

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 Quarterly Update and Infrastructure Planning Update

**Meeting/Date:** Overview and Scrutiny (Economy and Growth) – 8  
September 2016  
Cabinet – 22 September 2016

**Executive Portfolio:** Planning Policy, Housing & Infrastructure

**Report by:** Head of Development

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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**Executive Summary:**

This is the fourth quarterly update on progress on the Local Plan to 2036, as agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 19 November 2015. The report provides updates on each element of the evidence base currently under preparation and highlights the risks arising from delays to the Strategic Transport Study and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). It also provides a further update in relation to the highways and transport infrastructure projects necessary for its delivery.

**Recommendations:**

That the Cabinet:

Notes progress on preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, its supporting evidence base and the highways and transport infrastructure projects necessary for its delivery.

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress on preparation of the proposed submission Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP2036), its supporting evidence base and the highways and transport infrastructure projects necessary for its delivery.
- 1.2 The main purpose of the report is to:
- Confirm the delivery programme for the evidence base necessary to deliver the HLP2036; and
  - Confirm expected highways and transport infrastructure improvements along with anticipated delivery timescales.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At the Cabinet meeting on 19 November 2015 it was resolved that quarterly reports on progress with preparation of the HLP2036 should be provided. The December 2015 report on Infrastructure Planning also stated that a further update would be provided in June 2016; this was provided and is further updated in this report to provide a comprehensive picture of the work necessary to deliver the HLP2036.

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

### **Strategic Transport Study**

- 3.1 Following explanation of the implications of the delays to revalidating the Cambridge Sub-Regional Model (CSRM) traffic model, Cabinet on 16 June 2016 resolved to endorse the approach that the priority is to develop a defensible transport evidence base necessitating waiting for the revalidated CSRM to be available.
- 3.2 The completion date for the revalidation work has slipped numerous times and at Members' request the Chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council's Economy and Environment Committee, County Councillor Ian Bates, Cambridgeshire County Council's Executive Director: Economy, Transport and Environment, Mr Graham Hughes and Cambridgeshire County Council's Head of Transport and Infrastructure Policy and Funding, Mr Jeremy Smith attended the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny (Economy and Growth) on 7 July 2016 to explain the situation. At that meeting, it was confirmed that the model would be available by the end of July 2016. Continuing work required to deliver a robust model meant that the model was not available by the end of July and at a meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 attended by District Council and County Council officers, Atkins (who are re-validating the model) and Mott MacDonald (who are preparing the District Council's Strategic Transport Study) District and County Council officers reinforced the importance of meeting the December 2016 timescale for the Strategic Transport Study. At that meeting Atkins and Mott Macdonald were tasked to work together, and are working together, to this end. Weekly updates are now being provided and an update will be provided at the Cabinet meeting.

### **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)**

- 3.3 JBA have completed the Level 1 screening of all proposed allocation sites which provides information on flood zones, surface water mapping, historic

flood map and reservoir inundation maps. The screening also indicates whether the site: is at risk from an Internal Drainage Board watercourse, benefits from defences, there is an ordinary watercourse with a catchment less than 3km<sup>2</sup> and has been taken forward to the Level 2 assessment.

- 3.4 JBA have also completed the majority of the Level 2 detailed site summary assessments which provide site specific information on flood risk, suitability for use of SuDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage System), flood defences, emergency planning and guidance for developers. Amendments to some proposed allocations are expected to result from these.
- 3.5 Discussions between the Council, JBA and the Environment Agency have resolved the problems on modelling climate change allowances reported in June. The Environment Agency has agreed to fund JBA to undertake this work for the whole Lower Great Ouse. JBA have started compiling the models for this, and an update on the detailed programme will be provided at the Cabinet meeting. The model is unlikely to be completed until at least early 2017.
- 3.6 To minimise delay for the HLP2036 an interim SFRA has been prepared, the first draft of which was received on 15 August 2016. A completed version with the climate change modelling will be issued once analysis of the climate change work has been completed.

