

**JOINT INTERIM STATEMENT ON PLANNING BY THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE
AUTHORITIES AND FUTURE STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

To: Cabinet

Date: 26 October 2010

From: Acting Executive Director: Environment Services

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: 2010/047 **Key decision:** Yes

Purpose: To endorse the Joint Interim Statement on Planning from the Cambridgeshire Authorities

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- i) Endorses the Joint Interim Statement on Planning by the Cambridgeshire Authorities (Appendix A).
- ii) Comments on the future strategic planning work for Cambridgeshire outlined in the report.

<i>Officer contact:</i>	<i>Member contact:</i>
Name: Adrian Tofts	Name: Cllr Roy Pegram
Post: Development Strategy Manager	Portfolio: Growth, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
Email: adrian.tofts@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email: Roy.peggram@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: (01223) 715523	Tel: (01223) 699173

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report is to update Cabinet on discussions between the Cambridgeshire authorities relating to:

- A joint planning statement setting out the development strategy for Cambridgeshire, following the recent abolition of Regional Strategies (Appendix A).
- Future strategic planning work for the County.

1.2 Cabinet is asked to endorse the joint statement included as Appendix A.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 There is a history of successful joint working between the Cambridgeshire authorities to address strategic planning issues. This approach led to the development of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan in 2003, and continued in responding to the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) on the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), 'The East of England Plan > 2031', in 2008-09.

2.2 Work on the RSS review was overseen by the Cambridgeshire Regional Spatial Strategy Review Panel (CRESSP) - a joint Member body from across the Cambridgeshire local authorities and including representatives from Cambridgeshire Horizons and Peterborough City Council. This work culminated in the submission of detailed advice to EERA in June 2009 and a response to EERA's public consultation on scenarios for housing and economic growth in December 2009. Responses are available to view on the County Council's website at:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/planning/regional/cambsprocess/Our+Representations+on+the+Regional+Plan.htm>

2.3 These responses set out the authorities' vision for the County and preferred distribution and levels of growth to 2031, and proved successful in influencing the draft revision to the RSS published by EERA and submitted to Government in March 2010.

3.0 REVOCATION OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES

3.1 The new coalition Government announced on 6 July 2010 that Regional Strategies (incorporating the former Regional Spatial Strategies) would be revoked with immediate effect. In the longer term the legal basis for Regional Strategies will be abolished through the Localism Bill that the Government intends to introduce in the current Parliamentary session.

3.2 The Government also issued guidance for local planning authorities alongside this announcement. This states that local planning authorities should:

- Determine planning applications having regard to their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), saved policies and any old style Local Plans that have not lapsed, as well as national policy and any other material

considerations.

- Continue to work on their LDFs, although they may use the revocation of Regional Strategies as an opportunity to revisit policies in adopted LDFs if they wish.

3.3 In relation to housing provision the guidance states that local planning authorities:

- Are now responsible for establishing the right level of housing for their areas, and no longer have to meet regionally established targets.
- Need to justify the housing numbers they arrive at through the use of reliable information.
- Are still required to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND RESPONSE BY THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE AUTHORITIES

4.1 The Government intends that the previous 'top-down', target-driven planning system will be replaced by a new approach, giving local authorities considerable freedom and allowing local people more say in how their communities develop. Regarding regional and sub-regional planning, the guidance states that: "New ways for local authorities to address strategic planning and infrastructure issues based on cooperation will be introduced."

4.2 Although these new freedoms are to be welcomed, the changes also raise concerns - particularly that the gap left by the abolition of Regional Strategies will open up the authorities to major speculative development pressures and create a strategy driven by planning decisions granted on appeal.

4.3 In response to these concerns, the Cambridgeshire authorities have undertaken initial work to:

- Prepare a joint position statement, setting out the development strategy for Cambridgeshire in the absence of the Regional Strategy (Section 5 and Appendix A).
- Scope out what further work may be required for future strategic planning in Cambridgeshire (Section 6).

5.0 JOINT INTERIM PLANNING STATEMENT

5.1 The Joint Interim Planning Statement developed by the Cambridgeshire authorities is attached at Appendix A. The statement sets out the authorities' position following the abolition of Regional Strategies and the effects of the recession on the delivery of key development sites. It is anticipated that the statement will be adopted by each of the authorities through their committee processes and will be used to inform development decisions.

5.2 Regarding endorsement by the partner authorities:

- Cambridgeshire Public Service Board (PSB), comprising the local public

sector chief executives, discussed the statement at its meeting on 28 July, and supported it subject to reference for the need to rebalance the economy towards the private sector and to the emerging Greater Cambridge-Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership.

