

LITTLEPORT MASTERPLAN – DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **22 February 2011**

From: **Acting Executive Director: Environment Services**

Electoral division(s): **Littleport**

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

Purpose: **To consider the County Council's response to consultation from East Cambridgeshire District Council on the Draft Littleport Masterplan**

Recommendation: **That Cabinet:**

- a) agrees the draft response set out in this report and delegates to the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning in consultation with the Acting Executive Director, Environment Services the authority to amend the response for submission to East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC).**
- b) endorses ongoing liaison with ECDC on developing the Masterplan and working collaboratively on its implementation, subject to available resources**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 East Cambridgeshire District Council has published the Draft Littleport Masterplan for consultation. The consultation period is from 10 January to 21 February. When finalised, the document will be adopted by the District Council as its long term vision for Littleport's future.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Draft Littleport Masterplan is the third of a series of Masterplans that the District Council is preparing or has published for key market towns in the District, including:
- *Ely Masterplan* – reported to PDG on the 11 November 2009.
 - *Soham Masterplan* – reported to PDG on 17 March 2010.
- 2.2 Copies of the consultation documents can be viewed at:
- www.eastcambs.gov.uk/planning/draft-littleport-masterplan-public-consultation
- 2.3 It has not been possible to take the consultation to a scheduled meeting of the informal non-decision making appropriate Policy Development Group (PDG) within the consultation timescale and so a report has been circulated electronically for comment.
- 2.4 Any comments from PDG Members will be reported verbally to Cabinet on 22 February. Following Cabinet a final response will be prepared by the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning in consultation with the Acting Executive Director, Environment Services for submission to East Cambridgeshire.
- 2.5 Although Cabinet takes place the day after the close of the consultation, officers from the District Council have indicated that comments will be accepted from the County Council after the closing date.

3.0 OVERVIEW

- 3.1 The vision of the Masterplan is:

To ensure Littleport develops in a way that is sustainable and enables it to thrive and provide for all whilst embracing the surrounding rural fen landscape.

- 3.2 The Littleport Masterplan identifies seven development principles which are as follows:
- Embracing Littleport's rural character
 - Supporting business and employment
 - Boosting the town centre
 - Promoting healthy and enjoyable lifestyles
 - Achieving sustainable growth

- Serving the wider hinterland
 - Creating better movement and linkages
- 3.3 The Draft Masterplan sets out plans for the short-term growth of Littleport in accordance with East Cambridgeshire's Core Strategy, but it also plans for the longer term, to 2032. The Masterplan proposes an increase in the population of the town from approximately 8,800 people today to some 13,000 by the end of the plan period, resulting from an additional 1,700 homes.
- 3.4 The Masterplan states that the longer term plans are not intended to be a rigid blueprint but to indicate a 'direction of travel'. The Masterplan is not a statutory planning document, but will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will contribute to the development of future planning documents.
- 3.5 The Masterplan details the consultation process undertaken which began in October 2009. Key findings from the consultation are outlined, including:
- Strong support for new businesses and employment growth, including tourism.
 - Concern about the image of the town.
 - The need for enhancement of the town centre, riverside and station area.
 - The need for improved cycling and walking routes and public transport provision.
 - A lack of community facilities, particularly provision for young people and a secondary school.
- 3.6 Constraints and issues highlighted in the Masterplan include:
- Flood risk, which significantly constrains the potential for development to the north of the town.
 - Sites of biodiversity value, including the Ouse Washes, a Site of Special Scientific Interest at Shippea Hill and a County Wildlife Site covering the River Great Ouse.
 - Key landscape views and the Littleport Conservation Area.
 - The need for new infrastructure, including upgrades to the Littleport Waste Water Treatment Works and improvements to the foul sewerage network.
 - The need for a third primary school (already identified in the East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy).
 - The County Council has identified Littleport as the location for a new secondary school.

4.0 MASTERPLAN PROPOSALS

Development Principles

- 4.1 The Draft Masterplan sets out a series of development principles (outlined in paragraph 3.2 above) which are intended to guide the proposals outlined in the Masterplan. Key elements of these principles are dealt with below and the main proposals are shown on a plan included as Appendix 1 to this report.

Draft County Council comments are given in italics below.

