

**Public  
Key Decision - Yes**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy

**Meeting/Date:** Cabinet – 15th November 2022

**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing

**Report by:** Chief Planning Officer

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

The report highlights the approaches set out in the draft Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council as published for consultation between 26<sup>th</sup> September and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

The draft Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy sets out a vision and objectives for transport and travel in the district and includes the local context in which these function. It includes a series of policies which support implementation of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and contribute to delivery of sustainable growth in the district. The Strategy provides details on funding opportunities for transport and travel infrastructure improvements and the relevance to this of working collaboratively with partners including developers and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. An 'action plan' is also set out identifying a range of transport infrastructure improvements within Huntingdonshire that would address specific local issues and assist in delivering sustainable development. This excludes active travel projects to avoid confusion with the Cambridgeshire Active Travel Strategy issued for consultation concurrently.

A strong emphasis is placed on reducing the need for travel, particularly by car, and promoting public transport and active travel alternatives. The Strategy also focuses on road safety and traffic management to reduce risks to residents, and seeks to facilitate improved health outcomes through reduced collisions, reduced air and noise pollutions and enhanced active travel infrastructure.

**Recommendation:**

The Cabinet is

**RECOMMENDED**

To support submission of a response to Cambridgeshire County Council supporting the Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy and raising points of detail as identified in the analysis section of this report.

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

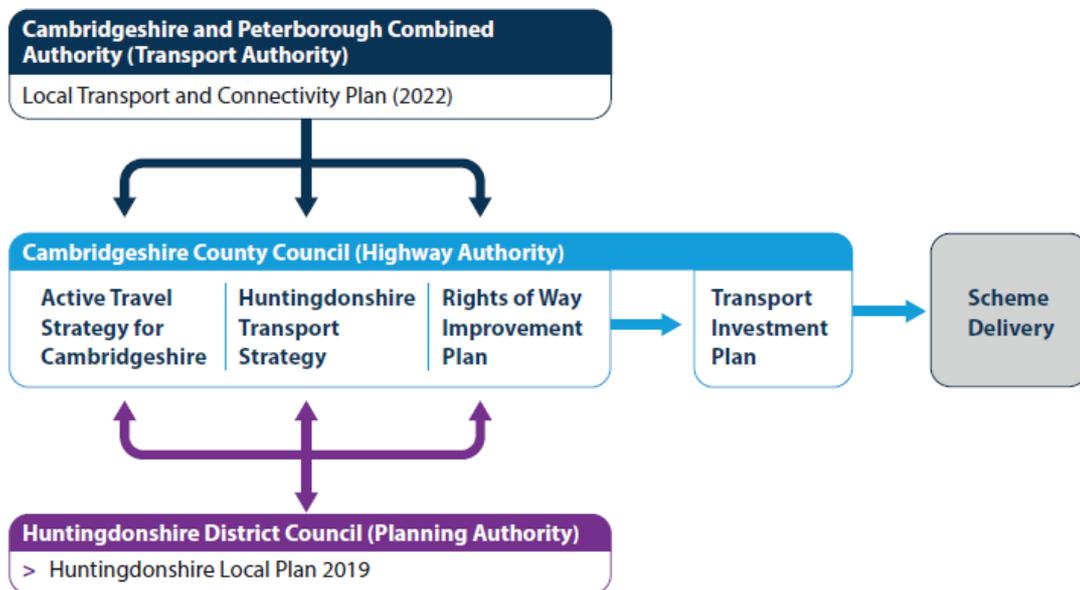
- 1.1 Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) has published a draft Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy for public consultation between 26<sup>th</sup> September and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022. This report seeks approval for submission of formal consultation responses on behalf of the District Council to the County Council.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. Preparation of the draft Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy started in 2019 involving a Member Steering Group comprising both County and Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) Members supported by officers from both councils. Work was suspended during 2020 as part of the Covid-19 response prioritisation and resumed in spring 2021. The Strategy has been prepared collaboratively between the County and HDC and comments made by HDC officers during the most recent revisions have been taken into account and have strongly shaped the structure and content of the Strategy. Reflecting this collaboration, it is suggested that there are only a few points of detail to address in the consultation response.
- 2.2. Consultation is available online at [Consult Cambridgeshire](#) with a survey form to guide responses. It has been supported by four public engagement events in Huntingdonshire between 1st to 6th October with six other events across the county. The consultation period is 26th September to 7th November 2022.
- 2.3. The purpose of the Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy is to provide a strategy and an action plan of schemes to address the transport challenges facing the district, whilst also looking at sustainable access to services and a safe and healthy environment. It will be used when developers submit planning applications, with schemes assessed to ensure they contribute to the vision and objectives of the strategy. This Strategy will work in tandem with the Active Travel Strategy for Cambridgeshire. The Strategy has been prepared to assist with delivery of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

