervision and
identified features will be excavated and recorded. Work would give particular consideration to the four sites of identified high archaeological potential.

11.2 No significant impacts are identified through the assessments. A number of beneficial effects would arise from enhanced understanding of the local area, which will revise existing interpretations of the origins of the landscape.

12.0 GROUND CONDITIONS

12.1 An assessment of ground conditions has been carried out. The assessment identifies the existing soil and geological conditions at the Site and evaluates the potential for existing ground and groundwater contamination from both past and current land use activities on both human health and the environment. Consideration has then been given to the resultant impacts from the Proposed Development.

12.2 Clearance of any isolated areas of fly-tipped material and remediation of contamination will be undertaken in order to mitigate the risks and the potential effects associated with historical contamination. In relation to the potential risks to construction site workers the adoption of appropriate Health & Safety procedures will mitigate the risks and the residual effects. The adoption of environmental management controls in accordance with industry guidelines will mitigate the risks and potential effects of pollution release from construction works.

12.3 The operational stage of the development constitutes the normal day-to-day activities within residential and commercial areas and no significant effects are identified to arise following the completion of the development.

13.0 FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

13.1 The potential environmental effects relating to flood risk and surface water drainage have been assessed. Consideration has been given to the location and function of watercourses, surface water features and defined flood plains within and around the site.

13.2 The potential effects of construction activities upon the surface water drainage/run-off regime will be controlled using routine surface water management controls. The Proposed Development will give rise to an increase in the impermeable area within the Site, thereby increasing surface water run-off to the Hen Brook and the Wintringham Brook and its tributary. The proposals include a surface water management strategy
to control outflows to the watercourses on site. The strategy comprises a number of surface water balancing ponds, each designed to limit and treat surface water flows.

13.3 Surface water will therefore be managed in a sustainable manner and the post-completion surface water drainage regime will replicate the existing (pre-development) regime, such that there will be no significant flooding and drainage effects.

14.0 UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

14.1 Consideration has been given to the potential environmental impacts relating to supply of utilities services, specifically relating to electric, gas, potable water, foul water and telecommunications.

14.2 The successful implementation of improvements to local electrical, gas, water and foul drainage infrastructure and the implementation of telecommunications systems will ensure negligible network capacity effects as a result of the Proposed Development.

15.0 AGRICULTURAL LAND QUALITY

15.1 The impact of the Proposed Development on agricultural land quality and soil resources has been assessed as part of the ES.

15.2 The loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land is considered to be an adverse effect due to the sensitivity of the land grade albeit that the land quality is common in this area and beyond. Loss of soil function can be managed by a good soil management policy including appropriate measures to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects on agricultural land quality and soil resources which may arise.

15.3 Assessed with wider development across the district to meet local housing needs, the local plan process has considered the impacts of development through the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment process. The eastern expansion of St Neots was identified as a sustainable means to reduce the overall cumulative effects of development across the district. The development of best and most versatile agricultural land in this case is therefore justified in line with adopted policy.
16.0 CONCLUSIONS AND CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

16.1 This EIA has found that the Proposed Development would have few adverse residual effects of more than moderate significance.

16.2 One area where substantial effects would arise would be in the positive socio-economic impacts of the development. The application proposals will result in substantial and demonstrable benefits in terms of meeting the need for new homes in a sustainable manner, fostering economic development. Major beneficial effects have been identified in terms of ecology and nature conservation as a result of habitat creation and enhancement measures which will be delivered as part of the development.

16.3 The potential for cumulative impacts arising as a result of the Proposed Development in combination with development of additional and adjacent sites in the immediate area, have been considered as part of the environmental assessments undertaken within this ES. The nature of the cumulative impacts has been set out in full and will for instance be related to traffic impacts. In this regard, the Proposed Development will make a positive cumulative impact by ensuring new housing development is well located in relation to the employment and services within St Neots and is in a location well served by sustainable transport options.

16.4 In overall terms, the outcome of the EIA is that significant beneficial effects are substantial, significant adverse effects are limited and beneficial effects outweigh adverse effects.