

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Local Transport and Connectivity Plan

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 19 July 2022

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing

Report by: Chief Planning Officer

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) is the proposed successor to the Local Transport Plan (2020). It seeks to set out a vision, goals and objectives to deliver a modern integrated transport system. It places a greater emphasis on reducing carbon emissions and boosting health through active travel. A strategy is put forward to establish the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's aspirations towards transport and travel. The addition of connectivity to the title reflects the recent significantly increased importance of digital connectivity to reduce inequalities. The LTCP also sets out local area strategies for each district with locally specific transport and travel challenges identified and aspirations for future approaches put forward. A local area strategy for Huntingdonshire is set out which includes approaches to both strategic and local area issues.

Consultation commenced on 12th May 2022 and finishes on 4th August. An interactive consultation website and a questionnaire has been prepared to inform responses.

This report provides an outline summary of the LTCP along with commentary which has informed the draft consultation response which accompanies the report as Appendix 1.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet/Committee is

RECOMMENDED

To agree the proposed response set out in the completed questionnaire at Appendix 1 and authorise its submission to the CPCA.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has published a draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan for public consultation between 12th May and 4th August 2022. This report seeks approval for submission of formal consultation responses on behalf of the District Council to the CPCA.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The CPCA is legally required to prepare a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the area; the current plan was approved in January 2020. The LTCP is a long-term strategy to improve transport and connectivity across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Given the scale and nature of changes to transport since 2020, particularly arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, the draft updated Plan has been extended to include connectivity in the title. This reflects the increased emphasis on digital forms of connectivity as well as more traditional physical transport modes.
- 2.2 The first round of public engagement on an updated and expanded Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) took place in November 2021. This initial engagement focused on establishing the main vision and goals of the LTCP and sought opinions on specific transport issues giving the opportunity to raise concerns over localised transport challenges and priorities. Detailed, technical comments were submitted at an officer level. Some of the concerns raised have been addressed, for instance there was little emphasis on contributing to our development strategy in terms of supporting Ramsey. Other concerns remain, for instance the vagueness in terms of deliverables and lack of referencing of data sources.
- 2.3 The CPCA has also engaged directly with Cambridgeshire County Council and all district councils in the area. Engagement has included workshops with members and an officer working group. Business engagement has also been undertaken.

3. ANALYSIS

- 3.1 The draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) aims to set out a vision and framework to deliver a modern integrated transport system across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It details the CPCA's vision, goals and objectives for transport along with an overarching strategy to deliver them and seeks support for each of these. It also contains location specific details, including a section specifically addressing Huntingdonshire, highlighting the key transport planning approaches, schemes and initiatives that will be required to achieve this. The LTCP also presents a summary list of policies to support delivery of the identified transport schemes. The LTCP builds on the CPCA's Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement. It will be supported by a series of documents which include a Policy Review, a Public Engagement and Consultation Report, an updated Evidence Base and three statutory impact assessments covering environmental, habitat and equality issues. The intention is to finalise the LTCP by the end of 2022.

3.2 The consultation seeks responses using its questionnaire. This covers the key aspects of the LTCP including the transport vision and objectives, the evidence base supporting proposals, the strategy, major schemes, local strategies for each district and place markers for future policies and monitoring indicators. Key elements of these are set out below. The Council's draft responses recommended for approval, are set out in Appendix 1.

3.3 The current LTP's vision is to 'Deliver a world-class transport network for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that supports sustainable growth and opportunity for all.' The draft revised vision is:

*'A transport network which secures a future in which the region and its people can thrive.
It must put improved health at its core, it must create a fairer society, it must respond to climate change targets, it must protect our environment and clean up our air, and it must be the backbone of sustainable economic growth in which everyone can prosper.
And it must bring a region of cities, market towns and very rural areas closer together.'*

3.4 This has significantly expanded the emphasis from a predominantly economic focus to one which reflects an enhanced emphasis on the importance of health, social equality, climate change and digital technology. The ability of transport networks to "clean up our air" is limited. However, it would be prudent to expect our transport network to "stop contributing to air pollution."

