

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Special Council meeting
AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

28 June 2012

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS REPORT FOR CONSULTATION

Purpose

1. Council is invited to consider and comment on the Issues and Options Consultation Report prior to the Localism, Planning Policy and Transport Portfolio Holder's decision to approve for public consultation from 12 July to 28 September.

Executive summary

2. The current Local Development Framework documents were adopted between January 2007 and January 2010.
3. It is time to update the current Local Development Framework because:
 - The current plan has an end date of 2016
 - The national economic slowdown has slowed the delivery of housing development
 - Marshall of Cambridge have been unable to relocate their businesses and a major site for some 7,500 new homes in South Cambridgeshire will not come forward by 2031
 - The Localism Act 2011 and new National Planning Policy Framework have introduced a number of changes to national policy,
4. The preparation of an updated Local Plan involves a number of stages, including public consultation.
5. The Issues and Options stage involves identifying and considering the issues that South Cambridgeshire will face over a period of at least 15 years from the adoption of a new Local Plan. The public and stakeholders will be asked for their views to inform the new Local Plan.
6. The District Council has worked with neighbouring authorities in particular Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to consider issues across the area.
7. Consultation on the Issues and Options Report is scheduled for ten weeks between 12 July and 28 September 2012.

Recommendations

8. This report is being submitted to the Full Council for consideration and comment before decision by Portfolio Holder for Localism, Planning Policy and Transport. The Portfolio Holder will be recommended to:
 - agree the Issues and Options Report (Appendix A) for consultation between 12 July and 28 September;
 - note Integrated policy assessment and sustainability appraisal summary

Appendix B

- agree that any minor amendments and editing changes that need to be made prior to publication should be agreed by the Director for Planning and New Communities in consultation with the Local Plan and Localism Portfolio Holder.

9. The full Issues & Options report is necessarily technical in order to demonstrate that the Council has considered matters in sufficient depth to show an independent planning inspector that the new Local Plan is soundly based. Once the Portfolio Holder has agreed the consultation document, a shortened version will also be produced ready for the beginning of the public consultation on 12 July.

Background

10. The current Local Development Framework (LDF) suite of documents was adopted between January 2007 and January 2010. They set out a vision, policies and proposals for development and land use in South Cambridgeshire to 2016 and beyond for some longer term proposals, e.g. Northstowe. The LDF gives effect to a sustainable development strategy taken from the last Structure Plan and East of England Plan, and proposes a sequence of development in South Cambridgeshire with:
 - (a) development on the edge of Cambridge on land removed from the green belt
 - (b) the new town of Northstowe
 - (c) development in the larger and better served villages designated as Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres.
11. The primary objective of this strategy is locate more new homes close to the main concentration of jobs and jobs growth in and close to Cambridge. This approach involved a review of the inner boundary of the Cambridge Green Belt. This included Cambridge Airport where 12,000 new homes (7,500 in South Cambridgeshire) were expected to be built, most after 2016. This strategy is a departure from previous plans which constrained the growth of Cambridge and dispersed housing development to the villages and market towns.
12. Whilst the current Local Development Framework is an effective set of documents and good progress is being made in terms of the delivery of its proposals, a number of factors come together to mean that an update is timely, as listed in paragraph 1.2 above.
13. Planning policies need to be kept up to date and the Council agreed in 2011 to review its plans, with adoption of a new Local Plan by early 2015.
14. The Localism Act received royal assent in November 2011 providing for the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and the introduction of Neighbourhood Planning. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into effect on 27 March 2012. The NPPF gives a 12 month period for Councils to update their plans to ensure consistency with the framework. Weight can be given to policies in emerging plans as they progress through the review process, and the current LDF is considered to be in general conformity with the NPPF. The Council will have a draft Local Plan by summer 2013.
15. The preparation of a Local Plan involves a number of stages including public consultation. This is to ensure that it is robust, comprehensive and founded on the principles of sustainable development. Key stages in the process are:
 - **Preparation of Evidence Base:** A number of local studies which will be used to inform issues and options and policy development;
 - **Consultation on Issues and Options:** Identification of issues to be addressed by the new Local Plan and options for policies and proposal where there are genuine choices to

be made. These will be published for consultation with the public and other stakeholders;

