

Cambridge City Council

Record of Executive Decision

Huntingdonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) Further Issues and Options consultation response

Decision of: Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure.

Reference: 24/URGENCY/P&T/16

Date of decision: 14/11/24

Date Published on website:22/11/24

Decision Type: Non-Key

Matter for Decision: To agree the proposed joint response to Huntingdonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) Further Issues and Options, to enable the decisions to be processed and completed in time for the end of the consultation period.

Why the Decision had to be made (and any alternative options): The Huntingdonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) Further Issues and Options consultation runs between 18 September and 27 November 2024. The contents of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) Further Issues and Options consultation could in principle impact on Greater Cambridge and have implications for the emerging joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The proposed response seeks to minimise negative and maximise any positive impacts of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan on Greater Cambridge. Given the proximity of Huntingdonshire to South Cambridgeshire, the contents of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan could in principle impact on the emerging joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan, and a joint response from Greater Cambridge is recommended.

Background: Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) are at the early stage of preparing a new Local Plan; having consulted on Issues and Options in April – July 2023, to which joint responses were made by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

HDC are now undertaking further issues consultation, and are currently consulting on the following documents:

- Further Issues and Options paper
- Land Availability Assessment
- Sustainability Appraisal

In addition, there is the opportunity to promote sites through the Call for Sites, which remains open until 31 December 2024.

Further Issues and Options paper

The Further Issues and Options paper sets out options for a series of issues that are key to the future planning of Huntingdonshire. These issues are structured into topic areas addressed in the following 11 chapters:

- Vision and Objectives
- Settlement Hierarchy
- Approach to Employment and Economy
- Housing Figures and Requirement
- Achieving well designed places
- Growth strategy options
- Our green and blue infrastructure
- Approach to climate change
- Tackling flooding and water
- Housing tenures and housing mix
- Transport and connectivity

The consultation document explores options within the above topics but doesn't currently include the preferred approach for the Greater Cambridge Councils to respond to. The Councils therefore have an opportunity to identify key cross-boundary matters they consider require active exploration by Huntingdonshire in the preparation of their Local Plan.

Land Availability Assessment

The Land Availability Assessment assesses over 400 sites submitted through the 2023 Call for Sites; there are no strategic scale sites close to the boundary with South Cambridgeshire.

Main Issues: The paragraph below identifies the points raised in the proposed response to consultation which is included at Appendix 2. The proposed response focuses comments on aspects that impact on Greater Cambridge rather than providing a general commentary on all elements of the forthcoming plan, which is a matter for Huntingdonshire District Council with their community and ultimately their inspector.

The proposed response identifies the following response points requiring future substantive engagement:

- The potential impact of the new Government's Cambridge Growth Company project under Peter Freeman and its ambition for a significant increase in economic activity across the Greater Cambridge geography and potential spillover effects on Huntingdonshire.

- The importance that Huntingdonshire District Council explore fully water supply issues, and stress the importance of ambitious water efficiency policies for both housing and non-residential development, particularly as part of Huntingdonshire district is served by Cambridge Water as is Greater Cambridge.
- Note merits of discussing potential cross-boundary green infrastructure opportunities.
- Note travel to work, housing market and economic connections, and encourage further engagement regarding these topics as well as on proposed strategic infrastructure projects including the A428 upgrade and East West Rail project and transport improvements around Huntingdon and St Ives to support future growth.
- Encourage Huntingdonshire District Council to adopt ambitious climate and biodiversity policy approaches in their new plan.

As a proposed joint response with Cambridge City Council, a mirror report is also being taken to Cambridge City Council.

Alternative options:

1. The options are:
 - a. Agree the proposed response to the consultation without amendments
 - b. Agree the proposed response to the consultation with amendments
 - c. Decide not to submit a response to the consultation – this option is not recommended as the plan would progress without awareness of potential impacts on Greater Cambridge

The Executive Councillor's decision:

- Agreed the proposed response to the consultation at Appendix 2
- Delegated authority to the Joint Director for Planning to agree any minor amendments to the response agreed by South Cambridgeshire District Council that are consistent with the response at Appendix 2.

Reason for the decision: as detailed above.

Scrutiny Consideration: The Chair and Spokesperson of the Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted prior to the action being authorised, no adverse comments made.

Report: Appendix 1 - Background Papers and Appendix 2 - Huntingdonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) Further Issues and Options consultation proposed joint response from Greater Cambridge.

Conflict of interest: [None].

Report Authors:

Claire Spencer – Senior Planning Policy Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713418

Stuart Morris – Team Leader - Planning Policy & Strategy
Telephone: 07514 925 287

Appendix 1: Background Papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Huntingdonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) Further Issues and Options consultation materials are available online: [Huntingdonshire District Council Consultation Home - Keystone](#)

Appendix 2: Huntingdonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) Further Issues and Options – proposed joint consultation response

This response to the Huntingdonshire District Council Further Issues and Options Paper (Regulation 18) consultation is made by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, and focuses on matters which could impact on Greater Cambridge.

