

Public

Key Decision - Yes

* Delete as applicable

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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| Title/Subject Matter: | Greater Cambridge Partnership Making Connections Consultation |
| Meeting/Date: | Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) – 7th December 2022 Cabinet – 12th December 2022 |
| Executive Portfolio: | Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing |
| Report by: | Chief Planning Officer |
| Ward(s) affected: | All |

Executive Summary:

In April 2022 HDC provided comment on the 'Cambridge: Making Connections' consultation that ran from November-December 2021. Greater Cambridge Partnership have since published a consultation document 'Making Connections' Autumn 2022 which seeks to promote transformational change to the bus network within and into Cambridge including multiple routes serving Huntingdonshire. This is to be funded by a proposed Sustainable Travel Zone broadly aligned with the urban area of Cambridge within which a charging scheme will be introduced to pay for public transport and related improvements. Improvements would be introduced before the charging scheme was implemented.

The proposed scheme seeks to significantly reduce congestion and air pollution within Cambridge to contribute towards meeting carbon reduction targets and to facilitate a significant modal shift in transport usage through provision of cheaper, faster and more reliable bus journey options.

Connections to villages and the rural areas of Huntingdonshire and other surrounding districts are addressed through proposals for enhanced routes and extended service running times supported by a network of demand responsive bus services to enable people to access main connecting services and travel hubs. An additional 10,000 park and ride spaces are also proposed to serve people accessing Cambridge from outside the city; all park and ride sites will be outside the proposed charging zone.

Paragraphs 3.3 – 3.6 set out the approach to transforming the bus network. Paragraphs 3.7-3.9 set out the rationale and funding approach to the creation of a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ).

The proposed timeline illustrated at paragraph 3.10 sets out an indicative timeline for implementation.

- Mid-2023 - Priority bus service improvements
- Early 2024 - Lower bus fares to be introduced
- 2025 - Potential phasing in period of sustainable travel zone (options outlined in consultation)
- 2027/28 - Full bus network in place; full sustainable travel zone implemented.

It is recognised that Huntingdonshire comprises many rural settlements. The introduction of reliable and frequent demand responsive transport services across Huntingdonshire's extensive rural area will be essential to the success of the scheme in terms of achieving modal shift and reducing car usage. Our proposed response makes it clear that HDC would welcome opportunities to work with the Greater Cambridge Partnership to shape the demand responsive transport offer within the district to ensure a truly sustainable, affordable, equitable, well-designed and timely bus service is available to all residents and businesses within Huntingdonshire.

The consultation is open from 17th October to 23rd December 2022. The [ConsultCambs Engagement HQ](#) contains all consultation documentation including an interactive future journey planner for people to see how their individual journey options would be impacted. Nine drop-in public engagement opportunities have been offered, four community fora and two consultation webinars. Paper copies of consultation materials are available in libraries in central Cambridge, Histon, Rock Road, Cherry Hinton and Cambourne.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet

