

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: New Communities Portfolio Holders Meeting 13 July 2010

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director – Operational Services / Corporate Manager – Planning & New Communities

INFORMAL PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE ON FOOD STORE PROVISION IN NORTH WEST CAMBRIDGE - OPTIONS REPORT

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to seek agreement for the draft Options Report on Food Store Provision in North West Cambridge and its supporting studies to be published for consultation.
2. This is a key decision because:
 - it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of the District comprising two or more wards.
 - It raises new issues of policy, or is made in the course of developing proposals to amend the policy framework, or is a decision taken under powers delegated by the Council to amend an aspect of the policy framework.and was first published in the July 2010 Forward Plan.

Recommendations and Reasons

3. The New Communities Portfolio Holder is recommended:
 - (a) To approve the draft Options Report on Food Store Provision in North West Cambridge (Appendix A) for public consultation.

Executive Summary

4. Since the Cambridge Sub-Regional Retail Study was completed in October 2008, there have been a number of changes to the level of housing development proposed in the North West (NW) quadrant of Cambridge at the University site, NIAB sites and Orchard Park, and proposals for larger scale food store provision have emerged from discussions with the developers of the three sites.
5. The sites in NW Cambridge fall within both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and both Councils considered that they needed to jointly investigate further the food retailing needs of this part of Cambridge along with associated transport and other planning implications to ensure that both new and existing residents have adequate food retailing facilities available.
6. The aim is to produce joint Informal Planning Policy Guidance (IPPG) on food store provision in NW Cambridge in order to provide an up to date supplement to retail policies in existing plans and help to guide the future planning of the three sites. The first step in developing the IPPG is to prepare an Options Report (Appendix A) for public consultation prior to taking a view on the preferred policy approach. The Options Report sets out the advantages and disadvantages of each option, using information from the evidence base.

Background

Planning Policy Context

7. Large scale development is proposed in the North West (NW) quadrant of Cambridge at the University Site (covered by the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan, NWC AAP, 2008), NIAB sites and Orchard Park. This will result in an additional 7,000 dwellings and 2,000 student units by 2021. Since the Cambridge Sub-Regional Retail Study was completed in October 2008, there have been a number of changes to the level of housing development proposed in the NW of Cambridge. The amount of housing now proposed is nearly 2,000 greater than was originally envisaged when the Councils were preparing the formal planning policy documents. In addition proposals for larger scale food store provision have emerged from discussions with the developers of the three sites.
8. The sites in NW Cambridge fall within both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and both Councils considered that they needed to jointly investigate the food retailing needs of this part of Cambridge further to ensure that both new and existing residents have adequate food retailing facilities available. This is important in developing sustainable communities which have their own appropriate level of food retail provision and when considering the potential to reduce the need to travel elsewhere in the City or beyond for main food shopping, thus establishing sustainable transport patterns. This work was supplemented by transport work involving input from Cambridgeshire County Council, and other planning and design related work as these are also important considerations in the selection of the appropriate size and location for any further food retail provision.
9. The aim is to produce joint Informal Planning Policy Guidance (IPPG) on food store provision in NW Cambridge in order to provide an up to date supplement to retail policies in existing plans and help to guide the future planning of the three sites. The plan led system would normally require a revised statutory planning policy to be prepared where a new approach to development is proposed. However, in the context of current developer aspirations and the need to increase the overall supply of market and affordable housing in Cambridge, it is not practicable to follow this route because of the timeframe involved in preparing a Development Plan Document (DPD). Nor is it possible to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) because there are no statutory policies with which the proposed approach would be entirely consistent and which it could therefore supplement.
10. The first step in developing the IPPG is to prepare an Options Report for public consultation prior to taking a view on the preferred policy approach. By taking this approach, the informal planning policy guidance will have as much weight as possible as a material consideration in the determination of any planning applications that may be received. It also facilitates a consistent approach between the Councils and is in the spirit of the localism agenda that is being brought forward by the Coalition Government.

Evidence Base

11. To support the development of the IPPG and this Options Report, two independent studies have been commissioned and carried out by consultants. These are a Supplementary Retail Study (SRS) (June 2010) carried out by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) and a Retail Transport Study (June 2010) carried out by Atkins. The Councils have also carried out additional work relating to planning and design matters. For information the SRS is provided in Appendix B and the Transport Study is provided in Appendix C.

12. The SRS shows that the existing planned development would not adequately address the qualitative and consequential quantitative need for convenience retail provision to 2021. In addition, the transport study finds that this would have disbenefits for the local residents causing them to travel further for main food shopping.
13. The SRS identifies a need for main food store provision in NW Cambridge and two appropriate options for how this could be provided as at 2021. These are either a superstore of 2,500 sqm convenience floorspace (which equates to 3,500 sqm net or 5,500 sqm gross) or two supermarkets of around 1,500 sqm convenience floorspace (which equates to 2,000 sqm net or 3,000 sqm gross).
14. The Transport Study assessed both of these options looking at the different possible combinations of location offered by the three different sites. The study concluded that the difference between the options was marginal in all of the six tests carried out. However, the two supermarket option came out slightly better than a single superstore.
15. In relation to the location of main food store provision, the SRS and the Transport Study conclude that either the University or the NIAB site is likely to offer a better location than Orchard Park.

