

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE BY THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE AUTHORITIES

BACKGROUND REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides an update on discussions between the Cambridgeshire authorities on a joint planning statement setting out the development strategy for Cambridgeshire following the recent abolition of Regional Strategies.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There is a long history of joint working between the Cambridgeshire authorities to address the issues affecting Cambridgeshire and to establish a strategy for the future development of the County. This approach led to the development and adoption of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) and the recent work undertaken by the authorities in responding to the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) on the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), 'The East of England Plan > 2031'.
- 2.2 Work on the RSS review was overseen by the Cambridgeshire Regional Spatial Strategy Review Panel (CRESSP) - a joint Member body from across the Cambridgeshire local authorities and including representatives from Cambridgeshire Horizons and Peterborough City Council. This work culminated in the submission of a detailed response to EERA in December 2009, which set out the authorities' vision for the County and preferred distribution and levels of growth to 2031.
- 2.3 The Cambridgeshire authorities' comments were reflected in the policies and growth levels subsequently set out in the draft revision of the RSS, published by EERA and submitted to Government in March 2010.

3.0 REVOCATION OF REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIES

- 3.1 After submission of the draft RSS, the new coalition Government announced in July that Regional Strategies would be revoked with immediate effect. In the longer term the legal basis for Regional Strategies will be abolished through a Localism Bill that the Government intends to introduce in the current Parliamentary session.
- 3.2 The Government also issued guidance for local planning authorities which states that:

- Local planning authorities should determine planning applications having regard to their Local Development Frameworks, saved policies and any old style Local Plans that have not lapsed, as well as national policy and any other material considerations.
- Local planning authorities should continue to work on their Local Development Frameworks. They may use the revocation of Regional Strategies as an opportunity to revisit policies in adopted LDFs if they wish.

3.3 The guidance emphasises that local planning authorities will:

- Be responsible for establishing the right level of housing for their areas, and will no longer have to meet regionally established housing targets.
- Need to justify the housing numbers they arrive at through the use of reliable information.
- Still be required to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land.

4.0 CAMBRIDGESHIRE AUTHORITIES' RESPONSE

4.1 The Government intends that the previous 'top-down', target-driven planning system will be replaced by a new approach, giving local authorities considerable freedom and allowing local people more say in how their communities develop. Regarding regional and sub-regional planning, the guidance states that: "New ways for local authorities to address strategic planning and infrastructure issues based on cooperation will be introduced."

4.2 Although these changes present opportunities for Cambridgeshire, they also raise concerns, including that the gap left by the abolition of Regional Strategies will open up the authorities to major speculative development pressures and create a strategy driven by planning decisions granted on appeal.

4.3 In response to these concerns, the Cambridgeshire authorities have undertaken initial work to:

- Agree a joint position statement, setting out the development strategy for Cambridgeshire in the absence of the RSS – Section 5 and Appendix A.
- Scope out what further work may be required for future strategic planning in Cambridgeshire - Section 6.

5.0 JOINT INTERIM PLANNING STATEMENT

5.1 The joint interim planning statement developed by the Cambridgeshire authorities is attached as Appendix A to this report. The statement was

discussed by Cambridgeshire Public Service Board on 28 July 2010. Public Service Board endorsed the statement, subject to the addition of reference in paragraph 3.1 to the need to rebalance the economy towards the private sector and to the Local Enterprise Partnership.

- 5.2 The statement sets out the Cambridgeshire authorities' position following the abolition of Regional Strategies and the effects of the recession on the delivery of key development sites. It is anticipated that the statement will be adopted by each of the Cambridgeshire authorities through their committee processes and will be used to inform development decisions. It is also intended to prepare a joint press release to accompany the publication.

6.0 FUTURE STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

- 6.1 While the planning statement affirms the authorities' commitment to the current strategy, there is also a recognition that the strategy needs to be kept under review.
- 6.2 Cambridgeshire Public Service Board discussed future strategic planning for Cambridgeshire alongside the joint planning statement at its meeting on 28 July. The Board considered a number of options, including:
- Waiting until new legislation is published before undertaking further work.
 - Beginning work immediately to gather and update the background evidence base.
 - Beginning to prepare a joint sub-regional strategy for the County addressing strategic issues where coordination is essential, including housing, education, employment, transport and infrastructure.
- 6.3 Public Service Board endorsed the recommended option to begin work immediately to gather and update the evidence base. This evidence will be used to inform the authorities' emerging Local Development Frameworks and future LDF reviews. It could also inform a sub-regional strategy for Cambridgeshire, if provision is made for this in legislation and the authorities were to agree at a later date that such a strategy is necessary.

