

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 TARGETED CONSULTATION

To: Economy and Environment Committee

Meeting Date: 21st April 2015

From: Executive Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

Electoral division(s): Brampton and Kimbolton; Buckden, Gransden and The Offords; Godmanchester and Huntingdon East; Huntingdon; Little Paxton and St Neots North; Norman Cross; Ramsey; Sawtry and Ellington; Somersham and Earith; St Ives; St Neots Eaton Socon and Eynesbury; The Hemingfords and Fenstanton; Warboys and Upwood.

Forward Plan ref: N/a **Key decision:** No

Purpose: To consider the key issues arising from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 Targeted Consultation.

Recommendation: The Committee is invited to:

- a) Consider and approve the County Council's draft response to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 Targeted Consultation as set out in Appendix 1;
- b) Delegate to the Executive Director: Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Environment and Economy Committee, the authority to make any minor textual changes to the consultation response prior to final submission.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Huntingdonshire District Council is undertaking a non-statutory “targeted” consultation involving key stakeholders and statutory consultees. A full public consultation will follow later in the year.
- 1.2 The Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) current programme for the preparation of the Local Plan is:
 - Consultation on the proposed submission Local Plan (Stage 4) - June 2015
 - Submission of the Local Plan for independent examination (Stage 5) - November 2015
 - Local Plan Examination in Public (Stage 6) - Spring 2016
 - Local Plan Inspectors report (Stage 7)- Autumn 2016
 - Local Plan Adoption (Stage 8) - Winter 2016
- 1.3 The County Council has responded to the previous stages of the Local Plan highlighting the importance of ensuring that infrastructure provision is adequate to keep pace with additional developments and acknowledging and assessing the impact of growth on existing community infrastructure.
- 1.4 The consultation on the draft Local Plan is a key part in the production of the Plan. This Plan takes into account responses received from the previous consultations in 2013 (Stage 3), including comments by the County Council, and incorporates sites put forward where they contribute to the strategy.
- 1.5 The deadline for making responses to the Targeted Consultation was 20th March 2015. Consequently internal consultations have been conducted with other County Council service areas and draft comments have been submitted to Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) in advance of this Committee. HDC are aware these comments are subject to the Committee’s agreement.
- 1.6 A full copy of the Local Plan is available for inspection in the Members Room.
- 1.7 While officers have been mindful of the Council motion of 16th December requiring detailed assessments of the impacts of draft Local Plans upfront, in drafting this response; it hasn’t been possible to undertake such detailed assessment to inform this response. This is principally due to the limited nature of this consultation, lack of resources to do detailed assessments and the short timescales within which the County has to respond to this targeted consultation. A separate paper is being reported to this Committee related to implementing the Motion. However, the key issues and concerns are being raised in this response and there will be a further opportunity for the County Council to comment at the formal Submission stage of the Local Plan.
- 1.8 A copy of the submitted consultation response is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.9 A separate paper on this agenda proposes the establishment of a Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Joint Strategic Planning and Transport Member Group to steer a joint approach to the infrastructure needed to support the Plan.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The County Council supports the overarching vision and objectives and welcomes the requirement for new infrastructure to be provided. The County Council will continue to work closely with the District Council and other stakeholders to ensure that impacts of new development are properly assessed and evaluated and infrastructure planning appropriately addresses these impacts.