Proposed County Council response

Overview

- (1) *The County Council strongly supports the vision and aims of the Littleport Masterplan, subject to the more detailed comments on certain sites outlined below. The Council would welcome the opportunity to work closely with East Cambridgeshire District Council and Littleport residents to help deliver the Masterplan's objectives and detailed development proposals.*

Masterplan vision (page 4)

- (2) *The County Council strongly supports the vision of the Littleport Masterplan to create a thriving and sustainable town.*

Embracing Littleport's rural character (page 27)

- (3) *Cambridgeshire County Council welcomes the references made to the development of a 'green rural' framework and improving access to new and existing greenspaces.*

Supporting business and employment (page 27)

- (4) *Cambridgeshire County Council welcomes the reference made to the need to reduce the level of out-commuting from Littleport by ensuring housing growth is matched by jobs. However the creation of a sustainable town will also be dependent on other factors - such as improving the image of Littleport and enhancing the skills of the local workforce - if Littleport is to be attractive to businesses wishing to locate to the area.*

Serving the wider hinterland / Creating better movement and linkages (page 27)

- (5) *Please see the comments relating to the Development Framework entitled 'Moving Around'.*

Embracing the natural landscape (page 28)

- 4.2 This section highlights that direct access from Littleport to the countryside is limited and that the landscape treatment of new development is likely to be of key importance, given that settlements can be seen for many miles across the flat landscape. The Masterplan seeks to establish a network of green spaces and routes connecting the town to the surrounding landscape. The Masterplan also seeks to improve existing green spaces, and The Paddocks, Riverside and The Moors.

Proposed County Council response

Green Fingers connecting town to countryside / Linking the Green Fingers

- (6) *Cambridgeshire County Council welcomes the emphasis placed on the need*

for additional green infrastructure, access to the countryside and alternative modes of transport, particularly walking and cycling. However it is suggested that there is a need to consider further how the proposed green infrastructure proposals relate to the existing Rights of Way network and other routes which provide access to the countryside.

- (7) South of the village there are few access opportunities beyond Woodfen Road. While the existing public footpath No.9 is shown as a 'green finger' in the Masterplan it would be of benefit to see an additional public right of way (preferably public bridleway to allow for cyclists and horse riders) linking from Woodfen Road back to the residential areas in the south of the village. This could be complemented by an additional public right of way from Padnal east to join the existing public footpath on the riverbank.*
- (8) The route of the public footpath that links Grange Lane to Oak Lane (east of the A10) has been omitted from the map on page 29 but could act as a useful green connector.*
- (9) A key issue for encouraging use of the wider countryside will be the problem of safe pedestrian and cycle access over the A10 Littleport bypass. It is considered that the 'green fingers' which involve crossing the A10 should not be encouraged for family recreation. In particular, infrequently used crossing places on high speed sections of the A10 (such as along the route of Woodfen Road and of Brickmakers Way) should not be promoted.*
- (10) If a safe controlled crossing point of the A10 is provided, then most demand is likely to be near Wisbech Road to the south of the A10 / Wisbech Road / A1101 roundabout for daily trips to and from work. There are therefore opportunities to investigate providing a 'green finger' linking Wisbech Road to Woodfen Road and other rights of way west of the A10.*
- (11) If a safe crossing point can be provided, there are excellent opportunities for cycling on unclassified roads and byways open to all traffic both west and north of Littleport. There are direct links to Little Downham and to the nature reserve at Chettisham Meadow.*
- (12) Where the proposed 'green fingers' and 'green connectors' do not coincide with an existing public highway, these should be dedicated as public rights of way so that these routes are fully protected for future public use.*
- (13) It is also suggested that all of the River Great Ouse County Wildlife Site should be included in the 'green finger' which has been identified to the east of Littleport so that it can contribute to the development of the green infrastructure network within Cambridgeshire (south of Littleport).*
- (14) The land in and around the existing primary schools (Littleport Community and Millfield) which is in the County Council's ownership is shown as forming part of the 'green fingers' which are intended to connect the town to the countryside. There is a need to consider how this designation would relate to future development proposals, particularly regarding expansion of school uses to serve the growing population.*

Landscape

- (15) *The Plan could be improved by considering how the Masterplan proposals fit with the wider local landscape character. The Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines provide a useful resource (available from: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/natureconservation/policy/guidelines.htm).*

Biodiversity

- (16) *There are opportunities to consider further how biodiversity could be enhanced as well as being protected, in line with the requirements of the National Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, such as improvements to Great Ouse County Wildlife Site.*

Archaeology

- (17) *Recent archaeological work undertaken with the development of the western side of Littleport has made substantial contributions to our understanding of the early development of the settlement. New development in these areas has the potential to make further contributions to our understanding of the early development of the town. Proposals for new development will need to consider the potential impact on archaeology in accordance with national and local planning policy. However, the results of archaeological investigations can contribute positively to the development of character for new communities through, for example, site based interpretation. It is considered that the Masterplan could be improved by emphasising that proposals for new development should encourage greater engagement with and public access to the historic environment.*

Balancing future growth areas (page 30)

Building business activity areas (page 32)

- 4.3 The Masterplan recommends a phased approach to housing growth, with low growth for the first ten years, followed by medium growth in subsequent years:
- 2011 to 2021 – 617 new dwellings (around 69 a year)
 - 2022 to 2032 – 960 new dwellings (around 96 a year)
- 4.4 These levels of growth would produce approximately 1,719 new dwellings over the Masterplan period and would take Littleport's population to around 13,000 people. A range of sites for potential new housing development is identified to the west of the town.
- 4.5 The Masterplan identifies that it will be vital to the future sustainability of the town that housing growth is matched by growth in employment. Currently only 30 per cent of local employment is taken up by people from Littleport – a target of 50 per cent is proposed. The Masterplan states that there is a need for 8.5 to 10 hectares of employment land to support the new jobs growth.
- 4.6 Proposals include in the short term:
- 7 hectares of land to the west of Woodfen Road for light industry and warehousing

- 1.6 hectares west of Wisbech Road to provide for growing businesses from the E-space North Business Centre

4.7 In the longer term, two sites across the A10 have been identified for business use. The Masterplan also identifies the provision of faster broadband access as important to business growth and the riverside area is identified as having potential for tourism development.

