

Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable)

To:

Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure
 Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee, 14 January 2025

Report by:

Stephen Kelly, Joint Director of Planning
 Email: Stephen.Kelly@greatercambridgeplanning.org

Wards affected:

All

Director Approval: Stephen Kelly, Joint Director of Planning confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to the Executive Councillor for decision.

1.	Recommendations
1.1	<p>It is recommended that the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure agrees that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable) 2025 at Appendix 1 be confirmed as the Local Plan Timetable 2. The Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable) 2025 be shared with Government and be published on the Greater Cambridge Planning website, superseding the Greater Cambridge Development Scheme 2022.
2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	<p>This report provides an update regarding the Local Development Scheme (LDS), which is a timetable for the production of new or revised development plan documents that set out the planning policy framework for Greater Cambridge. It is prepared jointly between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council as the plans in preparation are both joint plans for the authorities' combined area. The Councils are required to keep the Timetable up to date.</p>

	<p>The latest formal LDS was agreed by the Councils in 2022. Updates to the Timetable were agreed in March 2024 and subsequently in November 2024. For the November 2024 Timetable Update, the Councils agreed a draft revised timetable for the Local Plan, and also agreed that an updated formal Greater Cambridge Local Plan Timetable be brought to Members in spring 2025 once there was clarity on the transitional date for plans under the current plan-making system to be submitted, and also on the outcome of the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Development Consent Order.</p> <p>Since November 2024, on 12th December government confirmed a new National Planning Policy Framework, and also confirmed the transitional date for plans under the current plan-making system to be submitted. On 13th December, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Angela Rayner, sent a letter to all Local Planning Authorities requiring them to review and update their timetables for getting an up to date plan in place within 12 weeks. This report confirms the revised timetable to meet that deadline. An update for the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan will be confirmed subsequently.</p>
3.	Details
	<u>Background: Local Plan Timetable, March 2024 and November 2024 Timetable Updates</u>
3.1	<p>Authorities are required to prepare a Local Plan Timetable (previously called the Local Development Scheme (LDS), a change made by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) that identifies the expected timings for the production of new or revised development plan documents that set out the planning policy framework for Greater Cambridge. The Councils are required to keep the timetable up to date- and once the local plan timetable has effect, the local planning authorities must comply with it. The latest formal timetable was agreed by the Councils in 2022. That document listed expected future timings for the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan (GCLP) and North East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP), both being prepared jointly between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council. The timings set out in the 2022 LDS are now out of date or cannot be met and will need to be updated once there is sufficient certainty to identify formal revised programmes.</p>
3.2	<p>An update was initially made regarding the timetable in March 2024 via an Addendum to the 2022 LDS. The initial Addendum noted continuing uncertainties regarding key external dependencies for the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan (GCLP) - in particular relating to water availability and transport strategy, as well as to the (now previous) Government's programme for Greater Cambridge. It also had regard to the proposed new plan-making system and a transitional date applying at that time for plans to be submitted under the current plan-making system of end June 2025. Noting these uncertainties and that it would not be feasible to submit the GCLP by end of June 2025, the initial LDS Addendum included an indicative revised timetable for</p>

	preparing the GCLP under the proposed new plan-making system, which would achieve the start of a formal 30-month process by autumn/winter 2025.				
3.3	A further update was made regarding the timetable in November 2024 via an updated Addendum to the LDS. The Addendum notes that the new government was proposing to change the previously stated cut-off date for submitting Local Plans for Examination under the current system to December 2026, and proposes a revised draft GCLP plan making timetable that achieves that deadline, also recognising that the introduction of the proposed new plan-making system is delayed. This is a draft timetable subject to the new transitional date being confirmed by government following consultation on amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The report recommended that the Local Plan Timetable - for the GCLP and also the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP) - should be fully updated in spring 2025, once the government had reported its response to the current consultation on proposed NPPF revisions and confirmed the transitional date, and once the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant (CWWTP) Development Consent Order (DCO) outcome is known.				
3.4	Subsequent to the November 2024 timetable update, on 12 th December, Government confirmed a new National Planning Policy Framework, and also confirmed the transitional date for plans under the current plan-making system to be submitted. On the same day, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Angela Rayner, sent a letter to all Local Planning Authorities requiring them to review and update their timetables for getting an up to date plan in place within 12 weeks.				
	<u>Confirmed GCLP timetable</u>				
3.5	Drawing on the clarity provided in relation to the transitional date to submit plans under the current system, and the requirement to commit to a timetable within 12 weeks of 12 th December 2024, this report proposes that the draft revised Local Plan timetable agreed in November (and as set out below) be confirmed as the formal Local Development Scheme. If agreed, the Local Development Scheme will be shared with Government and be published on the Greater Cambridge Planning website, superseding the Greater Cambridge Development Scheme 2022 and Addendum.				
3.6	<p><u>Formal stages of GCLP timetable</u></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Autumn/Winter 2025</td> <td>Draft Plan Consultation (Reg 18)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Summer/Autumn 2026</td> <td>Proposed Submission Plan Consultation (Reg 19)</td> </tr> </table>	Autumn/Winter 2025	Draft Plan Consultation (Reg 18)	Summer/Autumn 2026	Proposed Submission Plan Consultation (Reg 19)
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	Winter 2026 (by Dec 2026 as per current NPPF consultation)	Submission to Secretary of State for independent Examination (Reg 22)	
	<u>Key factors and assumptions relating to the confirmed timetable</u>		
3.7	The November 2024 Timetable Update provided an update regarding the primary external factors influencing the future GCLP timetable including water supply, the transport strategy, the North East Cambridge Area - Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant relocation (see more on this below), Cambridge 2040/Cambridge Delivery Group, East West Rail, as well as the new national plan-making system. While there is now clarity regarding the plan-making system, the updates provided in November on the other items remain substantively up to date.		
3.8	The November 2024 Timetable Update report reported on key assumptions relating to the abovementioned external factors, and also noted that the revised draft timetable was a challenging one in terms of the practicalities of developing the plan, being based is based upon a number of assumptions about internal Council processes. It is important to note that the timetable proposed to be confirmed remains challenging, including being dependent upon the assumptions identified in the November report.		
	<u>North East Cambridge Area - Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant (CWWTP) relocation</u>		
3.9	Effective and efficient development of the North East Cambridge site is dependent on the relocation of the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant (CWWTP) via a separate Development Consent Order (DCO) process that Anglian Water is undertaking. Publication of the Proposed Submission version of the GCLP is dependent on the outcome of the DCO process; this is the same for the NECAAP, noting that the Councils agreed in January 2022 a Proposed Submission NECAAP for future public consultation, contingent upon the separate Development Control Order being undertaken by Anglian Water for the relocation of the Waste Water Treatment Plant being approved.		
3.10	The November Timetable Update report noted that that the deadline for the CWWTP DCO decision had been amended to 12 January 2025, and that, if approved there would follow a 6 week judicial review period. If no request for judicial review is received within that period then the decision will be confirmed.		
3.11	At the time of writing this decision has not been issued. A verbal update on the DCO decision will be provided at the meeting, noting that if the DCO is approved, the judicial review period will not have concluded at that point. As per the November Timetable Update report therefore, the Councils will need to reflect on the Secretary of State's decision on the DCO once confirmed. A further report will be brought to members confirming the future of the NECAAP once timings are clearer, taking into account the		