- ➔ **Consultation on the Draft Plan:** Consultation on the draft Plan having taken account of the comments made at the Issues and Options stage (substantial changes would require further public consultation).
- ➔ **Submission:** Submission of the new Local Plan to the Secretary of State;
- ➔ **Examination:** An independent Planning Inspector considers the 'soundness' of the Local Plan in a public examination and produces a report to the Council. Those tests are set out in the NPPF and include:
 - **Positively prepared** – based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;
 - **Justified** – the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
 - **Effective** – deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
 - **Consistent with national policy** – the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the NPPF;
- ➔ **Inspector's Report:** The Inspector will produce a report to the Council which may include proposed changes to the Submission Local Plan. The Localism Act allows the Council to either accept the changes the Inspector proposes or to propose its own changes to address the Inspector's concerns. The Council cannot however adopt an 'unsound' plan and will therefore have to make relevant changes.
- ➔ **Adoption:** Formally adopted by the Council.

Issues and Options

16. This stage is about considering the issues that South Cambridgeshire will face over the next two decades. The Issues and Options Report presents a set of themes that broadly follow those in the Cambridge City Council Issues and Options consultation that is currently being carried out.
17. Over the last year work has been undertaken to compile the evidence base. This has involved a number of studies and working with key partners. A series of workshops were held in March with District and Parish Councillors, service and infrastructure providers, developers and agents.
18. A list of evidence base documents is on the Council's web-site and will be attached as an Appendix to the Issues & Options Report.

Appendix A includes the Issues and Options Report. The Report includes a vision, strategic objectives, and specific chapters relating to the future spatial strategy, possible opportunity areas and other topic areas. The chapters are as follows:

- ⌘ **Chapter 1** is the introduction which describes the overall purpose document.
- ⌘ **Chapter 2** sets out a possible vision for South Cambridgeshire to 2031
- ⌘ **Chapter 3** contains the forecasts for jobs and housing.

- ⤴ **Chapter 4** concerns the spatial strategy and focuses on the location of housing and employment.
- ⤴ **Chapter 5** sets out a number of development site options which come mainly from the 'call for sites' last summer. There may be consultation later in the year with the City Council regarding detailed site options on the edge of Cambridge.
- ⤴ **Chapter 6** covers climate change including water
- ⤴ **Chapter 7** deals with quality of design and landscape.
- ⤴ **Chapter 8** sets out options to protect and enhance the historic and natural environment.
- ⤴ **Chapter 9** is about delivering high quality housing.
- ⤴ **Chapter 10** deals with the local economy, including sections on employment, retail and tourism.
- ⤴ **Chapter 11** is concerned with successful communities, including the provision of open space, leisure and community facilities.
- ⤴ **Chapter 12** deals with transport and infrastructure.

19. The overarching objective in national policy to secure sustainable development, covering environmental, economic and social factors has strongly influenced the development of the options in these chapters.

Levels of Housing and Employment Provision

20. District Councils are now responsible for setting their own level of housing and employment provision rather than targets being set at a regional level through Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). This means that the Council needs to establish an appropriate level of housing and employment provision to 2031. The NPPF requires that the levels of housing and employment provision are objectively assessed and include consideration of cross boundary and strategic issues.
21. South Cambridgeshire has experienced strong and persistent growth over many decades driven by the economic strength of the Cambridge area. In the last decade alone the District grew 10,000 jobs at a time when job growth in Cambridge was static and even during the recession the number of jobs has continued to grow. The Council's vision is for South Cambridgeshire to demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth and a key issue for the new Local Plan will therefore be how many new homes and jobs should be provided over the next 20 years.
22. Planning for an appropriate level of housing and employment provision means taking account of a range of forecasts for possible population, homes and jobs growth. The options that were produced in May for the review are:
- **Low:** 14,000 jobs (700 jobs per year)
 - **Medium:** 23,100 jobs (1,200 jobs per year)
 - **High:** 29,200 jobs (1,500 jobs per year)
 - Jobs growth 1991-2011 was 1,600 jobs per year