Proposed County Council response

- (18) *The County Council supports the principle of additional housing growth at Market towns, including Littleport, subject to additional infrastructure and improved employment prospects.*
- (19) *As the Masterplan's Risks Assessment recognises, securing access off the A10 is a significant risk and traffic assessments will be needed to determine whether this will be feasible.*
- (20) *In principle, further development to the west of the A10 and another junction on the A10 does not accord with the County Council's principles of promoting the free flow of traffic on strategic routes and of encouraging more home-work trips on foot or by bicycle. Further discussions will be needed to determine a satisfactory solution that meets local priorities recognising the role of the A10 as a strategic route and achieves safe highway design.*
- (21) *If these sites are taken forward into the final Masterplan, then access to the "potential new housing development" and "potential new employment sites (short term)" (page 33) immediately south east of the A10 / Wisbech Road / A1101 roundabout requires further feasibility work at an early stage to ensure a comprehensive solution. A direct access for motor vehicles off the A10 would be required, as well as good accessibility for buses, pedestrians and cyclists from the town.*
- (22) *The existing Saxon Business Park is served by a sub-standard access off the A10 and also has poor public transport, pedestrian and cycle access. The pedestrian and cycle access to the other existing employment sites off the A1101 west of the A10 are also poor. These existing problems would need to be addressed within the feasibility study.*

Employment land

- (23) *It is considered that the Masterplan could be improved by exploring other interventions – such as improving local skills – in addition to the provision of employment land to ensure that Littleport is attractive to businesses, particularly those wishing to locate to the area. It is anticipated that both authorities will work as part of the Local Enterprise Partnership to encourage inward investment to the area.*

Expanding community facilities (page 34)

4.8 The Masterplan identifies a range of community facilities that will be needed to serve Littleport's growing population, including:

- *Secondary school provision* – A site is identified on land north of Wisbech Road, adjacent to Littleport Leisure Centre, to enable shared use of sports facilities and playing fields.
- *Primary schools* – The medium growth scenario would require the provision of two additional primary schools:
 - One of 1 form of entry (1 x 1FE)
 - One of 2 forms of entry (1 x 2FE).

The Masterplan states that one of these should be provided to the east of the town to benefit residents in that area.
- *Preschool and childcare provision* – Additional private and voluntary provision will be needed to meet the planned growth.
- *Additional community space* – there is a need to expand library, childcare and youth services in the town.

- 4.9 In relation to secondary school provision, in July 2010 the District Council consulted on the East Cambridgeshire Site Allocations Options Paper. 11 sites were assessed for education purposes in Littleport as part of this process (for primary, secondary or co-located schools). The site north of Wisbech Road was assessed for its suitability and was found “not suitable as located in an area of high flood risk (Flood Zone 3)”. The Options Paper identified land to the west of Highfields and land south of Grange Lane as being the best options in terms of suitability and deliverability for schools provision. In its response to the consultation, the County Council supported the choice of the Highfields and Grange Lane locations.
- 4.10 National planning policy states that in relation to flood risk, a sequential approach should be followed which directs development to areas at lower risk before considering areas of high flood risk. (It should be noted that the Highfields and Grange Lane locations were in areas of low flood risk.)
- 4.11 Local planning policies for East Cambridgeshire are set out in the District’s Core Strategy (October 2009). This states that flood risk is an important issue for the District, given that large parts of the District are reclaimed fen land, with some areas lying below sea level. Core Strategy policy EN 7 (Flood risk) states that the sequential test will be strictly applied across the district and that new development should preferably be located in Flood Risk Zone 1 (lowest flood risk).
- 4.12 Any proposal to build a school on the site to the north of Wisbech Road would need to be accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment which would need to be funded. If the assessment concludes that development of the site is feasible, mitigation measures may be needed to provide and maintain flood protection adds additional cost for the scheme.
- 4.13 The Environment Agency (EA) would have to be consulted on any development proposals for the land. The EA could object to the development if it considers that:
- The proposed development is not consistent with national planning policy.
 - The sequential test has not been applied correctly and there is insufficient justification for the development as an exception to established policy.
 - The development is not supported by a flood risk assessment.

