

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Huntingdonshire Local Plan To 2036 Quarterly Update

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) –
8th March 2016
Cabinet – 17th March 2016

Executive Portfolio: Strategic Planning and Housing

Report by: Head of Development

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

At the Cabinet meeting on 19th November 2015 it was resolved that quarterly updates should be provided on progress on the Local Plan to 2036. This report provides details of the anticipated timetable for the proposed submission Local Plan (December 2016) and progress on preparation of the evidence base necessary to support this. In particular, it reflects progress on the Strategic Transport Study being jointly commissioned with Cambridgeshire County Council and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. It also highlights the need for the budgets to support the Local Plan to be able to respond flexibly to dependencies on other organisations' work programming.

Recommendation(s):

That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth):

- 1) Notes progress on preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and its supporting evidence base
- 2) Comments on the proposal to set up a single Planning Policy earmarked reserve as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

That the Cabinet:

- 1) Notes progress on preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and its supporting evidence base; and
- 2) Agrees to set up a single Planning Policy earmarked reserve as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?

1.1 This report provides an update on progress on preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP2036) and its supporting evidence base in the light of recent government announcements relating to the timescale for the production of local plans.

1.2 The purpose of the report is to:

- Confirm the current position with preparation of the HLP2036
- Detail progress made in the last quarter on preparation of the evidence base to support the proposed submission HLP2036
- Recommend a way forward for budgetary provision for the necessary evidence base

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

2.1 The government has announced that it expects new local plans 'to be written' by early 2017 although there has been no clarification of what statutory stage of preparation this means. The next stage of the preparation process for the HLP2036 will be the proposed submission stage which is the first statutory stage; this involves a set 6 week public consultation period under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012, specifically inviting representations on issues of soundness and legal compliance.

2.2 At the Cabinet meeting on 19th November 2015 it was resolved that quarterly reports on progress with preparation of the HLP2036 should be provided.

3. PROGRESS WITH PREPARATION OF THE HLP2036 AND ITS SUPPORTING EVIDENCE BASE

Local Development Scheme

3.1 A revised Local Development Scheme has been prepared setting out the intended timetable for production of the HLP2036 which is presented as a separate item on this agenda. This reflects the anticipated timetable for preparation of the key elements of the necessary evidence base, its incorporation into the HLP2036 and sustainability appraisal and the need for Appropriate Assessment of the draft proposed submission document under the EU Directive on Habitats Regulations Assessments.

3.2 The target set within the Local Development Scheme is for the proposed submission HLP2036 and its supporting documents to be reported to Cabinet in December 2016 seeking agreement to publish them for statutory consultation under Regulation 19 starting in January 2017.

Strategic Transport Study

3.3 The highest priority in the last quarter has been accorded to preparing a brief for a Strategic Transport Study in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council. This was completed on 12th February 2016 and is now in the hands of Cambridgeshire County Council's procurement team. The intention is to work through the procurement processes from 11th April 2016 and award the contract in the week beginning 3rd May 2016. This will allow some time for the appointed consultants to start preparatory work before the revalidated

Cambridge Sub-Regional Model (CSRM) traffic model is made available to them in early June.

- 3.4 Revalidation work of the CSRM is currently being carried out for Cambridgeshire County Council by Atkins. This is necessary to ensure that the model holds the most up-to-date data on traffic demand, is updated with all recently completed transport infrastructure schemes, potential transport infrastructure changes that have been modelled but not implemented are removed and the public transport, walking and cycling assignments are correct. Due to the volume and complexity of data in the model the revalidation work cannot be completed until the end of May 2016. Working in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council on this project, and awaiting the completion of the revalidation work before the substantive part of the Strategic Transport Study begins, ensures that the Study is based on the most up to date and robust information available. Awaiting the completion of the County Council's revalidation work also significantly reduces the cost compared to commissioning separate revalidation work.
- 3.5 The main purposes of the Strategic Transport Study are to:
- Identify and test the transport implications of committed development and four potential development scenarios;
 - Recommend the most sustainable development scenario in transport terms for delivering the 21,000+ homes required;
 - Highlight where there are opportunities for increasing the usage of sustainable transport modes;
 - Identify and cost where amended or additional transport infrastructure is required to mitigate the predicted impacts of each potential development scenario;
 - Form the basis of a district-wide transport strategy that mitigates the transport implications of the chosen development scenario
- 3.6 On 19 November 2015 Cabinet resolved that 'as a priority, infrastructure requirements for Wyton Airfield are further scoped with a view they can be identified and fully costed'. To facilitate this four potential development scenarios have been prepared for testing. A core set of completions, commitments and potential allocations has been included in all four potential development scenarios as these are expected to be delivered as they accord well with local and national planning policies. This core set totals 17,369 dwellings. Each of the four scenarios includes this core set of potential allocations and then different combinations of additional potential development sites. The potential development scenarios are set out in Table 1 below. To reflect the Ministry of Defence's announcement on 18 January 2016 the potential redevelopment of RAF Alconbury with an additional 1,450 dwellings has been added to each scenario given its proximity to Alconbury Weald; however RAF Molesworth is not included as it is a free-standing site in a countryside location which will need further consideration over its potential suitability for redevelopment. Option 1 is closest to the growth scenario put forward in the Targeted Consultation Local Plan to 2036 in January 2015, updated to reflect recent proposals. Option 2 is designed to test a development scenario which excludes redevelopment of RAF Wyton altogether to minimise the impact on the A141. Option 3 considers slower growth at RAF Wyton to extend the period available for introduction of traffic mitigation measures. Option 4 is intended to test the impacts of a high growth scenario to ascertain whether a major improvement scheme to the A141 could be deliverable.

