

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Planning Update

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) –
8th December 2015
Cabinet – 10th December 2015

Executive Portfolio: Strategic Planning and Housing (DD)

Report by: Head of Development (AM)

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on the current position with infrastructure planning in Huntingdonshire.

Recommendation(s):

That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) and Cabinet:

- 1) Receives an update on the current position with infrastructure planning in Huntingdonshire and notes that future update reports will be provided in June and December of each year.

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1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT / PURPOSE?

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the current position with infrastructure planning across the council. Given the importance of this issue, it is intended that further update reports will be provided in June and December of each year to keep Members fully informed of progress with emerging infrastructure strategies, projects, and delivery mechanisms.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY / BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Huntingdonshire District Council needs to plan effectively for a range of new infrastructure that is required to support development and growth. The spatial strategy for the location and scale of new development across the district will be set by the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP2036) which is currently under preparation. This will be supported by a Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan that will form part of the evidence base at the examination of the HLP2036, and will also be the basis for identifying and prioritising infrastructure programmes, projects and delivery mechanisms.
- 2.2 Most of the infrastructure required to support growth (for example, local road and transport improvements, new or extended schools, and playing fields) will be located within and close to new developments in the district itself. However, Huntingdonshire sits within a broader context of growth with neighbouring Cambridgeshire authorities and other authorities in the East of England and the South East. Larger scale infrastructure projects (for example major new highways and transport infrastructure such as the new A14) bring wider impacts and opportunities, if properly planned. The council recognises the need to work strategically with Cambridgeshire County Council and other authorities, the Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), national agencies and infrastructure providers, and government to plan for the delivery of all such projects.
- 2.3 Depending on their scale and nature, new infrastructure projects can be locally controversial, highly complex in design and planning terms, and expensive to deliver. They usually require a long term approach and commitment to project development, funding, and partnership working.
- 2.4 The main local funding sources for infrastructure to support development and growth are the Community Infrastructure Levy (for investment in projects across the District) and Section 106 Agreements (for site related infrastructure). Other funding and investment opportunities are available from time to time, including sources managed by the LEP, national agencies and the government. Infrastructure projects are usually required to be developed to a sufficiently detailed stage to be eligible for such funding and this can often require significant resources from the partners involved prior to any commitment from external investment sources.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED / ANALYSIS

- 3.1 There is a significant amount of Member and officer activity on a range of different types and scales of infrastructure planning at HDC. The main current areas of work are summarised below.
- 3.2 **Infrastructure Delivery Plan:** HDC is working with partners to prepare a detailed Infrastructure Delivery Plan to support planned growth related to the HLP2036. This will develop the approach established in the Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14 and cover a full range of infrastructure types, from

highways and transport projects to green infrastructure. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be HDC's main tool for prioritising investment and deploying resources to deliver locally and strategically important infrastructure projects. It will be developed by the HDC Growth and Infrastructure Group (which is proposed to be strengthened by additional elected Member involvement), with regular progress reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel process and to Cabinet. It also has a key role as part of the supporting evidence base for the HLP2036.

3.3 Highways and transport infrastructure projects: The council is actively involved with partners including the County Council, Highways England, and Network Rail in a range of major highways and transport infrastructure projects. These include:

- a) **A14 Trunk Road:** HDC has been pro-actively involved in the Development Consent Order process for the new £1.5 billion A14 project which, if approved in Spring 2016, will be the largest new road project in the country. Highways England intends to complete the construction of the A14 by 2019. The removal of the Huntingdon viaduct should be completed 18 months later.
- b) **A428:** HDC is involved with the County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council in lobbying government for the dualling of the A428 between the A1 Black Cat roundabout and the Caxton Gibbet. This is a major strategic project that links growth areas, and it has been identified in Highways England's Route Based Strategy initiative.
- c) **A1:** HDC is involved with the Department for Transport (DfT) and Highways England in raising the profile of a major project to improve the route between Peterborough and the M25. Stakeholder briefings are being held, the next in January 2016 hosted by HDC. This will culminate in a range of recommendations by DfT at the end of 2016 to inform the next government spending review.
- d) **Oxford to Cambridge Expressway and East West Rail:** This is following the same process as the A1 and is running approximately one month later. Again, recommendations will come forward at the end of 2016 and the council will remain pro-active on both projects. HDC was the lead council in producing a joint lobbying document for all council's that may benefit from the project along the route between Oxford and Cambridge. This was submitted to the Minister of State and has proved to be a useful tool for engaging MPs in particular. HDC has been lobbying to ensure that the A1 and expressway scheme fully dovetail where they cross at the Black Cat roundabout. It is pleasing to note that this is being fully taken on board and led by DfT. In tandem with the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway, a vital element will be to ensure that road and rail based projects entirely complement each other – Cambridgeshire County Council is a lead partner in the rail based elements.
- e) **A141 – Huntingdon / St Ives:** As part of the wider district-wide transport modelling now underway to support growth identified in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, and supported by the County Council's Long Term Transport Strategy (LTTS), a range of potential intervention options (which take account of economic, social and environmental impacts and opportunities) will need to be tested to facilitate planned growth in this area. At this stage, it is considered unlikely that an agreed package (that will need to be designed following consideration of the modelling outcomes) can be funded by development alone. Therefore, it is considered that a partnership approach will

need to be developed to seek resources from government. This is likely to need a high level strategic lead by the partners at a political level.

- f) **Rail investment:** The Thameslink project will see services arrive on the East Coast Mainline in by 2019. This will deliver through services across London and represent a step change in accessibility to the District. This will be supported by early delivery of new rolling stock and with a potential new rail station at Alconbury Weald. The County Council's LTTS contains the option for this railway station and, if secured, this has the ability to significantly improve travel by rail to and from Huntingdonshire with associated economic and transport benefits across the District.
- 3.4 **County-wide infrastructure planning:** The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Strategic Planning Unit is, at the request of the Cambridgeshire Public Service Board and the County Council, leading on the development of a county-wide infrastructure planning framework involving all Cambridgeshire authorities. The work has initially been modelled on HDC's methodology for project identification, analysis and prioritisation, as expressed in the Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14 as this has been recognised as good practice within the county. The aim is to provide a tool that informs and evidences the prioritisation of strategic growth related infrastructure projects that impact positively on more than one authority. The prioritisation process will then ensure that resources and funding are focused into the development and delivery of the 'big ticket' strategic infrastructure projects that create multiple benefits and do most to unlock growth potential. HDC officers are actively involved in this project.
- 3.5 **Growth and Infrastructure Group:** The preparation of the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan and consideration of infrastructure funding, including CIL prioritisation towards projects, is guided by the HDC Growth and Infrastructure Group (chaired by the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing Strategy). The Growth and Infrastructure Group involves a range of infrastructure partners, including the County Council and the LEP, and is recognised as a beneficial group by the partners involved. Current proposals to strengthen its role in infrastructure planning and as part of the CIL governance structure are being considered separately.
- 3.6 **District and County Council working relationship:** It is important that the District Council and the County Council continue to build a strong working relationship on infrastructure planning. Experience in recent years has shown that resources for effective infrastructure planning within both authorities have often been stretched. There is a strong inter-relationship between the District Council's role as local planning authority and the local responsible body for economic development, and the County Council's role as local highways authority and education authority, and its other responsibilities for sustainable drainage, libraries etc.
- 3.7 **District and LEP working relationship:** The LEP has an important role as the conduit for government funding into major economic development and infrastructure projects for the LEP area and Huntingdonshire. The importance of its role to Huntingdonshire is accentuated, but not limited, by the fact that the LEP is based at the Alconbury Enterprise Zone. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that that HDC has a key role in influencing the allocation of potential strategic infrastructure funding from government. For example, HDC coordinates the LEP working group for 'Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) Local Growth Deal' funding, and is currently working with other partners in developing projects for the SEP2 process. The LEP is also a member of the HDC Growth

and Infrastructure Group and is therefore involved in the consideration of the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the prioritisation of CIL funding. This is a key relationship and it is important that it continues to be strengthened.