- The flood risk assessment does not demonstrate that the development and its users will be safe for the lifetime of the development or that flood risk elsewhere will not increase.
- 4.14 If the EA sustained an objection to development of the site, the planning application would need to be referred to the Secretary of State if the deciding authority was minded to grant permission (the County Council for County Council school developments).
- 4.15 In relation to primary school provision, the 2010 Site Allocations Options paper identified three preferred locations: at the Highlands and Grange Lane locations (co-located with a new secondary school), and at land to the south of Paddocks (a smaller site that would only accommodate a primary school). The County Council's response to the consultation supported these locations, although it highlighted that the delivery of the Paddocks site would be dependent on securing visibility improvements at the Upton Lane / Ely Road junction.
- 4.16 The Draft Masterplan does not include any of these preferred sites, but instead identifies a site between Hoof Close and Hawthorn Close to the east of the town for a new primary school that appears to be accessed from Padnal. This site was previously assessed as part of the Site Allocations Options process and was discounted on the grounds that Padnal has no capacity for additional traffic due to visibility problems at the junction with Victoria Street.
- 4.17 The Masterplan also identifies locations for other community facilities, including cemetery provision and expansion of the medical centre, as well as additional community space and leisure opportunities to the north and east (a golf driving range, equestrian centre, water sports centre and hotel).

Proposed County Council response

Schools provision (including primary, secondary and post-16)

- (24) *The scale of housing development proposed as part of the Littleport Masterplan would generate the need for the following:*

- 430-602 (2-3 FE) primary schools places
- 310-430 (2-3 FE) secondary school places.

This would result in the need for a new primary school of up to 3 FE on a 3 hectare site. There are already approximately 3 FE of secondary age children living in Littleport. This together with additional need would generate land requirements for a new secondary school for 6 FE, requiring a 6.1 hectare site (this takes into account wider growth plans for the Ely and Littleport areas, the drop out of some pupils to the independent sector and the housing build-out rate over this time period).

- (25) *The Masterplan refers to the 3 FE additional requirement for primary education to be delivered through one 2 FE school and one 1 FE school. As the County Council's preference is now to allow primary schools to be up to 3 FE there is a need to identify one larger site for a 3 FE school rather than two*

smaller sites.

- (26) *The housing proposed as part of the Littleport Masterplan will also have an impact on post-16 education provision which cannot be accommodated by current facilities and some additional capacity will therefore be required. The County Council is currently undertaking a review of all post-16 provision within the County and this is due to be completed in July 2011. Following completion of this review the Council will be able to provide a more detailed assessment of the need for post-16 education provision as a result of the growth identified in the Masterplan.*

Children's Centre

- (27) *The existing Littleport Children's Centre, which is based at Littleport Community Primary School, currently provides services to 770 children and is close to capacity. It is therefore considered that the Masterplan should refer to the need for improvements to the existing Children's Centre to enable additional services to be provided for the new communities in Littleport.*

Pre-school and childcare provision

- (28) *The 1,719 dwellings proposed as part of the Masterplan would also be expected to yield:*
- 0-3 year olds: 310-430 children*
 - 4-10 year olds: 430-600 children*
- (29) *These figures suggest that the proposed housing growth would give rise to between 140 and 190 three to four year olds based on current assumptions. More precise figures within the range shown above will depend on the mix of housing which is developed in Littleport.*
- (30) *Reference is made to the development of three nurseries which would provide up to 100 places each to meet part of the need for such facilities as a result of the proposed housing growth (in addition to three nurseries of 50 places each). However it is considered that it is more likely that a greater number of smaller nurseries (possibly including one larger nursery which would provide full day care) will be required.*
- (31) *As some of these facilities would be provided by the private sector it is also considered that there is a need to identify sufficient land for their development. In the case of the new settlement of Northstowe, for example, a site of 0.3 hectares was required for a large private day nursery.*
- (32) *If there are plans to provide a new pre-school or day nursery it would be advantageous if this facility could be linked to new general nursery provision as both services will be serving the same community.*

Preferred site for a new secondary school

- (33) *The Littleport Masterplan identifies land adjacent to the Littleport Leisure Centre, north of Wisbech Road, as the preferred location for the secondary school. This site is identified in the Masterplan as being in an area of high*

flood risk (Flood Zone 3). Policy EN 7 (Flood Risk) of the East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy states that, in relation to flood risk, a sequential approach will be strictly followed which directs development to areas at lower risk before considering areas of high flood risk. Development is to be located in Flood Zone 1 in preference to sites at higher flood risk.