3.7 It should be stressed that these scenarios have been developed to test impacts of growth and should not be taken as any indication that the sites will be included in the next version of the Local Plan.

Table 1: Potential development scenarios

Option No.	Description	Total no. of dwellings	Additional sites above the core of 17,369 additional dwellings
1	Full Wyton plus expected sites	24,969	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wyton airfield – 4,500 dwellings, 10ha employment, 5,000m² retail, secondary school and 2-3 primary schools • Alconbury Weald intensification – 1,500 dwellings over the permitted 5,000 • RAF Alconbury redevelopment – 1,450 • West of Brampton – 150 dwellings
2	Without Wyton, minimising impact on A141	22,809	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giffords Park, St Ives – 2,100 dwellings plus supermarket • Riversfield, Little Paxton – 240 dwellings • West of Brampton – 150 dwellings • Alconbury Weald intensification – 1,500 dwellings over the permitted 5,000 • RAF Alconbury redevelopment – 1,450 dwellings
3	Delayed Wyton plus expected sites	23,347	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wyton airfield – 2,880 dwellings, 5ha employment, secondary school and 2 primary schools • Alconbury Weald intensification – 1,500 dwellings over the permitted 5,000 • RAF Alconbury redevelopment – 1,450 dwellings • West of Brampton – 150 dwellings
4	A141 upgrade support	32,412	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wyton airfield – 4,500, 10ha employment, 5,000m² retail, secondary school and 2-3 primary schools • Ermine Street, Huntingdon – 1,440 dwellings, 1 primary school • Sapley Park Farm, Huntingdon – 1,243 • Lodge Farm, Huntingdon – 3,570 dwellings, 15ha employment • Alconbury Weald intensification – 1,500 dwellings over the permitted 5,000 • RAF Alconbury redevelopment – 1,450 dwellings • North of Wyton airfield – 1,340 dwellings

- 3.8 To facilitate progress with determining the most sustainable and deliverable development strategy for the HLP2036 the brief specifies that draft analysis and recommendations from each potential development scenario be reported as soon as it is completed. The brief for the Study requires identification of the transport related infrastructure package for each development scenario along with anticipated indicative costs. Delivery of the Study is dependent upon release of the revalidated CSRM traffic model to the consultants; if this is delayed the anticipated completion date of late August may be compromised.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

- 3.9 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) comprises two separate elements: the Level 1 SFRA which will identify flood risks across the whole district defining and mapping flood zones and the Level 2 SFRA which will provide more detailed analysis of sites under consideration as development allocations in the HLP2036 which may be at an increased risk of flooding.
- 3.10 The main purposes of the SFRA are to:
- inform policy formulation and site selection for the HLP2036 and aid the sustainability appraisal process;
 - facilitate the submission of planning applications that are accompanied by sufficient relevant information;
 - facilitate the determination of planning applications;
 - be a useful resource to inform the Council's emergency planning functions
- 3.11 Following appointment of JBA Consulting, work on the SFRA Level 1 commenced on 30 November 2015 and is scheduled for receipt by the Council in late April 2016; this is later than originally scheduled due to delays in provision of extensive datasets by the Environment Agency. The Level 2 SFRA is informed by the outcomes of the Level 1 Assessment so cannot start until that is completed. Completion of the Level 2 SFRA is now anticipated in July 2016, again subject to availability of Environment Agency inputs.

Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment

- 3.12 A replacement Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (GTANA) is being coordinated by the Joint Strategic Planning Unit on behalf of Huntingdonshire District Council in partnership with South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire and Forest Heath District Councils, St Edmundsbury and Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Councils and Cambridge and Peterborough City Councils. The main purposes of the GTANA are to:
- Inform the development of future housing and planning policy for each respective authority
 - Provide information on gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople's accommodation needs both temporary and permanent, including 'bricks and mortar' accommodation
 - Gain a better understanding of the pattern of movements and encampments in and between the Councils' administrative areas
 - Translate these accommodation needs into five year increments covering the period 2016 to 2036
- 3.13 Work on the GTANA started in November 2015. Face to face surveys were conducted with members of the gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople communities where agreement could be gained during November and December 2015. Engagement with other stakeholders, including this Council

and Luminus, as managers of the St Neots caravan park, has taken place during January and February 2016. A final report is expected to be available in early April.

