

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Huntingdonshire Local Plan 2036 Quarterly Update/Approval for Consultation and Infrastructure Planning Update.

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny (Economy and Growth) – 20th June 2017
Cabinet – 22nd June 2017.

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Growth

Report by: Planning Service Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

This quarterly report provides updates on progress on Local Plan preparation and provides a further update in relation to the highways and transport infrastructure projects necessary for its delivery. It sets out a timetable to ensure that we are still able to meet the expected Government deadline to have submitted a new Local Plan by the end of March 2018 but also provide for an additional round of consultation to ensure that the Proposed Submission Draft is not only based on up-to-date evidence, but is also informed by up-to-date comments from interested parties.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to comment on the proposed approach
and

The Cabinet endorses the proposed approach and approves for consultation the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Consultation Draft 2017 and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal, and a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) June 2017, and issues a call for sites.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress on the 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:
- Set out delivery programme options 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.
- 2.2 Previous reports worked on the basis that the Statutory consultation on the proposed submission Local Plan to 2036 would be the next stage. Further consideration of the timeline indicates that a further round of consultation could take place before this stage and still enable the Council to meet the expected Government deadline to have submitted a new Local Plan by the end of March 2018. This is considered in this report.

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

Strategic Transport Study

- 3.1 A final Strategic Transport Study (STS) has now been received and is in the public domain. The link can be found via the following links:

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2641/huntingdonshire-strategic-transport-study-baseline-report.pdf>

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2642/huntingdonshire-strategic-transport-study-development-scenario-comparative-assessment.pdf>

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

- 3.2 The SFRA is now complete, and is in the public domain via the following link

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/environmental-issues/flooding/strategic-flood-risk-assessment/>

Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Assessment

- 3.3 The Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Assessment is complete, and is now in the public domain via the following link:

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2604/retail-and-commercial-leisure-needs-assessment.pdf>

Objectively Assessed Need

- 3.4 As reported in the April 2017 update, an update of the Objectively Assessed Need figure for Huntingdonshire was commissioned from Cambridgeshire County Council's Research Group – link below. This identified an objectively assessed need for a total of 20,100 homes, of which some 7,900 would need to be affordable. The Plan makes provision for more than 20,100 new homes to help deliver the required number of affordable homes. Full details can be found via the following link.

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2643/huntingdonshire-objectively-assessed-housing-need.pdf>

Wind Energy Development

- 3.5 Consideration of the responses to the consultation document issued in November 2016 has informed the policy contained in the Plan.

Habitats Regulation Assessment

- 3.5 The Habitats Regulations Assessment is complete and can be found via this link

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2684/habitats-regulations-assessment-2017.pdf>

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

- 3.6 A comprehensive sustainability appraisal including SEA has been undertaken to assess the implications of the development strategy, all policies and proposed site allocations including consideration of reasonable alternatives where appropriate. The link to the SA can be found via the following:

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/planning/new-local-plan-to-2036/monitoring-research-and-evidence-base/sustainability-appraisal/>

4. GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND DELIVERY PLAN

- 4.1 The document has now been fully reviewed and the published version is being finalised to support the HLP2036, and will be available alongside the public consultation.

- 4.2 A piece of work has also been undertaken covering Infrastructure Prioritisation, Funding and Programme Management. The purpose of this document is to provide a programme management tool to assist the Council and its partners in delivering the necessary infrastructure to support growth in the district. Infrastructure delivery has been prioritised, and advice is provided with regard to potential opportunities to rectify funding gaps where they are shown to exist. Work on this is now being finalised.

Local Plan Viability Testing

- 4.3 Cushman & Wakefield are undertaking a Growth Viability Assessment of the HLP2036 ensuring that local plan policies are deliverable and identifying the appropriate percentage of affordable housing to be sought to help meet local need.
- 4.4 An Assumptions Paper has been compiled outlining the assumptions to be used in the viability modelling. This has taken into consideration research of local and national market information and intelligence, the policies of the draft HLP2036, the CIL Charging Schedule and the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and analysis of recent Section 106 agreements. This was published alongside a consultation questionnaire in April.
- 4.5 In line with the approach outlined in the Harman report Viability Testing Local Plans, a consultation event was also held in April with the development industry to discuss the Assumptions Paper and provide a further opportunity for commentary on the assumptions and any suggested and evidenced amendments for consideration. This was a successful exercise resulting in 7 changes within the modelling undertaken.
- 4.6 All viability assessments have now been undertaken and the report is being finalised to support the evidence base of the HLP2036.

