

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Extraordinary Meeting of Council 17 July 2007  
**AUTHOR/S:** Executive Director / Planning Policy Manager

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### **NORTH WEST CAMBRIDGE AREA ACTION PLAN; RESULTS OF THE ISSUES AND OPTIONS PARTICIPATION; DETERMINING THE SITE FOOTPRINT, RESPONSES TO REPRESENTATIONS AND PREFERRED APPROACHES**

#### **Purpose and Executive Summary**

1. This report sets out the results of the public participation on the Issues and Options for the Area Action Plan (AAP) for North West Cambridge being prepared jointly by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. It covers land in both Councils' areas between Huntingdon Road and Madingley Road and seeks to establish the site footprint for the University related development set out in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003. In doing so, it will also establish the revised boundaries of the Cambridge Green Belt in this area. The recommended responses to representations on all issues and options for the AAP are also set out along with the recommended preferred approaches that flow from them in respect of the options consulted on. These will guide the development of a Preferred Options report and a Draft Area Action Plan in the subsequent stage of the plan's preparation. A similar report was considered by the **North West Cambridge Joint Member Reference Group** at its meeting on 29 June 2007

#### **Background and Considerations**

##### **The Issues and Options Report**

2. The Issues and Options Report forms the first stage in the preparation of the Area Action Plan.
3. The report sets out the various issues, options and possible approaches to the development of the area of North West Cambridge as required by the Structure Plan Policy P9/2b which proposes development here for predominantly University related uses. Not every issue for the Area Action Plan has a reasonable alternative. In some cases the Issues and Options therefore consulted on a preferred approach. For other issues, there was no specific option and the draft AAP will propose a policy approach.
4. The starting point is the Structure Plan proposal to remove land from the Green Belt. At the Structure Plan Examination the Panel of Inspectors was satisfied that there was "*a general need for land to be available specifically for the expansion of the University*" and that in terms of delivery "*there is considerable benefit to be derived from using land in the single ownership of the University...and that this could not be met elsewhere...*".
5. However, the Panel also noted that "*the land is prominent, being highly visible from the west and provides an open setting to the village of Girton*". They thus accepted that this area performed an important Green Belt function and that it "*should only be released from the Green Belt on the basis that the University are able to show a need for the land to be brought forward*". In this, they considered that the University's

growth “should be accommodated as part of the city, so far as that is compatible with meeting the vision of the city as a compact city.”

6. The University has indicated that it is seeking to development during the period to 2025 for:
  - accommodation for 2,000 students
  - 2,000 – 2,500 dwellings, including housing for their key workers
  - a new Earth Science Faculty and academic facilities
  - research institutes and commercial research
  - appropriate community facilities and open space.
7. The University has emphasised that these uses reflect their development needs for the longer term if the University is to maintain its position as a world leader and centre of excellence for further education and research. The University has produced a draft Masterplan which for this development that would require some 77 ha of land.
8. The Issues and Options report highlighted that the area forms an important part of the Green Belt setting of Cambridge and that much of it is prominent in views from the western approaches to the City, most notably from the M11 and the higher ground in the vicinity of Madingley and the American Cemetery. The other main component of land that will perform a Green Belt function within the Plan area is a strategic gap which maintains separation between the built-up area of the City and the village of Girton.
9. In order to explore with the public how land could be released from the green belt to meet the University’s development needs 5 site footprint options, 10.1 to 10.5, were generated for comment.
  - 10.1 is based on the University’s draft masterplan.
  - 10.2 would provide slightly less built development but with more development in the south of the site in the vicinity of the Madingley Road Park & Ride.
  - 10.3 and 10.4 have a more limited scale of development as they restricted it to the general alignment of the 20m contour with the Strategic Gap running north-south (10.3) or east-west (10.4).
  - 10.5, had very limited development and only on land within the City Council’s area at the eastern end of the area.
10. As well as site footprint the report covered matters including:
  - Housing, including the proportion of Affordable Housing which should be sought and where to accommodate higher and lower densities, and where to locate market housing, key worker housing and student accommodation in relation to each other
  - Whether the Plan should accommodate commercial research
  - Providing for transport infrastructure, including a potential orbital route
  - The provision of a local centre and appropriate community facilities including the potential for a secondary school
  - How to provide for renewable energy.
11. The key issues which the Councils will need to determine in order to produce the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan are:
  - (a) What land needs to be retained in the Green Belt in order to maintain and enhance the setting of Cambridge in this vicinity (Structure Plan policy P9/2a and P9/2b)
  - (b) In considering (1) having regard to the objective to meet the University’s development needs (Structure Plan policy P9/2b)

