

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES¹

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In 2010 the Coalition Government announced its intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies (and by extension any 'saved' Structure Plan policies) and introduce a wholly locally-based planning system. In response to this changing policy environment the Cambridgeshire authorities issued a joint statement in autumn 2010 to set out their position in support of the existing, established development strategy for the County.
- 1.2 This statement updates and replaces that earlier one in the light of events since its publication in 2010. It is expanded to cover Peterborough in addition to Cambridgeshire, reflecting the history of joint working between the two areas, the shared objectives within the Local Enterprise Partnership, and the recent agreement to co-operate effectively and work together on strategic planning issues.

2 Background

- 2.1 The existing development strategy originated in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and with the support of all of the Cambridgeshire local authorities was incorporated in the East of England Plan (the Regional Spatial Strategy) published in 2008. These strategic plans informed the development of the City and District Councils' Local Plan and Local Development Frameworks, which currently are being implemented.
- 2.2 The key objective of the strategy is to secure sustainable development by locating new homes in and close to Cambridge and Peterborough and to other main centres of employment, while avoiding dispersed development which increases unsustainable travel and restricts access to key services and facilities. Further sustainable locations for growth focus mainly on Cambridgeshire's market towns and Peterborough's district centres, with one large new town (Northstowe) to be connected to Cambridge and other key locations through a new dedicated public transport option, the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway.
- 2.3 Implementation of the strategy is on-going, with new urban extensions being delivered in Cambridge and Peterborough. With the Busway now up and running, significant development activity is underway in Cambridge's southern and north-west fringes and an application for a first phase for the new town of Northstowe has been submitted. Major developments, essential regeneration and infrastructure provision in Cambridgeshire's market towns continue to make positive progress.

3 National and Local Developments

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework, published recently, requires all local authorities to plan for sustainable development including planning positively for

¹ Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, Peterborough City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

economic growth, with their local plans being prepared on the basis that objectively assessed development needs should be met. With the enactment of the Localism Act in 2011, all local authorities are now under a Duty to Co-operate in the preparation of their plans, both with each other and a range of other bodies.

- 3.2 The national economic situation has presented significant challenges in maintaining the pace of growth and the delivery of sufficient investment where it is most needed. In the face of these challenges, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local authorities have continued to take a positive attitude to delivery of the development strategy and have taken innovative approaches to funding challenges - for example, the equity investment in the southern fringe sites. This has enabled development to start earlier than would otherwise have been the case, whilst still securing a future financial return for the authorities, which can then be reinvested to support future high quality growth for the benefit of local communities.
- 3.3 The Greater Cambridge-Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership is now well-established and has secured the designation of an Enterprise Zone at the former Alconbury airfield. The County Council has also announced it is putting in place the funding to deliver a new rail station in the north of Cambridge, which will enhance public transport accessibility and provide some relief to congestion within the city. Work is now underway, led by the Department for Transport but working in partnership with the County and District Councils, to find a way forward for delivering improvements along the A14 corridor. The outcomes are critical in order to support a range of key development locations, including at Northstowe. An announcement from Government on the way forward is expected this summer.

4 The Response to these Challenges

- 4.1 Despite the clarity of and support for the existing development strategy, the local authorities realise the need to keep the broader, strategic perspective under consideration. As a result, all authorities except Peterborough City Council, which last year adopted a Core Strategy running to 2026, are undertaking a review or roll forward of their local plans.
- 4.2 The need for this work results from a range of factors, including fostering continued economic growth, providing sufficient housing and the need for delivery of the necessary infrastructure to support the development of sustainable communities. The review or roll forward of plans will also need to take account of the fundamental changes that are likely to impact on the existing strategy – for example, the current unavailability of Cambridge Airport for housing development or the introduction of the Enterprise Zone at Alconbury. With regard to the Enterprise Zone the local authorities will need to consider and effectively respond to the wider spatial implications of that designation as a matter of urgency. Nevertheless, it is critical that a combined clear focus and effort remains on the effective delivery of the existing ambitious strategy and the major developments that are part of it; and to recognise that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, as a whole, still have more than adequate land coming forward to effectively deliver sustainable growth, which can be continued as the strategy is updated .
- 4.3 Preparation of these updated plans will take account of policies outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework, including wide community engagement in accordance with the principles of localism. This will enable engagement around a

range of development needs, including community-based, locally-generated proposals as well as those of more strategic significance. Furthermore, the local authorities will continue their long history of close collaboration and joint working as part of their Duty to Co-operate. This will include jointly gathering appropriate forms of evidence to both inform their plans and to shape the formulation of their strategies. Their work will be supported and constructively challenged at a strategic level by a newly-formed Joint Strategic Planning Unit. Close links to the Local Enterprise Partnership will also be further developed.

- 4.4 In undertaking the review or roll forward of their plans, the local authorities are clear that fundamentally they will continue to be guided by the strategic principles which underpinned the original growth strategy, first set out in the 2003 Structure Plan. Locating homes in and close to urban areas and to other main centres of employment is critical to ensure appropriate, sustainable development. It is essential, therefore, that the future development needs of the wider area are considered and agreed through a strategic plan-led approach, which takes account of identified local and national priorities.
- 4.5 Pending this review of the strategy, the local authorities are clear that they remain committed to delivering the existing planned strategy, and that significant capacity exists in terms of housing and employment land supply as we recover from the recession. During the transition period leading up to the introduction of their new, updated local plans, the local authorities will continue to give full weight to current, adopted planning policies.

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