

# Joint Local Planning Advisory Group (JLPAG)

## Item

### **Greater Cambridge Local Plan: Issues & Options consultation**

**To:** Joint Local Planning Advisory Group (JLPAG)

**Report by:**

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## **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report seeks comments on the proposed content of, and the consultation and engagement plan for, the first formal round of consultation for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, known as the Issues & Options consultation. This forms part of the early stages in preparing the next Local Plan for the area, being prepared jointly by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- 1.2 To provide a full context for this discussion, the report sets out:
- an overview of the Local Plan process
  - the member governance process ahead of the Issues & Options consultation
  - the findings of a Lessons Learned and Good Practice review of the adopted local plans
  - conclusions of initial stakeholder engagement workshops for the Local Plan
  - the draft Issues & Options for consultation
  - supporting documents
  - the proposed consultation and engagement plan for the Issues & Options consultation

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Joint Local Planning Advisory Group (JLPAG) is recommended to:

1. Note the Lessons Learned and Good Practice review (Appendix A)
2. Note the Statement of Consultation (Appendix B); and
3. Recommend to the respective council's decision-making processes that they should agree to consult on the Local Plan Issues & Options report text (at Appendix E) and supporting documents (at Appendices A, B, F, G and H).

### **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are committed to preparing a joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan, starting in 2019 with an Issues & Options consultation. The Issues & Options consultation is part of the first stage towards preparing the new Local Plan, but is not the actual plan.
- 3.2 JLPAG members are invited to note the outcomes of early engagement to inform the Issues & Options consultation, and to comment on the draft consultation text and proposed consultation activities. Recommendations from JLPAG will be communicated to each council's separate democratic processes for discussion and formal agreement.

### **4. Background: overview of Greater Cambridge Local Plan**

- 4.1 Through the City Deal with Government in June 2014, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council committed to develop a joint Local Plan for the Greater Cambridge area.
- 4.2 Both councils adopted their current Local Plans in 2018. Both plans include a shared policy commitment to produce a joint Local Plan via an early review of those plans, in particular to update the assessment of housing needs, review the progress of delivering planned developments (in particular the new settlements at Waterbeach and Bourn Airfield), and consider the needs of caravan dwellers and government changes to the approach to planning for Gypsies and Travellers.

#### Local Plan outline process

- 4.3 The adopted Local Plans set out that production of the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan will commence before the end of 2019, with submission to the Secretary of State for examination anticipated by the end of Summer 2022. The adopted Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme 2018 states that the first formal consultation on issues and options for the joint plan will take place in Autumn 2019, with submission of the plan in summer 2022 and an anticipated date of adoption being around summer 2023.

- 4.4 The Issues & Options consultation is the first stage towards preparing the new Local Plan, but is not the actual plan. In legal terms, it forms parts of the Regulation 18 stage of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. It is intended to explore important issues that will influence how the plan is developed, giving people the opportunity to inform and shape the direction of the plan before it is drafted.
- 4.5 Future consultation stages of the Local Plan, including the draft local plan consultation will include a preferred strategy, site allocations, and development management policies. The draft plan will be supported by a full suite of evidence, which is currently being commissioned and prepared.

#### Preparation for Issues & Options consultation

- 4.6 Officers have progressed a number of workstreams to start the Local Plan process, and in particular to inform the Issues & Options consultation. These are set out below and are explored in the following sections:
- Section 5: Governance
  - Section 7: Lessons learned and good practice review
  - Section 8: Initial stakeholder engagement via workshops held in summer and autumn 2019
  - Section 9: Drafting the Issues & Options
  - Section 10: Supporting evidence
  - Section 11: Communications and Engagement Plan