The recently elected Government has made clear its intention to review but continue with the former Government's "Case for Cambridge" project aimed at intensifying and accelerating economic growth in the Greater Cambridge area. It is not yet clear what this ambition, and the work of the Cambridge Delivery Company, will mean for areas beyond Greater Cambridge but it will be important for the HDC Local Plan to track potential spillovers from that work and to consider what it may mean for the decisions reached by the Council as it continues to develop its Local Plan.

The main issue we wish to raise is that it is very important that Huntingdonshire District Council considers fully water supply issues in the preparation of a new Huntingdonshire Local Plan, noting the severity of the issue in Cambridge Water's Water Resource Zone which covers part of Huntingdonshire and the whole of Greater Cambridge, and that the whole of the East of England region is under water stress as was set out in the Regional Water Resources Plan (2023). Water supply has been a key consideration in the preparation of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

We note that the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Further Issues and Options Paper references recent publication of an update to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Level 1) and Water Cycle Study (stage 1). The new Local Plan must carefully

consider the water supply available from both Anglian Water's and the emerging Cambridge Water's Water Resources Management Plans, taking into account when new sources of supply such as the planned pipeline and Fens Reservoir are due to become operational; in particular in terms of the phasing of delivery and cumulative impacts of planned growth. Noting that rivers and catchment areas cross administrative areas, we consider it important that Huntingdonshire continue to engage with Greater Cambridge as well as the water companies, Water Resources East, and the Government's Water Scarcity Group on this critical issue.

Noting the water supply challenge, we would stress the importance of ambitious water efficiency policies which set out levels of water use for both housing and non-housing development.

For housing this should follow as a minimum the optional Part G Building Regulations level of 110 litres/person/day, but considering whether a lower level may be justified due to the level of water stress. We note that the Water Cycle Study notes that Huntingdonshire is in an area of serious water stress and there is sufficient justification for the tighter water efficiency target currently allowed for under building regulations of 110l/p/d (usage based on litres, per person, per day). The Greater Cambridge Local Plan First Proposals included [water efficiency standards](#) that went beyond what Local Authorities were able to require of 80 litres/person/day. Since then a Written Ministerial Statement in December 2023, announced a review of building regulations to allow local planning authorities to introduce tighter water efficiency standards in new homes. It stated that 'In the meantime, in areas of serious water stress, where water scarcity is inhibiting the adoption of Local Plans or the granting of planning permission for homes, I encourage local planning authorities to work with the EA and delivery partners to agree standards tighter than the 110 l/p/d that is set out in current guidance'.

For non-residential development, high water efficiency levels are also an important consideration, related to categories Wat 01 and Wat 03 of BREEAM. In the Greater Cambridge Local Plan First Proposals we include a requirement for full credits for category Wat 01 of BREEAM unless demonstrated impractical.

For Greater Cambridge the case for greater water efficiency in response to the level of water stress is so strong that there is a case for seeking the above approach to both housing and non-housing development, and this may also be the case in Huntingdonshire, at least for the area covered by Cambridge Water.

Aside from the water issue, we note the potential [Strategic Green Infrastructure initiatives](#) identified in our Local Plan evidence that could cross the administrative boundary between Huntingdonshire and Greater Cambridge, including the Great Ouse Fenland Arc and Western Gateway multifunctional GI corridor. We would welcome continued dialogue on this topic as our plans progress.

We also note that Huntingdonshire and Greater Cambridge have travel to work, housing market and economic connections, and that strategic infrastructure projects including the A428 upgrade and planned East West Rail route pass through both of our areas. We note that Cambridgeshire County Council are currently consulting on transport improvements around Huntingdon and St Ives to support future growth; these could impact existing routes serving the Greater Cambridge area and it is important these wider impacts be appropriately assessed and mitigated. The Councils value previous joint working with Huntingdonshire on these issues and will look to continue this as our respective plans and key infrastructure projects progress.

Beyond the above, in common with Huntingdonshire District Council, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have both declared climate emergencies. The Councils acknowledge the challenges faced by Huntingdonshire District Council in addressing the Climate Emergency. Given the cross-boundary (and indeed global) nature of both opportunities and impacts in relation to the climate and biodiversity emergencies, we encourage Huntingdonshire District Council to adopt ambitious climate and biodiversity policy approaches in their new plan, noting the approach taken within the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

We note the publication of a Land Availability Assessment for consultation; the Councils would welcome continued dialogue on any site allocations which may impact on Greater Cambridge, including those close to the district boundary.

The Councils are already engaging with Huntingdonshire District Council under the Duty to Cooperate in relation to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. We would welcome further dialogue with Huntingdonshire as our respective plans progress, including but not limited to the cross-boundary matters identified above.