

PROPOSED RESPONSE TO HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY AND POLICY CONSULTATION (AUGUST 2012)

To: Cabinet

Date: 27 November 2012

From: Executive Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

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

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

Purpose: To agree the County Council response to Huntingdonshire District Council's Local Plan Strategy and Policy Consultation (August 2012).

Recommendation: Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Agree the consultation response attached as Appendix 1 to this report, and send it to Huntingdonshire District Council in response to their Local Plan Strategy and Policy Consultation (August 2012).
- b) Delegate to the Cabinet Member for Growth and Economy in consultation with the Executive Director, Economy, Transport and Environment the authority to make minor amendments as necessary prior to submission.

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out for Cabinet's consideration and comment the key issues relating to the County Council's consultation response to the Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan Strategy and Policy Consultation. The County Council will submit detailed comments to the District Council in response to this consultation as approved by Cabinet.

2. BACKGROUND

Process

- 2.1 Huntingdonshire District Council adopted a Core Strategy in 2009. The District Council considers that much of this document is still sound policy, however, in light of the designation of the Alconbury Enterprise Zone, the introduction of the Localism Act in 2011 and the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework earlier this year, the District Council has decided to produce a new local plan. It will incorporate the principles of the 2009 Core Strategy and plan for an additional 10 years of growth up to 2036 which will include some form of development at the 'Alconbury Weald' site.
- 2.2 The strategy and policy consultation marks the start of the new local plan process and the consultation is asking for views on the issues and options that should be covered in the local plan. The consultation documents include options on the level of future housing and jobs provision within Huntingdonshire and draft proposals to allocate 'Alconbury Weald' and 'RAF Wyton' for development.

3. PROPOSED RESPONSE

- 3.1 The proposed response for Cabinet to consider is attached as Appendix 1. The overall vision and objectives are supported. More detailed points for Cabinet to be aware of are as follows:

Growth Options

- 3.2 The Draft Strategic Options and Policy document outlines 3 growth options. These suggest that a range of between 7275 (low) and 11150 (high) new homes may be required up to 2036. Potential new employment sites are also considered within the Draft Strategic Options and Policies Document. The draft consultation response supports the middle of the three options.

Transport

- 3.3 The location of future growth and employment is critically important to ensure the opportunity to travel using sustainable modes is maximised and need to travel is reduced where possible. At this stage in the process there are no strategic transport objections in principle to the growth locations identified. All new developments should integrate with the existing sustainable travel network to contribute to changes in travel behaviour, reducing the need to travel and promoting active travel.
- 3.4 The Local Plan will need to take into account the government's proposal for the A14 trunk road as this has particular implications for the Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area. The Local Plan will also need to give consideration to the rest of the strategic transport network e.g. the A428 and the capacity of the rail network.

- 3.5 All new developments should be designed to integrate with the existing sustainable travel network and provide new sustainable infrastructure to reduce the need to travel and help promote travel behaviour change away from the private car. In relation to all new development, the County Council wishes to see all new roads constructed to an adoptable road standard and thereby adopted by the Highway Authority. This will require that all roads are built to a good standard including drainage and adequately lit.
- 3.6 The sustainability assessment includes a number of sustainability appraisal questions related to transport, however these questions only focus on reducing the need to travel; the development options should also be considered with regards to access to sustainable transport infrastructure which would assist in reducing the impact of the development on the highway network.

Economic Development

- 3.7 With the potential 8,000 Enterprise Zone (EZ) jobs, the Medium Growth Option looks a realistic and sustainable option with a better balance of housing and job growth (than the low and medium options) over the period and job growth averaging around 500pa, although with the majority of this growth probably occurring in the last 15 years of the period. This rate of job growth is less than that achieved in the decade 1995 to 2005.
- 3.8 The potential importance of the Alconbury EZ is recognised within the employment section of the document, both in terms of its opportunities and its risks to other employment areas in the District through possible displacement. The potential new employment sites are considered realistic and give a reasonably good spread across the District, when compared to the main areas of proposed housing growth. The intention to review the Core Strategy's proposed employment growth to the north west of Huntingdon in the light of the Alconbury EZ designation is supported. One slight query is why the former RAF Upwood has not been included in the employment development policy opportunities for Ramsey.

Minerals and Waste Planning

- 3.9 The Development Guidance section of the Spatial Planning Area policies should make reference to minerals and waste safeguarding and consultation areas so that developers take them into account when making proposals.

Education

- 3.10 There is limited available spare capacity across Huntingdonshire. Continued growth will require investment in new school infrastructure (sites and buildings).
- 3.11 Under the high growth option, the County Council has significant concerns regarding school places arising from the potential additional dwellings at Alconbury Weald. For a development of 7,220 dwellings, the Council would need to plan for a fourth primary school. There are similar concerns regarding primary school places arising from the potential additional dwellings proposed under the high growth option at Brampton.
- 3.12 In St Neots there is limited flexibility to respond to further or additional housing development. Equally, with regard to early years provision, there are already significant pressures and limited solutions to expand provision at Loves Farm and

further housing planned will exacerbate the situation. Decisions taken as part of this consultation on options will need to feed into the current discussions on the planning applications for the extension to Love's Farm and Wintringham Park.