Other Evidence and Research

- 3.14 Research is being undertaken into older people's housing needs led by Planning Policy working with colleagues in Strategic Housing and in the Social Care team at Cambridgeshire County Council. This is in response to significant concerns over lack of suitable accommodation for older people needing additional support or wishing to downsize within their community to retain existing social networks which have been raised by local residents and Town and Parish Councils during previous phases of engagement. This is targeted for completion by the end of May.
- 3.15 Detailed checking of all draft policies and allocations is ongoing to ensure compliance against the National Planning Policy Framework/National Planning Practice Guidance to minimise the potential of lack of conformity issues when the HLP2036 is being examined. A brief has been drafted for a Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Assessment which will be issued for tender subject to availability of the necessary budget. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is being reformatted to aid ease of understanding. This is a detailed, iterative assessment that is required to be completed at each stage of preparation of the HLP2036; the outcomes of the SA are required to be incorporated into the HLP2036 before it is published for proposed submission consultation.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROVIDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

- 4.1 Currently, the budgets for consultants and related costs to support the HLP2036 and other Planning Policy initiatives are agreed for each financial year. Dependencies on others e.g. the County Council for transport modelling, means that timescales can be outside the District Council's control and budgets are not therefore spent as planned. Rather than continue with the status quo, it is proposed that a single Planning Policy earmarked reserve is set up, with money then drawn from the reserve to support the work programme. The 2015/16 budget of £362K for Local Plan Preparation, Wyton Airfield Development, Alconbury Development Proposals, Hunts Town Centre Redevelopment and St Neots Town Centre Advice and future years' budgets for Local Plan preparation, Wyton Airfield and St Neots Town Centre Advice would be put into this reserve. The estimated cost of progressing the current draft HLP2036 to submission is some £330K-£430K.

5. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

- 5.1 Comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) from the meeting on 8th March 2016 are appended to the report.

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

- 6.1 A key risk is that critical elements of the evidence base may not be completed to the timetable anticipated due to factors outside of this Council's control. This will delay finalisation of the development strategy and potential allocations required to deliver it, preventing completion of the proposed submission HLP2036 and its supporting documents by December 2016. This will be managed by ongoing liaison with consultants and other partners

involved in preparation of evidence base documents to reaffirm expected commitments. Loss of expertise within the Planning Policy team could give rise to delays if it impacted on preparation of specialist documents such as the Sustainability Appraisal. A further risk arises from potential budget limitations on preparing the evidence base, particularly if a change in government policy requires additional evidence that is not currently identified. This could be best addressed by provision of a single Planning Policy earmarked reserve to draw down against.

- 6.2 The revised LDS envisages the submission of the new Local Plan in July 2017. It remains unclear whether the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2009 already means that the District Council has met the requirement announced by Government in July 2015 to have written a Local Plan by early 2017. The Government has still not made clear exactly what is required to meet this requirement. If the adoption of the Core Strategy does not mean that the requirement has already been met, and the requirement is for the new Local Plan to have been submitted by March 2017, the LDS timeline means that the District Council will not have met the requirement to write a plan by early 2017. The penalty for not having written a plan is that the Government will intervene and write a plan. As the LDS envisages having carried out statutory consultation on the Proposed Submission version of the plan, Government intervention to write a plan seems most unlikely.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 The production of the HLP2036 relates to the Corporate Priority of Enabling Sustainable Growth.

- 7.2 The objective under the Corporate Priority is as follows:

“To improve the supply of new and affordable housing to meet future needs: Our work programme includes, ensuring an adequate supply of housing to meet objectively assessed needs and planning and delivering the provision of decent market and affordable housing for current and future needs.”

- 7.3 The relevant key actions for 2015/16 related to the objective are:

- Implement a programme to adopt the Local Plan to 2036
- Facilitate delivery of new housing on the large strategic sites at Alconbury, St Neots, Wyton, Bearscroft - Godmanchester

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Advice has been sought and will continue to be sought as necessary throughout the preparation of the HLP2036.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As set out in paragraph 4.1 above it is proposed that a single Planning Policy earmarked reserve is set up enabling money to be drawn down from this to support the HLP2036 work programme.

10 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 10.1 To ensure that Members are updated on preparation of the HLP2036 and its associated evidence base and to provide for expenditure on studies which are required to support the delivery of the proposed submission HLP2036 document.

11 APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 Comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) from the meeting on 8th March 2016.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Cabinet 19th November 2015 – Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036

Local Plans: House of Commons: Written Statement Department for Communities and Local Government Written Statement made by Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Brandon Lewis), July 2015

Letter from the Right Honourable Greg Clark MP (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate, July 2015

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