

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
December 2016
Cabinet – 19 January 2017

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Roger Harrison – Executive Councillor for Growth

Report by: Head of Development

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

This quarterly report provides updates on progress on Local plan preparation and the main elements of the evidence base currently under preparation. It highlights the risks arising from delays to the Strategic Transport Study. 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.
 - 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. To provide a comprehensive picture updates on infrastructure planning are integrated with this as the Local Plan cannot be successfully delivered without the necessary supporting infrastructure.

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 revalidation work has been completed and reviewed by Mott McDonald to ensure it is fit for use from a Huntingdonshire perspective. Initial runs of the baseline and four scenarios were completed in November to quantify expected trip generation, trip purpose and mode share. The data needs to be analysed, its implications identified and possible mitigation measures devised. A further round of modelling is required to test what the implications would be of any possible mitigation measures to ascertain their impact on the future transport situation.
- 3.3 Mott McDonald prepared a revised timetable for the Strategic Transport Study following receipt of the revalidated CSRM. The timetable focuses on producing sufficient outputs to advise on a preferred scenario in January 2017 to allow preparation of the HLP2036 to move forward, with the final report to follow that.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

- 3.4 JBA have made good progress on the SFRA, recently undertaking the climate change modelling work on behalf of the Environment Agency for the whole of the lower Great Ouse. The final report is nearly completed and publication is expected in January 2017.

Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment

- 3.5 The Cambridgeshire, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Peterborough and West Suffolk Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2016 was published in October. This reflects the new 'planning' definition for a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson as set out in the national Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015); however, this is inconsistent with the definition in place through the Equalities Act (2010) and may be subject to further legal challenge.
- 3.6 The Assessment indicates that there is a need for 9 additional pitches in Huntingdonshire for Gypsy and Traveller households that meet the new definition; a need for up to 19 additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households that may meet the new definition and 38 additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households who do not meet the new definition but may seek culturally appropriate accommodation. There are no occupied Travelling Showpeople yards in Huntingdonshire so no current or future need is identified.

Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Assessment

- 3.7 The Assessment is almost complete, having been delayed to update the guidance on Huntingdon West following the sale of the former Sainsbury's site. It is expected to be published in January 2017.

Objectively Assessed Need Update

- 3.8 An update of the Objectively Assessed Need figure for Huntingdonshire has been commissioned from Cambridgeshire County Council's Research Group. This was delayed awaiting completion of an update to the East of England Forecasting Model. The model preparation is now being undertaken by Cambridge Econometrics (CE) and at the time of writing this report CE have yet to clarify the timescale for providing the model. In the interim, the research group will complete the Objectively Assessment Need update using evidence from the most recent version of the model.
- 3.9 The national requirement is to use the most up to date data available. At the time of drafting the previous report it was anticipated a revised model would be available by November 2016. However, given the delay in revising the model it is considered reasonable to complete the study using what is the most recently available data.

Wind Energy Development

- 3.10 A consultation document was issued on 21 November 2016 to seek comments on four possible options for which areas of the district might be designated as potentially suitable for further wind turbine development, supplemented by an additional option allowing for wind turbines of up to 30 metres which could be implemented in combination with the other options. The consultation document also contains a draft policy on which comments are sought prior to inclusion of a policy on wind turbine development in the proposed submission HLP2036. The consultation period is open until the 16th January 2017.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 3.11 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 require an assessment of any plan or proposal which may result in a significant effect on the integrity of any European designated site of nature conservation value. This is commonly known as a Habitats Regulations Assessment and is an iterative process whereby the draft HLP2036 is assessed and any modifications or mitigation measures that need to be incorporated are recommended; then a final revised assessment produced. In line with other key elements of the evidence base the initial work will consider the potential significant effects of each of the four development scenarios. Once a preferred scenario is agreed and the draft HLP2036 prepared the Habitats Regulations Assessment will be finalised. The work is being undertaken by Bodsey Ecology based in Ramsey.

Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan

- 3.12 Arup have been commissioned to carry out this study which aims firstly to assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure currently available and its ability to accommodate anticipated growth and then to determine the additional infrastructure investment required to support the level of growth anticipated in the HLP2036. It will estimate the costs involved, funding sources and shortfalls, and the phasing and prioritisation for delivery. This work is essential to be able to successfully demonstrate at examination that the development strategy put forward in the HLP2036 can actually be delivered and builds on the previous infrastructure planning work undertaken most recently to evidence the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule and the first Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14.
- 3.13 Infrastructure standards are currently being reviewed and assessed in line with recently updated strategies and plans and meetings are being held with key infrastructure providers.

Local Plan Viability Testing

- 3.14 Cushman & Wakefield have been appointed to undertake a Growth Viability Assessment of the HLP2036, building on the work previously undertaken following the Harman approach. It will consider the implications of each policy from a viability perspective in delivering development. By assessing the impact of all requirements to support the HLP2036, it will result in a recommendation for the appropriate percentage of affordable housing to be sought. It will consider the viability issues faced in delivering the three proposed strategic expansion locations and a number of other key sites; it will also complete viability testing for a range of site typologies which should address the many smaller sites proposed for allocation.
- 3.15 Following a recent inception meeting, site typologies are currently being assessed and the programme of work being finalised.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

- 4.1 The Panel received and noted the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 Quarterly Update and Infrastructure Planning Update. Members commended the work of the planning team in reducing the six month delay caused by the wait for the revalidated Cambridge Sub Regional Model from Cambridgeshire County Council to only one month.

5. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UPDATE

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement

Construction compounds commenced construction in September 2016 at Brampton and Swavesey plus additional works at Godmanchester
Condition discharge continues in consultation with A14 Integrated Development Team (IDT).
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">• Phase 1 – Section 1 A1 widening between Alconbury and Brampton Hut – from December 2016 to summer 2018• Phase 1 – Section 2 Brampton Hut to ECML – from December 2016 to 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:

Central government has granted funding to Highways England/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">• January to March 2017 – Non-statutory consultation on scheme options• Spring/Summer 2017 – Ministerial announcement of preferred route• Summer/Autumn 2017 – Development of Preferred Scheme• Autumn 2017 – Formal consultation on Preferred Scheme• Summer 2018 – Submission of DCO application• Winter 2019 – Secretary of State for Transport decision• Spring 2020 – Commencement of works

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway: (subject to 2016 Autumn Statement Update)

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)

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). Final route option is emerging,
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"> • Initial National Infrastructure Commission report – Late 2016 • Preferred Route confirmed – Late 2018 • Preferred Alignment confirmed – circa 2021 • DCO application – circa 2022 • Start on site – circa 2026 • New train services running – circa 2031

A1 M25 to Peterborough: (Subject to possible 2016 Autumn Statement Update)

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"> • Package A – section of new motorway (mostly offline) in the middle (northern) section i.e. 'Middle bypass' • Package B – local improvements (grade separating junctions or creating new grade separated junctions in the middle (northern) section i.e. 'Improve existing junctions') • Package C – upgrade the east-west connectivity of the A1 to avoid 'hop on/hop off' behaviour i.e. 'Modest improvements'.
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:

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

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.

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

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.

An early intervention is Huntingdon to Woodwalton four tracking project. This scheme continues consultation to reinstate the 4th track between Huntingdon and Wood Walton Fen.

The current timeline is:

- 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

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.

6 KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 6.1 The Strategic Transport Study remains the key risk to the timetable for the remaining stages of the Local Plan process. The September 2016 report left the timetable as set out in the June 2016 report unchanged, but highlighted that it would be impacted by any further delays in the Strategic Transport Study and/or SFRA. The revalidated Cambridge Sub-Regional Model (CSRМ) was originally anticipated to be complete by the end of May 2016 but was not completed by Atkins, the County Council's consultants, until the third week in November 2016. There still remains some uncertainty over the timeline for delivery of the Strategic Transport Study which makes the production of a definitive timetable for preparation of the HLP2036 difficult at present. This is because the process of the identification and assessment of mitigation packages for each scenario is iterative, involving rounds of modelling, and needs to be complete to demonstrate a deliverable preferred development strategy. This iterative process 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. The table below has been revised from the one in the June and September reports as it is now expected that sufficient outcomes from the study to prepare the preferred development scenario will be available in January 2017 but the final report will not be complete at that time.
- 6.2 The table below has also been updated to reflect the timescales set out above in relation to the finalisation of the other evidence.
- 6.3 Once all the evidence is complete and the proposed submission HLP2036 draft prepared it is necessary to complete 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.
- 6.4 Although the completion of the re-validation of the CSRМ by the County Council was 6 months later than originally expected, Officers continue to make considerable efforts to seek to ensure that the timescale for the Statutory consultation on, and submission of, the Local Plan is only one month later than anticipated in the June and September reports. This includes at least weekly conversations with Atkins and Mott McDonald to push the Strategic Transport Study forward and commissioning work on the HRA to begin based on all four scenarios rather than waiting for the preferred scenario to be determined before work began. Importantly, the timetable below still enables the Council to meet the expected requirement to submit a new Local Plan to the Secretary of State by the end of March 2018.

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, Growth & Investment Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Growth Viability Assessment and Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment	August 2015 - November 2016 January 2017
Strategic Transport Study in collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council	January 2016 - December 2016 February 2017
Statutory consultation on proposed submission Local Plan to 2036 (Reg. 19)	May – June 2017 June – July 2017
Submission to Secretary of State	November 2017 December 2017
Estimated examination	November 2017 – April 2019 December 2017- May 2019
Receipt of Inspector's report	May 2019 June 2019
Estimated date for adoption	June 2019 July 2019

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

7.1 The production of the HLP2036 and associated evidence relates to the 2016/17 strategic priority of Delivering Sustainable Growth and specifically two associated strategic objectives.

7.2 The first 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 2016/18 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

7.4 The second related objective under the strategic priority is as follows:
“To remove infrastructure barriers to growth”

Our work programme includes:

- *influencing the development of the Highways and Transport Infrastructure Strategy; and*
- *facilitating the delivery of infrastructure to support housing growth.*

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. It is expected that any additional funding needed can be drawn from this.

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 22 September 2016 Item](#)

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

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

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

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