

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: England's Economic Heartlands - Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 1st October 2019

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development

Report by: Planning Service Manager – Growth

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

England's Economic Heartlands was established to engage authorities impacted by the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge Arc. The Economic Heartland region covers Swindon, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Luton, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The organisation is the sub-national transport body for this region and received financial backing from the Department for Transport to advance an ambitious programme of work, including the development of an overarching transport strategy and work to identify and define a major road network across the arc.

England's Economic Heartlands (EEH) are currently consulting on the Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement which runs until 6pm 31 October 2019 and can be found on [England's Economic Heartlands webpages](#). The Framework for Engagement sets out the challenges and opportunities faced by the region and to achieve growth and zero carbon transport system by 2050. The views received and currently commissioned technical work will be used to develop a draft transport strategy which will be the subject of formal consultation in the first half of 2020.

This report provides an outline of the Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement (FfE) its aims and objectives and a draft consultation response on issues that affect the Huntingdonshire District Area, its corporate priorities and objectives.

Recommendation:

The Committee is recommended to provide comments on this consultation and delegate authority to submit the Council's final consultation comments on this consultation to the Planning Service Manager - Growth, in consultation with the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an outline of the Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement (FfE) its aims and objectives and a draft consultation response on issues that affect the Huntingdonshire District Area, its corporate priorities and objectives for approval by the Council.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 England's Economic Heartlands was established to engage authorities impacted by the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge Arc. The Economic Heartland region covers Swindon, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Luton, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The organisation is the sub-national transport body for this region and received financial backing from the Department for Transport to advance an ambitious programme of work, including the development of an overarching transport strategy and work to identify and define a major road network across the arc.
- 2.2 Organisationally the aim of EEH is to “address identified barriers to economic activity (both existing and planned growth) and raise productivity to match, and where possible exceed, that of our global competitors. To achieve this [they] need to
- Strip away duplication, remove inefficiencies, and enable faster, more agile decisions.
 - Simplify funding streams wherever possible so that the time (and cost) taken to develop proposals and get them delivered on the ground is reduced.
 - Provide greater certainty for private sector investors thereby encouraging them to commit sooner to investments with greater confidence.”
- 2.3 Another important goal for England's Economic Heartlands is to submit a proposal to establish a statutory Sub-national Transport Body with powers and responsibilities devolved from Government in a way that enables delivery of a Regional Transport Strategy. Currently Transport for the North is the only organisation that has been made a statutory body.
- 2.4 England's Economic Heartlands (EEH) are currently consulting on the Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement which runs until 6pm 31 October 2019 and can be found on [England's Economic Heartlands webpages](#). The Framework for Engagement sets out the challenges and opportunities faced by the region and to achieve growth and zero carbon transport system by 2050. The views received and currently commissioned technical work will be used to develop a draft transport strategy which will be the subject of formal consultation in the first half of 2020. It provides a useful opportunity to highlight the Council's priorities for transport infrastructure on a regional level.

3. STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE DRAFT OUTLINE TRANSPORT STRATEGY: FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGEMENT

3.1 The strategy for the Draft Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement focuses on:

- Improved connectivity for local journeys – ensuring that users have access to convenient, attractive and safe choices for movement and supports the underpinning principles of being active and inclusive
- Freight and logistics – the continued success and growth of our economy will be dependent upon our businesses having access to labour and access to markets
- National/international connectivity – ensuring that connections between the Heartland and neighbouring regions are of a high quality.

3.2 Their vision is focused around three themes:

- Enabling economic growth: Supporting planned housing and economic growth through coordinated investment in infrastructure and services. Improving safety reliability and resilience of the network to maximise productivity of goods services and commuters,
- Accessibility and inclusion – providing attractive affordable and reliable travel choices and reducing barriers to travel e.g. financial, cultural digital or physical.
- Quality of life and environment – unlocking opportunities to improve health. Improving the quality of the built and natural environment. Delivering environmental net gain. Becoming zero carbon by 2050.

3.3 The Strategy and vision is built around four core objectives of:

- Connecting People (pages 22-33 of the FfE)
- Connecting Places (pages 34-65 of the FfE)
- Connecting Opportunities (pages 66-77 of the FfE)
- Connecting Services (pages 78-87 of the FfE)

Connecting People

3.4 To 'connect people' the EEH envisions a transport system centred on frictionless travel across the region for the people who use it and investment to achieve fully integrated 'end-to-end' journeys (first mile/last mile). A major study has been commissioned as part of the evidence base to underpin the draft transport strategy.

3.5 The FfE identifies an objective to improve access to transport hubs offering longer distance trips by mass transit (rail, coach and bus) and reducing the need to travel by car. Transport systems should also work to address physical, cultural and digital barriers to travel.