- (34) The East Cambridgeshire Site Allocations Options Paper (published in July 2010) identified the land to the west of Highfields and land south of Grange Lane as the preferred sites for secondary provision based upon an assessment of a number of issues including flood risk. Both of these sites are identified as being in Flood Zone 1. The site north of Wisbech Road was discounted in the Options Paper on the grounds of high flood risk.*
- (35) The County Council has significant concerns about the deliverability of the secondary school site identified in the Masterplan although recognises the potential benefits of co-location with existing leisure facilities and playing fields. The strong preference of the County Council would be for the secondary school site to be located in Flood Zone 1 in accordance with national and local planning policy and the Council urges East Cambridgeshire to reconsider this issue. However, if ECDC wishes to pursue their preferred site, then the County Council would be willing to enter into further dialogue to discuss the costs and risks associated with such a development.*
- (36) If the north of Wisbech Road site is taken forward in the final plan, then it would need to be subject to an archaeological evaluation in advance of any planning application to consider the impact of construction on this potentially highly significant site in relation to Roman settlement and industry (salt production).*
- (37) A secondary school on the north of Wisbech Road site would attract considerable bus traffic. Camel Road would require substantial widening to enable two buses to pass one another. Cycling and walking routes to and from the site would need to be assessed and improved. The feasibility of such improvements together with their cost should be assessed further to determine viability, if this site is included in the final Masterplan.*

Third Primary School Option

- (38) The proposed location for the third primary school near Hoof Close and Hawthorn Close, was assessed as part of the East Cambridgeshire Site Allocations Options Paper (published in July 2010) and it was identified then that Padnal had no capacity for additional traffic due to poor visibility at the junction with Victoria Street. The level crossing and the cottages built at the back of the footway form the major constraints so it is not possible to design a solution. Given this, a new access would need to be provided off Peacock Way / Sandys Crescent to make this a deliverable site.*
- (39) If an alternative access to this site can be provided, then it is favourably located in relation to the two existing primary schools to provide a more even spread of primary school provision across Littleport, although this would trigger the need for the County Council to undertake a review of primary school catchment areas. The school would also be well-located to encourage pupils to walk to school.*

Library provision

- (40) *The scale of the increase in Littleport's population will create a pressure to improve library provision - sought through contributions from developers. The existing building is not capable of being extended in order to introduce the necessary enhancements to information technology access, children's facilities and general stock holding capacity which would be needed to ensure that future provision is appropriate to meet community need. The potential should therefore be explored to co-locate enhanced library provision with new or existing community facilities as part of a "community hub". Since the most effective location for library provision is in a visible central position at the heart of the community and close to retail pedestrian flows. Such a development would also support the Draft Masterplan principle of reinforcing the town centre through community and leisure uses.*

Leisure opportunities to the east

- (41) *As outlined above, Padnal has no capacity for additional traffic due to poor visibility at the junction with Victoria Street. For this reason the identification of the large 'potential leisure use area' to the south east of the town would not be acceptable from a highways perspective if it is intended to be accessed from Padnal.*
- (42) *Reference is made to the development of leisure facilities to the north east of Littleport including (but not limited to) a hotel, marina and water taxi. This development would appear to gain access via the existing boatyard. This site is too close to the level crossing to enable a safe junction with Station Road so any development proposal would not be acceptable on highways grounds. An enlarged marina designed to attract more traffic by boat only might be acceptable in highway terms.*
- (43) *The proposed marina and hotel are located in an area which forms part of the River Great Ouse County Wildlife Site. If this proposal is taken forward it is considered that there is a need for further work to be undertaken to demonstrate that the proposals will not adversely affect the site.*

New cemetery and allotments

- (44) *The junction of Horseley Hale with Camel Road has insufficient visibility looking northwest to be acceptable as the access to and from a new cemetery or allotments. The width of the carriageway of Horseley Hale would also need to be improved and safe pedestrian access provided between the site and the town.*

Renewable Energy Centre

- (45) *In the accompanying plans a Renewable Energy Centre is identified to the east of the Great Ouse however no further details are provided in the Draft Masterplan. It would be helpful for users of the Masterplan if details could be provided.*

Reinforcing the town centre (page 36)

4.18 The Masterplan identifies a number of problems with Littleport's town centre, including the loss of town centre and community uses and lack of clear connections to the south, where much of the development is to take place. A number of proposals are highlighted, including:

- Concentrating retail uses at the western end of the town centre and providing additional retail space.
- Public realm enhancements.
- Improvements to the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Proposed County Council response

(46) *In addition to the town centre improvements, it is considered that there is also a need to recognise the contribution which the historic environment, particularly the built environment (including the Conservation Area), can make to developing the character and distinctiveness of the town centre and making it a more attractive, pleasant and interesting place to live and to visit.*

(47) *It would be helpful to clarify the status of the proposals outlined in the Town Centre report produced by Studio REAL. For example there are a number proposals relating to:*

- *Proposed quality street spaces – which include improvements to street frontages, street planting and possible car and cycle parking.*
- *Town Centre Site Studies – Specific development proposals for a number of key sites in the form of replacement buildings and improvements to the existing public realm.*

However the Masterplan only refers to these proposals in the context of public realm enhancements. It would be helpful to users of the Masterplan to clarify how the detailed design proposals will be taken forward as part of the Masterplanning process.