## **3. ANALYSIS**

- 3.1. The Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy sets out a vision and objectives for transport in Huntingdonshire and analyses the district's transport and travel challenges. An extensive context is set out reflecting the complex nature of transport planning across different tiers of local government. Key elements are highlighted in the diagram below. It contains a series of policies to assist in decision-making and considers funding opportunities. It concludes with an action plan of potential improvement schemes. It should be noted that to avoid duplication these exclude active travel measures which are contained in Cambridgeshire's Active Travel Strategy.



- 3.2. The Strategy is based around the four following **objectives**:
- Enhancing the natural environment, tackling the challenges of climate change by meeting Cambridgeshire County Council’s carbon targets and supporting Huntingdonshire District Council’s commitment of net zero carbon by 2040.
  - Enabling residents to access the services they need to enjoy a good quality of life.
  - Enabling residents to live a safe, fit and active lifestyle by supporting and investing in active travel infrastructure.
  - Supporting the needs of the local economy, potential growth and tackling existing traffic congestion.
- 3.3. These align well with the five objectives adopted by this Council in May 2022 and should be supported. It is suggested that the response includes a request to delete the section containing HDC’s vision and substitute it with the Council’s five current strategic priorities.
- 3.4. The section entitled ‘**Wider transport and other policy context**’ contains references to multiple documents which are currently being updated or prepared for the first time. It is suggested that the response includes a request for relevant updates to be included when this Strategy is finalised. If completion of other documents does not align with this Strategy, then it is suggested that the response urges publication of an updated version issued reflecting the completion of other strategies as soon as this is feasible for ease of interpretation by readers.
- 3.5. This section also raises several points that would benefit from clarification. The paragraph on **Alternative Fuels** highlights a list of barriers to electric vehicle uptake. This list omits an important concern about new forms of

emissions and particulate creation as well as the carbon cost of producing electric vehicles. The paragraph describing the **Huntingdonshire Environment and Climate Strategy (emerging)** should be updated to clarify the council's ambition "to reach net carbon zero council operations by 2040" and "encourage the communities and businesses of Huntingdonshire to achieve net carbon zero". The paragraph on **Civil Parking Enforcement** is noted and it should be referenced that this work is part of ongoing dialogue with HDC. . The paragraph describing the **Future High Street Fund (St Neots)** lists a key project ambition to improve connectivity across the river. This refers to an earlier ambition that is no longer reflected in the FHSF project as detailed schemes are developed. With that in mind, the language should continue to reflect the evolving nature of projects as they are developed from strategic into detailed projects.

