

## North East Cambridge – Transport Position

To: Environment and Green Investment Committee

Meeting Date: 16 January 2025

From: Executive Director of Place and Sustainability

Electoral division(s): Kings Hedges, Milton, Fen Ditton

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: N/A

**Executive Summary:** This report provides members with an update to the County Council's position as Highway Authority regarding the development area of North East Cambridge (NEC). It summarises work that has been undertaken to inform discussions with planners and developers to define the level of development deemed deliverable in transport terms, and to support securing appropriate levels development funding towards the transport measures identified as needed to facilitate access to the NEC area by non-car modes of transport. This is an update to the Council's formal Position Statement that was agreed at this Committee in September 2021.

**Recommendation:** The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Approve the approach to the assessment and consideration of traffic and transport impacts, and the associated transport Position Statement as set out in Appendix 1.
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment and Green Investment Committee to update the position statement to take account of minor changes, Counsel advice, and mitigation measures in line with the recently updated National Planning Policy Framework (published December 2024).

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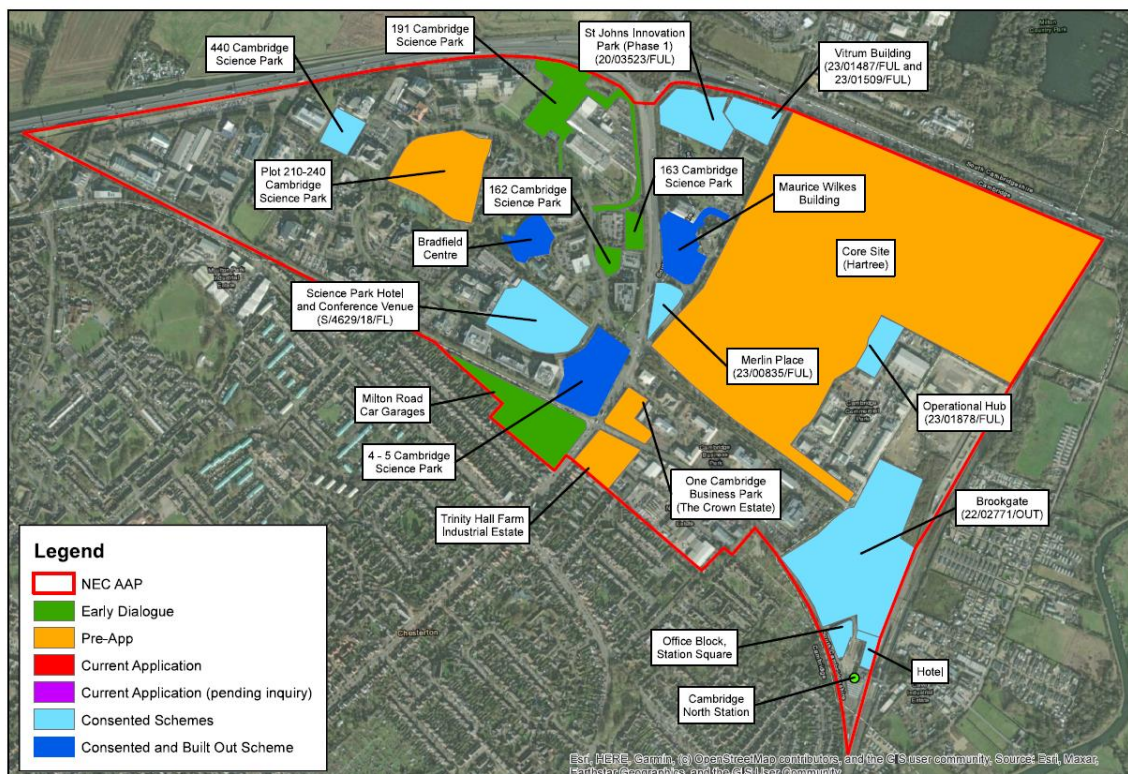
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# 1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

- 1.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes: The approach proposed will provide officers working on the redevelopment of North East Cambridge with a robust framework to securing developer contributions towards sustainable transport investment, maximising journeys by public transport and active travel, therefore contributing to the avoidance or reduction of carbon impacts from transport to the area.
- 1.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable: the approach proposed will provide officers working on the redevelopment of North East Cambridge with a robust framework to securing developer contributions towards sustainable transport investment, maximising journeys by public transport and active travel, therefore contributing to the avoidance or reduction of carbon impacts from transport to the area.