Moving around (page 40)

4.19 The Masterplan highlights the dispersed nature of services and facilities in Littleport. Additional routes are needed to provide strong linkages between new development and the town centre. Proposals include:

- A fifth access onto the A10 / Wisbech Road roundabout or a new roundabout on the A10 to open up access to land to the west of Woodfen Road.
- Exploring the option for a purpose-built cycle lane running alongside the old A10 road to link Littleport and Ely.
- Looking at increasing car parking and cycle facilities at Littleport station.
- Improvements to cycle and walking routes, cycle parking and bus services.

Proposed County Council response

General comments

(48) *The County Council supports further feasibility work to examine the following:*

- *Ely-Littleport cycle spine route.*
- *Designated cycle and walking routes.*
- *Increased cycle parking.*
- *Improved bus services (including demand-led).*
- *Better links to the railway station and more car and cycle parking to serve the station.*

The County Council would wish to be involved with these projects as they progress.

(49) *There is a strong emphasis in the Draft Masterplan on the need to provide sustainable transport within the town and to the railway station, which provides opportunities for sustainable commuting. The focus on sustainable transport, particularly improved access to the railway station, is strongly supported by Cambridgeshire County Council. The County Council would wish to be involved as these proposals are developed further.*

(50) *However, there is comparatively little detail on transport proposals in the Masterplan. At present it is difficult to assess how much of an impact this development and associated population growth is likely to have on strategic routes such as the A10 and how the proposals might impact on the wider area. It is also difficult to tell if some of the schemes will be feasible to deliver. Further work on these issues will be needed, as well as to assess how parking problems around the station will be affected by the planned developments.*

(51) *There is also little information on the possible levels of out-commuting the planned development is likely to create. Although there is an expectation that some of this would take place on the rail network, it is difficult to distinguish how much this could accommodate and hence how many trips will be carried out on the road network.*

(52) *Although there is an aspiration to provide employment within the area, due to the size of the settlement and its proximity to Cambridge, a proportion of residents will still commute to Cambridge and elsewhere. Combined with the planned growth at Ely, this could place particular pressure on the A10.*

(53) *The Risks Assessment identifies the failure to manage traffic demand arising from development as a significant risk and states that Highway Authority controls through the planning process can be used to tackle this. While these controls have some influence on traffic demand, much will be dependent on the behaviour of residents - whether they are willing to make more journeys by public transport, cycling and walking.*

(54) *The Masterplan proposes that a range of hard transport measures (such as walking and cycling lanes, cycle parking and improved bus services) should*

be delivered. It is suggested that reference should also be made to the need for soft transport measures (such as travel awareness campaigns, car schemes and travel plans) to encourage the behavioural change that will be necessary to ensure development happens in a sustainable way, and wherever possible such measures are tied to the bringing forward of developments through the planning process.

A10 Access

- (55) *As stated above, another junction on the A10 does not accord with the County Council's principles of promoting the free flow of traffic on strategic routes. If this option is taken forward, then a feasibility study will need to be carried out at an early stage to identify a safe solution for motor vehicle access off the A10, as well as addressing the existing problems of poor cycle and pedestrian links to employment sites and providing a better access to Saxon Business Park.*

Cycle spine route between Littleport and Ely

- (56) *Cambridgeshire Council supports the principle of the cycle route between Ely and Littleport, and wishes to be involved in the more detailed work which will be required in relation to the routing and design.*

Increased level of cycle parking

- (57) *Cambridgeshire County supports the provision of increased cycle parking at key locations in the town and wishes to be involved in determining where the new facilities should be located.*

Improved public transport

- (58) *There is relatively little mention of public transport or how an increased population might access a larger service centre sustainably placing greater emphasis on the need for development to be accessible by walking and cycling. Further work is necessary to establish whether a demand responsive minibus service or community transport service would be sufficient to cater for anticipated provision or whether provision of these services is viable, given the population and rural location of the town. It is probable given the size of the settlement that residents will need to travel to Cambridge, King's Lynn or Norwich for some services. The County Council would wish to be involved in this process and the rail industry may also wish to be involved in looking at access improvements to the railway station.*

How do we get there? (page 42)

- 4.20 The Masterplan concludes with a section on how the proposals will be implemented. Key mechanisms include:

- *Strong programme management* – An implementation plan will be produced, which will bring together the work of stakeholders and will be overseen by the District Council's Growth Delivery Sub-Committee.
- *Embedding the Masterplan* – Masterplan proposals will be incorporated within the District Council's Local Development Framework.

- *Phasing and risk management* – A suggested timescale is given for the proposals and key risks are identified.
- *Funding* – Potential sources of funding are identified, including developer contributions, Regional Growth Fund, National Lottery Funding or Landfill Communities Fund.