#### **Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment**

- 3.7 Officers provided comments on a partial draft of the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (GTANA) on 28 June 2016 and commented on a further revised draft on 3 August 2016. A further draft of the whole report was due to be received by 19 August with any final comments to be provided as soon as possible after that, to enable the final document to be completed early in September. It will be published simultaneously by all participating authorities in September. Legal opinion sought from the QC retained by South Cambridgeshire District Council has confirmed that the approach taken in the GTANA is consistent with national policy and current case law, although the implications of the changes to national policy in 2015 have yet to be fully tested. Further legal advice is being sought on compliance with statutory housing responsibilities and equalities legislation.

#### **Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Assessment**

- 3.8 Officers provided comments on a partial draft of the Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Assessment Engagement on 20 July 2016 and received a further draft for review on 17 August. The Assessment will advise on the need for additional retail and commercial leisure floorspace to ascertain the quantity and nature of site allocations for the HLP2036 and to inform development management policies.

#### **Objectively Assessed Need Update**

- 3.9 An update of the Objectively Assessed Need figure for Huntingdonshire has been commissioned from Cambridgeshire County Council's Research Group. Outputs are awaiting completion of an update to the East of England Forecasting Model to ensure review of the housing delivery target for the HLP2036 is as up-to-date as possible.

## Wind Energy Development

- 3.10 The role of this document is to identify whether any general areas within Huntingdonshire are potentially suitable for wind energy development leading to preparation of a local plan policy and area designation accordingly. It will set out a range of options and specify a preferred approach. Consultation is scheduled to start in late September.

## Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan, and Growth Viability Assessment.

- 3.11 The Local Plan must demonstrate that development is supported by sufficient infrastructure, and that its vision, allocations and policies will enable viable development. In order to achieve this, the Council is seeking to commission a Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan and a separate but linked Growth Viability Assessment.
- 3.12 The aim of the Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan is to show that the Local Plan is deliverable, by enabling the Council to prioritise investment and deploy resources to deliver locally and strategically important infrastructure projects. It will do this via: a) an infrastructure study - identifying the infrastructure required to support the growth proposed in the Local Plan, including identifying: costs, and timing; and b) an infrastructure viability and delivery plan - providing a realistic infrastructure project plan, including: prioritising infrastructure requirements, and considering funding options.
- 3.13 The aims of the Growth Viability Assessment are to: support the deliverability of the Local Plan, by ensuring that the Local Plan vision, allocations and policies are viable; and enable the Council to maximise gain through planning obligations in order to improve delivery of infrastructure and affordable housing, whilst balanced against the desire to encourage growth and delivery across the district. It will do this by testing the viability of proposed allocations and policies, and in particular by identifying an appropriate and viable affordable housing requirement target.
- 3.14 Given the linked nature of these evidence pieces, an initial request for quotation including both the infrastructure and viability work was published in July 2016. This did not result in any responses, and a refreshed request for quotation closes on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The intended timetable is for work to start in early October, with initial findings in December 2016. Full draft reports are required by April 2017 to support the proposed submission consultation.

## 4. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UPDATE

### A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement

4.1

Construction compounds are due to start being constructed from September 2016 at Brampton and Swavesey
Condition discharge continues on 7 key conditions required before commencement. HDC, as local planning authority, is consulted on these.
Sub-groups relating to such matters as design, delivery, legacy and environment are on-going. HDC officers service these.
Physical works will commence from December 2016 and the programme is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phase 1 – Section 1 A1 widening between Alconbury and Brampton Hut – from December 2016 to summer 2018</li><li>• Phase 1 – Section 2 Brampton Hut to ECML – from December 2016 to</li></ul>

autumn 2019

- Phase 2 – Section 3 ECML to Swavesey – from early 2017 to summer 2019
- Phase 3 – Section 4 Swavesey to Girton – from early 2017 to summer 2019
- Phase 4 – Section 5 Girton to Milton – from Summer 2018 to autumn 2019
- Phase 5 – Section 6 Huntingdon Viaduct removal and new local road network– from January 2020 to early 2021

