



Report To: Planning Portfolio Holder

25 August 2017

Lead Officer: Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development

Central Bedfordshire Local Plan Consultation

Purpose

1. To consider the contents of a draft Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) consultation from Central Bedfordshire District Council and agree an appropriate response.
2. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Planning Portfolio Holder agree that a consultation response be submitted based upon paragraphs 18-24 of this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. To respond to the consultation from Central Bedfordshire having regard to the content of the emerging Local Plan and the planning context set out below under 'Background'.

Background

5. Central Bedfordshire is a large mixed urban and rural district located to the south and west of South Cambridgeshire adjoining Milton Keynes in the west, Bedford in the north, Luton and Stevenage in the south. The eastern part of Central Bedfordshire includes Sandy and Biggleswade, close to South Cambridgeshire. It sits astride a number of key north-south communication routes including the M1, A5, A1 and the east coast main line. Its rural eastern fringe borders the South Cambridgeshire Parishes of Gamlingay, Hatley, Tadlow and Guilden Morden.
6. Preparation of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan commenced in February 2016 and previous stages have included a high level leaflet consultation style on broad themes and challenges. Their current draft Local Plan consultation (Regulation 18) commenced on 4 July and will close at 5pm on 29 August 2017. It concentrates on strategic matters and does not include small scale site allocations. They intend to consult again on a Proposed Submission Local Plan in March/April 2018 (Regulation 19), which is required to be a complete Local Plan including all the site allocations and policies they consider to be required for a sound plan.
7. A number of key considerations have influenced the emerging plan including development pressures radiating out from Stevenage, Luton, Milton Keynes and Bedford, and the constraints and opportunities associated with new planned transport infrastructure including the A1 upgrade, and the planned east-west rail and road schemes linking Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. A key item of interest for this district concerns a proposed new market town near Tempsford for 7,000 plus homes

and a new science and technology/business park at Tempsford Airfield located between Sandy and the Black Cat roundabout, close to the A1 and adjacent to the east coast main line, and lies to the west of Gamlingay.

8. Highways England consulted on route options for a new dual carriageway linking Caxton Gibbet on the A428 to the Black Cat roundabout on the A1 in Spring 2017 which will run to the north of the proposed Tempsford new market town development and form part of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. The road is intended to relieve local congestion, support Local Plans in an area of high housing and economic growth and form part of a planned expressway linking Cambridge with Milton Keynes and Oxford. The preferred route announcement is expected in late September 2017, a public examination will follow and if confirmed construction could start in Spring 2020.
9. The Department of Transport and Highways England are considering options for improvements to the A1 between the M25 and Peterborough. The option packages are being tested and refined with a view to developing a preferred package of works for possible inclusion in the Government's next Roads Investment Strategy (RIS2) for the post 2020 period. No decisions have yet been made on what schemes will be included in RIS2 from across all of England. The evidence base for the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan recognises that improvements to the A1 are required to enable the delivery of the Tempsford new settlement.
10. In Summer 2016 Network Rail announced that the preferred geographic corridor for the Bedford - Cambridge section of the Oxford – Cambridge new rail link (East – West Rail) would pass via Sandy. Network Rail currently consider that a preferred route for this section will be selected in 2018 following public consultation, with construction possibly starting in the mid 2020's and trains operating from the early 2030's.
11. In March 2016 the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) was asked to make recommendations to government to maximise the potential of the Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Oxford corridor. It issued an Interim Report in November 2016 whose message was that to succeed in the global economy, Britain must build on its strengths. The corridor connecting Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford could be the UK's Silicon Valley – a world renowned centre for science, technology and innovation. But its future success is not guaranteed - a lack of sufficient and suitable housing presents a fundamental risk to the success of the area. New east-west transport links were found to be necessary to secure the area's future success.
12. The Tempsford new market town proposal is potentially well located in regard to new and upgraded transport infrastructure and to contribute the future growth of the Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Oxford corridor.
13. The evidence base for the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan includes site assessment forms for each potential site including for Tempsford (the Central Bedfordshire Council - North Central Bedfordshire Growth Options Study, July 2017, Appendix 5 part 1, location N10, described as Sandy North East). The assessment correctly identifies that the delivery of this key enabling infrastructure is not confirmed. It rates the likelihood of its delivery by 2035 at 50% (for each of the A428 Caxton Gibbet to the Black Cat, A1 upgrade and the Bedford to Cambridge section of East/West rail projects).
14. The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan states that objectively assessed housing needs will be met in full (which requires a minimum of 20,000 new homes) but plans for a

range of 20,000 to 30,000 new homes, with the exact housing 'target' within this range to be identified in the Proposed Submission Local Plan in March/April 2018.

