

**HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ACTION PLAN
THE INSPECTOR'S BINDING REPORT / ADOPTION PROCEDURES
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Council that, following his examination of the submitted Huntingdon West Area Action Plan (AAP), the Inspector has now issued his binding report which has found the AAP to be sound, and therefore the Council can now adopt this AAP as part of the Development Plan.

1.2 A copy of the Inspector's report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Proposed Submission Huntingdon West AAP was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in April 2010.

2.2 An independent Planning Inspector, David Vickery, conducted an examination into the soundness of the AAP by way of written exchanges and public hearing sessions in July and August. The Inspector considered representations received on the Proposed Submission document, together with further statements for the hearings, and all relevant evidence including a Sustainability Appraisal.

3. THE INSPECTOR'S REPORT

3.1 The Inspector has now issued his binding report and he has found the AAP to be sound subject to a number of agreed changes being made to the Proposed Submission version. All of these changes have been proposed by Council, either at the time of Submission in April 2010 (having viewed representations received on the Proposed Submission document) or later following questions raised by the Inspector. A final set of changes was sent to the Inspectorate following the October Spending Review to update the Plan further to the withdrawal of the A14 scheme in favour of a new study.

3.2 Due to changes in government guidance, the process of considering this plan differed slightly from that for the Core Strategy. The Proposed Submission was a new separate stage and the Inspector sought to make his decision based on changes put forward by the Council rather than proposing any changes himself. This may also be the process for future development plan documents as it is the one outlined in the Localism Bill.

3.3 The Inspector's report is primarily concerned with addressing the tests of 'soundness' which include whether the plan is 'justified' by evidence and 'effective' in that it is able to be implemented.

- 3.4 The Inspector found that with the agreed amendments:
- The AAP can effectively respond to changes to the related transport schemes
 - The AAP appropriately details requirements for mixed use development to the west of the town centre
 - A limited amount of development is likely to the west of the railway line and in the Hinchingsbrooke area
 - The proposed extension to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park can occur
 - The infrastructure requirements are founded on a robust evidence base
 - The AAP can be monitored in an effective manner
- 3.5 Therefore he concluded that the AAP met the overall criteria for soundness and complied with all the legal requirements. The sustainability appraisal is also adopted through this process.

4. ADOPTION OF THE AREA ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 Adoption of the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan will ensure that the most up to date policies are applied in respect of the planning proposals for this area, and its status will help to facilitate positive change and redevelopment.
- 4.2 The west of town centre area offers an opportunity for appropriately increasing the retail offer within Huntingdon whilst supporting the town centre and appropriate redevelopment of Chequers Court. The precise details of this requirement were discussed at length during the hearings. New housing and offices, as well as an additional public car park and other town centre uses are also envisaged to come forward on this previously developed land.
- 4.3 The AAP allocates land currently temporarily used for car parking opposite the railway station for the development of employment activities, together with Cambridgeshire Constabulary land in Hinchingsbrooke. It was clarified during the hearings that the two parcels which currently have permission for the Regional College and the Water Tower can be allocated for alternative uses should those permissions not be implemented. However, the intention in the Proposed Submission document to allow for some redevelopment on the hospital site, possibly with additional road access, was not pursued on the basis that the hospital management did not have an agreed plan to release any land.
- 4.4 In respect of open space, within a year of adopting the AAP it is intended that progress will be made to extend Hinchingsbrooke Country Park using Higher Level Stewardship funding. The Plan also sets out how land can be added to Views Common should the further A14 Study decide that the viaduct across the railway will be removed.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is therefore recommended that Council:
- a. Adopts the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan as part of the Development Plan for the district.

Appendix 1: The Inspector's letter to the Chief Executive and his report on the Examination into the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan

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