23. The Medium forecast is the level of growth that the forecasters consider to be the most likely and takes account of the latest Bank of England forecasts. The High level is based on the national economy (Gross Domestic Product or GDP) growing at half of 1% above the forecast and the Low level is based on growth at half of 1% below the forecast. The forecasters advise that these are reasonable tolerances.
24. Jobs growth is the main factor driving population and housing growth in South Cambridgeshire. The new Local Plan will need to provide for a commensurate amount of housing provision but this is not the same number as job forecasts. Allowing for the loss of allocations such as Cambridge Airport, the current LDF still has deliverable allocations for 14,200 new homes in South Cambridgeshire. These can be carried forward into the new Local Plan. Taking account of this, the additional options for housing allocations to be added in the new Local Plan are:
- **Low:** 4,300 additional homes (18,500 in total, 925 per year)
 - **Medium:** 6,800 additional homes (21,000 in total, 1,050 per year)
 - **High:** 9,300 additional homes (23,500 in total, 1,175 per year)
25. The High level of growth would be a continuation of the same levels of growth for which the Council is planning in its current Local Development Framework but which was only achieved during the final year of the boom preceding the 2008 recession.
26. The Council is also required to make provision for Gypsy and Travellers. In March 2012, the Government released national guidance on planning for Gypsies and Travellers sites. The guidance requires that Councils set pitch targets to address the objectively assessed need, working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities. In 2011, a review of the 2006 Cambridge Sub-Regional Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment was undertaken. The Housing Portfolio Holder recently accepted the conclusion that gypsies and travellers making up 1% of the population of South Cambridgeshire pitches already in the district, it is likely that an additional 85 pitches will be needed by 2031.
27. The Council has been exploring options for Gypsy and Traveller sites since 2006 and has already carried out an Issues and Options consultation on the approach to planning for Gypsies and Travellers and a consultation on site options and policies.

Development Options

28. It is also important to explore where development should occur. Sustainable development means locating homes, jobs, services and facilities close to one another wherever possible to reduce the need to travel, make bus services viable, support local services and facilities, and generally create a good quality of life.
29. The current Local Development Framework (LDF) includes:
- a) Development on the edge of Cambridge on land removed from the green belt
 - b) The new town of Northstowe
 - c) Development in the larger and better served villages designated as Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres

30. The issues and options report explores the scope for further development and asks for comments. The options include provision for 3,000 – 12,750 new dwellings in new settlements and up to 5,840 new dwellings in villages.

'Call for sites'

31. Last summer's 'call for sites' provided the Council with almost 300 sites to consider for inclusion in the new Local Plan. Ranging from new settlement proposals to development in villages, these sites have been comprehensively evaluated including a full sustainability appraisal to determine which sites merit inclusion in the Issues and Options Consultation as potential site options. A summary of the 'call for sites' assessment is attached at **Appendix B** and the public will be able to draw on the whole assessment in making comments.

New town options

32. The 'call for sites assessment' led to 8 sites being put to the Council for consideration for a new settlement scale of development. Two sites have come through as options for the current consultation:
- Waterbeach Barracks and adjoining land where there are 3 options for development:
 - Just redevelopment of the MOD buildings (which would only be a village extension of 900 dwellings)
 - Just the MOD land holding with a capacity for 7,600 dwellings; and
 - The MOD land plus additional land to the north and east with a capacity for 12,750 dwellings
 - Bourn Airfield with the capacity for 3,000 – 3,500 dwellings
33. New settlement sites found not to merit inclusion for public consultation were Six Mile Bottom, Hanley Grange, the CEMEX landholdings at Barrington and development at Heathfield (north of the Imperial War Museum).

