

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
Record of Executive Decision

**JOINT RESPONSE TO THE BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL DRAFT PLAN
(REGULATION 18) STRATEGY OPTIONS AND DRAFT POLICIES CONSULTATION**

Decision of: **Councillor Katie Thornburrow** Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport

Reference: 21/URGENCY/P&T/12

Date of decision: 03/09/21 **Published on:** 10/09/21

Decision Type: Non Key Decision

Matter for Decision: Joint Response to the Bedford Borough Council Draft Plan (Regulation 18) Strategy Options and Draft Policies consultation

Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options): To provide the Councils' comments to this consultation in recognition of the opportunities it provides to influence the emerging Bedford Borough Council Draft Plan.

The Executive Councillor's decision(s): To agree the response, jointly with South Cambridgeshire District Council, to the Bedford Borough Council Draft Plan (Regulation 18) Strategy Options and Draft Policies consultation

Reasons for the decision:

Background

Bedford Borough Council is preparing a new local plan for the period up to 2040. The review of their current local plan which covers the period to 2030 is being progressed at pace to reflect emerging policies around the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. The council need to submit their new local plan for examination by January 2023 to ensure their plan will remain up to date and to demonstrate five-year land supply.

An initial issues and options consultation and call for sites took place during summer 2020. The current consultation is on Strategy Options and Draft Policies. This consultation started on 29th June and closes on 3rd September 2021.

Given the consultation dates there it would not have been possible to take this item to the last meeting Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee on 29th June, nor to the next scheduled meeting on 28th September.

The consultation and supporting documents can be accessed on Bedford Borough Council's website:
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy-its-purpose/local-plan-review/>

Summary of Strategy Options and Draft Policies consultation

The Strategy Options and Draft Policies includes the following key components:

Four themes are proposed to reflect the vision for the future: Greener; More accessible; More prosperous; Better Places.

The standard method for calculating housing requirements for Bedford is 1,275 dwellings per year. The current adopted local plan requirement is 970 dwellings per year. Existing commitments (planning permissions, allocations from current local plans and an allowance for windfall, which together total 13,000 dwellings) mean that based on the standard method figure of 1,275 dwellings p.a. the new local plan will need to allocate land to provide a minimum of 12,500 new dwellings.

There is a need for 171ha of employment land (B type use) with 48ha in supply with a shortfall of 123ha to be allocated in the emerging plan. The council intends to allocate a number of large scale sites that are well connected to the transport network. These sites will be business parks for high technology firms associated with the Oxford Cambridge Arc.

The issues and options consultation suggested six development locations for growth. The consultation responses favoured focusing growth in existing urban areas, the A421 corridor, and possible new railway stations which might be delivered through East West Rail.

In the Strategy Options and Draft Policies consultation, four spatial strategy options have been put forward, which are a short list of strategy options following consideration of a long list in relation to evidence and Sustainability Appraisal. The four options include a mixture of development in and around the urban area, development on the A421 transport corridor, rail-based growth parishes, southern and eastern parishes and two new settlement proposals at Wyboston and/or Little Barford in the north east of the Borough, connected to East West Rail station location options. These new settlement proposals are included within three of the four spatial strategy options.

The council is not proposing to allocate any small sites as they expect sufficient small sites to continue to be delivered through windfall development. Policies relating to town centres and development management are also included.

Aspects of relevance to Greater Cambridge

Given that the South Cambridgeshire and Bedford Borough boundaries do not adjoin we consider it unlikely that the Bedford Borough Plan would have direct impacts on our districts. However, given the possible growth at new settlements in the north east of Bedford borough linked to East West Rail we recommend that the Councils should highlight, at a high level, potential strategic cross-boundary matters of relevance (under the Duty to Cooperate) between Bedford Borough and South

Cambridgeshire and Cambridge (noting that Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire are producing a joint plan: strategic cross-boundary matters affecting one district will have implications for the other). We therefore propose the high-level response set out in Appendix A below, noting ongoing uncertainties.

**Scrutiny
consideration:**

The Chair and Opposition Spokes of the Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted prior to the action being authorised.

Report:

Details of the background are set out in this Record of Decision. See Appendix A below.
There are no relevant financial considerations.

**Conflicts of
interest:**

Comments:

Appendix A: Proposed joint response by South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council Councils to the Bedford Borough Council Draft Plan (Regulation 18) Strategy Options and Draft Policies consultation

This response to the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 – Draft Plan Strategy Options and Draft Policies Consultation is made by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

We support the broad approach that Bedford Borough Council has taken to developing the emerging spatial strategy in terms of considering carbon emissions and natural capital as integral components to inform the preferred approach – this approach matches with the Themes in our emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which reflect our Councils' commitments to addressing the climate crisis and biodiversity emergency.

Given that the South Cambridgeshire and Bedford Borough boundaries do not adjoin we consider it unlikely that the Plan would have direct impacts on our districts. However, given the possible growth at new settlements in the north-east of Bedford Borough linked to East West Rail, we would like to highlight at a high-level potential strategic cross-boundary matters of relevance (under the Duty to Cooperate) between Bedford Borough and South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge (noting that Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire are producing a joint plan: strategic cross-boundary matters affecting one district will have implications for the other).

We note that three of the four emerging preferred Bedford Borough Local Plan strategy options include a new settlement (linked to the proposed East West Rail station at a location between St Neots and Tempsford) at either Wyboston and/or Little Barford (2b,c,d), on the basis that these perform well in sustainability terms, including taking into account transport evidence findings. Beyond this, we note that the detailed sustainability performance and deliverability of a new settlement at Wyboston and/or Little Barford is fundamentally dependent on the preferred East West Rail route alignment option, which has yet to be confirmed.

In this context, we would highlight that we will be consulting on our First Proposals Greater Cambridge Local Plan in autumn 2021. The draft papers for this consultation have been published and are now going through committee processes. The [committee stage version of the First Proposals Plan](#) includes Policy S/CB: Cambourne, identifying an expanded Cambourne as a broad location for future growth in the 2030's to respond to the opportunity that will be provided by the proposed East West Rail that includes a station at Cambourne. We have yet to determine scale or specific location of growth for the Cambourne area, but our overall aim is to provide sufficient critical mass to perform the following role as a:

- Well-connected place through high quality public transport, cycling and walking facilities
- South Cambridgeshire town for the 21st century
- growing employment centre to provide local opportunities for its residents and nearby communities
- place that meets the day to day needs of its residents.”

Further to our own plans for development connecting with East West Rail, we note that the recently adopted [Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-35](#) includes Policy SP1a: Partial Review of the Local Plan, which identifies the need to review the plan within the next six months “in order to investigate, as part of the wider statutory plan-making processes and identify where necessary, opportunities for future growth that can capitalise on any appropriate commitments to improve existing, or provide new, strategic infrastructure”.

Given the above context of potential significant growth at these possible growth locations along the proposed East West Rail route between Bedford and Cambridge, which are also close to existing substantial settlements including St Neots in particular, we consider that there is potential for there to be strategic cross-boundary matters of substance between Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and South Cambridgeshire (and Cambridge), as well as with Huntingdonshire, particularly in relation to economic roles, and transport impacts and opportunities of these existing and potential new settlements. Should Bedford Borough take forward strategy options including a new settlement at Wyboston and or Little Barford via the Local Plan we would suggest that there may be benefit in engaging with us and the other relevant partners on these topics to support alignment of approaches.