- (c) The development area should be capable of providing high quality sustainable development which enhances the character of Cambridge (Structure Plan policy P9/2c)

### **The Participation Process**

12. The North West Cambridge AAP Issues and Options Report was the subject of extensive public participation from 25<sup>th</sup> September to 6<sup>th</sup> November 2006. The document was sent to a wide range of consultees, including local organisations and interest groups as well as statutory consultees.
13. The Report was supported by a Green Belt Landscape Assessment Report prepared by David Brown Landscape Associates and Richard Morrish Associates which had been commissioned to inform the report and by a Transport Study prepared by W.S. Atkins which had been commissioned by the County Council.
14. Although not a requirement of Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2004, the Councils agreed that as the AAP would have a significant impact on the area, it was important to engage the public as well as the specific and general consultation bodies (or key stakeholders). This would also be consistent with the emphasis on early public participation in the plan making process. The public were therefore advised by press releases and formal public notices in the press and invited to comment on the issues and options raised by the AAP. A summary leaflet was delivered to all households in the part of the City between Huntingdon Road and Madingley Road and in the villages of Coton, Girton and Histon/Impington. Additionally, three exhibitions were held to assist this process. These were manned by Officers of Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and the County Council. The exhibitions included material from the University (who showed their emerging Masterplan), David Wilson Estates (who showed proposals for development on nearby land between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road within Cambridge City), and Cambridgeshire Horizons.
15. The Councils also set up an interactive website to assist access to the document and to facilitate making responses online.

### **The Results of Participation**

16. There was a very positive response to the participation with a large number of people visiting the exhibitions and 701 comments being received on the Issues and Options Report (I&O). Good use was made of the interactive website with 70 % of representations being made online.

### **North West Joint Member Reference Group (NWJMRG)**

17. The NWJMRG met on Friday 29 June to discuss a covering report and papers 1 & 2 which on the basis of consultation included 4 revised options to the site footprint.
  - **Option A:** Development along the Girton Ridge generally not extending below the 20m contour, the green belt between Girton and Cambridge narrows to 100m south of the SSSI towards Madingley Road where it is not visible from Huntingdon Road.
  - **Option B:** Development along the Girton Ridge generally not extending below the 20m contour, the green belt between Girton and Cambridge narrows to 200m south of the SSSI towards Madingley Road where it is not visible from Huntingdon Road.

- **Option C:** Based on option 10.1, development is drawn slightly further up the slope, the strategic gap widens out into a large circular open space in the vicinity of the SSSI.
  - **Option D:** Based on option C, with additional green indentations into the outer edge of the development, the 200m strategic gap runs south towards Madingley Road.
18. The NWJMRG was addressed by Cambridge University and Girton Parish Council. The University argued that Option A, as recommended by officers was not soundly based whilst Girton Parish Council were concerned about the implications of the development on the integrity of Girton. The University preferred Options C or D as a basis for further discussion.
  19. At the meeting, a refinement to Option A was put forward titled Option E which would generally maintain development above the 20 metre contour line in South Cambridgeshire in order to respect the Green Belt setting, whilst providing a larger, high amenity value central green space as part of the north-south strategic gap, primarily in the City. By careful design, it would also be possible to retain the cohesion between the western and eastern parts of the development by narrowing the width of the gap to 100 metres, south of the central green space, as it runs towards Madingley Road.
  20. The NWJMRG accepted this proposal and recommended that this refinement should be taken forward by officers in consultation with the Executive Members before putting it to the meetings of each Council in July, together with a site assessment and sustainability appraisal.
  21. A map of Option E, a site assessment and sustainability appraisal will be circulated to Members before the meeting on 17 July.