3.6 The 'connecting people' objective aims to create changes in travel behaviour, led in particular by the expansion of digital services and using transport hubs and wide-scale ownership of shared travel modes. The objective aspires to aligning planning for transport systems with land use

and economic planning ambitions across the region. Integrated ticketing solutions are also proposed to provide passengers with ease of access and frictionless travel between modes and service providers will be prioritised.

Connecting Places

- 3.7 To achieve the objective of connecting places the FfE aims to:
- Deliver investment in strategic transport corridors to transform travel patterns and improve connectivity.
 - Deliver East West Rail and investment in the strategic road network (the Oxford Cambridge Expressway, A1(M)) are key elements of the new multi-modal east-west spine across the Heartland region). The Strategy recognises the Combined Authority's Cambridge Autonomous Network Proposal.
 - Invest in north-south strategic corridors.
 - Pair investment in strategic transport corridors with digital infrastructure at the same time.
 - Reflect the implications of improved digital connectivity on future travel demand in the design of the strategic transport corridors.
- 3.8 England's Economic Heartland has been charged by the Government to take forward a connectivity study linked with supporting access to the new emerging solutions for east-west strategic road connectivity between Oxford and Milton Keynes. This work will form part of the technical evidence supporting the draft Transport Strategy. They also recognise the need to take forward a similar study to investigate connectivity to/from the strategic road network between Milton Keynes and Cambridge. They will also review the current pattern of rail services to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- 3.9 The Transport Strategy will restate the case made by the original Rees Jeffreys Road Fund report that the Major Road Network should be viewed as a single network and be reviewed during the development of the Strategy. The long term investment pipeline associated with the Major Road Network will be developed in parallel with the work on the Transport Strategy.

Connecting Opportunities

- 3.10 The FfE is committed to creating opportunities for growth, widening labour markets and supporting business growth. To do this it aims to:
- Improve connectivity, especially between business clusters to benefit the regional economy;
 - ensure that economic growth helps us achieve a zero carbon transport system by 2050;
 - Improve connectivity to international gateways to support business activity by providing access to global markets (including better access to Heathrow, Stansted and Luton airports), a more accessible workforce and also to support individuals acquiring skills that enable them to realise their full potential.

- 3.11 To do this they will have to work with Local Enterprise Partnerships and have established an Innovation Working Group to bring together expertise across the region with a view to exploiting opportunities to use artificial intelligence and data as a catalyst for the development of new models of delivery for transport services in partnership with the private sector.
- 3.12 A Regional Policy Scenario Model will also model transport demand needs based on what stage people are at in their lives. England's Economic Heartlands will use data gathered to anticipate future travel demands to encourage investment and innovation from the private sector.

Connecting Services

- 3.13 The FfE wants to create a Transport Strategy that connects services to enhance the economy, this will be achieved by:
- Identifying the way major infrastructure projects can be optimised and addressing lorry parking challenges.
 - Collecting and improving the quality and availability of freight data, creating a data repository to inform future interventions.
 - creation of a new or improved freight forum and/or representing the region on an emerging Freight Leadership Council to shape policies and raise the profile of freight and to develop sector skills shortage and champion innovation.
 - Identifying a network of strategic rail freight interchanges and rail terminals to address gaps in provision.
 - Working with Network Rail and partners to prioritise capacity enhancement, electrification, loading gauge enhancements and train capacity.
 - Developing regional standards and best practice principles on goods delivery restrictions, delivery and servicing plans and solutions for deliveries into historic cities and towns.
 - Taking forward more detailed feasibility work with other regional bodies and Network Rail to quantify the level of freight demand along East West Rail.

4. KEY DIAGRAMS AND FUTURE VISIONS

- 4.1 The FfE contains illustrative maps which identify key issues. It also establishes 'future visions' to improve connectivity for specific types of developments. The EEH asks whether the 'future visions' are ambitious, attainable or desirable. For reference these can be found on the following pages of the FfE:
- Major strategic links map identified on page 16-17 - The A141 is not included on this map.
 - Clusters of businesses and organisations excelling in science, technology and research that exist in the Heartland are identified on pages 18-19. Alconbury Enterprise Zone was the only identified business cluster. The map also identified St Neots and Huntingdon as 'major towns and cities'.
 - Future Vision - High Street: addresses what the high street can do to rejuvenate town centres. Pages 20-21.

- Future Vision - New housing development: addresses what transport infrastructure can do to improve new developments on pages 32-33.
- The strategy identifies a hierarchy of facilities which are important to large Research and Development Business. This includes good public transport hubs, housing shops, hotels, meeting facilities, Childcare etc. This can be found on pages 72-73 of the strategy.
- The map on page 74-75 identifies Major Science, technology and innovation within the region. In Huntingdonshire Huntingdon Life Sciences and Forward Composites Enocam are identified.
- Future Vision for Business Parks: The strategy identifies a nine point vision for establishing successful business parks on pages 76-77:
- Rural Setting: pages 86-87 identify a seven point plan to support and improve transport accessibility for rural communities.