3.8 Potential opportunities from Government Initiatives: Under the government's drive to devolve powers and funding from 'the centre' to local areas there is a potential opportunity to explore new ways of working strategically across Cambridgeshire to deliver the infrastructure required to support growth. High level options are currently being developed by partner authorities to enable full consideration of a potential case to government for using appropriate devolved powers and funding, in combination with existing powers, to unlock development and growth by delivering strategic infrastructure.

3.9 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): The CIL process has been in place in Huntingdonshire since May 2012. The CIL fund continues to grow as new development that is liable to pay CIL comes forward across the District. The CIL process is managed by the Implementation Team within the Planning Service as part of the team's wider role in infrastructure planning. As the CIL fund grows it will be important to ensure that the use of CIL funds is prioritised towards the most appropriate local and strategic projects. A separate report on CIL governance structures identifies a proposal to refine the decision making processes related to the prioritisation of CIL funds. The only project currently receiving CIL funding is the Huntingdon West Link Road (Edison Bell Way) which was a joint regeneration and development venture by HDC and Cambridgeshire County Council. It is estimated that the CIL may generate up to some £80 million of developer contributions in the period to 2036¹. Of this, HDC is able to retain up to 5% for administering the CIL process; between 15% and 25% (the 'meaningful proportion', dependent on whether the town or parish has a Neighbourhood Plan in place) goes to town and parish councils where CIL liable development has taken place (a number of town and parish councils have begun to receive their proportions of CIL through this process); and the remainder is available to HDC to prioritise for local and strategic infrastructure projects. In the period since its introduction some £3.360 million of CIL charge has been invoiced. To date, £1.869 million of CIL funds have been received to date, taking account of the HDC instalment policy.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

4.1 This matter is being considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) on 8th December 2015 and its comments will be conveyed to Cabinet.

5. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

5.1 Infrastructure planning will continue to be a major element of corporate workload, especially within the Development Service linked to planning, economic development and funding activities. This is complex work that needs to be programmed over realistic timescales, and the Director of Delivery and the Development Service Management Team, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Housing and Planning, continues to plan for the appropriate deployment of resources to facilitate the required tasks.

¹ This is a high level estimation based on current evidence and before any exemptions or reliefs are applied. The figure is subject to monitoring and potential regulatory changes.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN / TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 The Head of Development will continue to ensure that Members are kept informed of progress with infrastructure planning issues that affect Huntingdonshire. It is proposed that future update reports are provided to the Overview and Scrutiny process and to Cabinet in June and December of each year.
- 6.2 The next update report will be brought to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet in June 2016. Additionally, it is intended that an update report on progress with the emerging Local Plan to 2036 will be brought to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet in March 2016. This will include an update on progress with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, specific highways and transport modelling work to support the Local Plan which is being taken forward with Cambridgeshire County Council, and other infrastructure related Local Plan evidence base work.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 The information in this report relates to the following elements of the Huntingdonshire Corporate Plan 2015 – 2016 (page 6):
- A strong local economy: to remove infrastructure barriers to growth.
 - Enabling sustainable growth: improve the supply of new and affordable housing to meet future needs; and develop sustainable growth opportunities in and around our market towns.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None arising from this report.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Effective infrastructure planning requires the efficient use of HDC resources in conjunction with resources from partner organisations, often over long term timescales. Plans are being developed, for example through the strengthening of the HDC Growth and Infrastructure Group, to ensure that appropriate resources are in place to manage the infrastructure planning workload into the future.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 10.1 This report is provided to update Members on the current position with infrastructure planning in Huntingdonshire. Future update reports will be provided in June and December of each year.

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