

# NHDC & HCC Agreed Direction of travel



## NORTH HERTS LOCAL PLAN

Project No. 16079-01

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### 1.0 REVIEW OF LOCAL PLAN PROGRESS TO DATE

- 1.1 The North Herts Local Plan Regulation 18 underwent a public consultation on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016.
- 1.2 A public consultation response from Hertfordshire County Council, as the Highway Authority (HCC), was submitted to North Herts District Council (NHDC) on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016.
- 1.3 The response outlined a number of comments with two main outstanding issues;
  - Additional intelligence to add to the collective knowledge from the Welwyn & Hatfield and Stevenage Hitchin (WHaSH-BL) model which was extended to cover Baldock and Letchworth.
  - A means of properly assessing the cumulative impact of growth, including those areas outside the WHaSH-BL model area.
- 1.4 A meeting was held between HCC, NHDC and Markides Associates on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017 to discuss the context of HCC's response to the NHDC Local Plan consultation and agreed the next steps to overcome the comments and outstanding issues raised.
- 1.5 The agreed outcomes of this meeting concluded that;
  - A joint memorandum of understanding (MOU) between NHDC and HCC should be agreed.
  - An agreement in principle to carry out a further 'cumulative impacts' run of the WHaSH-BL model incorporating proposed local plan growth in NHDC, Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield. NHDC agreed there were no issues in principle to this but any further modelling should wait until the outcomes of the Stage 1 hearings on the SBC Local Plan (January 2017) have occurred to ensure as any conclusions or requests for additional information by the Inspector may influence the direction NHDC takes with addressing HCC's local plan response.

- 1.6 Stevenage agreed an in-principle Transport Strategy with HCC at the Local Plan Strategic Transport hearing on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017. This proposed 15% modal shift and as a result the funding which was proposed towards highway interventions was diverted to cycling interventions to create and encourage mobility shift. A significant change in thinking was agreed to the focus on traffic modelling in predicting traffic impact analysis of local plan growth.
- 1.7 A further meeting between HCC, NHDC and Markides Associates occurred on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017, after the Stevenage Local Plan Stage 1 hearings has been concluded.
- 1.8 Due to the agreement of a Stevenage Transport Strategy, it was agreed that NHDC should follow a similar route and undertake a Transport Strategy to support the NHDC Local Plan. The Transport Strategy should outline how modal shift will take place within the four main NHDC towns and links between towns and villages.
- 1.9 It was agreed with HCC that longer term sustainable transport based solutions would be more suitable to reduce congestion than highway based solutions.
- 1.10 This is a significant, and welcome change in direction from the previous work NHDC have undertaken to support their Local Plan in highway terms. A considerable evidence based has been collated to support the Local Plan which is largely based around traffic modelling impacts. This is covered in the Odyssey Markides Technical Note 'Local Plan Transport Technical Review' September 2016.
- 1.11 It was agreed that a further run of the WHaSH-BL model would be needed to include the interventions outlined in the Transport Strategy as highway interventions may still be required as specific junctions, particularly those within air quality management areas.
- 1.12 It is HCC's aspiration that the County wide multi-modal transport model (COMET) will become the primary transport model, however, it is not yet at a stage to serve this function and therefore for the purposes of assessing local plan growth for NHDC, given the timescales to their local plan submission, the WHaSH-BL model is the most appropriate to use.
- 1.13 It was agreed at the February 2017 meeting that HCC would take the lead on the modelling due to Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield and East Herts, potentially needing to also undertake additional model runs. HCC also agreed to undertake select link analysis for Royston which has been provided and addresses the fact Royston is not covered within the WHaSH-BL model. HCC also agreed to contact Cambridgeshire Authorities to obtain more detailed information on their local plan growth to incorporate into COMET.

- 1.14 The Transport Strategy will therefore become an important document to support the aspirations of NHDC and their Local Plan. It will be written in line with HCC's new direction for mobility shift but in the context of NHDC which covers urban and rural areas. NHDC is a diverse District and therefore the transport strategy needs to include highway and sustainable interventions where necessary to accommodate the local plan growth with a view to the future post 2031 and potential strategic interventions which may shape NHDC in the context of supporting growth.

## 2.0 NHDC TRANSPORT STRATEGY SCOPE AND TIMESCALES

- 2.1 NHDC are taking the plan to full council on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017. This agreed way forward with HCC ensures that it can be demonstrated to members that there is a continuing dialogue with HCC and an agreed direction. The essence of this direction of travel will form the basis of the MOU between HCC and NHDC.
- 2.2 The planning inspectorate is expecting NHDC to formally submit in May 2017 and therefore the NHDC Transport Strategy needs to be finalised and agreed by July 2017 to be passed to the Inspector as evidence.
- 2.3 The following section includes the transport strategy objectives, policy framework and scope.