APPENDIX A: JOINT STATEMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE BY THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE AUTHORITIES

[Highlighted text shows changes following PSB 28 July 2010]

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by the Cambridgeshire authorities to set out our position regarding the development strategy for the County in light of the Government's recent announcement of the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies and aspiration for a locally based planning system.
- 1.2 The Cambridgeshire authorities have a long history of joint working on planning issues and will continue to work together to share information and develop good practice. A significant evidence base has been built up that provides the authorities with important information to guide further work. An important outcome of this approach was the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan - a sustainable strategy for growth that was tested at Examination and adopted in 2003. This strategy was adopted largely unchanged in the Regional Spatial Strategy (2008) and the authorities' response to the RSS review in 2009. The Structure Plan strategy has also informed the development of the City and District Councils' Local Plan and Local Development Frameworks and is currently being implemented by the authorities through their development decisions.

2 Cambridgeshire strategy

- 2.1 The Cambridgeshire authorities remain committed to the strategy for planning in the County, including the provision of housing, as originally established by the Structure Plan and as now partially set out in saved Structure Plan policies and as reflected by the policies and site proposals in the Cambridge Local Plan and District Councils' Development Plan Documents and developing strategies for market towns.
- 2.2 The key objective of the strategy is to locate homes in and close to Cambridge, following a comprehensive review of the Cambridge Green Belt, and to other main centres of employment, while avoiding dispersed development which increases unsustainable travel and makes access to services and community facilities difficult. Further sustainable locations for growth focus mainly on Cambridgeshire's market towns.
- 2.3 This strategy makes provision for development:
 - within Cambridge or as sustainable extensions to the urban area, subject to environmental capacity and compatibility with Green Belt objectives.
 - at the new town of Northstowe, linked to the guided busway;

- within, or as sustainable extensions to, the market towns of Wisbech, March, Ely, Huntingdon and St Neots, subject to the potential for regeneration and the provision of essential infrastructure and public transport improvements¹; and
- within, or as extensions to, other market towns, where development would increase the towns' sustainability and self-containment, improvements to infrastructure and services are planned or will be provided and high quality public transport provision can reduce the impacts of out-commuting.

2.4 This strategy has met with considerable success so far and a large number of sites have already been delivered throughout the County or are under construction, with more remaining to be developed. Despite the recession, construction has continued and Cambridgeshire is identified as one of the key areas of the country likely to lead the national economy into recovery.

2.5 Despite recent announcements about the relocation of Marshalls from Cambridge airport, the authorities consider that Cambridge East retains great potential for sustainable development and currently remains part of the strategy. The authorities also consider that there is sufficient availability of housing land over the short to medium term. Cambridge East will be considered alongside other sites as part of a fuller review of the strategy.

3 Looking forward

3.1 The Cambridgeshire authorities remain committed to the strategy for planning in the County outlined above, as embedded in the Cambridge Local Plan and District Councils' Development Plan Documents. However, with factors such as fragile economic growth, the need to rebalance the economy towards the private sector, changing demographic pressures, the challenges of climate change, uncertainty over infrastructure provision and emerging proposals for the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership, there remains a need to keep the strategy under review.

3.2 The authorities will continue to work together on place-shaping issues and will begin gathering evidence to inform decisions on future development levels and locations, so that the strategy that emerges will be based on a thorough understanding of the issues the County faces, including cross-County boundary impacts. Moves to a more locally based planning system will provide the authorities with much greater freedom. We will ensure that under this new system the future strategy is driven by the needs and aspirations of local communities, is fully deliverable, ensures the County's

¹ Huntingdon and St Neots in this policy refers to the Spatial Planning Areas as defined in the adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy

continuing economic success and protects and enhances Cambridgeshire's unique environment.