- 3.6. The '**Policies**' section helpfully identifies the policies of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 which are directly impacted by transport and cross-refers between these and the Local Plan's objectives. The policies are grouped into five categories and the relevant Local Plan policies are listed in each category. This provides clarity on how the Strategy supports implementation of the Local Plan policies. However, if this strategy aims to address the FHSF than the developing market town strategies should also be referenced.
- 3.7. **Support sustainable growth** covers policies TSH1 to TSH3. These focus on supporting growth which reduces the need to travel and promotes active and public transport capacity, working with developers to secure high quality infrastructure and travel plans. The policies support the delivery of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and it is suggested that they be supported.
- 3.8. **Technological solutions** covers policies TSH4 and 5. These seek to embrace new technologies and encourage the use of low carbon transport technologies. These reflect the advances made in this area since the Local Plan was adopted and should be supported as helping to move closer to HDC's net zero by 2040 aspiration.
- 3.9. **Improved integration of modes** covers policies TSH6 to TSH11. This focuses on supporting comprehensive public transport and active travel options both for longer journeys and those catering for first and last mile journeys to facilitate ease of use. It also focuses on reducing the need to travel, particularly by car, positively impacting health, well-being and the environment. This category also reflects the importance of collaborative working with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority in delivering bus and community transport options. The policies in this category reflect the increasing emphasis on promotion of sustainable travel and will help deliver the Local Plan.
- 3.10. **Management of environmental impacts** contains just policy TSH12 which seeks to reduce transport related emissions and protect

Huntingdonshire's landscape and biodiversity. It includes the County Council's commitment to deliver low carbon transport for their own vehicle fleet and again should be supported.

- 3.11. **Road safety and traffic management** covers policies TSH13 to TSH18. This addresses aspects which are less directly related to implementation of Local Plan policies but promote community wellbeing and safety. The policies highlight the County Council's commitment to the Vision Zero Partnership and Safe System Approach to achieve safe and healthy mobility for all by 2040; application of this approach ensures that safety is a priority in the development of all transport and travel related schemes. Policy TSH14 has potential to be of particular benefit to the rural parts of Huntingdonshire through its approach of focusing resources on improvements to local roads where accident clusters or congestion is present. Support for this should be highlighted in the consultation response. Policies in this category also seek to address transport-related noise pollution and manage demand for cars at points of congestion to improve the quality of life for the district's residents.
- 3.12. The '**Funding**' section outlines some of the funding opportunities available from government, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), developers, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and CCC rolling fund. Whilst the section notes the challenges currently faced in accessing funding, it is unfortunate that more specific transport funding opportunities are not able to be highlighted from government, the CPCA and CCC pots. It is suggested that the response reflects disappointment with this as detailing and aligning with more current funding opportunities would be beneficial in this section.
- 3.13. The reference to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) should be reworded. Whilst CIL can be set for different locations and different development types, the current CIL Charging Schedule does not include location zones and is charged across the whole of the district.
- 3.14. The final section covers the draft **Action Plan**. It is noted that the active travel schemes for Huntingdonshire are covered separately in the Cambridgeshire Active Travel Strategy (ATS). As outlined in para 2.3, this is being consulted on at the same time as the Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy.
- 3.15. The Action Plan outlines the schemes noted for the district shown by location. Maps are presented for Huntingdonshire, Huntingdon including St Ives, and St Neots. Nothing is shown for the fourth market town of Ramsey on the Huntingdonshire map. Weblinks to maps are also referenced, although the consultation document only shows maps but not the weblinks. It is suggested that the response notes this and recommends that the map keys are enlarged for clarity. It is also noted that the only action included for Ramsey is installation of real time passenger

information displays. The symbol for this is omitted from the map and should be noted in the response.

- 3.16. It was noted in the consideration of the Cambridgeshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021 - [Minute 18 refers](#) - that Ramsey should be included in strategies for the district and that schemes identified previously for the Ramsey area should be reviewed and considered for inclusion. The lack of more ambitious strategies for the Ramsey area is disappointing. It is suggested that the response highlights the very limited consideration of Ramsey within the Action Plan and urges a review on this matter so that the transport challenges of Ramsey and surrounding communities are considered comprehensively.
- 3.17. The Action Plan will feed into the Cambridgeshire Transport Investment plan (TIP). It is noted in the draft Active Travel Strategy action plan that a review and update of the TIP and associated processes is to be undertaken to ensure it remains effective. The Action Plan does not provide any detailed programme or project plans to support the delivery such as timescales, cost or funding opportunities. It is suggested that the response seeks greater clarity on how the projects stated have been chosen as the Strategy Basis identified provides little detail. The response should also request greater detail and clarity on the project descriptions to make the document more informative.