5 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. Agreement has been reached on setting up an additional group to specifically consider the intricacies of the viaduct removal and Huntingdon local road network alongside the heritage and conservation issues within the locality.
Physical works continue on schedule 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 mid 2021**

A428: Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement:

Highways England/Jacobs are progressing scheme to Preferred Route announcement stage.
Scheme underwent Public Consultation between 6 th March 2017 and 23 rd April 2017. In April, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy & Growth) followed by Cabinet considered the options and resolved to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> support the Orange route, subject to any final alignment of the route east of St Neots and confirmation that the existing A428 will be retained as a local road along its whole length between A1 and Caxton Gibbet; support proposals for Black Cat roundabout in accordance with Option C that provides a free-flow route for the A421/A428 and the A1 through this junction, as well as providing all movements arrangements within the junction; to advise Highways England that any support is condition on 'future-proofing' any A1 improvement scheme and that the current scheme should not prejudice or prevent that future route improvement; and this route will eventually form part of the wider Oxford to Cambridge Expressway scheme and that nothing emerging in terms of the design of this must prejudice the wider Expressway proposals.
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 within a broad Sandy corridor 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: <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'
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. As part of the A428 improvement/Oxford to Cambridge Expressway proposals, investigation is on-going to ensure that these schemes do not prejudice a future A1 improvement

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

6. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS / OPTIONS

- 6.1 Over the last 18 months the major impact/risk on progressing the HLP2036 to proposed submission has come from the Strategic Transport Study, but this has now been finalised.
- 2.2 The key risk to a Local Plan is that it is found 'unsound' – see details under Legal Implications heading below. There is also a risk that if the Local Plan is not submitted by the end of March 2018 the Government will intervene to arrange for the Plan to be written. This latter risk is low, particularly if a Plan is very close to being submitted. Moreover, the driver for having a Plan in place is the certainty for all that it provides.
- 6.3 The Council could continue with its previous plan for Statutory consultation on the proposed submission Local Plan in June to August 2017 and Submission in December 2017. However, further consideration of the timeline indicates that a further round of consultation could take place before this stage and still enable the Council to meet the expected Government deadline to have submitted a new Local Plan by the end of March 2018. The timeline below would ensure that the Proposed Submission Draft is not only based on up-to-date evidence, but is also informed by up-to-date comments from interested parties. Although such a consultation would normally be for a 6 week period, it is proposed to be for 8 weeks in this instance given the time of year and to give the best opportunity for all interested parties to have their say. If another round of public consultation, including a 'Call for Sites', is built into the process as now proposed, we will be in a position to have a more robust, and resilient plan that will be submitted with more confidence in compliance with government guidelines as set out below. If the Government's response to the Housing White Paper is published in the autumn, this timeline would also enable the proposed submission Local Plan to take account of it. Details of the 'Call for Sites' can be found at Appendix 2

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
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 - June 2017
Strategic Transport Study in collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council	January 2016 - June 2017

Timetable: key stage – to be completed/undertaken	
Full draft Local Plan (July 2017) consultation, Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment June 2017, and a call for sites.	June – August 2017
Statutory consultation on proposed submission Local Plan to 2036 (Reg. 19)	December 2017
Submission to Secretary of State	March 2018
Estimated examination	March - May 2019
Receipt of Inspector's report	June 2019
Estimated date for adoption	July 2019

- The full Local Plan is attached as Appendix 1
- Details of the 'Call for Sites' guidance can be found at Appendix 2
- Consultation on the HELAA will run in conjunction with the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Consultation Draft 2017

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 2017/18 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 2017/18 are:
- prepare the submission draft of 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
- 6.1 The second related objective under the strategic priority is as follows:
"Support development of infrastructure to enable 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. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Paragraph 004 Reference ID: 12-004-20160519 of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) highlights that during the examination a planning Inspector will assess whether the Local Plan has been prepared in line with the relevant legal requirements

(including the duty to cooperate) and whether it meets the tests of 'soundness' contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

8.2 Paragraph 182 of the NPPF sets out the test of 'soundness', namely , the plan is:

- Positively prepared – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development
- Justified – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence
- Effective – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities
- Consistent with national policy – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 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.

9.2 The recommendation to carry out an additional round of consultation does have regard to existing staff resources, but this will need to be kept under review.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

10.1 To ensure that the Proposed Submission Draft is not only based on up-to-date evidence, but is also informed by up-to-date comments from interested parties.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Cabinet Report April 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](#)

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – The Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Consultation Draft 2017

Appendix 2 – Call for Sites Guidance

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