Proposed County Council response

Phasing and risk management

- (59) *The figures for primary and secondary provision set out above are based on an assumption that birth rates will remain at current levels. These numbers should continue to be monitored, especially in the light of the low housing build-out rates, to ensure there is not an over-provision of school places in the future. It is also suggested that both the new primary and secondary school are built in two phases.*

Private sector and public funding

- (60) *Cambridgeshire County Council wishes to be involved in any future discussions relating to the funding (both public and private) of the additional infrastructure and community facilities outlined in the Masterplan.*
- (61) *It would be helpful to clarify how the Masterplan's proposals for additional community facilities and infrastructure relate to the District Council's Planning Obligation Strategy which is currently under preparation. It would also be helpful to clarify which elements of the Masterplan are intended to be secured through the Regional Growth Fund.*
- (62) *The Landfill Communities Fund is identified in the Masterplan as a potential funding source for the landscape management initiatives. It is recommended that the District Council contacts ENTRUST (www.entrust.org.uk) the regulator of this fund to establish whether these proposals would be eligible for funding.*

5.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

Resources and Performance

- 5.1 There are a number of resource implications for the County Council. The development of the secondary school on land to the north of Wisbech Road would be likely to involve additional costs in providing a site specific flood risk assessment. If the site proves to be deliverable, flood risk mitigation measures may need to be provided with funding from the County Council and there could be an ongoing liability for their maintenance.
- 5.2 Developers will need to make a contribution towards the community facilities and infrastructure which are required as a direct result of their developments. The District Council is developing a Community Infrastructure Levy – a pooled tariff system levied on each unit of development - to collect developer contributions for new infrastructure. The Masterplan states, however, that this is unlikely to secure sufficient funding to pay for all of the infrastructure requirements identified. Given this, the Masterplan refers to the need for

further discussions with service providers (including the County Council) to access additional private and public funding.

- 5.3 The draft response set out above asks that County Council be involved in this work to ensure that a comprehensive range of infrastructure, services and facilities can be provided.

Statutory Requirements and Partnership Working

- 5.4 The Masterplan is not a statutory planning document within the Local Development Framework planning process; however it will contribute to the development of future statutory planning documents.
- 5.5 The County Council will need to work closely with the District Council in delivering many of the schemes identified in the Plan. The County Council is currently working with East Cambridgeshire to prepare an Infrastructure Investment Strategy for the District. This Strategy will include consideration of infrastructure requirements for Littleport.

Climate Change

- 5.6 The Draft Masterplan seeks to promote a better balance between housing and employment development to reduce the level of out-commuting from the town, which would have a beneficial impact on greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5.7 The likelihood is that incidents of flooding will increase as the effects of climate change are experienced in Cambridgeshire. As Lead Local Flood Authority, the County Council has responsibilities for flood and water management including coordinating of flood management activity, assessment of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as part of new developments and monitoring flood management assets.

Access and Inclusion

- 5.8 A key issue for access and inclusion will be the extent to which the Masterplan can achieve a better balance between housing and job growth to reduce out-commuting. The A10 to the south of Ely is already one of the most congested routes in the County and further development will be taking place at Ely and Littleport that may add to the traffic levels on the road.
- 5.9 The proposed response outlines the need for further work to be undertaken to assess transport impacts. It also emphasises that the County Council would wish to be involved in this work together with other interested parties (such as public transport providers).
- 5.10 The Masterplan recognises that Littleport's local workforce tends to be employed in lower paid positions, which reflects the lower skill levels among residents. A difference between the east and west of the town is also evident, with the Littleport West ward experiencing some pockets of deprivation (with lower skills and income levels, higher dependency on benefits and more health problems) than Littleport East. The Masterplan proposals are designed to address these problems where possible, and stimulate Littleport's town centre and economy, bringing new jobs into the town.