## 2. Background

2.1 A paper to this Committee was approved in September 2021 which set out the County Council's approach to dealing with development in the North East Cambridge (NEC) area – a location shown in the plan below and bounded to the north by the A14, the east by the railway line and extending south to the Nuffield Road industrial area while on the western side of Milton Road. It includes Cambridge Science Park and Cambridge Regional College. The Council's approach was presented as a Position Statement setting out how planning applications coming forward ahead of the adoption of the Area Action Plan (AAP) for the NEC area would be dealt with to ensure all plots contributed to the strategic and local transport mitigation highlighted as being required to facilitate access to the area by non-car modes.



- 2.2 At the time of the 2021 Committee report, the Council was expecting the adoption of the Area Action Plan later that year. However, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service took the decision to delay the adoption of the Area Action Plan until such time as the Development Consent Order dealing with the relocation of the Waste Water Treatment Works had been determined.
- 2.3 The aspirations for the NEC area, as set out in a draft Area Action Plan are for a high-density and high-quality mixed-use area, effectively creating a new urban quarter for Cambridge. The transport evidence supporting the Area Action Plan showed that the road network around the NEC area was already operating at or above the maximum capacity meaning that if development were to come forward in the NEC area, then it would need to do so without adding additional car trips to the highway network. As set out in the previous Position Statement it was decided to go down the route of setting a vehicular trip budget which would limit the number of car trips to the area but not the total number of trips that can be made into the NEC area.
- 2.4 The Position Statement agreed in 2021 and revised in February 2022 set out some key principles including:
- Future growth needs to be delivered without adding car trips to the already congested highway network, and this will be managed using a 'vehicular trip budget'.
  - Development of the area should be brought forward in a co-ordinated way which considers the impact of cumulative development and provides appropriate levels of mitigation to facilitate access by non-car modes.
  - Development must not lead to unacceptable air quality.
  - Active travel and public transport have a key role in connectivity to the area.
  - Quality of development and place is critical.
- 2.5 An extensive list of transport proposals was identified and set out, including a mix of site-specific measures, as well as strategic public transport and active travel schemes, principally within the Greater Cambridge Partnership programme that would facilitate access by non-car modes.
- 2.6 It was also proposed to place limits on the level car parking which was also set out, noting that this would need to be a step-change from other areas in Cambridge. This is because restricted levels of parking are one relatively easy way of limiting the number of car trips because if it is hard to find parking at the destination and there is a viable alternative way to access the site, then people are more likely to change their mode of transport.
- 2.7 At the time of the 2021 Committee, the total cost of the infrastructure required to adequately mitigate the impact of the NEC area was estimated at £110m.
- 2.8 Key to the successful implementation of the NEC area was the development of a comprehensive position on transport for the whole area. Individual development site Transport Assessments would then be required to show how their development site addresses the area wide strategy. Officers have worked to ensure that there is a suitable evidence base to go forward with to allow the Mitigation required to be procured.