5. INVESTMENT

- 5.1 The approach to investment will be underpinned by better understanding of the travel needs of individuals, and driven by their expectations of the transport system. An agreed programme of investment will be established.
- 5.2 EEH will make the case as to the benefit of developing the programme of investment within an indicative funding envelope set by Government. At a national level, the Government has adopted such an approach as part of the National Infrastructure Assessment. England's Economic Heartlands believe extending this approach to the regional level will encourage an honest discussion as to how best achieve the desired outcomes in the most cost effective way. They will also explore whether the current level of funding available to local partners to support the development of proposals is sufficient.
- 5.3 England's Economic Heartlands believes in the need for stronger integration of investment by Government, its agencies, local authorities, as well as infrastructure and service providers and the need to push the case for investment through a single voice and at the right scale to have impact and success

6. DELIVERY

- 6.1 England's Economic Heartland operates as a partnership. A Strategic Alliance was formed in 2015 with Local Authorities.
- 6.2 EEH note that many of the ambitions set out within the final Transport Strategy will be dependent on the commitment and ambition of partners. Decisions on preferred approaches to solutions will require the support and oversight of the bodies that are responsible for their delivery including: partner local authorities, Highways England, Network Rail, East West Railway Company, and bus and train operators, amongst others.

- 6.3 Delivery partners (the companies providing professional services to partners) will also assist in providing a source of knowledge and experience in the development, design and implementation of investment in strategic infrastructure and services. They will also be involved in developing the programme of investment, including consideration of future skills requirements within the sector.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 A copy of the draft Local Transport Plan was distributed Council-wide via email for comment to the following recipients:

Name	Job Title
Neil Sloper	Head of Operations
Matt Chudley	Operations Manager Environmental Services
Andrew Rogan	Operations Manager Commercial Services
Chris Jablonski	Business Development Manager
George McDowell	Parking Services Manager
Helen Lack	Development Manager
Nigel McCurdy	Corporate Director (Place)
Clara Kerr	Service Manager - Growth
Jacob Jaarsma	Planning Service Manager (DM)
Susan Bedlow	Economic Development Manager
Charlotte Fox	Strategic Developments Team leader
Clare Bond	Planning Policy Team Leader
Claire Burton	Implementation Team Leader
Oliver Morley	Corporate Director (People)
Jon Collen	Housing Needs and Resources Manager
Chris Stopford	Head of Community
Finlay Flett	Operational Manager (People)
Jayne Wiseley	Head of Leisure and Health
Jo Peadon	Active Lifestyles and Health Manager
Martin Grey	Sports Development Manager
Clive Mason	Head of Resources
Jackie Golby	Commercial Estates Manger

- 7.2 The key comments are as follows:

- The need to highlight the Prospectuses for Growth are underway
- The aims of the EEH are very similar to the LTP
- It is noted that England's Economic Heartlands is going to submit a proposal to establish a statutory Sub-national Transport Body with powers and responsibilities devolved from Government in a way that enables delivery of the Transport Strategy
- The Council therefore supports the FfE objectives of connecting people, places, and opportunities and to achieve zero carbon by 2050. However, it is felt that the strategy fails to address the needs of those with lower skill sets who are also a valuable asset in the functioning of a healthy economy.

- The FfE also omits to mention the requirements and importance of smaller businesses and is heavily focussed on research and development and the hi-tech economy. Greater emphasis could also be placed on understanding the needs of large industrial uses and warehousing.
- The Council agrees that the draft transport strategy should aspire to make the region and Huntingdonshire a better place to work and invest and deliver new and appropriate housing in the right places at the right time. Careful consideration of Local Plans and future growth across the districts should be assessed and incorporated into the draft Transport Strategy when created. The Council welcomes consultation and engagement on this.
- The FfE identifies some useful research currently being undertaken to understand the transport needs of the region. This information should be widely distributed amongst the various transport authorities and groups to enable a better understanding at regional and local level. This would be especially useful for Local Plan and Local Transport Strategy preparation
- These future visions offer an insight into how our transport system might look up to 2050. The aims and objectives are admirable, but little information is provided to understand how this could be achieved. In terms of High Street and Rural Setting, investment and project areas would have to be identified for enhancement and improvement.
- With regard to Business Parks and New Housing Development further discussion would be required with Local Planning Authorities to understand how this could be achieved in planning terms and whether additional funding would be available to applicants to realise this ambition.