3.5 Six goals are proposed to outline the wider outcomes sought from the transport network which are shown in the illustration below



3.6 Eleven objectives are set out in the LTCP on which opinions are sought. These are:

- Housing – support new housing and development to accommodate a growing population and workforce, and address housing affordability issues
- Employment – connect all new and existing communities sustainably so all residents can easily access a good job within 30 minutes by public transport spreading the region’s prosperity
- Business and tourism – ensure all our region’s businesses and tourist attractions are connected sustainably to our main transport hubs, ports and airports
- Resilience – build a transport network that is resilient and adaptive to human and environmental disruption, improving journey time reliability
- Accessibility – promote social inclusion through the provision of a sustainable transport network that is affordable and accessible for all
- Digital – communities are digitally connected, innovative technologies are supported and here is improved connectivity and mobility, across the region
- Health and wellbeing – provide ‘healthy streets’ and high quality public realm that puts people first and promotes active lifestyles
- Air quality – ensure transport initiatives improve air quality across the region to exceed good practice standards
- Safety – embed a safe systems approach into all planning and transport operations to achieve Vision Zero – zero fatalities or serious injuries
- Environment – deliver a transport network that protects and enhances our natural, historic and built environments
- Climate change – reduce emissions to ‘net zero’ by 2050 to minimise the impact of transport and travel on climate change

3.7 The overall strategy focuses on provision of an integrated transport network and is shaped by a series of guiding principles linked to the goals above. These principles seek to support sustainable economic growth and decarbonise transport as part of the transition to net zero carbon emissions. Identification of the guiding principles behind the strategy is complex as the following list of guiding principles is set out on page 30 but these do not correspond with the expanded text on the guiding principles set out on pages 31-46:

- Integrating spatial planning and reducing the need to travel
- Providing high quality digital connectivity
- Supporting sustainable economic growth and distributing prosperity;
- Considering and improving the safety of our transport network, whilst ensuring actual and perceived barriers are addressed and minimised;
- Delivering real, attractive alternatives to the private car;
- Being able to be responsive and flexible to adapt to future changes in mobility and technology;
- Greening our transport infrastructure and enabling access to our high quality green open spaces;

- Supporting social mobility and enhancing accessibility to opportunities that improve the quality of life for our people; and
 - Protecting our natural environment and increasing biodiversity.
- 3.8 The core text of the strategy is arranged under 10 sub-headings: productivity, connectivity, health, place-making and public realm, safety, climate change, natural environment, attractive alternatives, demand management and shaping our investment.
- 3.9 In summary, the strategy section seeks to connect all communities sustainably to support the local economy and promote greater equality of opportunities across the CPCA area. The interconnected nature of the guiding principles is shown within the text. Review and reconsideration of the terms used throughout this section would create greater clarity around the policy principles underpinning the LTCP.
- 3.10 Targeted improvements to the highway network are promoted to allow more efficient movement and alleviate congestion thereby also tackling air pollution and supporting the local economy. A strong emphasis is placed on public transport with the strategy committing to delivering financial and operational support for buses with improvements tailored to local needs. It seeks to encourage behaviour change from private cars to public transport and active travel modes. The strategy also promotes improved and innovative first/ last mile options to deliver an integrated transport offer.
- 3.11 Cycling is strongly supported in the strategy as an easy, cheap form of travel which provides direct benefits to health, air quality and relieving traffic congestion. Very few of the aspirations are quantified and no indications are given of how and when projects to deliver them might come forward. There are some linkages to other documents which help provide more detail. A list of policies is intended to be added to the LTCP but its absence from the consultation document impairs the ability to understand how the strategy might be delivered.
- 3.12 The growing importance of faster, more reliable digital connectivity is highlighted, particularly as a way of easing the strain on the transport network and reducing inequalities. Road safety is also a fundamental consideration in the LTCP with support expressed for the Vision Zero goal to reduce and eliminate the numbers of people killed and seriously injured on the transport network.
- 3.13 Climate change and enhancing the natural environment are also key elements of the strategy section. The approach seeks to reduce the need to travel as a key mechanism for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. An overarching ambition is set of reducing car mileage by 15% from 2019 levels by 2030. A programme of investment in decarbonising the bus fleet is included with the dual aim of reducing air pollution and enhancing the quality of the local bus offer. The LTCP strongly emphasises the importance of attractive alternatives to car use as key to reducing emissions and supporting changes in travel behaviour.