- a) Comment on the draft response letter as set out at Appendix B.
- b) Delegate authority to the Chief Planning Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing to make amendments to the Huntingdonshire District Council response prior to submission to the Greater Cambridge Partnership.
- c) Encourage Huntingdonshire residents and businesses, who it is recognised will have a range of opinions on the proposed scheme, to submit their own feedback to the consultation to ensure the Greater Cambridge Partnership has the fullest evidence base from within the district to inform its decision-making.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) has published a consultation document 'Making Connections for public consultation between 17th October and 23rd December 2022. This report seeks approval for submission of the letter as set out in Appendix 2 and in line with recommendations as our formal consultation response.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Consultation originally took place on Making Connections in November – December 2021 looking at a series of proposals for transforming public transport, cycling and walking within and into Cambridge whilst seeking the co-benefits of reducing pollution and congestion in the city. It also explored ways that the transport improvements might be funded.
- 2.2. Feedback on that indicated that respondents' priorities were for more frequent bus services, longer operating hours and cheaper fares with a preference for introduction of flat fares.
- 2.3. Assessment of a range of options was undertaken to raise the money needed to improve buses, walking and cycling provision and lower the traffic levels within Cambridge. The assessments have been supported by public engagement over several years. They have showed that:
 - Higher parking charges or a workplace parking levy would not reduce traffic significantly and were the least supported option in the 2021 consultation
 - Road user charging would reduce congestion and facilitate more reliable journey times. This option received more support in 2021 than higher parking charges.
 - A pollution charge, with zero emission vehicles exempt, had limited benefits as usage of exempt vehicles is likely to increase over time reducing funding for buses and it was deemed discriminatory against those who cannot afford zero emission vehicles.
 - Varying the time of the charging period, for instance charging only in the morning peak, even with a £10 charge would not meet the objectives of creating better and greener transport networks and raising funding to deliver transformational bus network changes.
- 2.4. The current consultation document issued by GCP builds on the consultation carried out in 2021 and looks in more detail at ways to transform the bus services into and within Cambridge, reduce traffic in the city and raise money to pay for transport improvements. This includes proposals for more frequent and faster bus routes to/from Huntingdonshire.
- 2.5. Making Connections acknowledges that for many journeys there is still no viable alternative to car travel, reducing the range of opportunities open to

people. Congestion within Cambridge makes journeys unreliable, particularly at peak times, and poor air quality and high carbon emissions are significant challenges for the city.

- 2.6. The [Making Connections](#) brochure is supported by a range of other consultation documents, including a [Making Connections Map Book](#) which illustrates current and proposed bus routes and frequencies through Cambridgeshire that are potentially impacted by the proposals. This includes multiple routes within Huntingdonshire.
- 2.7. This consultation is from the Greater Cambridge Partnership. However, the proposed alterations to the public transport network, along with localised cycling and walking infrastructure improvements should be considered in the wider context of the draft Active Travel Strategy for Cambridgeshire, the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, the draft Cambridgeshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and the draft Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy. . Links to reports on these can be found in the background papers. Regard is also had to the developing CPCA Bus Services Improvement Plan and draft Bus Strategy

3. ANALYSIS

- 3.1. The Making Connections consultation focuses on three primary elements which are set out in more detail below:

- 1) Transforming the bus network
- 2) Investing in other sustainable travel schemes
- 3) Creating a sustainable travel zone

- 3.2. The consultation brochure details the key transport challenges faced by and within Greater Cambridge regarding congestion, limited public transport options and air pollution. It also reflects responses to the earlier consultation and notes in particular that 78% of respondents supported proposals to create a bus network with cheaper, faster, more frequent and reliable services and 68% supported reducing traffic to improve walking and cycling options. This report summarises the proposed changes detailed in the Making Connections brochure.

3.3.

Transforming the bus network

- 3.4. Making Connections states that it proposes a world-class bus network with improvements to regional and rural services as well as those within Cambridge. Significant improvements to the bus network are proposed to start from mid-2023 before any charge is introduced for driving into Cambridge. The key elements include:
 - Introducing flat fares from 2024 of £1 for single journeys within the current Stagecoach Cambridge zone and £2 for journeys in the wider Cambridgeshire area
 - New services between residential areas, towns, village, employment area, education and key service locations

- Higher frequency, faster services with a significant increase in services in villages and rural area; reduced traffic congestion is expected to make services faster and more reliable
 - Longer operating hours including early morning, late evening and Sunday services
 - Increase in rural services providing connections to market towns, rail station and the core bus network; regular services would be supported by demand responsive transport enabling every village to have access to a bus service
 - Simple ticketing with fare caps and special ticket options
 - Better bus infrastructure arising from investment in improvements to real-time information at bus stops, improved onward travel information at key interchanges and high standards of cleanliness and safety on buses and at bus stations
- 3.5. Bus improvements will be supported by an additional 10,000 Park and Ride parking spaces, improved walking and cycling provision. A series of travel hubs are proposed to promote better interchange facilities. Funding will be generated by users driving with the Sustainable Travel Zone as set out below.
- 3.6. Figures 2, 3 and 4 in Appendix 1 show the bus service connections proposed in the Making Connections consultation brochure.

