

**THE REVOCATION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY –
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ADOPTED HUNTINGDONSHIRE CORE
STRATEGY 2009 AND THE JOINT CAMBRIDGESHIRE APPROACH
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet about the recent revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy; to thereby clarify any perceived uncertainty regarding the status of the Council's Adopted Core Strategy 2009; and to update Members with regard to the interim joint approach towards strategic planning being taken by all of the Cambridgeshire authorities.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Adopted Core Strategy 2009 sets out the Council's strategic planning and sustainable development strategies for the period up to 2026. The Core Strategy is in effect the spatial expression of the Council's aspirations for the future growth, conservation and environmental enhancement of Huntingdonshire. It is therefore the primary planning policy document within the Local Development Framework - and as such it is a fundamental part of the statutory development plan which can effectively be considered to constitute the approved 'local plan' for our area.

2.2 As Cabinet will be aware Huntingdonshire remains very much at the forefront in terms of the delivery of the sustainable growth strategy for Cambridgeshire and the sub-region. The Council's policy position is that it is supportive of appropriate levels of sustainable growth, which provides homes for our residents and supports a vibrant economy, and this approach is strongly reflected within the Adopted Core Strategy. A particularly notable feature, when the Core Strategy was independently examined, was the overall high level of public support for its strategies and proposals.

3. REVOCATION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

3.1 On 6th July 2010 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced that Regional Strategies would be revoked with immediate effect. The revocation statement was accompanied by new national planning guidance which explicitly clarifies the status of adopted Local Development Documents. That guidance specifically;

- ❖ Strongly advocates (at 5.) that local planning authorities should continue to prepare appropriate development plan documents (DPDs) for their areas. The guidance states that these local plans will guide development and thereby provide certainty for investors and communities.

- ❖ Confirms (at 6.) that adopted DPDs, such as our Core Strategy, and saved policies, will continue to provide the statutory planning framework. Local authorities will also have the option to review applicable issues or policies as they see fit.
- ❖ Advises (at 7.) local planning authorities to continue to prepare and bring forward relevant DPDs.

It also provides some clarification with regard to other policy issues;

- ❖ In (10.11 and 12) the guidance clarifies that local planning authorities will continue to be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision for their area and therefore for identifying a long term supply of housing land.
- ❖ The guidance also particularly reiterates (in 13.) that local planning authorities should continue to identify enough viable land to meet their local housing needs. Local planning authorities should continue to use their plans to identify sufficient sites and broad areas for development in order to deliver their housing ambitions for at least 15 years from the date that their plan is adopted. All authorities will also continue to have to demonstrate that they have a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- ❖ In (14.) the guidance also stresses that local councils are best placed to assess the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. Local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand, and for bringing forward land in DPDs. The guidance stresses that they should continue to do this in line with current policy.

3.2 A full copy of this updated national planning advice is attached as Appendix A.

4. LOCAL IMPLICATIONS

For the Adopted Core Strategy

- 4.1 The revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies, which of course previously constituted the upper tier of the Statutory Development Plan, has created some obvious uncertainty within the development industry. The provision of certainty is the cornerstone of the plan-led system and is essential to underpin, to support and to deliver landowner and developer investment in an area.
- 4.2 This Council has been consistent in wanting to see its approved and adopted development strategies come to fruition with acceptable sustainable development proposals being brought forward in appropriate locations. Uncertainty regarding the weight that should now be attached to the Council's adopted 'plan' would both undermine potential investment and also be likely to give rise to the promotion of a number of inappropriate, speculative, development proposals.
- 4.3 Huntingdonshire is one of a minority of local planning authorities that have successfully expended the considerable time and resources needed to develop and deliver an adopted Core Strategy. Our Core Strategy sets out a positive and robust framework to deliver sustainable development, and

to safeguard our environment, for the period to 2026. As such, the Council is in a very strong position, being able to proceed with its more detailed plans and deliver appropriate forms of development, during this period of relative uncertainty in terms of national planning guidance. Moreover the Adopted Core Strategy, which was of course developed having regard to an extensive up-to-date evidence base, therefore remains the most robust mechanism to assess planning and development proposals, and to promote the growth of the District irrespective of the revocation of the RSS. Subsequent related Development Plan Documents will now take forward the applicable policy details, allocate land for development and define the appropriate delivery methods.

For the Joint Cambridgeshire Approach

- 4.4 Co-operative working between Cambridgeshire County Council and the Cambridgeshire Districts has been on-going since the successful delivery of the 2003 Structure Plan. This approach led to an agreed position being taken in relation to the preparation of the RSS and its subsequent review. In effect the RSS policy in respect of the Cambridge Sub-Region embraced and adopted the locally derived position including the agreed appropriate local levels of, and locations of, strategic housing growth. With the revocation of the RSS the Cambridgeshire authorities have therefore begun work to review the current strategic policy position. This is necessary, not only because of the demise of the RSS, but also because of the decision by Marshall, at least for the time being, not to relocate from Cambridge airport.
- 4.5 Pending any review of the agreed sub-regional strategy, and paying appropriate regard to the updated advice from the Secretary of State in respect of encouraging effective joint working, a joint interim statement has been prepared by all of the Cambridgeshire authorities and a copy is attached as Appendix 2 to this report. This joint approach is considered necessary in order to give an appropriate degree of certainty across the sub-region and to thereby discourage speculative inappropriate proposals - particularly with regard to the potential development of strategic sites and in respect of any further new settlement proposals.
- 4.6 In order to be able to give appropriate weight to this interim joint approach it needs to be endorsed by each of the constituent local planning authorities including this Council. As far as Huntingdonshire is concerned the interim statement reflects and effectively enshrines the Council's approved strategic planning policy position as set out in the Adopted Core Strategy. As such it can be positively endorsed.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Therefore it is recommended that the Cabinet;
- a. Notes the Government's revocation of the RSS, its intention with regard to the revision of policy, and its clear guidance regarding the need for LPAs to continue to prepare appropriate Development Plan Documents, and;
 - b. Notes that the adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009 remains as the Council's primary planning policy document in accordance with this latest Government guidance.

- c. Endorses the joint statement made by the Cambridgeshire authorities with regard to the interim planning policy position for the Cambridge Sub-Region.

Background Papers:

The Adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009

Revocation of Regional Strategies Statement – Department for Communities and Local Government July 2010

Interim Joint Statement – Cambridgeshire Authorities August 2010

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