#### **A428: Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement:**

4.2

Central government has granted funding to Highways England (HE)/Jacobs to progress scheme to Preferred Route announcement stage.
HE/Jacobs engaging with MP's/cross-border Members at counties and districts, plus officers. Separate Parish Forums are being held.
Part of the government's Road Investment Strategy April 2015 to March 2020. It is subject to funding approval and a Development Consent Order (DCO) consent, works on-site would commence by March 2020.
Scheme design will be to the government's 'Expressway' standard to tie into the current Oxford to Cambridge Expressway strategic study.
Proposed timeline is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• January to March 2017 – Non-statutory consultation on scheme options</li><li>• Spring/Summer 2017 – Ministerial announcement of preferred route</li><li>• Summer/Autumn 2017 – Development of Preferred Scheme</li><li>• Autumn 2017 – Formal consultation on Preferred Scheme</li><li>• Summer 2018 – Submission of DCO application</li><li>• Winter 2019 – Secretary of State for Transport decision</li><li>• Spring 2020 – Commencement of works</li></ul>

#### **A1: Oxford to Cambridge Expressway:**

4.3

Identification of options to be taken forward is now complete plus; stakeholder meetings with a range of public bodies/interested parties are on-going. HDC officers service these.
Route currently in place on A421 between M1 and Caxton Gibbet to M11. Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet emerging as a separate scheme (see above). The scheme will consider integration of the route with M11/A14 at Girton and with the A1/M25 to Peterborough Study, East-West Rail and emerging ECML proposals.
Key 'missing' link between M40 and M1 and route around Oxford.
Whole scheme includes road-based options, plus rail, technology, local access, behaviour change and high-quality public transport elements.
Scheme will feed into the government's Road Investment Strategy, together with the other 5 Strategic Studies across England and, if approved, would be delivered as part of Roads Period 2 via the National Roads Fund after 2020.

#### **East West Rail Central Section (Bedford to Cambridge)**

4.4

East West Rail (EWR) developed 20 original options and reduced to a final 2, focussed on a Bedford/Sandy/Cambridge corridor or a Bedford/Sandy/Hitchin/Cambridge corridor. Final route option is via Sandy in order to achieve a 125mph line speed
Western Section between Oxford and Bicester now complete and offers a second Oxford to London service to Marylebone. Also looking at development of options between Bicester to Milton Keynes, Bedford and Aylesbury

Work to date has shown that it is not possible to reinstate the old Oxford to Cambridge 'Varsity Line'. Alignment is either too slow for a modern-day railway or the previous alignment has been lost at various locations.
Bedford to Cambridge will be a 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project' and will be subject to a Development Consent Order (DCO). Now final route option is identified, EWR Consortium has invited LPAs to join the project team as key stakeholders. HDC officers service these meetings.
A route via Sandy is likely to result in growth options being explored in that area, which would be of direct relevance and impact on Huntingdonshire.
The (very indicative) timeline is as follows, subject to funding and consents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial National Infrastructure Commission report – Late 2016</li> <li>• Preferred Route confirmed – Late 2018</li> <li>• Preferred Alignment confirmed – circa 2021</li> <li>• DCO application – circa 2022</li> <li>• Start on site – circa 2026</li> <li>• New train services running – circa 2031</li> </ul>