#### **Site Footprint and the Green Belt**

22. This matter is dealt with in detail in **Paper 1**, which sets out how each site footprint option was assessed. The Paper has been written so that it provides a detailed technical commentary, which can be used as a stand alone document and form part of the evidence base for the AAP.
23. At the heart of the consideration of site footprint lies the need to balance the needs / aspirations of the University with the maintenance of the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt as found by the Inspectors at the Structure Plan Examination (see paragraph 3.1.4 of this report).
24. It was also clear from the responses to the participation that this was one of the most important issues for consultees. In the responses, the University had indicated that it supported 10.1, which had been based on its draft masterplan but that it could accommodate most of its requirements on the slightly lower site footprint set out in 10.2. It also put forward an alternative site for consideration. The local Parish Councils and residents groups favoured the smaller scale development in 10.5. It was clear that none of the published Options fully met the requirements of all key consultees. The Sustainability Appraisal also indicated that there were a number of conflicts, which remained unresolved in these Options.
25. Given the significance of the site footprint, a considerable amount of further work has been undertaken on this issue. In order to compare the relative merits of the site options, Site Assessment Criteria were developed from the Issues & Options report

drawing on the Draft Vision (Option 7.1), the draft Objectives (Option 8.1) and other relevant planning criteria. The draft criteria were agreed with the Executive Councillor (Climate Change and Growth) at the City Council and the Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio holder at South Cambridgeshire District Council). The draft Criteria were then the subject of additional participation with key local stakeholders including the University, the County Council, local Parish Councils and residents groups.

26. In parallel with the development of the Assessment Criteria, there have been on-going discussions between the joint officer team (Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council) and the University's officers. In December 2006 a workshop was held to consider how further options could be developed in order to meet more closely the objectives of the Plan as set out in draft in the Issues & Options report. This included the University's officers and its planning consultants EDAW, officers from the City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, the County Council and Cambridgeshire Horizons. The workshop focussed on whether amendments to the University's preferred site option, 10.1, could be made in order to reduce the impact on the purposes of the Green Belt whilst accommodating the University's aspirations. This centred around whether a greater amount of Green Belt could be retained on the slope down to the M11 in order to provide a more significant green foreground setting for the development, whether it was appropriate to allow more development further south towards the Park & Ride and to limit the extent of the Strategic Gap within the development to compensate, thus achieving more of the University's aspirations than set out in some of the Options in the Issues and Options report.
27. The workshop also focussed on the use of three dimensional modelling to demonstrate the visual impact of various options. This led to a number of meetings between officers of the University, the Councils and EDAW. The results of this modelling are also set out in Paper 1. It is hoped that the modelling will assist Members to understand the implications of the site footprint options.
28. This additional work has resulted in the generation of the four further options referred to above. Options A and B were developed by the Joint Officer Team. These two Options seek to reduce the adverse impact on the Green Belt setting of Cambridge by maintaining a wider green foreground on the slope to the M11/Washpit Brook with development kept generally to the higher ground around the 20m contour. In order to provide a scale of development as close as possible to the University's needs/aspirations, there is slightly more development at the southern end of the slope where it is less acute and is partly screened by hedgerow (this would need to be enhanced through masterplanning and a landscaping strategy). They also seek to maximise development potential by providing only a relatively narrow Strategic Gap through the development. This is 200m wide at Huntingdon Road where it has an important function of maintaining separation between Cambridge and Girton. Officers have taken the view that the Strategic Gap becomes less important with distance from Huntingdon Road as Girton village lies essentially north of Huntingdon Road. Indeed within the new University quarter which will be developed, a wide and open gap could actually hinder the creation of a cohesive and sustainable community by making distances within it unnecessarily long, especially to the local centre which will be needed. Thus Option A reduces the Strategic Gap to 100m further within the development. Option B is similar but maintains the width of the Strategic Gap at 200m throughout.
29. The University has also developed two further options. Option C has been approved by the University's North West Cambridge Committee and formed part of the

University's response to the consultation; it draws development slightly further up the slope leading to the M11 compared with 10.1 but maintains the wide area of open space connected with the Strategic Gap. Option D, which has been put forward informally by the University as a result of the on-going dialogue with officers, has a more irregular edge to it on the M11 slope with the edge broken up by green "indentations" and reduces the Strategic Gap to a general width throughout of 200m.