	other issues raised in this report. This will be done in the context of seeking to provide a clear planning framework for this key strategic site as soon as possible.
	<u>Additional issue: Extending the plan period: Plan period</u>
3.12	The November Timetable Update report advised that the NPPF requires that “Strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption, to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities”. The emerging GCLP plan period used so far has been 2020 -2041, which would be NPPF compliant assuming adoption no later than 2026 as in the 2022 LDS. Given the external factors explored in the November Timetable Update which have delayed the plan’s progress, and the revised timetable set out in this report, officers are exploring an appropriate revised plan period to ensure NPPF compliance. This process is ongoing, and will be confirmed in a Member update in due course.
4	Corporate plan
4.1	There is no decision to be made as part of this report in relation to the content of emerging development plans. The Local Plan and NECAAP will both contribute to meeting the corporate plan’s priorities via policies addressing a wide range of environmental, social and economic issues.
5.	Consultation, engagement and communication
5.1	Consultation and engagement are a key element of the plan making. Consultation already undertaken will inform the draft Local Plan. Future stages of the Local Plan and NECAAP, whenever they take place, will involve consultations meeting the Councils’ Statement of Community Involvement.
6.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
6.1	The report has no immediate impacts or outcomes given that it recommends approval of a draft revised Local Plan timetable, to be confirmed in 2025.
7.	Implications
7.1	Relevant risks
	<p>Providing a revised timetable for the new plan ensures that the Councils comply with the national requirement to keep the Local Plan timetable up to date.</p> <p>It is recognised that continued delay in the preparation of the plans, due to external factors outside the Council’s control, adds to the risk that significant development proposals will come forward ahead of the adoption of a new comprehensive local planning policy framework. To manage that risk, officers continue to identify, propose and develop interim policy measures. Further, more detailed, risks are identified in paragraphs 4.3.4-4.3.5 of the November 2024 Timetable Update Report. Officers will</p>

	continue to keep all these risks under review as the plans progress and identify appropriate mitigation as may be necessary.
	Financial Implications
7.2	The Shared Planning Service programme for the Local Plan is being jointly funded by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. The impact of some of the issues identified in this report were not explicitly anticipated at the time that the original budget for the Local Plans were set. Nevertheless, the service has to date managed its costs within the existing budget envelope. Some additional funding has already been identified by the Government to support engagement with the Council on its ambitions for growth. In the event of significant additional work being required as a result of the wider issues identified above, the service will need to review the available budget for the Local Plan against its other ongoing priorities.
	Legal Implications
7.3	There are no legal implications arising from the report.
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
7.4	There is no decision to be made as part of this report in relation to the content of emerging development plans. The development plans will each be subject to Equalities Impact Assessment at each stage during their development.
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
7.5	There is no decision to be made as part of this report in relation to the content of emerging development plans. Notwithstanding, development plans provide 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 as the plans are prepared. One of the big themes for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan identified in The First Proposals is climate change. Evidence has been produced to inform the plan, including a study on how the plan can assist with the journey towards net zero carbon.
	Procurement Implications
7.6	There are no procurement implications arising from the report.
	Community Safety Implications

7.7	There is no decision to be made as part of this report in relation to the content of emerging development plans.
8.	<p>Background documents</p> <p>Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985</p>
8.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme incorporating Local Plan Timetable Update, November 2024 • Greater Cambridge Local Plan Timetable Cabinet Report, November 2024 • Government response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation
9.	<p>Appendices</p>
9.1	Appendix A: Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable) 2025
	<p>To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact</p> <p>Jonathan Dixon - Planning Policy Manager Telephone: 07514 925952 jonathan.dixon@greatercambridgeplanning.org</p> <p>Caroline Hunt – Strategic Planning Manager Telephone: 07849 824745 caroline.hunt@greatercambridgeplanning.org</p>