7.3 The Consultation asks key questions, namely:

- 1) Does the draft vision ("connecting people and places with opportunities and services") provide sufficient focus for the Transport Strategy?
- 2) Is the ambition to have a zero-carbon transport system by 2050 sufficiently challenging?
- 3) Do the three key principles (enabling economic growth; accessibility and inclusion; quality of life and environment) provide an appropriate framework within which to develop the Transport Strategy?
- 4) What are the key factors influencing people's choice of travel mode?
- 5) What are the key barriers that need to be addressed if we are to achieve frictionless travel?
- 6) What performance measures should be used to identify the levels of service users require of the transport system?
- 7) Should the strategy include and define appropriate 'nudge principles' (small changes which can influence user behaviour) to encourage more people to use public transport in the Heartland area?

- 8) What weight should be given to the changes in travel demand arising from the delivery of transformational infrastructure?
- 9) What weight should be given to the potential of the rail network to accommodate a higher proportion of future travel demand?
- 10) Have we identified the key strategic transport corridors?
- 11) Are there specific issues that should be taken into consideration as part of the connectivity studies?
- 12) To what extent should we look to the growth in digital services to change the nature and scale of future travel demand?
- 13) What are the core connectivity requirements for businesses operating from the region?
- 14) What are the key performance measures for the Transport System from a business perspective?
- 15) What measures should the overarching Transport Strategy include in order to enable the potential that exists within the four Grand Challenges of the Industrial Strategy to be realised?
- 16) To what extent is investment in digital infrastructure more significant and/or urgent than physical infrastructure?
- 17) How will the way we access goods and services continue to change, and what are the key issues that need to be addressed in the Transport Strategy?
- 18) What freight and logistics services are important for people and businesses? For example, accessing goods (via delivery or in person); a thriving high street; access to health, education and leisure facilities?
- 19) Just in time and last minute operations are affecting the way people and businesses access goods and services. How should this growing trend affect the way we plan transport now, and in the future?
- 20) Is the approach to investment the right one? If not, why not?
- 21) Is the approach to delivery the right one? If not, why not?

7.4 A draft officer response can be found at appendix 2.

8. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS

8.1 Potential resource implications if additional capacity is required to input into further development of the Outline Transport Strategy.

9. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Subject to approval from Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) the Council's final consultation response will be submitted to England's Economic Heartlands by 6pm on 31 October 2019.

10. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND / OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

10.1 The EEH Outline Transport Strategy assists in the delivery of a number of objectives related to the Council's work programme and key actions including:

- Supporting new and growing businesses and promoting business success
- Supporting the delivery of the Alconbury Enterprise Zone
- Supporting economic growth in market towns and rural areas
- Promoting inward investment
- Influencing the development of the Highways and Transport Infrastructure
- Strategy
- Facilitating the delivery of infrastructure to support housing growth
- Improving the quality of the environment, by including infrastructure that supports people to walk and cycle
- Facilitate and provide opportunities for positive activities that support residents' health and wellbeing needs
- Prioritising accessible, high quality, well maintained open space, walking and cycling facilities on new housing developments
- Collaborating with partners, providers and stakeholders in an enterprising fashion to enhance community resilience and build sustainable opportunities for people

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None, this is a consultation response.

12. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Government has recognised the need to plan for and deliver substantial new infrastructure ahead of the arrival of new communities, including necessary transport infrastructure, utilities, digital connectivity, health and education. Projects identified in the Framework for Engagement if implemented will facilitate and provide opportunities for positive activities that support Huntingdonshire's residents' health and wellbeing needs including multi-modal transport options and an increased emphasis on connecting people by way of cycling opportunities.

13. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

13.1 The Framework for Engagement provides opportunities to enhance and support opportunities for growth across the England's Heartlands Regions, Combined Authority Area and Huntingdonshire. The Council's response to this consultation will help to shape the draft Strategic Transport Plan and provide a steer for future infrastructure projects influencing the district and enabling and supporting Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the Council's Corporate Objectives. Recommendations provided in the Council's consultation response will ensure that Huntingdonshire is adequately represented within the Regional Transport Strategy and that schemes support Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and ambitions for growth.

13.2 It is recommended that Committee provide comments on this consultation and delegate authority to submit the Council's final consultation comments on this consultation to the Service Manager -

Growth, in consultation with the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader.

14. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 - Huntingdonshire District Council's draft Consultation Response to the Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[England's Economic Heartlands – Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement](#)

England's Economic Heartlands - Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement [Report to Overview and Scrutiny Panel \(Performance and Growth\)](#).

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Frances Schulz, Senior Planning Policy Officer
Tel No: 01480 388432
Email: frances.schulz@huntingdonshire.gov.uk