Villages

34. The Issues and Options report considers the options for further development in the larger better served and more sustainable villages identified as Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres in the LDF, and also villages close to the Guided Busway. The report includes options for development at Bassingbourn, Cambourne, Comberton, Cottenham, Fulbourn, Gamlingay, Gt Shelford, Girton, Histon, Impington, Linton, Longstanton, Melbourn, Milton, Over, Papworth Everard, Sawston, Stapleford, Swavesey and Willingham. The report also includes options about changes to classification of villages as Rural Centres or Minor Rural Centres and a possible new category of Guided Busway villages.

Edge of Cambridge

35. A key issue is whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of further land from the Green Belt to provide housing and employment. In South Cambridgeshire, the most sustainable location for development is on the edge of Cambridge. Due to the closely drawn administrative boundary around Cambridge the Council is working closely with the City Council to consider the needs of the area.

36. At this stage, the approach is to look at broad locations on the edge of Cambridge. Further consultation on any site specific options with detailed boundaries will follow in winter 2012.
37. This approach was supported at the Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, County Council Strategic Transport and Spatial Planning Group on 18 April 2012. The report is available online and can be found using the following link:
<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CMSWebsite/Apps/Committees/Meeting.aspx?meetingID=471>
38. At the same time that South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City are updating their Local Plans, Cambridgeshire County Council is producing and consulting on a new Cambridge Area Transport Strategy (CATS). Consultation on the principles for new CATS began with the City Council's Issues and Options Consultation on 15 June and end at the close of South Cambridgeshire's consultation on 28 September.

Sustainability Appraisal and Other Assessments

39. To ensure that Local Plans in the UK deliver on the Government's requirement for sustainable development, all plans are subjected to sustainability appraisal (SA) throughout their preparation and at adoption. This is also necessary to meet the requirements of the EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (2001/42/EC). This means that the options have been assessed against a range of social, environmental and economic topics in order to help identify any significant effects. The Sustainability Appraisal will be subject to consultation alongside the Issues and Options Report. Consultees will be able to draw on the findings of the SA to inform their representations to the Issues and Options Report. They will also be able to make comments on the findings of the SA.
40. The SA advises on ways in which any adverse effects could be avoided, reduced or mitigated or how any positive effects could be maximised. It will be used by the Council, along with the consultation responses received, to help decide which options to develop as policies in the Local Plan. The SA will subsequently appraise policies as they are developed to ensure that they are in keeping with the aims of sustainable development.
41. As part of plan-making, other assessments are required. Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required under the European 'Habitats Directive' (92/43/EEC). It is an assessment of the potential impacts of implementing a plan or policy on European sites of nature conservation importance (Natura 2000 Sites) and aims to avoid any potential damaging effects.
42. There is one Natura 2000 site in South Cambridgeshire at Eversden and Wimpole Woods, the home of a protected species of bats. None of the site options have an impact on this site. Just outside the District, the Ouse Washes are home to a protected species of fish. This will be taken into account during the development of the Local Plan Preliminary assessment of the options suggests that this site will also not be adversely affected but the views of the Environment Agency on projected quality of water outflow from the Uttons Drove WWTW will have to be taken when choosing the preferred site options after the current round of consultations.
43. The Equality Act 2010 requires local authorities to consider how its policies and decisions impact disadvantaged groups and minimise this impact. The Council has undertaken an initial Equalities Impact Assessment of the options to ensure that everything that it is

consulting on could be included in the new Local Plan.

Duty To Co-operate

44. The NPPF places a duty to cooperate on planning authorities for issues that cross administrative boundaries. How this duty has been followed is one of the tests of 'soundness' that the Planning Inspector will apply at the Examination of the Local Plan. Councils are required to work collaboratively to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans.
45. At a County level, arrangements have been put in place to facilitate the duty to co-operate with the establishment of a Joint Strategic Planning Unit.
46. Joint working with the City Council and the County Council is well established. The City Council and South Cambridgeshire have jointly commissioned much of the evidence base to support Local Plan preparation.
47. In addition, the Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and County Council Strategic Transport and Spatial Planning Group was established earlier this year to provide a senior member sounding board throughout the Local Plan review process.
48. The interrelationship between the two areas means that decisions should not be taken in isolation and the future approach needs to be a joined up and seamless approach to the proper planning of the area. On the whole South Cambridgeshire looks towards Cambridge as the main centre for services and facilities, and any decision relating to the spatial strategy in South Cambridgeshire is likely to have an impact on Cambridge and vice versa.