## **5. Governance**

- 5.1 Preparing a new joint Local Plan requires a clear governance structure.
- 5.2 As per the terms of reference, this Joint Local Planning Advisory Group has been established by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council as the local planning authorities to facilitate a shared policy position. This Group will report its recommendations to the respective Local Planning Authorities, for decision-making to be completed through each Council's existing democratic processes. This will allow the timely development of the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- 5.3 An officer board has been established, comprising representatives of both councils, Greater Cambridge Partnership, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Combined Authority. The role of this group is to steer the development of the plan from an officer perspective and ensure alignment between the relevant organisations. The Board meets on a monthly basis.
- 5.4 To enable the Issues & Options consultation documents to be agreed for public consultation, this report and supporting documents will be taken through each council's committee processes for discussion and agreement as follows:
- a. 14<sup>th</sup> October - Cambridge Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee:

This committee makes recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy & Open Spaces, who following discussion takes an in-principle decision from a Cambridge perspective, on the Issues & Options consultation content and process. It will be recommended that the Executive Councillor is given delegated powers to approve any further minor amendments arising from the South Cambridgeshire democratic processes.

- b. 17<sup>th</sup> October - South Cambridgeshire Scrutiny & Overview Committee:  
This committee makes recommendations to South Cambridgeshire Cabinet for their final decision.
- c. 6<sup>th</sup> November - South Cambridgeshire Cabinet:  
This committee will provide the final agreement from a South Cambridgeshire perspective on the Issues & Options consultation content and process.
- d. Following 6<sup>th</sup> November:  
Under delegation approved at Cambridge Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee, Cambridge Executive Councillor for Planning Policy & Open Spaces confirms minor amendments arising through South Cambridgeshire democratic processes, or confirms more major amendments via an out of cycle decision in consultation with Chair and Spokes, to provide final agreement from a Cambridge perspective.
- e. 25<sup>th</sup> November – Issues & Options consultation starts:  
Subject to agreement via processes set out above. If agreement were not reached by both Councils, consideration would need to be given to next steps and further consideration through the democratic process.

## **6. Local Plan early engagement**

- 6.1 The plan making process does not start with the issues and options consultation. An independent Lessons Learned and Good Practice review has been carried out, engaging with key stakeholders via structured discussions looking back at the previous Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans in terms of processes and outcomes. In addition, in July and September 2019, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service held eight Local Plan workshops across both districts of South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge.
- 6.2 Both of these processes have informed the development of the draft issues and options report, and the communications plan. This report now explains each of these in more detail.

## **7. Lessons Learned and Good Practice review (Appendix A)**

- 7.1 To support a reflective approach to the new Local Plan, an independent local planning expert was commissioned to undertake a Lessons Learned and Good Practice review. This involved engaging with key stakeholders via structured discussions to look back at the previous Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans in terms of processes and outcomes. It also included considering examples of good practice nationally, to understand in which areas, and how, improvements might be made to the approach to plan-making, consistent with current national planning policy.
- 7.2 The Lessons Learned and Good Practice review forms Appendix A to this report. The report author, John Williamson, will make a short presentation to JLPAG on the process of the review and his findings.
- 7.3 The headline findings of the Lessons Learned report, representing areas of broad consensus among those who contributed, are listed below:
- the extent and type of stakeholder engagement before public consultation is important, particularly as this can have a positive bearing on defining the key issues and options for the plan;
  - the length of the plan and the extent of supporting evidence should be kept proportionate, including through a rigorous review of plan policies;
  - the plan's policy content should include a central focus on climate change and biodiversity, while travellers' accommodation needs remains a challenging issue to address;
  - ensuring effective information management and co-ordination of evidence production and presentation, particularly given increased organisational complexity; and
  - the examination, where it is important to attempt to reduce the number of objections through a clearer approach to on-going engagement with

stakeholders, and a proactive and assertive approach should be taken through early engagement with the Planning Inspectorate.

- 7.4 While some of the report's findings relate to later stages in the plan process, the early stakeholder workshops and Issues & Options report discussed below respond to the first and third bullets identified above, and a review of existing plan policies has been started. Further reflection on the Lessons Learned report findings will be required as the plan progresses.