- Joint Transport and Planning Lead Members endorsed the statement on 9th September. Lead Members commented that any future strategy should have sufficient flexibility to allow for development which would support the regeneration and economic prosperity of the County's smaller towns and larger villages.
- The statement has been endorsed by:
 - Cambridge City Council;
 - East Cambridgeshire District Council;
 - Fenland District Council; and
 - Huntingdonshire District Council.

It is due to be considered by South Cambridgeshire District Council in due course.

- 5.3 The statement was discussed at the relevant County Council advisory Policy Development Group (PDG) in late September. The PDG endorsed the statement but emphasised that any future strategic planning work needed to look at the cross-boundary impacts of development, and the impacts of development in Peterborough on Cambridgeshire was highlighted as was the growth of Haverhill on the A1307. Questions were also raised about how further work would align with the role of the proposed Local Enterprise Partnerships.

6.0 FUTURE STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

- 6.1 While the planning statement affirms the authorities' commitment to the current strategy, there is also a recognition that the strategy needs to be kept under review.
- 6.2 Public Service Board (PSB) discussed the future of strategic planning at its meeting on 28 July, alongside the joint planning statement. PSB considered a number of options, including:
- Waiting until new legislation is published before undertaking further work.
 - Beginning work immediately to gather and update the background evidence base.
 - Beginning to prepare a joint sub-regional strategy for the County, addressing strategic issues where coordination is essential, such as housing, education, employment, transport and infrastructure.
- 6.3 PSB endorsed the recommended option, to begin work immediately to gather and update the evidence base. It is intended that this evidence will be used to inform the authorities' emerging Local Development Frameworks and future LDF reviews. It could also be used to inform a sub-regional strategy for Cambridgeshire, if provision is made for this in legislation and if the authorities agree that this is needed.

- 6.4 Work is currently underway to determine the scope of the evidence gathering, what information already exists and what resources will be required.

7.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

Resources and Performance

- 7.1 The abolition of Regional Strategies, while giving much greater freedom to local authorities, raises the risk that developers will put in speculative proposals to exploit the current uncertainty. The joint interim statement is intended to set out a clear position from the Cambridgeshire authorities to counter this.
- 7.2 Section 6 outlines further strategic planning work that the authorities are intending to undertake. Some funding has been secured from Cambridgeshire Horizons, but additional funding will be sought from the Cambridgeshire authorities. Assistance has also been secured from Government Office for the East of England through a temporary secondment arrangement. Support for strategic planning work has been identified in the County Council's 2010 Integrated Plan. It is intended that the work will be done in-house wherever possible, to save costs and enhance skills within the authorities.

Statutory Requirements and Partnership Working

- 7.3 Regional Strategies were revoked by the Communities Secretary on 6 July. In the longer term the legal basis for Regional Strategies will be abolished through the Localism Bill. In a recent response to a letter from the President of the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Communities Secretary states that the Government is currently considering what additional tools or mechanisms can be added to the legislative framework to enable strategic planning.
- 7.4 There has been a history of successful joint working between the Cambridgeshire authorities which led to the publication of the Structure Plan and continued in responding to the review of the East of England Plan. The joint planning statement included at Appendix A is a further outcome of this partnership approach. The future work outlined in Section 6 would require continued close partnership working between the authorities and Cambridgeshire Horizons.

Climate Change

- 7.5 There are no direct implications arising from this report. The strategy for Cambridgeshire developed for the Structure Plan and the review of the East of England Plan is designed to promote sustainable development and reduce the environmental impacts of new development. Promoting sustainable development will be a key objective of any future work that the Cambridgeshire authorities undertake.

Access and Inclusion

- 7.6 There are no direct implications arising from this report. The strategy for Cambridgeshire developed for the Structure Plan and the review of the East

of England Plan is designed to promote the regeneration of the County's market towns and reduce deprivation and inequality as far as possible. This will also be a key objective of any future work.

Engagement and consultation

- 7.7 The Cambridgeshire authorities undertook extensive engagement and consultation in responding to the review of the East of England Plan, including questionnaires, roadshow events with local communities and a series of meetings with local businesses.
- 7.8 A joint press release is being prepared to accompany the endorsement of the interim planning statement. Further consultation and engagement will be required for any future strategic planning work; the scope and extent of this will be determined as part of the project.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 As set out in Section 5, the Cambridgeshire authorities are taking the statement through their own committee processes for endorsement.
- 8.2 Updates will be given on the future work highlighted in Section 6 in due course.