- 3.13 At Wyton-on-the-Hill if the low growth option prevailed, multipliers indicate that a single new primary school of 2FE to serve both the existing and new communities might be sufficient. Significant development at Wyton, unlike development in existing communities and market towns, will also require the provision of a range of children's services, including early years and childcare, children's centre services, support for families and more general community facilities. Consideration cannot be restricted to the provision of extra school places alone. With regard to the impact on secondary school places, this option would indicate the need for an additional 1 to 1.5FE secondary provision. The designated secondary school for Wyton is St Peter's which would require expansion to accommodate the additional pupils.
- 3.14 Under the high growth option, the County Council has significant concerns regarding school places arising from the potential additional dwellings proposed at Wyton-on-the-Hill. This would be much more difficult to accommodate in terms of primary school provision, as it may require 3+ FE to serve both the new and existing communities which would be larger than any existing primary school in Cambridgeshire. The alternative, two smaller schools each of 2FE would require a second site and be more costly.
- 3.15 The Local Plan will need to identify the site needed to make the required level of education provision in this area as the Wyton Primary School site does not meet current Department for Education (DfE) guidance.
- 3.16 The District Council is supported in seeking to identify the size and location of new school sites through the Local Plan. Thus if additional land is required for future education expansion, the site and land value is safeguarded, together with an expectation that any additional land should be acquired at education land values. This has implications for Wyton and possibly RAF Upwood.
- 3.17 Whichever growth option prevails, the County Council's clear policy position is that new schools should be sited as centrally as possible to the communities which they will serve, and, should be open for the first residents in these new homes. Schools have a critical role to play in establishing the sense of place and community cohesion in any new development, the value of any new school extends well beyond its central educational role. This Council policy position was endorsed by Cabinet in September 2007, and continues to be this Council's position.

Strategic Green Space

- 3.18 The inclusion of a strategic green space policy is welcomed and provides an opportunity to provide green infrastructure functions through Huntingdonshire, including protection and enhancement for nature conservation. It will be important for the Strategic Green Spaces to provide bigger, better quality and better connected wildlife sites to create a coherent ecological network that is resilient to current and future pressures, in accordance with paragraph 109 of NPPF.

Broadband

- 3.19 The Council welcomes the Local Plan's support of improved broadband connections through the Connecting Cambridgeshire campaign. The provision of a high-speed communications network can help reduce the need to travel and therefore lessen the impact of new development on the transport network. We view as positive the inclusion of both residential and employment developments within this policy.

Providing for an Ageing Population

- 3.20 In line with national trends, Cambridgeshire will experience a significant rise in its older population over the next 10 years and beyond. National and local policy places an ongoing emphasis on enabling people to live in their own homes as long as possible. This would suggest that homes should be more easily adaptable to meet the needs of people as they grow older - so called life time homes - thus ensuring their independence but also ensuring they can remain connected to their local communities. New housing should also consider the direct application to care delivery through the use of assistive technology into home, e.g. remote health monitoring for people with long term conditions.

Alconbury Weald

Transport

- 3.21 The approach to transport assessment as part of the Planning Application on Alconbury Weald is supported.

Education

- 3.22 The County Council understands that as part of the current outline planning application for this site, the new secondary school is proposed to be located in the south east corner of the site. There are ongoing discussions about the best location for the school site.

Flood Risk Management

- 3.23 Any development at this site needs to refer to the County Council's responsibility for flood risk management.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

- 4.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all
The strategy and policy consultation includes an option for a high level of growth for the District. Additional housing growth is important for the broader development of the Cambridgeshire economy.
- 4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives
The strategy and policy consultation sets out a number of options that will be used to secure community infrastructure and services as part of new developments.
- 4.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people
The strategy and policy consultation includes options which aim to address deprivation through strategic objectives.

4.4 Ways of Working

The County Council is identified as a key partner that will help deliver the emerging Local Plan. The preparation and adoption of the Local Plan will support the County Council's ways of working through:

- Helping provide services and community facilities – *Making sure services are provided in the right way*
- Promoting closer working between public bodies – *Working together*

5. **SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Resource and Performance Implications

Major new development creates pressures on the County Council and its services. This will need to be considered as individual applications come forward.

5.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

When adopted, the Local Plan will be part of the development plan for the District and will carry significant weight in the determination of planning applications. It is therefore important that the right policies are included.

5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

Huntingdonshire District Council has undertaken an equality impact assessment of the draft Local Plan and the County Council is satisfied with this.

5.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

The County Council is being consulted on this Local Plan Strategy and Policy Consultation by Huntingdonshire District Council. Comments have been sought from a wide range of County Council service areas and those received have been incorporated into the draft response.

5.5 Public Health Implications

As part of the corporate response public health have been consulted on the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Strategy and Policy Consultation. It is important that new development is accessible, of a high quality and allows people to walk and cycle as much as possible. In combination, this will contribute towards people's health and well being.

6. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 Comment on the proposed response to the Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan Strategy and Policy Consultation and delegate sign off to the Cabinet Member for Growth and Planning.

| Source Documents (click on links) | Location |
|---|---|
| Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan Strategy and Policy Consultation August 2012 (This link opens a page with links to all documents.) | Online & hard copies in Members' Lounge |
| Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan | Online & hard copies available from G&E |
| Cabinet Report: New Schools – Competition arrangements, policy and decision-making process | Online |