



**GREATER
CAMBRIDGE
PARTNERSHIP**

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Delivering our City Deal

Report to: Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly

18 January 2018

Lead officer: Chris Tunstall – GCP Director of Transport

Rural Travel Hubs

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To present a feasibility report on the development of Rural Travel Hubs in South Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2. To seek approval to proceed to phase two of the project. Phase two will involve the preparation of full business cases for the pilot sites, a detailed analysis of planning considerations, refined costings of construction and an outline of the evaluation methods to review the success of the pilots.
- 1.3. This supports the Greater Cambridge Partnership's transport vision of 'creating better and greener transport networks, connecting people to homes, jobs, study and opportunity'.

2. Background

- 2.1. In July 2016, all South Cambridgeshire Parish Councils were written to asking them if they could identify any locations for Rural Travel Hubs (RTHs). A number of responses were received which broadly identified six villages (Foxton, Meldreth, Oakington, Shepreth, Swavesey and Whittlesford).
- 2.2. In March 2017, the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Executive Board approved £100k to progress a feasibility study into the potential of RTHs.
- 2.3. In May 2017, a project team led by GCP officers developed a Project Initiation Document and Project Brief. The main objective of the RTHs project is 'making it easier to travel in, out and around Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire by public transport, cycle or on foot, and reduce and maintain lower traffic levels to ease congestion'.
- 2.4. Skanska were appointed as the consultants to undertake most of the feasibility study under a framework contract already held with the County Council. The feasibility work commenced in June 2017.

- 2.5. The key objectives for Skanska and the Rural Travel Hubs feasibility study were:
- a. To provide a community-led understanding of what a Rural Travel Hub is and their purpose
 - b. Identification of rural communities' travel connections to Cambridge City
 - c. Develop an outline specification and criteria for Rural Travel Hubs based on community views
 - d. Identify areas within South Cambridgeshire that may benefit from the provision of a Rural Travel Hub
 - e. Provide a recommendation to establish at least two sites that could be used as a pilot study for Rural Travel Hubs
 - f. Consider the high-level planning issues that would be relevant to any planning application.
- 2.6. The feasibility report appended to this report details the work undertaken to clarify the term "Rural Travel Hub", the engagement with local communities and stakeholders, transport modelling, criteria used to assess sites and high level planning considerations of pilot sites.

3. Key issues and considerations

- 3.1. Section 11 of the feasibility report details the site prioritisation methodology and nine criteria used to rank the sites. Taking all factors into consideration, Oakington (adjacent the Cambridge Guided Busway), and Whittlesford are identified as the top two sites. A further eight sites are listed in order of their criteria based score.
- 3.2. The Oakington site is owned by Cambridgeshire County Council. It is anticipated that this would enable quicker land acquisition discussions and therefore a faster delivery of the pilot. It is also in the green belt; therefore work will need to be done to demonstrate the very special circumstances which justify a Green Belt location such as more evidence to demonstrate the benefits of the sites and local transport needs.
- 3.3. The Whittlesford site is in the countryside outside the village framework; therefore consideration will need to be given to safeguard the rural character. During the course of this research it has been agreed that a master planning exercise will take place for Whittlesford station and its surrounding area, including the three adjacent science hubs. This will involve taking a holistic look at the issues and opportunities whilst involving all the stakeholders, landowners, neighbourhood plan group and Parish Council to develop a plan for the whole area. The master planning exercise will take into consideration the Cambridgeshire rail corridor study and any ongoing need for the rural hub.
- 3.4. Given that there could be delays, for planning or master planning reasons, in bringing forward either of the top two sites. It may be prudent to consider a third pilot at Sawston (a very close third ranked hub) to safeguard against this. The proposed location at Sawston will need to be considered in light of the ongoing projects including delivering improvements to the South Eastern Corridor (A1307), which also has the potential for the development of a park and ride at Linton, and aspirations of the Parish. This can all be taken into consideration if it is agreed this site moves into phase two.
- 3.5. An initial costing for each of the sites has been included in the feasibility report. It should be noted that whilst these costings may be high they could well be reduced depending on specification and exact designs. More detailed costings would be developed in phase two of the project if approved by the Executive Board in February.

3.6. The report has undertaken initial assessment of the benefits and disbenefits of Rural Travel Hubs in 'Section 6' of the feasibility report. This will inform the development of the business cases going forward. At this stage it is anticipated that further work to refine current designs to facilitate the preparation of business cases can be met within current budget allocation. The budget will be monitored carefully going forward. Any likelihood of overspend will be reported back to the Board.

4. Options and emerging recommendations

- 4.1. Taking into consideration the results of the feasibility report, parish consultation, local knowledge and planning considerations, it is the officers' view that Rural travel Hubs be explored further at Oakington, Whittlesford (as part of the Transport Master Planning exercise) and Sawston by developing full business cases for each site.
- 4.2. The GCP Joint Assembly is asked to comment on the officers' recommendations to help with the development of the Executive Board Report.

5. Next steps and milestones

- 5.1. The GCP Executive Board in February 2018 will be recommended to approve Oakington, Whittlesford (as part of the Transport Master Planning exercise) and Sawston as the three pilot sites, to progress to phase two of this project.
- 5.2. Phase two will include the preparation of full business cases for Oakington and Sawston sites, developed with the local communities, Parish Councils and local Members to ensure proposals meet local needs. They will address planning considerations such as green belt, design, access and conservation, refine the costs and outline the monitoring and evaluation methods that will be used to review the success of the pilots.
- 5.3. Following local engagement the business cases will be updated accordingly and presented to the Assembly and Board in late 2018 when the Board will be asked to approve further funding for the development of the sites.

List of appendices

Appendix 1	Rural Travel Hubs Feasibility Study Report November 2017
Appendices within appendix 1	Please refer to the documents section on the following web page https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/transport/transport-projects/rural-travel-hubs/