Investing in Sustainable Travel Schemes

- 3.7. Making Connections proposes wider improvements to cycling and walking within Cambridge which could be achieved with lower traffic levels. These are of less immediate impact on Huntingdonshire but include proposals such as improving and extending the walking and cycling network to create more connections between surrounding villages and Cambridge, more secure cycle parking and improving public spaces.

Creating a Sustainable Travel Zone

- 3.8. The proposed Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) is an area within which vehicles would be charged for driving, initially 7:00-10:00 and between 7:00-19:00 from 2027/28 when the full scheme might be implemented. Charges would apply to vehicles starting within the zone or crossing into it and apply once per day. The proposed STZ broadly follows the boundary of the urban area of Cambridge. All Park and Ride sites would be outside the STZ.
- 3.9. The proposed charge is £5 for a private car or motorbike, £10 for light goods vehicles and minibuses and £50 for coaches and heavy goods vehicles. A range of charging options were considered including making zero emission vehicles exempt, higher parking charges, peak hour only charging and a higher charge of £10 per car. The £5 charge is expected to achieve the required level of traffic reduction and the funding for the transformational bus project with a lower financial burden on those paying than other options might generate. The Making Connections consultation

brochure does not set out detail on how initial improvements and fare reductions would be funded prior to introduction of the STZ charging zone.

- 3.10. A series of exemptions and discounts are proposed such as blue badge holders receiving a 100% discount on up to 2 vehicles and a tapered discount of 25-100% for people on low incomes. Details of these proposals are still being developed. A reimbursement scheme is also proposed to be developed to compensate for journeys such as patients accessing accident and emergency services and social care workers.

Timeline and Benefits

- 3.11. Figure 1 below illustrates the proposed timeline for implementation of the proposals set out in the Making Connections brochure.

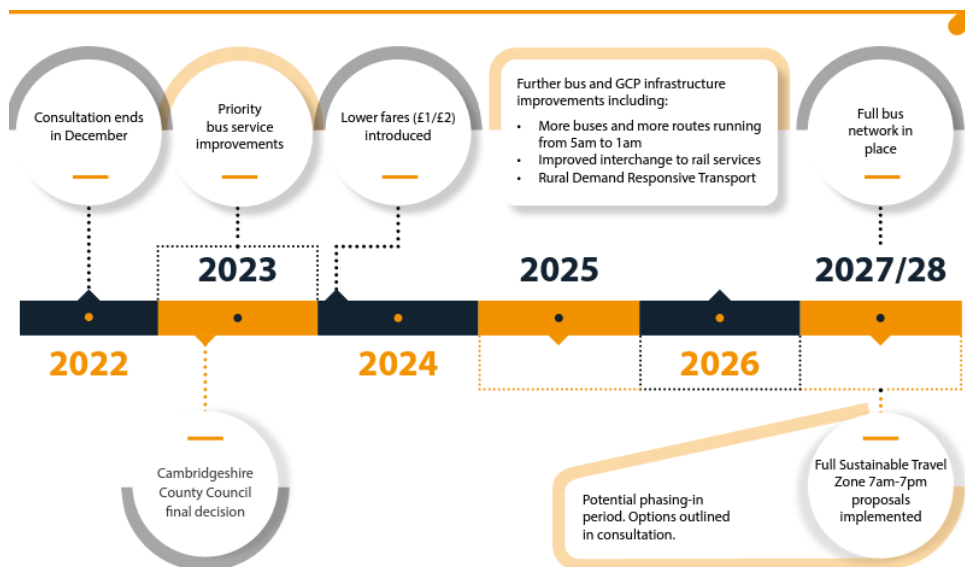


Figure 1: Making Connections Timeline

- 3.12. The proposals set out in Making Connections are anticipated to achieve a series of benefits:
- Tackling transport-related social exclusion of those currently unable to access opportunities, key services and community life because the bus services are inadequate, unreliable or too expensive
 - Creating a healthier and cleaner environment arising from a 50% anticipated reduction in traffic, resulting in substantial reductions in air pollution
 - Breaking the cycle of car dependency due to a lack of realistic alternatives
 - Meeting carbon reduction targets and contributing to tackling the climate crisis
 - Creating a stable and ongoing source of funding for the bus and active travel network reducing reliance on central government funding and increasing local control

