

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 Quarterly Update and Infrastructure Planning Update
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) – 6th April 2017 Cabinet – 20th April 2017
Executive Portfolio:	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 initial outcomes from the Strategic Transport Study. It also provides a further update in relation to the highways and transport infrastructure projects necessary for the local plan's delivery.

Recommendations:

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

- 1) 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; and

That the Cabinet:

- 1) 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 Headline outcomes from the Strategic Transport Study (STS) were circulated in an 'All Members Bulletin' on 27 February 2017. This highlighted that the road infrastructure required to deliver the proposed allocation of Wyton airfield is not currently deliverable, in particular the funding requirements are considered unachievable at this time. Scenarios tested included a 'without Wyton' scenario and other scenarios are being considered to enable the final proposed development strategy to be determined.
- 3.2 An initial draft STS report was received on 3 March 2017 and extensive comments have been made by officers from HDC and Cambridgeshire County Council. Mott Macdonald are currently reviewing these and preparing a revised document for further consideration. A finalised report is expected by the end of April.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

- 3.3 Some additional work has been identified as necessary and a small extension to this project commissioned to ensure a comprehensive piece of evidence is available. The final report is expected in April 2017.

Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Assessment

- 3.4 The Assessment examines the current retailing situation in Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey considering the strengths and opportunities for each town centre individually. Across the district as a whole it recommends capacity exists for 2,000-2,500 sqm convenience shopping floorspace and 18,200-28,500 sqm comparison floorspace by 2036. It does, however, caution that floorspace capacity is based on available expenditure and does not necessarily equate to demand from potential retailers for space; if additional floorspace is not provided trade may simply be concentrated within existing retail provision. The Assessment was completed before Waitrose's announcement of the

intended closure of their Huntingdon store. The successful contribution of markets, particularly in St Ives, to the local economy is quantified with 60% of residents surveyed having visited a local street market or farmers market in the preceding two months.

- 3.5 In terms of leisure facilities the Assessment did not identify any district-wide capacity for major commercial facilities (health and fitness clubs, cinema screens or tin-pin bowling lanes). In qualitative terms an increase in the provision and diversity of restaurants could be justified. St Neots' vibrant evening economy is noted along with recent improvements to provision in Huntingdon.

Objectively Assessed Need Update

- 3.6 An update of the Objectively Assessed Need figure for Huntingdonshire has been commissioned from Cambridgeshire County Council's Research Group. This has identified a marginally reduced objectively assessed need for housing of 20,100 rather than the target for 21,000 new homes included in the Targeted Consultation HLP2036.

Wind Energy Development

- 3.7 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. 131 comments were received from 54 respondents. An initial review of comments shows that there was roughly equal support for each of the four options. In relation to all options, there were quite a number of comments expressing the view that if the policy is applied robustly, including consideration of all planning impacts as required by the WMS, then applications with unacceptable impacts would be refused and this would be true wherever they were located.

Local Development Scheme

- 3.8 A revised Local Development Scheme has been prepared for the HLP2036. This is a formal requirement to set out the nature and programme for the HLP2036. The timetable is reflected in section 5 of this report. The updated document was published on HDC's website in March 2017.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 3.9 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. First stage of this comprises a screening report completed in January 2017. As with the initial work completed in 2013 this concluded that a full Habitats Regulations Assessment was required because likely significant effects were identified for European sites from several of the HLP2036's proposed policies. A draft final Habitats Regulations Assessment was received at the end of March identifying minor changes to six proposed policies. Of the identified sites the small allocation proposed on the former gas depot site in Huntingdon was identified as potential having a likely significant effect on Portholme SAC but adequate mitigation can be put in place to address this.

Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan

- 3.10 Arup were commissioned last year to undertake this study to set out the infrastructure that will be required to deliver the planned level of housing and employment put forward in the HLP2036. The Delivery Plan seeks to:
- Understand the current baseline provision in relation to physical and social infrastructure
 - Assess infrastructure need to support the growth proposed in the HLP2036
 - Estimate cost, potential funding sources and phasing of delivery
 - Support the selection of sites and drafting of policies in the emerging HLP2036 and
 - Inform further work being undertaken by the Council in relation to viability and implementation.
- 3.11 Following a range of meetings and dialogue with infrastructure providers and partners the Infrastructure Delivery Plan is now being finalised for officer consideration in readiness to support finalisation of the proposed submission HLP2036.

Local Plan Viability Testing

- 3.12 As previously reported Cushman & Wakefield are undertaking a Growth Viability Assessment of the HLP2036. This is building on previous work undertaken which followed the Harman approach and reviewing changes in direction and costs that have occurred since that time. The work looks to consider the drafting of policies, their impact and other development costs to then identify an appropriate percentage of affordable housing to be sought with the HLP2036.

4 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UPDATE

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement

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 commenced in December 2016 and the programme remains 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:

Highways England/Jacobs are progressing scheme to Preferred Route announcement stage.
Scheme is undergoing Public Consultation between 6 th March 2017 and 23 rd April 2017. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy & Growth) will consider the proposals on 6 th April 2017, followed by Cabinet on 20 th April 2017.
The scheme is part of the government's Road Investment Strategy April 2015 to March 2020. It remains subject to funding approval and a Development Consent Order (DCO) consent and, if granted, works on-site would commence around Spring 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">• March/April 2017 – Public 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:

Route currently exists between M1 and M11 via Caxton Gibbet. Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet emerges 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.
Development funding of £27m was allocated in the Govt. Autumn Statement 2016 to further develop options for the scheme. Estimated overall costs are between £3bn to £3.5bn.

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
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. Govt. committed a further £10m of development funding towards the scheme as part of the Autumn Statement 2016.
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

- Depending on the outcomes of the further development work, it is possible that the above timelines could be accelerated

A1/ M25 to Peterborough:

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:

- 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’.

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.

As part of the Govt. Autumn Statement 2016, Govt. announced that the A1 proposals will take a slightly longer timeframe to the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway proposals but that options will continue to be developed to inform Road Investment Period 2 from 2020 onwards.

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 for the East Coast Study 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

5 KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 5.1 Over the last quarter the major impact/risk on progressing the HLP2036 to proposed submission has come from the Strategic Transport Study. The December 2016/January 2017 report revised the table below slightly, predicated on sufficient outcomes from the study being available in January 2017 to prepare the preferred development scenario. Unfortunately, these were not received until late February; the final report is now not expected until the end of April instead of February. If the last elements of work identify any unexpected issues this may impact on the delivery of the proposed submission HLP2036.
- 5.2 The table below has been updated – using the timetable contained in the December 2016/January 2017 report as a base – to reflect the timescales set out in the Local Development Scheme (March 2017).
- 5.3 Officers continue to make considerable efforts to seek to ensure that the timescale for the statutory consultation on, and submission of, the Local Plan does not slip. 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. The Proposed Submission Local Plan will be presented to Overview & Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet before the Statutory Consultation scheduled for this summer.

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 - January 2017 April 2017
Strategic Transport Study in collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council	January 2016 - February 2017 April 2017
Statutory consultation on proposed submission Local Plan to 2036 (Reg. 19)	June – July 2017 June – August 2017
Submission to Secretary of State	December 2017
Estimated examination	December 2017- May 2019
Receipt of Inspector's report	June 2019
Estimated date for adoption	July 2019

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

6.1 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.

6.2 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.”*

6.3 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
 - Alconbury Weald
- maintain a 5 year housing supply position

6.4 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.*

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 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.

8 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 8.1 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 19 January 2017 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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