Source Documents	Location
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003)	Strategic Planning Castle Court, A Wing, 2 nd Floor
East of England Plan – The Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (May 2008)	
Regional Spatial Strategy Review – Section 4(4) Advice – Cambridgeshire's Initial Response (7 January 2009)	
Regional Spatial Strategy Review – Update following Joint Cambridgeshire RSS Review Panel (CRESSP) Meeting (16 February 2009)	
Submission to EERA from Cambridgeshire County Council in response to the request for Section 4(4) and 5(5) advice on the Review of the East of England Plan (3 June 2009)	
Response to 'East of England Plan > 2031 – Scenarios for Housing and Economic Growth' from the Cambridgeshire authorities (9 December 2009)	
Letter from Chief Planner, Department for Communities and Local Government to Local Planning Authorities in England – Revocation of Regional Strategies (6 July 2010)	
Letter from Communities Secretary, Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, to Ann Skippers, President Royal Town Planning Institute (undated)	

APPENDIX A: JOINT STATEMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE BY THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE AUTHORITIES

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by the Cambridgeshire authorities to set out our position regarding the development strategy for the County in light of the Government's recent announcement of the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies and aspiration for a locally based planning system.
- 1.2 The Cambridgeshire authorities have a long history of joint working on planning issues and will continue to work together to share information and develop good practice. A significant evidence base has been built up that provides the authorities with important information to guide further work. An important outcome of this approach was the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan - a sustainable strategy for growth that was tested at Examination and adopted in 2003. This strategy was adopted largely unchanged in the Regional Spatial Strategy (2008) and the authorities' response to the RSS review in 2009. The Structure Plan strategy has also informed the development of the City and District Councils' Local Plan and Local Development Frameworks and is currently being implemented by the authorities through their development decisions.

2 Cambridgeshire strategy

- 2.1 The Cambridgeshire authorities remain committed to the strategy for planning in the County, including the provision of housing, as originally established by the Structure Plan and as now partially set out in saved Structure Plan policies and as reflected by the policies and site proposals in the Cambridge Local Plan and District Councils' Development Plan Documents and developing strategies for market towns.
- 2.2 The key objective of the strategy is to locate homes in and close to Cambridge, following a comprehensive review of the Cambridge Green Belt, and to other main centres of employment, while avoiding dispersed development which increases unsustainable travel and makes access to services and community facilities difficult. Further sustainable locations for growth focus mainly on Cambridgeshire's market towns.
- 2.3 This strategy makes provision for development:
- within Cambridge or as sustainable extensions to the urban area, subject to environmental capacity and compatibility with Green Belt objectives.
 - at the new town of Northstowe, linked to the guided busway;
 - within, or as sustainable extensions to, the market towns of Wisbech, March, Ely, Huntingdon and St Neots, subject to the potential for regeneration and the provision of essential infrastructure and public transport improvements¹; and
 - within, or as extensions to, other market towns, where development would increase the towns' sustainability and self-containment, improvements to

¹ Huntingdon and St Neots in this policy refers to the Spatial Planning Areas as defined in the adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy

infrastructure and services are planned or will be provided and high quality public transport provision can reduce the impacts of out-commuting.

- 2.4 This strategy has met with considerable success so far and a large number of sites have already been delivered throughout the County or are under construction, with more remaining to be developed. Despite the recession, construction has continued and Cambridgeshire is identified as one of the key areas of the country likely to lead the national economy into recovery.
- 2.5 Despite recent announcements about the relocation of Marshalls from Cambridge airport, the authorities consider that Cambridge East retains great potential for sustainable development and currently remains part of the strategy. The authorities also consider that there is sufficient availability of housing land over the short to medium term. Cambridge East will be considered alongside other sites as part of a fuller review of the strategy.

3 Looking forward

- 3.1 The Cambridgeshire authorities remain committed to the strategy for planning in the County outlined above, as embedded in the Cambridge Local Plan and District Councils' Development Plan Documents. However, with factors such as fragile economic growth, the need to rebalance the economy towards the private sector, changing demographic pressures, the challenges of climate change, uncertainty over infrastructure provision and emerging proposals for the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership, there remains a need to keep the strategy under review.
- 3.2 The authorities will continue to work together on place-shaping issues and will begin gathering evidence to inform decisions on future development levels and locations, so that the strategy that emerges will be based on a thorough understanding of the issues the County faces, including cross-County boundary impacts. Moves to a more locally based planning system will provide the authorities with much greater freedom. We will ensure that under this new system the future strategy is driven by the needs and aspirations of local communities, is fully deliverable, ensures the County's continuing economic success and protects and enhances Cambridgeshire's unique environment.