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1. The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

5. KEY IMPACTS

- 5.1. Access to the Greater Cambridge area is important for many residents of Huntingdonshire for employment, shopping, leisure, education and health. Access into Huntingdonshire in the opposite direction is also important for the district for similar reasons. The proposals set out in Making Connections are very ambitious but if delivered would represent a major step-change in the quality, availability and cost of public transport for Huntingdonshire's residents and those travelling into the district from the Greater Cambridge direction. In addition to the significantly enhanced routes serving the district's towns and larger villages the rural areas and smaller villages would have access to bookable buses through 'demand responsive transport' providing connections to market towns, rail stations and the core bus network allowing for connections to services into Cambridge if desired.
- 5.2. The consultation enables the District Council, as well as individual residents and businesses, to express priorities and seek to maximise the benefits for the district as well Cambridge city and its immediate environs. Through participation in this process the District Council has the opportunity to promote the needs of our communities in towns, villages and rural areas to ensure consideration is given to all both in accessing enhanced travel opportunities and the impact of the potential introduction of a charging zone surrounding Cambridge.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN

- 6.1. Subject to approval, including having regard to any suggested revisions arising from the comments of Overview and Scrutiny, the response letter attached as Appendix B to this report will be submitted to GCP. External communications will also reinforce the District Council's encouragement to residents and businesses within Huntingdonshire to submit responses to the consultation directly prior to its close.

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

- 7.1. The Making Connections proposals could help to deliver several of HDC, 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. Consultation started on the Making Connections brochure on 17th October 2022. The brochure and a range of supporting documents along with an online survey response option are all available at [ConsultCambs Engagement HQ](#). Nine drop-in public engagement opportunities have been offered, four community fora and two consultation webinars. Paper copies of consultation materials are available in libraries in central Cambridge, Histon, Rock Road, Cherry Hinton and Cambourne.
- 8.2. An interactive planner is available on the consultation website for people to explore how they would be able to travel on the proposed new network. This provides before and after scenarios to illustrate potential changes to service levels and travel opportunities.

9. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Making Connections proposals focus primarily on bus transport improvements but includes some proposals for enhanced walking and cycling routes and improved public open spaces in Cambridge which could all offer health and wellbeing benefits. The introduction of widespread zero emission bus services and opportunities for substantial modal shift away from the use of private cars provides opportunities for significant reductions in air pollution.

10. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Delivery of the proposals set out in the Making Connections consultation document has the potential for very significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions throughout the Greater Cambridge area and surrounding districts. The proposals could provide opportunities to promote a substantial shift in travel modes away from private vehicles and to use of public transport. The impacts would be further enhanced by the pledge to have an entirely electric, zero emission bus network in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Area by 2030.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Making Connections contains reference to supporting people with a variety of protected characteristics and is supported by an [Equality Impact Assessment](#). The implications for people on low incomes were also considered. Overall, the Equality Impact Assessment identified that drawbacks of the scheme can be reduced by the proposed package of discounts, exemptions and reimbursements and that the transformation of the bus network could significantly benefit many protected groups, for example through access to more educational opportunities for young people.

12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 12.1. The submission of a response to the making Connections consultation enables the district Council to influence the final proposals which could have significant impacts on Huntingdonshire's residents and businesses.

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Proposed Bus Connections

Appendix 2 – Proposed response on behalf of Huntingdonshire District Council

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Making Connections consultation website](#)

[Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy](#) – Cabinet 15th November 2022

[Active Travel Strategy for Cambridgeshire](#) – Cabinet 15th November 2022

[Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#) – Cabinet 19th July 2022

[Proposed Cambridge Congestion Charge](#) – Cabinet 21st April 2022

[Draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) – Cabinet 15th July 2021

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