### **A1 M25 to Peterborough**

4.5

Identification of options to be taken forward is now complete and stakeholder meetings are on-going with a range of public bodies/interested parties. HDC officers service these.
Scheme aims to bring consistency to the southern section of the route and to improve the non-motorway northern section (Baldock to Brampton) to motorway standard.
Short-list of three packages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package A – section of new motorway (mostly offline) in the middle (northern) section i.e. 'Middle bypass'</li> <li>• Package B – local improvements (grade separating junctions or creating new grade separated junctions in the middle (northern) section i.e. 'Improve existing junctions')</li> <li>• Package C – upgrade the east-west connectivity of the A1 to avoid 'hop on/hop off' behaviour i.e. 'Modest improvements'.</li> </ul>
Next step is for Highways England to submit an option package assessment to the Department for Transport (DfT) during autumn 2016.
Subject to DfT approval, preferred options will be developed and the scheme will feed into the government's Road Investment Strategy, together with another 5 strategic studies across England and, if approved, would be delivered as part of Roads Period 2 via the National Roads Fund after 2020.

### **East Coast Main Line Study (London Kings Cross to Edinburgh):**

4.6

The strategic approach is:

- to increase line capacity by reducing speed difference between services, removing junction conflicts and to improve performance, safety and resilience
- greater dedicated fast and slow lines
- build additional routes to separate routes where necessary
- use technology to reduce headway and manage passenger experience
- develop safer resilient infrastructure giving better performance
- ability to accommodate new InterCity Express Programme

4.7

Initial work is indicating that interventions are required throughout the whole route, that the mix of traffic with different speeds is an overriding issue and there may be conflicting movements at junctions and stations i.e. Peterborough.

However, there is also potential for use of loop lines i.e. Hitchin/ Cambridge/ Ely/Peterborough.

- 4.8 Key constraints between Kings Cross to Peterborough:
- Kings Cross – turnaround times
  - Outer Suburban (services to St. Neots, Huntingdon and Peterborough) – Stevenage turnback, standing time in Kings Cross
  - Welwyn Viaduct – two-track section, speed mix, conflict with stopping and freight services
  - Welwyn to Peterborough – speed mix on slow lines, including freight, 2-track section at Stilton Fen, station operations/overlaps
  - Emerging demands of Thameslink services
  - Lack of electrification Ely to Peterborough
- 4.9 Possible options may include the ‘spreading’ of stopping patterns for long-distance services to other stations i.e. possible future Lincoln and Grimsby services to Kings Cross potentially stopping at Huntingdon and St. Neots, rather than all at Peterborough. Need also to consider interchange at Sandy via East West rail and its importance as a possible major interchange/hub.
- 4.10 An early intervention is Huntingdon to Woodwalton four tracking project. This scheme is now at consultation stage to reinstate the 4<sup>th</sup> track between Huntingdon and Wood Walton Fen. The current timeline is:
- July 2016 – Public Information Events (followed by further scheme development)
  - Spring/Summer 2017 – Public Consultation
  - Summer/Autumn 2017 – Scheme design finalisation and application submission
  - 2018 – Abbots Ripton level crossing closure
  - Summer 2018 to Autumn 2020 – Main Works
  - Winter 2020 – Opening to services
- 4.11 Thameslink services are still planned to arrive through Huntingdon and St. Neots circa 2019 via Kings Cross St. Pancras/Farringdon/London Bridge to south of London and the south coast.

## **5. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

- 5.1 The Panel stated that they believe the Council should have regular meetings with Cambridgeshire County Council to ensure that the revalidation of the Cambridge Sub-Region Model traffic model is completed within a timely manner.
- 5.2 Members want to ensure that the Council keep the pressure on Highways England to ensure that the improvement works on the A428 commences on time. The Panel want the Council to emphasise that the A428 is a priority for the District and important to accommodate future housing developments.
- 5.3 Following the discussion regarding the securing the services of consultants in order to carry out work on the Local Plan, the Panel want to emphasis to Cabinet that if needed then additional resources should be allocated in order to secure the services of consultants.
- 5.4 Members believe that the completion of the Local Plan is the number one priority for the Council and that resources should not be diverted away from achieving this priority.