## **8. Statement of Consultation: Report on Local Plan Workshops, Summer / Autumn 2019**

- 8.1 In July and September 2019, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service organised eight Local Plan workshops across both districts of South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge, for the following representatives and groups:
- Ward members of both Councils
  - statutory consultees, service providers and other interest groups
  - landowners, developers and agents
  - Resident's Associations and Parish Councils
  - Internal council officers
  - Businesses
- 8.2 The purpose of these events was to ask stakeholders to identify the key issues facing Greater Cambridge over the next twenty years or so, informing the Issues & Options consultation in particular. These workshops also offered an opportunity to gather feedback on the previous Local Plan process, and explain about the forthcoming Local Plan process.
- 8.3 The Report of the Workshops is at Appendix B Statement of Consultation. At the workshops attendees were given a presentation indicating that the plan would explore the need for jobs, homes and infrastructure, but that there would be cross cutting themes that would influence how these would be shaped and the issues it needed to address. Stakeholders provided a very wide range of feedback on issues that were important to them, and ideas on measures the new local plan could take. The outputs have helped to shape the draft Issues and Options, which includes broad 'big themes' to help structure the issues and questions to seek feedback on.
- 8.4 Reflections shared on the previous Local Plan process will inform the preparation of the plan as it progresses, both in terms of plan content and process. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan Lessons Learned & Good Practice document cross-refers to the notes of the workshops to inform and reinforce the conclusions made within the report.
- 8.5 Feedback on the workshops will inform how workshops and other engagement later on in the plan process are planned and run.

## 9. Issues & Options consultation format and draft text

- 9.1 The purpose of the Issues & Options consultation is to begin a wider conversation about the kind of place we want the Greater Cambridge area to be in the future in a way that is accessible to everyone, including engaging with those that wouldn't normally be aware of and engage with the Local Plan. At the same time, the consultation needs to provide enough context and detail to enable responses to inform future, more technical stages, of the Local Plan.
- 9.2 To achieve the intended accessibility, the consultation content must be visually appealing and easy to navigate in both online and print forms. A dedicated website is being set up, and is intended to be the primary way people will access the consultation. This is being designed to be visually engaging, and to enable users to navigate the content easily in a way that suits them – moving around between issues of particular interest. It will also introduce the ability to 'quick comment' on the questions directly, as an alternative to submitting a more time-consuming and detailed response via our standard online response system, JDi. A 'wire-frame' of the website can be seen at Appendix C. The print document is also intended to be visually led and easy to navigate; a mock-up of what this may look like is provided at Appendix D. These are intended to be illustrative at this stage and may be subject to further change.
- 9.3 Before the full consultation website and print materials can be completed, officers are seeking JLPAG members' views on the draft proposed text for the Issues and Options Report (included at Appendix E to this report). The reason for not providing a fully designed draft at this point is to enable changes to be made. Following approval of the report's text and diagrams by the respective councils, the online content and the final document production process will be completed.
- 9.4 The draft text has been written with the intention of being accessible to all. It is intended to be relatively concise, including clear simple language and using a repeated content structure as set out below.
- 9.5 This draft text puts forward some overarching themes for comment and sets out the conceptual spatial choices available for the development strategy. The overarching themes, set out below, have drawn on feedback from the workshops, and also address the key objectives of the Councils, including climate change, and biodiversity:
- Responding to climate change
  - Increasing biodiversity and green spaces
  - Promoting wellbeing and equality
  - Delivering quality places
  - Jobs
  - Homes
  - Infrastructure
- 9.3 Each theme is set out as follows:

- *What we are required to do in the plan* - for example by National Planning Policy.
- *What we are doing already* - as the councils' existing plans and other strategies mean the Councils are already doing a lot under each of these themes.
- *Key Issues* - issues are then explored that need to be considered through the new local plan
- *Questions* - seeking in some areas to understand how much of a priority should be given to specific issues, and seeking feedback on ideas for what the new Local Plan should do to respond to them.