15. Policy SP1 and its supporting text set out a spatial growth strategy which provides for strategic growth in multiple locations to address growth pressures and opportunities across Central Bedfordshire, including new settlements and large scale urban expansions. The policy states that subject to further assessment of sustainability and deliverability, that new housing development will be planned for a 'selection' of the following locations:
- Urban extensions north and west of Luton
 - Green Belt inset villages
 - Tempsford new settlement
 - East of Biggleswade (new villages)
 - East of Arsley (town extension)
 - Marston Vale (new villages)
 - Aspley Guise (new villages)
 - Wixams Southern Extension (town extension)

It is noted that there is no specific policy in the current draft plan concerning the Tempsford site. It is assumed that such a policy will be included in the next version of the Local Plan for consultation.

16. The Tempsford assessment identifies a number of constraints and impacts. Regarding transport it states that significant upgrades will be required for the A1 as well a new bridge over the East Coast Mainline. The assessment records that until the routing of East-West Rail and any A1 upgrade is known there is a risk that development of the site could form a barrier to delivery and would prevent the master planning of the site. Concerns are noted about the lack of vehicular access to Sandy without use of the A1. Further assessment is required in regard to flood risk. The site includes a scheduled monument and a number of listed buildings, and the assessment states that development of the site could cause substantial harm to these designated heritage assets, but goes on to say that the degree of harm could be mitigated and that the site has the potential to provide benefits that could in combination outweigh the identified substantial harm.
17. The plan identifies a need for new Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople pitches and plots but does not identify new site allocations in this consultation (new sites will be included for part of their identified need in their next consultation, the remainder of their need will be provided for through a criteria based policy).

Considerations

18. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that to be 'sound' a Local Plan should be positively prepared (meeting development needs and infrastructure requirements), justified (the most appropriate strategy compared to reasonable alternatives), effective (the plan is deliverable over the plan period based on effective cross-boundary working on strategic priorities), and consistent with national policy (it will deliver sustainable development as defined in the NPPF).
19. The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to work collaboratively to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated to meet development requirements. Local Planning Authorities are expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively cooperated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for examination. These duties apply to both Central Bedfordshire and to this Council. The adequacy of this 'duty to

cooperate' engagement will be a matter for the Inspector conducting the examination of the Local Plan based upon the nature of the engagement and its outcomes.