Engagement and consultation

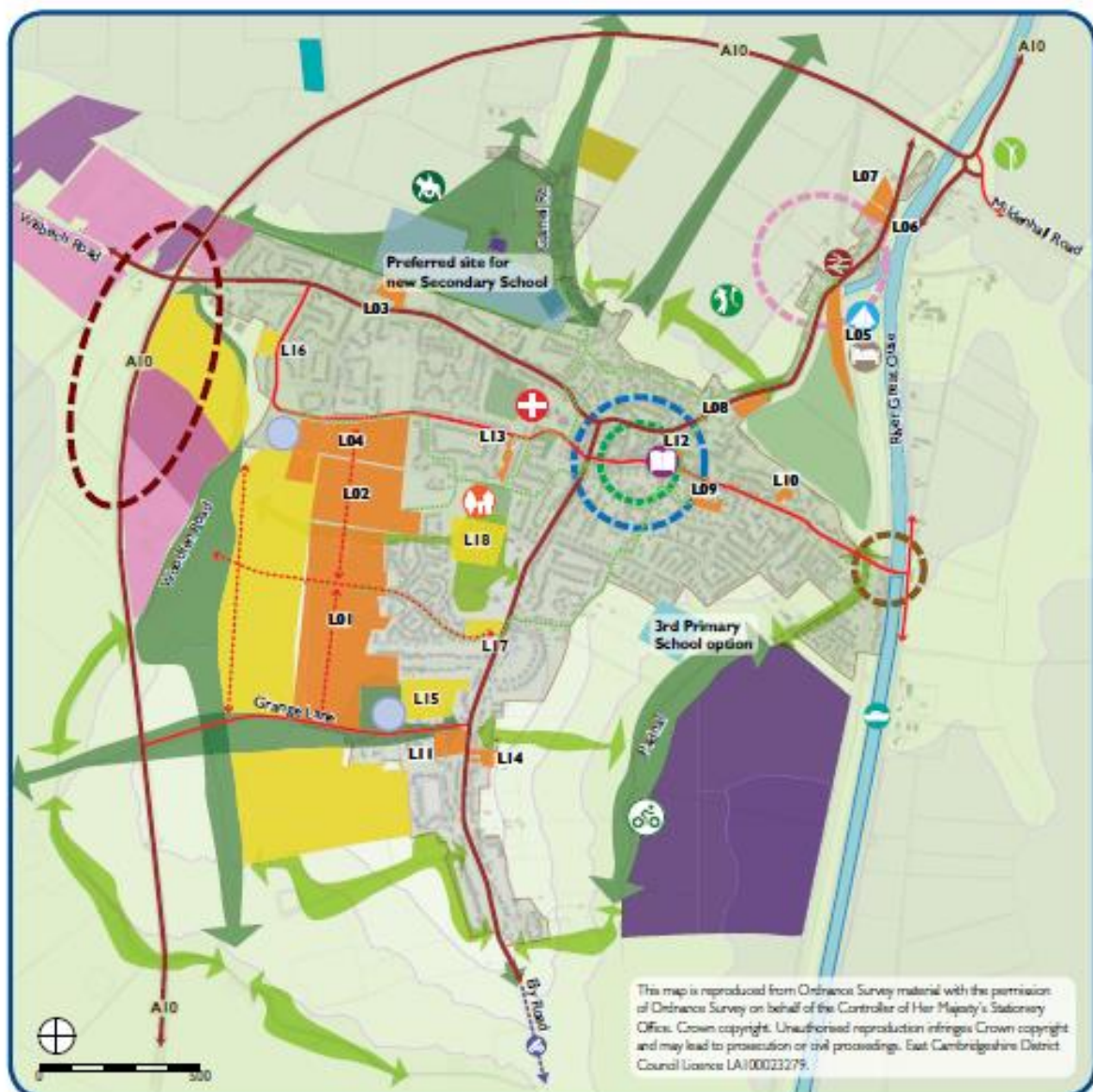
- 5.11 The County Council is responding to consultation on this document being undertaken by the District Council. Following consultation the Masterplan will be finalised and will inform the preparation of statutory planning documents for the area. Further consultation will be undertaken during the preparation of these documents and when planning applications are prepared for the sites identified in the Plan.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Following Cabinet a final response will be prepared by the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning in consultation with the Acting Executive Director, Environment Services for submission to East Cambridgeshire. Officers from the District Council have indicated that they will accept a response from the County Council after the 22 February Cabinet meeting (shortly after the close of the consultation period).

Source Documents	Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft Littleport Masterplan• Appendix 1: Littleport Facts and Figures• Appendix 2: Draft Littleport Masterplan Options Report (Studio REAL for East Cambridgeshire District Council)• Appendix 3: Draft Littleport Masterplan Town Centre Report (Studio REAL for East Cambridgeshire District Council)• Appendix 4: Draft Littleport Masterplan Habitats Regulations Assessment• Appendix 5: Health Appraisal of Draft Littleport Masterplan Proposals• Site Allocations Options Paper (July 2010)• Site Assessment Results Technical Background Paper to the Site Allocations Options Paper (June 2010)	'A' wing, second floor, Castle Court, Cambridge

APPENDIX ONE: DRAFT LITTLEPORT MASTERPLAN KEY PROPOSALS (2011)



Key

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Train station | Existing employment sites | Main roads into and through Littleport |
| River Great Ouse | Potential new employment sites (short term) | Existing secondary roads |
| Green 'fingers' connecting town to countryside | Potential new employment sites (long term) | Possible improvements to permeability of existing network |
| Green connectors between 'fingers' | Potential site for retail and office business | Potential new road network |
| Existing green spaces with potential for enhancement | Area for potential tourism | Potential walking and cycling routes |
| Existing housing site locations | Water taxi to Ely | Cycle spine route |
| Sites for potential new housing development | New Primary School (3rd) option | Community centre |
| Leisure Centre | Preferred site for new Secondary School | Existing Primary School |
| Potential leisure use | New cemetery/allotments | Equestrian centre |
| Sewage Works | Golf course/driving range | Medical centre |
| Area of search for potential new access into development area | Water taxi to Ely | New marina |
| | Walking/cycling areas | New hotel |
| | | Renewable energy centre |
| | | Library |