Consultation Arrangements

49. The Council has consulted relevant organisations in preparing this report.
50. In accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement, consultation arrangements for the Issues and Options report include:
 - ⤴ Consultation for 10 weeks between 12 July to 28 September 2012 (6 weeks plus an extra 4 weeks to allow for the holiday period).
 - ⤴ Letters and emails informing Consultees of consultation dates and how to view and respond to the consultation material.
 - ⤴ A public notice.
 - ⤴ All documents available on the Council's website and an exhibition in the foyer of the Cambourne offices.
 - ⤴ Libraries to receive electronic or hard copies as agreed.
 - ⤴ An article in the summer edition of South Cambridgeshire News which goes to every household in the district advertised the forthcoming consultation and an in the autumn edition to be distributed in early September;
 - ⤴ Publicity through the Council's Facebook page and Twitter as well as blog.
51. A series of exhibitions will be held across South Cambridgeshire focussing on those locations where there are options for development.
52. Workshops will be held for Parish Councils in the week running up to the Issues & Options consultation explain the issues and options, and receive feedback. There will also be opportunity for Parish Councils to present additional development proposals possibly in lieu of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan as part of the consultation. Any such proposals can be

consulted on as part of the second part of the Issues and Options Consultation in winter 2012.

Next Steps

54. Once consultation on the Issues and Options Report has finished, all of the representations received will be considered to help develop the Council's preferred approach to drafting the new Local Plan. Council will receive a report on the consultation and how the proposed preferred option responds to the representations received and be invited to make a recommendation to Cabinet to decide the content of the draft Submission Plan.
55. Following this, the new Plan will be published for a further round of public consultation prior to being submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. Any objections received at that stage will be considered by the Planning Inspector at the examination of the Local Plan before the Council can adopt the new Local Plan.

Implications

- **Financial**

56. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, the cost of preparing a Local Plan is significant but is included in the Medium term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and has been budgeted for over the duration of its preparation. Preparing one single Local Plan rather than three separate Development Plan Documents (Core Strategy, Development Control Policies and Site Allocations) and a separate Gypsy and Traveller DPD will mean that cost and time savings can be achieved.

- **Staffing**

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

- **Equal Opportunities**

58. There are no direct equal opportunities arising from this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of preparing the Issues & options report.

Consultation

59. Consultations undertaken and arrangements for the forthcoming public consultation are set out in the report.

Effect on Strategic Aims

60. **Aim 1:** "We will listen to and engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure that we deliver first class services and value for money". The Issues and Options Consultation provides the opportunity for all stakeholders in the future of South Cambridgeshire to influence the policies and proposals for new Local Plan before the Council makes any decisions.
62. **Aim 2:** "We will work with partners to create and sustain opportunities for employment, enterprise and world leading innovation." The Issues and Options Report sets out options forecasts for the growth of the local economy, possible revisions to employment policies and options to ensure continued success and the supporting 'infrastructure' from housing to maintaining our high quality environment.

63. **Aim 3:** “We will make sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding and sustainable quality of life for our residents.” The Council has a duty to secure sustainable development. This lies at the heart of the options set out in the Issues and Options Report and covers all three aspects of sustainability – economic, social and environment. The options have a focus on sustaining and enhancing the qualities of South Cambridgeshire that in national surveys consistently identify the District as one of the best places to live in the UK.

Background papers

Localism Act 2011
National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Appendices

- A. Issues and Options Report
- B. Integrated policy assessment and sustainability appraisal summary

Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

Contact Officer: Keith Miles (Planning Policy Manager)
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