- 3.14 The section on Huntingdonshire starts with background, recent developments and transport challenges. These acknowledge the reliance on private cars, social exclusion of those without a car, and strategic road and rail links. The limitations on dedicated walking and cycling routes outside the market towns are recognised. Limited access to public transport beyond the railway and guided bus routes, particularly for commuting purposes, is also highlighted. The importance of good integration into the transport network is identified as a key to the success of strategic growth areas.
- 3.15 The Huntingdonshire section of the strategy would be more accessible if it were more clearly structured relating regional or town specific elements. Where statistics are used, the addition of references to data sources is essential.
- 3.16 On the future approach for Huntingdonshire, the LTCP stresses the importance of promoting sustainable alternative travel modes. It also recognises the need to invest in targeted highway improvement, such as the A141 and St Ives local road network, and stresses the benefits of including active travel modes within such schemes. A strong emphasis is placed on integrating rail services, local buses and community and demand responsive travel services.
- 3.17 A package of investment is promoted for rural public transport, including demand responsive travel options, to promote access to reliable comprehensive public transport in villages. However, no commitments to specific investment are made. Details are not provided on funding, deliverability, or how elements will be phased or prioritised. These details, along with how the viability of proposals will be assessed, are essential and should be included within supporting documents.
- 3.18 Support is given to strategic improvements to the A1/ A1(M) between junctions 10 at Baldock and 14 at Alconbury to be delivered by National Highways. Emphasis is placed on the importance of integrating infrastructure to support active travel and public transport alongside improvements to the A428 between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet roundabouts. This is consistent with representations made at the recent Development Consent Order hearings. Support is also given to the delivery of East West Rail with lobbying identified for provision of a station in the vicinity of St Neots.
- 3.19 Support is also given for the extension into Huntingdonshire of the rental e-bike and e-scooter scheme currently operating in Cambridge and Peterborough as a trial. This could benefit our market towns, enabling connectivity between town edges and town centres.
- 3.20 A series of local projects are also identified. Although many proposals are very vague, timing of possible actions is not given and elements are included which are outside the CPCA's control. These include:
- multimodal improvements to support the delivery of development at Alconbury Weald

- improvements in and around St Ives to connect residential and employment areas in a sustainable manner.
- Extension of the TING demand responsive travel project to serve the Ramsey area.
- Transport interventions in St Neots to enhance active travel, public transport and parking facilities.

3.21 The LTCP does not identify detailed project plans or timelines for delivery. However, in parallel with the CPCA's preparation of the LTCP, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) are preparing a 'Transport Strategy: Huntingdonshire.' This is intended to contain an action plan of schemes and interventions that will form part of the wider Transport Investment Plan. The preparation of this is briefly mentioned in the 'recent developments' section. It would be useful to signpost this within the local projects section to help co-ordinate transport projects between the CPCA and CCC as the local highways authority.

3.22 A Transport Delivery Plan and a suite of policies is intended to accompany the LTCP. The omission of these from the consultation material has limited the ability to fully understand the CPCA's intentions in delivering the strategy's aspirations.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.1 The Panel discussed the CPCA Local Transport and Connectivity Plan at its meeting on 6th July 2022.

4.2 Disappointment was expressed by Councillor Gardener that the document does not go into enough detail on the subject of public transport. It was stated that rural communities are not served by public transport, and that rural roads are often perceived to be unsafe for cyclists, therefore these communities are unable to make any alternative decisions for transport other than by private car. Councillor Gardner further observed that if the Council's climate aspirations are to be met, alternative transports need to be developed and made available across the whole district not just the four towns within the district.

4.3 The Panel heard that whilst this observation was well put, the CPCA must be commended in highlighting the challenges face within Huntingdonshire, in particular the aspirations for an improved bus service. It was noted that greater detail will follow in due course.

4.4 The Panel heard that the report specifically highlights demand responsive travel in Ramsey, however Councillor Gardener argued that this issue is district wide and not restricted to the towns which are better served than rural areas.