9.4 The text does not set out any firm proposals for land use or policy as this will be done at the draft plan stage in 2020, when we will prepare a draft Local Plan informed by the comments we receive to this consultation. It does however highlight the potential scale of growth in homes and jobs to plan for based on existing information, from the nationally set standard method and from the conclusions of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review.

9.5 JLPAG members are invited to comment on the Issues & Options document text. Further to this, members are invited to recommend to the respective Local Planning Authorities that it should be issued for consultation, subject to comments agreed by this group.

## 10. Supporting evidence

10.1 Each stage of the plan making process will be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is an assessment process designed to consider and report upon the significant sustainability issues and effects of emerging plans and policies. SA informs the plan-making through an iterative process by helping to refine the plan's contents, ensuring we understand the sustainability impacts of potential options and then helping to refine the emerging draft plan itself.

### Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (Appendix F)

10.2 The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report is Appendix F to this report. Its purpose is to provide the context for and determine the scope of the SA of the Local Plan and to set out an assessment framework of SA objectives, for undertaking the later stages of the SA. This will be published for consultation alongside the issues and options report, to allow stakeholders to comment on the scope of the SA at this early stage.

### Sustainability Appraisal of Issues & Options (Appendix G)

10.3 Using the SA objectives identified in the Scoping Report, the SA of the draft Issues & Options text provides a high-level commentary on the sustainability implications of issues raised within each big themes. The main focus of the Appraisal for this stage of the plan process is a broad assessment of the sustainability implications of each spatial option.

### Habitat Regulations Assessment Scoping Report (Appendix H)

10.4 Habitat Regulations Assessment will determine whether the Local Plan site allocations and policies may affect the protected features of wildlife habitat sites that have international designations. Given that no development sites or policies are identified in the Issues & Options consultation, it is not possible to assess the impacts on designated habitats at this stage in the plan process. Instead the Habitat Regulations Assessment Scoping Report identifies the habitats that may be affected by the plan.

# 11 Statement of Consultation: Local Plan Participation and Communication Strategy

## Background

- 11.1 Previous experience of Local Plan consultations in Greater Cambridge has shown that a good level of responses were received, but engagement was not fully representative of our communities. Statutory consultees, active community organisers/campaigners, major landowners and planning agents, and certain other groups do engage actively in shaping the Plan. However, the wider community, including residents from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations, small businesses, and even internal officers within local authorities who do not work within planning or related services, have little understanding that a Local Plan is being developed, let alone how it will shape their lives in the future and therefore why their involvement is important.
- 11.2 In the Greater Cambridge area, there is a clear political priority to put community engagement at the heart of the Local Plan development process. A Participation and Communication Strategy has therefore been developed to support the Local Plan process (included at Appendix 6 of the Statement of Consultation).

## Participation and Communication Strategy

- 11.3 The aims of the strategy are as follows:

### Spreading the word

- Encouraging participation and engagement – explaining why the Local Plan is important and how it affects people’s lives on the ground.
- Demystifying the process of creating a Local Plan and managing expectations of what a Plan can and can’t do.
- Communicating the ‘big ideas’ and a positive vision of the future – contributing to creating a sense of identity and inclusion.
- Ensure there is accurate and timely information accessible to all.
- Explain why difficult decisions have been made.
- ‘No surprises’ – no excuse for stakeholders to be surprised by the content of the draft Local Plan when published.

### Co-creating the Plan

- Thinking outside the box – gathering ideas we might not think of otherwise – from internal and external sources.
- Testing ideas – ‘kicking the tyres’ – is it fit for purpose, what kind of challenges are we likely to face in the formal consultation and inspection stages?
- Testing the detail – benefitting from wider knowledge in the community and specialist stakeholders on specific theme/policy and sites, ensuring policy detail is well drafted and effective.
- Ensuring key stakeholders buy into the policy wording and therefore support it effectively in implementation

## Building the evidence base

- Providing evidence for why the draft Local Plan emerges in the form it eventually takes.
- Justifying options and the selection of options.
- Evidencing wide community and stakeholder participation
- Providing the material for the Statement of Consultation.