30. These four new Options are also assessed in Paper 1 in exactly the same way as the published Options. Members will see that the Joint Officer Team originally recommended that Option A be taken forward as the Preferred Option on the basis that it would have a less adverse impact on the Green Belt than 10.1, C or D as the slope towards the M11 and Madingley is largely maintained thus providing what will become a new edge to the City with a green foreground. The David Brown study considered that a site contained by the 20m contour could provide a "workable Green Belt setting function". By limiting the extent of the width of the Strategic Gap in Option A, the area available for built development would be increased so that it would compare favourably with the amount of developable land in Options 10.1, C and D which are put forward by the University. Work undertaken by the Urban Design Team within Cambridge City Council has demonstrated in an illustrative masterplan that Option A is capable of being developed satisfactorily and which is included as an appendix to Paper 1. Option A would provide 71ha of development compared with 77ha in Option 10.1, 72ha in Option C and 75ha in Option D. It should also be noted that the University in its responses to the consultation had indicated that its needs could be met on the site footprint of Option 10.2 (68 ha). All land in the AAP area outside the site footprint will be included in the Green Belt, including the land in Cambridge that was removed from the Green Belt by the Local Plan Inspector along Madingley Road and in the strategic gap, with the exception of the open space located close to Storey's Way which will be surrounded by built development.
31. Option E which now forms the basis of the recommendation to Council revises Option A to provide a large central public open space which is intended to have the purpose and character of one of Cambridge's many commons and at 5ha is similar in extent to Lammas Land on Barton Road. This space would be protected from traffic noise emanating from the M11 by development. Option E provides 69 ha of developable land.

#### **Representations on Other Issues**

32. The representations on the other Issues and Options are set out in **Paper 2**. This is made up of a Table that summarises the key issues for each option, an indication of the number of representations and the preferred approach which is recommended for the Area Action Plan. The Table is supported by a detailed Appendix (Appendix 2.1) which sets out a summary of each representation together with a response and recommended preferred approach.
33. Of these Options the most significant number of representations relate to transport, the provision of a secondary school, and whether its playing fields should be located in the Strategic Gap, the provision of renewable energy and sustainable drainage.
34. The key transport Options are:
- The nature and location of an orbital route which would connect Huntingdon Road with Madingley Road: Taking the responses to the Options into account together with the findings of the North West Cambridge Transport Study, the recommended approach is to take forward Option 13.2 with a new all-purpose route, designed to not impact on the purposes and amenity of the Strategic

Gap and which would also serve to provide access for the proposed development. It would also reduce rat-running through Storey's Way and offer an alternative access to the strategic road network. There will also be a need to ensure adequate dedicated networks of cycle and pedestrian links in order to encourage sustainable travel.

- The possible addition of north facing slip roads to the M11/A1303 Madingley Road junction: The recommended approach is that, as the Transport Study shows negligible benefits, this Option should not be included as a preferred approach.
35. On the provision of a secondary school, the County Council has now indicated that its preferred location would be between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road, and therefore the preferred approach is to take forward Option 14.4 which would not provide for a secondary school within the area of the AAP. There is therefore no need for playing fields associated with the secondary school to be accommodated within the AAP area.
36. On renewable energy, the preferred approach is to pursue a combination of options and to clarify that in addition to 20% being generated by on-site renewables there will be a requirement for Combined Heat and Power or, if this is proved impossible or not viable, a District Heating Scheme preferably fuelled by renewable energy sources to meet the needs of a substantial proportion of the development.
37. The preferred approach on surface water drainage and flood risk is to ensure that policies address surface water run-off in the event of ordinary rainfall events which could lead to flood risk downstream as well as storm events.
38. On Sustainable Drainage Systems the preferred approach is to ensure that development does not take place until written agreements with the Councils have been secured that organisations with sufficient powers, funding, resources, expertise and integrated management are legally committed to maintain and manage all surface water systems in perpetuity. It is also the preferred approach to develop an integrated water strategy in the AAP and to include a policy to reduce per capita water consumption by 25% compared with 2006.