20. The emerging Central Bedfordshire Local Plan is positively prepared in that it seeks to more than meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements responding to growth pressures in a positive way. The plan also seems to be broadly consistent with national policy subject to the caveats set out below. However there are reasons to question at this stage, based on the information available, whether a plan which allocates the site at Tempsford for a new market town could be considered to be effective. The evidence base for the plan has identified that crucial enabling infrastructure (the A1 upgrade) has only a 50% chance of being completed by 2035, and that other important infrastructure which will also help to enable the new town and which may actually impinge upon the site of the new town will also only have a 50% chance of delivery by 2035 (although it potentially seems reasonable to consider that the likelihood of the Caxton-Gibbet to the Black Cat roundabout scheme being delivered by then are higher than 50%). The feasibility and cost of a new bridge over the East Coast Mainline and its timing also call into question the deliverability of the new town. It is not possible to comment on whether the plan as a whole will be justified as the current consultation plan only includes strategic allocations and we are told that only a selection of these will be required which may or may not include Tempsford. The site assessment of the Tempsford new town has identified important heritage concerns and the views of Historic England on the balancing exercise undertaken by Central Bedfordshire to justify its possible allocation are not yet known. There is also no draft policy for the new town to give any certainty about how the new town will come forward or the mitigation measures it would be required to provide.
21. The Local Plan evidence base does not provide much information on the possible impacts of the town at Tempsford on South Cambridgeshire and on Gamlingay in particular as our nearest village. Their North Central Bedfordshire Growth Options Study Appendix 5 part 1 says that only 5% of traffic generated in the Tempsford area presently uses eastern routes to South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge. But if the Caxton-Gibbet to Black cat scheme were not to be built but the new town was, one could expect much more village rat running to avoid the existing congestion on the A428. Their Stage 1a Transport Modelling and their Growth Options Study Appendix 5 part 1 does show some future congestion in Potton and Gamlingay and the narrow roads in central Gamlingay make it particularly vulnerable to congestion. If the site were to be allocated for development in the Local Plan the policy should make appropriate provision for the mitigation of traffic impacts on local villages including villages in South Cambridgeshire.
22. It is not clear whether the transport modelling which supports the plan takes account of the levels of new development being planned in South Cambridgeshire in our new Local Plan. Neither is it clear whether it takes account of the proposed 4,000 dwelling new settlement at Wyboston close to the Black Cat roundabout on the A1, included in the emerging Bedford Borough Local Plan.
23. Overall given the identified deliverability concerns regarding the Tempsford market town, based on the information currently available its inclusion in their Proposed Submission Local Plan would lead to concerns that the plan was not effective or justified. The location may be an appropriate location for future growth but it seems clear that it is not needed to ensure that objectively assessed development needs are met in the plan period to 2035. As the routes of the enabling new transport infrastructure become clearer and if the likelihood of its delivery become more certain it may then be appropriate to allocate the site, but at this stage it is not clear that the

new settlement could be delivered in an appropriate way with the necessary supporting infrastructure, and there are concerns that if it were relied on to meet housing needs/targets there could be pressure to bring it forward without the appropriate supporting infrastructure, which would be likely to have unacceptable negative impacts on South Cambridgeshire. In many respects its inclusion could be considered to be premature. If however it is included the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan must be clear that its delivery must only proceed if enabling transport infrastructure is provided and in step with its provision.

24. Although the plan does not currently include a draft Tempsford policy there are South Cambridgeshire related matters which such a policy should address in addition to village traffic mitigation measures. These are reference to footpath links to the Greensand Ridge from the new settlement, and the provision of cycle links to any new station at Tempsford from surrounding villages including from Gamlingay.
25. Finally it can be noted that to be effective a plan must be based on effective joint working on cross-boundary issues. Whilst there have been meetings between Central Bedfordshire and this Council in 2014 and 2016 these have not included any mention of a new town at Tempsford.

Next Steps

26. Representations to the Local Plan will be submitted as agreed by the Portfolio Holder.

Options

27. The Planning Portfolio Holder has the following options:
 - (a) Agree the proposed response; or
 - (b) Agree the proposed response with amendments; or
 - (c) Not to agree the proposed response.

Implications

28. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:

Financial

29. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal

30. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Staffing

31. There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

32. No direct risks to this Council or to South Cambridgeshire residents and businesses have been identified.

Equality and Diversity

33. There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report

Climate Change

34. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report.

Consultation responses

35. Officers have worked with Cambridgeshire County Council officers in the preparation of this report.

Effect on Strategic Aims

B. HOMES FOR OUR FUTURE

Secure the delivery of a wide range of housing to meet the needs of existing and future communities

36. The provision of sufficient homes in Central Bedfordshire to at least meet their objectively assessed housing need will contribute to meeting housing needs across south-east England and so help contain development pressures on South Cambridgeshire. It could also help to justify the provision of strategic transport infrastructure of general benefit.

Appendices

A – Satellite image of North East ‘Central Bedfordshire’

Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Central Bedfordshire Consultation Draft Local Plan:

<https://centralbedfordshire.jdi-consult.net/localplan/>

Central Bedfordshire Local Plan evidence base:

<https://centralbedfordshire.jdi-consult.net/localplan/>

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Appendix A

Satellite image of North East Central Bedfordshire. Showing CBC boundary.

Approximate site of the Tempsford new market town

Approximate Wyboston new settlement site

Gamlingay