## Proposed Issues & Options consultation and participatory activities

11.4 The Issues & Options consultation is the time to spark the interest in our communities as well as setting out the challenges and managing expectations for the next stages.

11.5 The focus will be on:

- Reaching out widely and hearing ideas from all quarters, specifically the hard to reach groups
- Ensuring that the format and content of the material presented is highly accessible and visual
- Capturing feedback in ways that create compelling and interesting content – allowing people to hear each other’s voices where possible
- More ‘questions’ than ‘answers’ to avoid any perception that the plan has already been drafted – needs to be genuinely open ended
- Explaining the existing ‘fixed issues’ – both national policy that we are obliged to implement, and also major sites within the Local Plan area that will be built out into the new Local Plan period.

11.6 Drawing on the Participation and Communication Strategy principles, the activities proposed to be included within the Issues & Options consultation are set out in the Statement of Consultation (included at Chapter 6 of the Statement of Consultation). JLPAG members are invited to comment on these proposed principles and activities.

## 12 Options

12.1 JLPAG members may decide to:

1. Recommend to the respective Local Planning Authorities that they should agree to issue the Local Plan Issues & Options documents, incorporating amendments agreed in discussion at JLPAG;
2. Recommend to the respective Local Planning Authorities that they should agree to issue the Local Plan Issues & Options documents, without any amendments; or
3. Recommend to the respective Local Planning Authorities that they should not agree to issue the Local Plan Issues & Options documents.

## 13 Implications

**a) Financial Implications**

Currently anticipated to be within current budgets. This will be kept under review alongside other work priorities.

**b) Staffing Implications**

Currently anticipated to be delivered within our existing budgets. This will be kept under review alongside other work priorities.

**c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

The plan provides an opportunity to address aspects of equality and poverty that can be influenced by the physical environment. The Local Plan will require an Equalities Assessment to be undertaken as part of its preparation.

**d) Environmental Implications**

The plan provides an opportunity to address the aspects of the environment that can be influenced by the planning system. These aspects will be considered by a range of evidence including via a Sustainability Appraisal.

**e) Procurement Implications**

A large number of evidence base studies have been or are being procured to support the development of the Local Plan.

**f) Community Safety Implications**

The plan provides an opportunity to address aspects of community safety that can be influenced by the physical environment.

## 14 Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

South Cambridgeshire Leader's Decision approving the final Joint Local Planning Advisory Group terms of reference

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=11133>

Papers of Cambridge City Council Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=475&MId=3740&Ver=4>

Draft minutes of the South Cambridgeshire District Council Cabinet meeting, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=293&MId=7532&Ver=4>

Papers relating to Cabinet meeting 3 October 2018, where it was agreed to set up a joint member group in principle

<http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=293&MId=7345&Ver=4>

Papers relating to Cambridge Planning & Transport Scrutiny meeting 3 October 2018, where it was agreed to set up a joint member group in principle

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=475&MId=3558&Ver=4>

Adopted Cambridge Local Plan 2018

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/local-plan-2018>

Adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/planning/local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/the-adopted-development-plan/south-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2018/>

## 15 Appendices

The Councils have prepared these documents to be compliant with the website accessibility requirements where possible; however some sections of individual documents may not be fully website accessibility compliant. If you would have problems accessing any sections of the appended documents, please contact the Planning Policy, Strategy and Economy Team by email: [ldf@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@scambs.gov.uk) or phone: 01954 713183.

**Appendix A: The Greater Cambridge Local Plan: Lessons Learned and Good Practice**

**Appendix B: Greater Cambridge Local Plan: Statement of Consultation**

**Appendix C: Issues & Options website 'wire-frame'**

**Appendix D: Issues & Options print document example layout**

**Appendix E: Issues & Options consultation draft text**

**Appendix F: Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report**

**Appendix G: Sustainability Appraisal of Issues & Options document**

**Appendix H: Habitats Regulations Scoping Report**

## **16 Report Author**

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

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