- 5.5 The Panel recommends to the Cabinet that the Growth and Infrastructure Group should include the following District Council Members: the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy, Housing and Infrastructure; two Members from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) and a Member from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment).

**6. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS**

- 6.1 The table below is unchanged from June (except for the addition of the Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan, and Growth Viability Assessment) although it will be influenced by the matters set out in the preceding paragraphs. Work is being done to seek to ensure that, even if the Strategic Transport Study and/or SFRA are delayed, the May – June 2017 timescale for the Statutory consultation on proposed submission Local Plan can still be met. Once all the evidence is complete and the proposed submission HLP2036 is in draft it is necessary to commission a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA); this includes a statutory 5 weeks consultation period with specified stakeholders including Natural England and the Environment Agency. The proposed submission HLP2036 cannot be finalised for statutory consultation until the HRA is complete and necessary amendments made.
- 6.2 There remains some uncertainty over the timeline for delivery of the Strategic Transport Study, not least because it will depend on the number of mitigation options that need to be considered, and this makes production of a definitive timetable for preparation of the HLP2036 difficult. The Strategic Transport Study is a critical piece of evidence; progressing to submission and examination without it would be futile as it would be sought by any Inspector and its omission give rise to many objections.
- 6.3 Although progress has been made with the climate change modelling for the SFRA, the timetable for finalisation of the climate change modelling is not definitive as yet.
- 6.4 There is also a risk that no quotations will be received to undertake the Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan, and Growth Viability Assessment.

Timetable: Key stages- completed	
Sustainability appraisal scoping report	February – March 2012
Issues and options consultation	May – June 2012
Strategy and Policy consultation	August – November 2012
Full draft Local Plan (stage 3) consultation	May – July 2013
Additional sites consultation	November – December 2013
(Long Term Transport Strategy preparation led by Cambridgeshire County Council)	May – November 2014
Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2026: Targeted Consultation 2015	January – March 2015

Timetable: key stage – to be completed/undertaken	
Finalisation of evidence base – including Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment	August 2015 - November 2016
Strategic Transport Study in collaboration with	January 2016 -



Cambridgeshire County Council	December 2016
<b>Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan, and Growth Viability Assessment</b>	<b>October 2016 – April 2017</b>
Statutory consultation on proposed submission Local Plan to 2036 (Reg. 19)	May – June 2017
Submission to Secretary of State	November 2017
Estimated examination	November 2017 – April 2019
Receipt of Inspector's report	May 2019
Estimated date for adoption	June 2019

## 7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND / OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

7.1 The production of the HLP2036 relates to the 2016/17 strategic priority of Delivering Sustainable Growth.

7.2 The objective under the strategic priority is as follows:  
*“To improve the supply of new and affordable housing, jobs and community facilities to meet future need.”*

*Our work programme includes:*

- *“ensuring an adequate supply of housing to meet objectively assessed needs;*
- *planning and delivering the provision of decent market and affordable housing for current and future needs;*
- *ensuring that there are the right community facilities to accommodate the housing growth.”*

7.3 The relevant key actions for 2016/17 are:

- prepare the Local Plan;
- facilitate delivery of new housing on the large strategic sites at:
  - St Neots
  - Wyton
  - Alconbury Weald
- maintain a 5 year housing supply position

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 A single Planning Policy earmarked reserve was agreed at the Cabinet meeting of 17 March 2016 enabling money to be drawn down to support production of the evidence base.

## 9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

9.1 To update Members on preparation of the HLP2036 and its associated evidence base and raise awareness of the risks and implications for the timetable. To update Members in relation to highways and transport infrastructure projects.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Cabinet Report 16 June 2016 Item 5](#)

[HM Treasury July 2015 Fixing the Foundations](#)

[Written Ministerial Statement July 2015 Local Plans](#)

[Environment Agency February 2016 Climate change allowance guidance](#)

[Written Ministerial Statement 18 June 2015 on Wind Turbine Development](#)

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