### 3. Main Issues

- 3.1 As a result of there being no developer-led transport strategy for the NEC area, working closely with colleagues at the Greater Cambridge Planning Service the Council's position statement has been revisited and enhanced by officers to ensure that it provides an up-to-date and reliable evidence base for the transport network. In the period since the previous report, developer aspirations for the NEC area have changed significantly and the developers are now considering higher densities and mixes of employment sites to increase the numbers of potential jobs on the site whilst retaining the same level of houses to be delivered.
- 3.2 There have also been material changes on the ground, with Cambridge North station now providing access into the NEC area by rail as well as paving the way for the redevelopment of the Network Rail yard which allows for a fuller redevelopment of the area.
- 3.3 Several developments have come forward with their own transport assessments, including one which was determined at appeal where the previous position statement was questioned. It was therefore critical to ensure that the Council's position and technical approach to planning applications and specifically transport assessments was robust.
- 3.4 The previous evidence base has therefore been re-examined and expanded to draw in new information and increase its robustness, and also to contemplate potential additional, higher levels of employment within the NEC area.
- 3.5 The recent work shows that significant levels of jobs and housing growth can be delivered in the NEC area in transport terms, as long as appropriate sustainable transport mitigation is provided. However, the latest work has indicated that there is a finite level of development that can be accommodated in transport terms without the required car driver mode share falling below acceptable realistically achievable levels. The list of mitigation required to deliver the revised development quanta has been refreshed using recent cost estimates from the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP). The revised figure to deliver what is needed is over £170m. The updated evidence base and position statement are appended to this report in Appendix 1.
- 3.6 The latest work indicates that development quanta over this finite level as defined in Table 10 of Appendix 1 would require achieving car mode shares lower than the best performing sites in the UK and Europe and is likely to require significant additional mitigation over and above the identified mitigation including from the current GCP programme of schemes, as the level of change in travel pattern and mode would need to be transformational. At this point in time, there is no clarity as to what interventions over and above the GCP programme would be required and no clarity as to who should develop or fund such a scheme if it were proved to be deliverable. This may be explored through the work on the Greater Cambridge Transport Strategy, which is being led by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).
- 3.7 Officers are content with the technical work, and the evidence base that lies behind it. Given the importance of securing these developer contributions, and the strong likelihood of challenge that is expected, Counsel's advice has been sought on the principles in the position statement (the outcome of which is expected after this Committee meeting, which is why a delegation has been sought for any updates that may be required as a result) and

it has also been through an independent technical review of the evidence and conclusions. These two additional checks will ensure that the Council's updated Position Statement is robust and allows the best chance possible to secure a comprehensive transport package required to deliver the type and quality of development that is aspired to.

- 3.8 Close working with partners, developers, and stakeholders will be required to both deliver the scale of transport investment required to enable the comprehensive redevelopment of this area of Cambridge, and to achieve the vision for the highest quality place-making.

## 4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Relying on the existing position previously approved by Committee in 2021 was considered but given the changes in transport trends following the Covid pandemic, including increased working from home, the increased levels of development being contemplated, and the increase in scheme costs due to inflation, this was not determined to be robust.

## 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Council adopts the Transport Position Statement as set out in Appendix 1, and officers use this in discussions with partners and developers in relation to the master planning and the transport assessments of individual planning applications in the NEC area. This will establish a set of 'red lines' that guide discussions and provide a methodology for the negotiation of significant amounts of developer funding that will deliver on site infrastructure as well as support the delivery of the GCP schemes.

## 6. Significant Implications

### 6.1 Finance Implications

No direct implications, however, the approach ensures that developments in the area contribute financially to the area-wide strategic transport package, providing much needed local match capital funding.

### 6.2 Legal Implications

The approach will assist the County in fulfilling its Local Highway Authority duties as a statutory planning consultee. As already discussed in paragraph 3.7, officers have sought Counsel's legal advice to support the principles in this report and to ensure that it is updated as appropriate following the advice to ensure it is robust.

### 6.3 Risk Implications

The approach will assist the County in fulfilling its Local Highway Authority duties as a statutory planning consultee. There are risks associated with securing the developer contributions which will be mitigated by adopting the approach set out in this report.

## 6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. Access for all will form an overarching requirement of any detailed planning application assessed through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Any potential impacts from limiting car access will be evaluated at the time as part of the usual development consent processes, it is important to note that this position statement will not replace existing standards or guidance for example on accessible parking.

## 7. Source Documents

7.1 The following have been referred to in the report and are available online:

- Environment and Green Investment Committee Paper September 2021, including Transport Position Statement: [Document.ashx](#)
- Previous Transport Position Statement updated in February 2022: <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/2452/transport-position-statement-revised-february-2022.pdf>

7.2 Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Transport Position Statement