Transport

- 2.2 The overarching vision and objectives are supported. In particular the County Council welcomes the requirement for new infrastructure and public transport services to ensure that the District functions effectively. In addition, the County Council welcomes the reference to walking and cycling as they are important mode choices for shorter journeys, reduce impacts on the highway network and contribute towards improving health and well-being.
- 2.3 The vision and objectives should also make specific reference to the need for good levels of accessibility to services, particularly given the rural nature of much of the district. With new developments providing good non-car based routes for local movement within the development and also to surrounding communities, facilities provided should include footpaths and segregated cycle tracks to locations such as places of employment and education.
- 2.4 The County Council welcomes the inclusion of the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan as well as Market Town Transport Strategies (MTTS) for St Neots, St Ives, Ramsey, and Huntingdon and Godmanchester.
- 2.5 The scale and location of the proposed allocation at Wyton alongside other development in the Huntingdon / St Ives area will place significant additional demand on the transport network and infrastructure. It will be necessary for the development to address these impacts. Mitigation should include appropriate improvements to the local and strategic road network and measures to promote sustainable transport links. This should identify the most sustainable package of transport options to meet the transport demand of development and set out how this can be aligned with the Long Term Transport Strategy (LTTS) for Cambridgeshire.
- 2.6 The County Council's Economy & Environment Committee adopted the LTTS on 25 November 2014. The LTTS was written in consultation with HDC and contains an action plan of high-level measures necessary to support the growth in the Local Plan.
- 2.7 The LTTS recognises that traffic conditions around Huntingdon and St Ives can be very congested at peak periods. In this context the proposed A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon scheme will be a critical to releasing transport capacity on the local road network around Huntingdonshire and help provide capacity for new development.
- 2.8 It is also necessary to safeguard a potential new alignment for the A141 around the north of Huntingdon, should further capacity be needed in future. Works on the current A141 and on the A1096 are also identified, as is major investment in public transport links and walking and cycling infrastructure.

- 2.9 Despite these improvements there will still be a need for individual developments to mitigate the impact of their trips. In particular, the County Council considers that work to develop the package of transport interventions needed to address the impacts of development at Wyton Airfield is needed, and that further, this would allow the potential environmental impacts of such interventions to be assessed.
- 2.10 The transport implications of employment growth at Alconbury Weald, and accompanying mitigation measures, will need to be assessed in detail via either key phase Transport Assessments agreed as part of the granting of the existing Outline Planning Permission, or through additional detailed Transport Assessment work to clearly demonstrate that the residual cumulative transport impacts of this level of development will not be severe.

Economic Development

- 2.11 There is a heavy reliance on the Alconbury Enterprise Zone (EZ) to provide the employment growth with 150 hectares (ha) allocated for employment compared to 55ha across the remainder of the District. None of the site specific proposals however contain any detail on the type of business units to be constructed that might be preferred by the District Council, e.g. to provide provision for start-ups or micro businesses or how this might be encouraged.
- 2.12 The EZ will bring 8,000 jobs by 2036. These numbers of employees are likely to include a large number of parents requiring childcare. The need to support working parents should be considered and reflected in the plan by including the requirement for at least one full day care setting within the EZ.
- 2.13 It is important that if new developments are to be as sustainable as possible that high quality broadband provision is required (as a minimum superfast broadband speed of 30Mbps should be a requirement). This key element of necessary infrastructure needs to be strengthened considerably in the Local Plan.
- 2.14 The Local Plan includes a brief reference to the implications of the forthcoming withdrawal of the United States Airforce (USAF) from Alconbury and Molesworth. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is currently undertaking a review of the UK defence estate, assessing both their future defence and commercial uses. Whilst this review will not report until January 2016, it is important that the local authorities' proposals for the two sites (should they be released by the MOD) are fed into this process. Ideally this needs to take place in the next 3 months before any preliminary defence preferences are expressed by the MOD.

Children Families and Adults

- 2.15 The County Council supports Policy LP4 (Service Centres) and suggests amendments to ensure that community facilities provide flexibility to meet the space requirements of different user groups.
- 2.16 Other suggested amendments to policies include ensuring the Local Plan contributes towards promoting health, cultural and social well-being, not only through the delivery of facilities but also by incorporating the needs of

vulnerable groups into the master planning and design process, including the need for the Plan to promote Lifetime Homes.

Libraries and Lifelong Learning

- 2.17 The County Council supports policy LP29 Services and Facilities, however Libraries should be added to the list of these facilities covered by this policy.