4.5 Councillor Howell queried whether there were any reassurances on public transport provision in the North of the district. It was specifically noted that as Yaxley borders another authority, there are no direct bus links with the Serpentine Green Shopping Centre which is a main hub for shopping for Yaxley residents. The Panel heard that whilst concerns are recognised,

this report provides high level strategy, more detail will come forward in specific projects as this is progressed.

- 4.6 Having expressed appreciation that Ramsey had been highlighted for improvement within the report, Councillor Corney stated that he felt the Council's response should be more strongly worded. It was particularly noted that whilst the demand based transport model currently works, it is not felt to be sustainable should demand increase. Councillor Cawley seconded the call for a punchier response and especially highlighted the disappointing lack of detail within the draft LTCP. The Panel heard that the comments of the Panel would be noted, and the response reviewed prior to submission.
- 4.7 It was observed by Councillor Gray, that the CPCA needed to make some decisions and provide further detail whilst allowing local authorities scope to provide a more detailed response. The Panel were advised that the Cabinet report would be submitted alongside the response to compensate for the restrictive nature of the response form.
- 4.8 Councillor Pickering enquired whether any secure cycle storage facilities were planned for the district, as lack of these is another major obstacle in encouraging cycling within the district. The Panel heard that this level of detail was anticipated within the Active Travel document, which the Council would expect to have input into.
- 4.9 Councillor Gardener again highlighted that the report focused on the market towns within the district with no alternatives to private cars being mentioned for rural areas which make up the bulk of the district. The Panel were assured that the recognition of challenges faced by our rural district was included within the Council's response.
- 4.10 The Panel praised the hard work of the officers and commented on the limited scope within which they were able to comment. The Panel encourage the Cabinet to endorse the recommendations within the report.

5. KEY IMPACTS

- 5.1 Having an effective LTCP will aid the CPCA, CCC and HDC in prioritising future projects and funding allocations. This requires well-evidenced strategy for transport across the wider area and co-ordinated but locally specific approaches for improved travel infrastructure. By responding to this consultation, HDC increases the likelihood of improvements being made to the strategy that will support travel and transport suitable to Huntingdonshire's local needs.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN

- 6.1 Subject to approval, the response questionnaire attached as Appendix 1 to this report will be submitted to the CPCA before the end of the consultation period.

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

7.1 The LTCP will help deliver several of HDC's priorities for 2018-22, in particular:

- Support people to improve their health and well-being
- Create, protect and enhance our safe and clean built and green environment
- Accelerate business growth and investment
- Support development of infrastructure to enable growth

8. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The LTCP promotes substantial investment in active travel modes and reduction of air pollution which have potential for significant health benefits.

9. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council has committed to tackling climate change and protecting Huntingdonshire's environment and has a duty to deliver sustainable place-making. The Council has a key influencing role in climate action. Working collaboratively with the CPCA, the Council can influence transport behaviour to promote environmental benefits. The Council also sets policies and strategies which will influence businesses and communities to tackle climate change whilst enabling sustainable living and growth. Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions created by transport will support the Council's aspirations for a net zero Huntingdonshire.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

10.1 Submitting a response to the draft LTCP allows the Council the opportunity to help shape the final version. This enables the Council to maximise the effectiveness of the document and its benefits to the residents and businesses of Huntingdonshire. Although the overall intentions and approaches of the LTCP are commendable, more detail and consideration of the achievability of its aspirations will increase the value of the document.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Proposed response on behalf of Huntingdonshire District Council

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority: [Your LTCP consultation website](#)

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority: [The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Transport Plan](#)

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Draft Local Transport Plan. Cabinet response September 2019 can be found here: [Report Template for Cabinet / Committee Reports \(huntsdc.gov.uk\)](https://huntsdc.gov.uk/Report-Template-for-Cabinet-Committee-Reports)

A141/St. Ives Study report to Cabinet in September 2020 can be found here: [Report Template for Cabinet / Committee Reports \(huntsdc.gov.uk\)](https://huntsdc.gov.uk/Report-Template-for-Cabinet-Committee-Reports)

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