Options

16. There is no strong conclusion from the SRS and the Transport Study as to which is the best option in terms of size of store i.e. one superstore or two supermarkets. The SRS indicates that the superstore would provide the 'best fit' in terms of meeting qualitative and quantitative need, whereas the Transport Study is slightly in favour of the two supermarket option. From a design point of view, a supermarket would be easier to integrate into a local centre than a superstore, although this is not impossible provided that good urban design principles are followed.
17. The phasing of provision is also a relevant factor and the SRS advises that the provision of either a superstore or two supermarkets should be phased if provision is made ahead of 2021 in order to help enable the delivery of small supermarkets in the other centre(s). If it were a superstore the issue would be the practicality of phasing its provision and the difficulties of making it a sustainable form of construction. If it were two supermarkets there would be a question around which location came forward early and which was held back and the nature of the local centre in which the supermarket is delivered later.
18. The four options that are being put forward for public consultation are as follows:
 - (a) Option A: Planned Development Only (this is the policy baseline situation, with the committed and pipeline floorspace and no further food store provision).
 - (b) Option B: Two supermarkets of 2,000 sqm net floorspace (1,500 sqm net convenience), one at the University site and one at NIAB, and the committed floorspace at Orchard Park.
 - (c) Option C: One superstore of 3,500 sqm net floorspace (2,500 sqm net convenience) at the University site, and the committed / pipeline floorspace at NIAB and Orchard Park.
 - (d) Option D: One superstore of 3,500 sqm net floorspace (2,500 sqm net convenience) at the NIAB site, and the committed / pipeline floorspace at the University Site and Orchard Park.

19. The Options Report (Appendix A) sets out the advantages and disadvantages of each option, using information from the evidence base and seeks the public's views on the different options.

Consultation Arrangements

20. As explained earlier, it is considered that public consultation on the options for food store provision in North West Cambridge is important before progressing any further. This will ensure that the views of the public are taken into consideration before a firm approach is agreed.
21. In line with both Councils' adopted Statements of Community Involvement, the proposed consultation arrangements are as follows:
- (a) A six-week period of consultation running from Monday 6 September to Monday 18 October 2010.
 - (b) Information on the consultation and how people can get involved to be advertised by Public Notice in the Cambridge News along with relevant articles in Cambridge City Council's 'Cambridge Matters' magazine and South Cambridgeshire District Council's magazine.
 - (c) Letters including consultation details to be sent to statutory and general consultees.
 - (d) The Options Report and supporting evidence base to be made available to view at the following locations:
 - (i) The Councils' websites: www.cambridge.gov.uk and www.scambs.gov.uk/ldf.
 - (ii) Cambridge City Council's Customer Service Centre, Mandela House, St Andrew's Street, Cambridge.
 - (iii) South Cambridgeshire District Council's Offices, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne.
 - (iv) Public Libraries in North West Cambridge.
 - (e) An on-line consultation system will be available on the Councils' websites in order for people to respond directly via the internet. Hard copies will be made available to those who do not have access to the internet.
 - (f) A staffed exhibition stand at the North West Community Forum event in September 2010.
22. A schedule of relevant statutory and general consultees is set out in Appendix D.

Next Steps

23. Following the consultation, officers will assess all comments received and the preferred option will be used to develop the IPPG document.

Implications

24. Financial	Within existing budgets.
Legal	None.
Staffing	Staffing will be required to manage the consultation process, although this can be accommodated within existing resources.
Risk Management	No significant risks. The consultation responses will highlight any issues for further consideration by the Councils.
Equal Opportunities	The Options Report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (see Appendix E) and has been shown to have a neutral and / or positive impact on Equal Opportunities.
Climate Change	The Options Report supports sustainable development by proposing locational options for food store provision that allow the use of sustainable transport and by recommending that a high degree of sustainable design and construction is sought.

Consultations

25. To support the development of the IPPG and this Options Report, two independent studies have been commissioned and carried out by consultants. These are a Supplementary Retail Study (SRS) (June 2010) (Appendix B) carried out by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) and a Retail Transport Study (June 2010) (Appendix C) carried out by Atkins. The recommendations of these studies have been incorporated into the Options Report, which will enable wider consultation to take place.

Effect on Strategic Aims

26. **We are committed to being a listening Council, providing first class services accessible to all:** The consultation on the Options Report will enable the Council to receive comments on the four options from local residents, land owners, developers, house builders, other interested parties and the general public.
27. **We are committed to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for you and your family:** Including food store provision in NW Cambridge will allow local residents to use sustainable methods of transport (including walking and cycling) to access their food retailing needs.
28. **We are committed to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live:** Including food store provision in NW Cambridge will ensure that the development of the three sites (University site, NIAB sites and Orchard Park) includes a mix of services and facilities to allow the creation of sustainable communities.
29. **We are committed to assisting provision of local jobs for you and your family:** Including food store provision in NW Cambridge will provide jobs for local residents.
30. **We are committed to providing a voice for rural life:** The consultation on the Options Report will enable the Council to receive comments on the four options from local residents, land owners, developers, house builders, other interested parties and the general public.

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

Cambridge Local Plan

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (in particular Site Specific Policies DPD)
North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (NWC AAP)

Contact Officer: Caroline Hunt – Local Development Framework Team Leader
Telephone: (01954) 713196