#### **Responses to the Interim Sustainability Appraisal**

39. It is a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) for all planning policy documents to undergo a Sustainability Appraisal in order to determine its impact on social, economic and environmental objectives. As part of this process, the Issue and Options Report was appraised and reported in the interim Sustainability Appraisal Report prepared by Scott Wilson (2006). This document was consulted on at the same time as the Issues and Option report and Appendix 2.2 to Paper 2 sets out a summary of each representation received together with a response.

#### **Next steps**

40. The programme for preparing the draft NW Cambridge AAP is very tight, in order to bring development forward as soon as possible to address the needs of the University including affordable housing for its own staff. The aim is for both the City and South Cambridgeshire to agree a draft AAP with an accompanying Preferred Options report in September 2007, for a 6-week public participation period in October/December so that the AAP can be submitted to the Secretary of State in June 2008. It is anticipated that a public examination would be held in November / December 2008 with a view to a binding Inspector's Report being received in May

2009. The housing content of the AAP will also inform the forthcoming debate at the South Cambridgeshire Site Specific Policies DPD Examination when the Inspector will be looking to make up a shortfall of approximately 1,000 dwellings in South Cambridgeshire as a result of delays in bringing forward development at Northstowe.

### **Options**

41. Within the Issues and Options Report there are some 45 different Options. The resulting preferred options, taking into account the responses to the public participation and the Sustainability Appraisal are set out in this report and its accompanying Papers and their appendices. The Issues and Options Report also sought through the participation process to identify if there were any other reasonable alternatives. The iterative process of developing preferred options has only identified other reasonable alternatives in the case of the site footprint Options which had been published, where a further 4 options were identified. These have been assessed and appraised in exactly the same way as those published for consultation.

### **Implications**

42. Financial	The cost of preparing the AAP to adoption will require budgetary provision by each Council.
Legal	As set out in the main body of the report.
Staffing	The continued involvement of staff from both Councils is required to progress the AAP.
Risk Management	None specific
Equal Opportunities	None specific

### **Consultations**

43. The North West Cambridge Area Action Plan Issues and Options report has been the subject of extensive public participation and consultation with key stakeholders. There has also been a continuing dialogue with the University as the landowner and developer of the site.

### **Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives**

44. Taking the AAP forward will have a significant affect on all the Council's annual priorities and corporate objectives, especially growth areas and sustainability.

### **Conclusions/Summary**

45. This report presents the responses to representations on the Issues and Options for the North West Cambridge AAP and the preferred approaches to be taken in developing the Preferred Options and Draft AAP.

### **Recommendations**

46. Council is recommended to agree:
- (1) Option E as the site footprint and revised Green Belt boundary as set out in paragraphs 17 to 21 of this report and informed by Paper 1.
  - (2) Responses to the Issues and Options document and the preferred approach to the Area Action Plan as set out in Paper 2.



**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003  
The Panel's report for the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Structure Plan  
Cambridge Local Plan 2006  
Cambridge Local Plan Inspector's Report 2006  
North West Cambridge Landscape Study 2006  
North West Cambridge Transport Study 2007  
Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, Cambridge City Council, 2002  
North West Cambridge AAP, Issues and Options report September 2006

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## Appendices

Paper 1  
Appendix 1.1: Maps of Site Options 10.1 to 10.5  
Appendix 1.2: Issues & Options Report – Vision (Option 7.1)  
Appendix 1.3: Issues & Options Report – Objectives (Option 8.1)  
Appendix 1.4: Other Relevant Criteria  
Appendix 1.5: Consultation Representations and Responses on the Site Assessment Criteria  
Appendix 1.6: Site Assessment Criteria  
Appendix 1.7: Site Assessment of Options 10.1 to 10.5  
Appendix 1.8: Opportunities and constraints map extracted from the 2006 Green Belt Landscape Study prepared by David Brown Associates  
Appendix 1.9: Heritage Interests map extracted from the 2006 Green Belt Landscape Study prepared by David Brown Associates  
Appendix 1.10: Site Assessment of Options A to D  
Appendix 1.11: Maps of Site Options A to D  
Appendix 1.12: Three Dimensional Modelling  
Appendix 1.13: Illustrative Masterplan  
Paper 2  
Appendix 2.1: Representation summaries and responses to the Issues & Options consultation on the North West Area Action Plan  
Appendix 2.2: Representation summaries and responses to the Interim Sustainability Appraisal