Education

- 2.18 The key issues for the provision of education infrastructure and school place planning arising from the proposed allocations within the draft Local Plan relate to:
- Potential for some areas of development to result in more dwellings than currently reflected in the Plan.
 - There is a lack of reference to the impact of the smaller housing developments on the availability of school places.
 - The development of the Forensic Science Laboratory has increased in size since the previous Plan, which will generate the need for land to facilitate the expansion of the adjoining Cromwell Academy.
 - Some school site allocations have been based on a previous version of the Plan. As a result there is a risk that some sites are not large enough to accommodate pupils resulting from the increased dwellings.
- 2.19 The Strategic Expansion Allocations at Alconbury Weald and Wyton on the Hill may have potential for more dwellings in the longer term not reflected in the 22,795 proposed new homes. This poses particular difficulty with regard to the provision of education infrastructure and will require the need to future proof secondary school sites to respond to the need for additional school places.
- 2.20 The site secured for the secondary school at Alconbury Weald has been negotiated on the basis of an 8 form entry (FE)/1200 place school and is effectively land locked in terms of master planning so the scope to build a bigger school if necessary is limited.
- 2.21 In order to avoid a similar situation at Wyton on the Hill, it is suggested that a 12.3ha site is allocated rather than the current 8.68ha site. This would be large enough for a 12 form entry (FE) /1800 place secondary school (the maximum size which the Council would consider) and would accommodate additional need resulting from increased number of dwellings. If the total site is not required excess land could be re-allocated for housing.

Floods and Water

- 2.22 The County Council supports the inclusion of a Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as a material consideration for the determination of planning applications within Huntingdonshire. The forthcoming countywide Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document will provide more detailed guidance to developers and a robust mechanism for addressing all key matters relating to flooding and water. Without the inclusion of such a document, the County Council considers that greater detail within the local plan policies will be necessary.

Sport, Arts and Museums

- 2.23 The County Council notes there is a lack of reference to sports, arts or museums facilities/ infrastructure.
- 2.24 Whilst the document does mention providing a place for residents to enjoy living in a healthy environment the County Council would also like to see an acknowledgement that arts and sports strategies should be created with partners in all development sites and definitely within the bigger sites.

Health

- 2.25 The majority of the Local Plan is supported from a public health point of view. The inclusion of a requirement for health impact assessments is welcomed, however, there is a concern that the proposed threshold in the policy requiring Health Impact Assessment has been set too high. An alternative phased approach to Health Impact Assessment is recommended in the detailed comments. This would capture a larger number of developments without placing undue burdens on developers/applicants.

Minerals and Waste

- 2.26 The County Council welcomes references throughout the Local Plan to the need for proposals to consider other relevant policies, including those set out in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Development Plan, which are part of the development plan for Huntingdonshire.
- 2.27 Detailed comments on policies and specific site allocations have been provided jointly by the Mineral and Waste and Assets and Commissioning teams. These generally support the provisions set out in the Local Plan and seek to ensure that proposals in the Local Plan support sustainable management of mineral resources and waste, subject to minor amendments.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The implementation of the Local Plan's policies and proposals will bring many benefits to the local economy including new housing and supporting infrastructure, business opportunities and improved transport links.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

The Local Plan will help support healthy and independent lives through well planned new communities and supporting physical and social infrastructure.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

The Local Plan seeks to support the local economy including new housing and supporting infrastructure, business opportunities and improved transport links.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

The County Council has identified that further work is needed to consider the impacts of growth in the Huntingdon and St Ives area holistically and identify in more detail a suitable package of interventions to facilitate and mitigate the impacts of future planned growth.

In particular, the County Council considers that work to develop the package of transport interventions needed to address the impacts of development at Wyton Airfield is needed, and that further, this would allow the potential environmental impacts of such interventions to be assessed.

This work would meet the requirements set out in the LTTS Table 4.3 “*Wyton Airfield Access*” noted above, and would support and build upon the work undertaken to develop the LTTS measures in Huntingdonshire that could facilitate growth and mitigate its impacts.

The County Council will work with the District Council and developers to scope and to support the production of the necessary traffic and transport assessment work to support development in the District.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

There are no significant implications for statutory, risk and legal.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications for equality and diversity.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

There are no significant engagement and consultation implications as this report is a consultation response.

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Members and the local community have a further opportunity to be involved in the preparation of the Local Plan at the Pre-submission consultation stage.

4.6 Public Health Implications

The inclusion of health considerations forms part of the Council’s response and would benefit the proposals as they move forward.

| Source Documents | Location |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036: Targeted Consultation 2015 | Room 304, Shire Hall, Cambridge |