#### **4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY**

- 4.1. The Panel discussed the Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy report at it's meeting on 2nd November 2022.
- 4.2. Councillor Gray observed a carelessness in the approach of the County Council on this Strategy with incorrect road labelling on the map at page 5 and incorrect figures for the population of Huntingdonshire, it was further noted that these inconsistencies did not inspire confidence in the Strategy. Councillor Gray also observed that the strategy does not address the signification developments across rural areas of the district with specific reference to policy TSH1 in regards to sustainable growth, by this omission and the broad assumptions made, the robustness of the strategy must therefore be called into question. The Panel heard that the strategy will support the delivery of the Local Plan 2036. The Local Plan has sustainable growth at it's core with not only the market towns but key services centres and smaller settlements being identified within the strategy. The rural nature of the district is understood but the Council need to be mindful of what can realistically and reasonably achieved.
- 4.3. The growth of developments in key services areas was observed by Councillor Gray, along with the lack of active or alternative travel options thus encouraging reliance on private car usage. The Panel heard that Huntingdonshire would be unlikely to see the disappearance of the private car any time soon, however it is possible to use alternative transport

methods for part journeys which would be progress.

- 4.4. It was observed by Councillor Gardener that the document holds grand aspirations but lacked in the detail of how this would be achievable for the district. The Panel heard that the detail is expected to follow as the strategy is finalised and the action plan taken forward and linked into the County Council Transport Investment Plan.
- 4.5. In response to a question from Councillor Howell on the development of 5000 homes at Great Haddon, which is outside of the County but bordering on the north of the district, the Panel heard that planning process would have been followed for this development with local infrastructure and transport options being taken into account.
- 4.6. In response to a question from Councillor Cawley, the Panel heard that the Council would continue to work with the County Council and would involve Councillors in this conversation as much as practicable.

## **5. KEY IMPACTS**

- 5.1. Transport is a key consideration in many areas of work for the Council in order to support the delivery of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. It will support CCC as Local Highways Authority to ensure issues are considered, addressed, funded and implemented in a timely manner.
- 5.2. Through engagement in the process, the District Council ensures the needs of the district and its communities are fully considered.

## **6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN**

- 6.1. A response will be sent to Cambridgeshire County Council based on the suggestions included in this report. This will be supportive of the Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy and reflecting the collaborative nature of its preparation and identify points of detail that would benefit from amendment. Agreement has been obtained to submit these after the closing date of 7<sup>th</sup> November to accommodate the timings of HDC's committee cycle.

## **7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

- 7.1. The Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy will help deliver HDC's priorities for 2022/23, in particular:
  - Tackling climate change and caring for the environment
  - Enhancing employment opportunities and supporting businesses
  - Supporting the needs of residents
  - Strengthening our communities

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1. As noted in paragraph 2.1 the Strategy has been prepared collaboratively between the County Council and HDC. An online consultation portal is available for submission of responses, supported by four public engagement events within Huntingdonshire and others across Cambridgeshire as part of the joint consultation on this Strategy, the Active Travel Strategy and a Fenland Transport Strategy. Information has also been made available in libraries across the county, so residents who are unable to access the internet or cannot attend an event can view hard copies of the draft strategies and complete the survey.

## **9. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. Implementation of the policies put forward in the Strategy have the potential to support a range of health improvements including reduced air pollution, reduced stress from noise pollution and improved health of residents through facilitating the increased uptake of active travel modes.

## **10. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Implementation of the policies put forward in the Strategy has the potential for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The Strategy will help to deliver the policies in Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 which promote sustainable development, reduced demand for travel and sustainable travel.

## **11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 11.1. The submission of a response to the draft Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy, enables the Council to further influence the final version. This enables the Council to maximise the effectiveness of the document and its benefits to the residents and businesses of Huntingdonshire.

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[CCC consultation portal for Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy public consultation](#)

[Cabinet Report 19th July 2022 on draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#)

[Cabinet Report 15th July 2021 Consultation on Draft Cambridgeshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#)

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