### Transport Strategy Objectives

- 2.4 The Transport Strategy will be written to support the Local Plan in line with the relevant Local Plan Vision statements and objectives as noted below. It will include the whole of NHDC and not just focus on the areas of new development being brought forward within the Local Plan.
- A mixture of quality new will be provided in appropriate sustainable locations. (EN1)
  - New development will have contributed to the creation of sustainable communities. Strategic sites will have been master planned in accordance with the guiding principles set out within this Plan. (ENV1 & SOC1)
  - New development will help to maintain and enhance the vibrancy of existing settlements, and essential infrastructure that is of benefit to existing and future residents. (SOC3)

- New green infrastructure will have enhanced the network of green corridors linking settlements to the open countryside, providing greater opportunities for healthy lifestyles. (ECON7 & ENV5)
- The District will play its part in addressing climate change by improving opportunities for travelling by public transport, walking and cycling, using natural resources more efficiently, reducing the demand for water, securing high quality sustainable design and managing the risk of flooding. (ECON7)
- By working in partnership with service providers, government bodies, the Local Enterprise Partnerships, developers, other local authorities and other key bodies we will ensure the timely delivery of necessary supporting infrastructure. (ECON8)

## Policy Framework

2.5 The following policies within the NHDC Local Plan will be supported by the Transport Strategy;

- Policy SP6 Sustainable Transport
- Policy SP7 Infrastructure requirements and development contributions
- Policy SP9 Design and sustainability
- Policy SP10 Healthy communities
- Policy SP14- Site BA1 North of Baldock
- Policy SP15 Site LG1 North of Letchworth Garden City
- Policy SP16 Site NS1 North of Stevenage
- Policy SP17 Site HT1 Highover Farm Hitchin
- Policy SP18 GA2 Land off Mendip Way Great Ashby
- Policy SP19 Sites EL1, EL2 & EL3 East of Luton
- Policy T1 Assessment of transport matters
- Policy T2 parking
- Policy D1 Sustainable design
- Policy D4 Air Quality
- Policy HE2 Green Infrastructure

## Agreed scope for Transport Strategy

2.6 The scope of the NHDC Transport Strategy has been agreed with Markides Associates and the strategy will cover the following sections and be written in line with the following aims and objectives;

- A broad review of work undertaken to date including all the modelling. This can follow the Odyssey Markides Technical Note 'Local Plan Transport Technical Review' September 2016. This should include a broad discussion of the UTP's and any relevant policy/documents which would inform the strategy, including evolving work like the NHDC parking strategy.
- A section should outline the purpose of a Transport Strategy, how this links and supports the local plan with relevant vision statement, policies, and objectives. A clear Vision statement should set the tone for the master planning of developments and provide the rationale for selecting and assessing a package of mitigations which contributes towards the Vision, which may not necessarily be mitigations that create vehicle capacity. The local plan growth should be outlined and the strategy employment and housing sites. The strategy should cover its proposed use and implementation and that it is an ever-evolving document through the local plan period and beyond.
- A review of the Stevenage Transport Strategy in the context of the north of Stevenage sites as these effectively create an extension to Stevenage but need to be promoted and assessed in line with the NHDC Transport Strategy.
- A review of Luton Strategy in the context of East of Luton Sites these effectively create an extension to Luton but need to be promoted and assessed in line with the NHDC Transport Strategy.
- The strategy should cover the use and advantages of travel planning for residential, school and employment sites within NHDC. Internalisation of trips will be discussed for the strategic sites which include a range of uses education, local centres, housing etc.
- Assessment of car ownership and travel to work data from the 2011 Census as well as the latest HCC travel survey data 2016 and information available on travel in the District and County to set the context of the Strategy. The Growth and Transport Plan evidence packs for Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock which HCC are undertaking will include a full analysis of census data and travel patterns and will be fed into the Transport Strategy.
- A review of the existing NHDC Local and Strategic highway network, especially the A505 and A602, detailing the specifics of the network unique to NHDC, rat running routes, any existing issues, AQMA areas and constraints. The Strategy should cover design schemes to ensure

drivers are on the correct corridors for their travel needs. This section will also cover a broad overview of NHDC, towns and villages which create the network and known commuter routes.

- The strategy should cover all the main towns and villages in NHDC with a small assessment of each in highway, traffic and transport terms.
- The context of the strategy and how it links to the draft LTP4 and 2050 Transport Vision and HCC policy and guidance. The emphasis should be on HCC as the Highway Authority to take forward and support highway related proposals so the strategy needs to outline the role of HCC.
- A section on transport modelling should be included which explains the purpose of transport models, how and why they are used as tools for traffic impact analysis which sets the context of traffic modelling. Transport modelling is a good tool to use in the correct context and how the strategy will outline how modelling assessment and conclusions should be used in the context of the previous NHDC evidence base. The transport modelling done to date has identified future pinch points on the highway network and indication of the trips travelling through these locations and has started to identify highways based interventions which could address the capacity issues identified. These interventions need to be reviewed in line with the developing Transport Strategy to identify whether any of the identified improvements could be replaced by interventions to encourage more sustainable travel patterns. It is anticipated that a further WHaSH BL model run would be undertaken incorporating Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan growth and considering the broader transport strategy.
- An assessment of all modes should be undertaken for the District, the area specific section can include assessment of individual areas in relation to cycling, walking, rail, bus, cars etc. This should look at which towns could be promoted as sustainable towns and the commuter links between the routes and how modal shift will take place within the four main NHDC towns and links between towns and villages.
- A section on the new modelling outcomes, AQMA areas, congestion hotspots, junction improvements (if required) and those junctions not being improved and why. HCC have agreed that for certain junction's sustainable improvements may be preferable to capacity improvements.
- A section should cover any existing issues outlined in Local Plan consultation responses.
- A specific section should address the HCC local plan response November 2016 and what progress has been undertaken outlining the MOU (to be agreed). This should include the

select link analysis in Royston which HCC have undertaken and other aspects of our discussions with HCC to overcome the 'concerns' raised.

- The strategy should summarise with a section on the future of NHDC post 2031 and strategic initiatives for example reference to the potential Hitchin bypass etc.

### **3.0 JOINT STATEMENT- NORTH OF STEVENAGE SITES**

- 3.1 NHDC are working with Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) and their transport consultants Vectos on a joint statement to cover the north of Stevenage sites.
- 3.2 This statement will cover the principles of how sites NS1 in NHDC and HO3 (Stevenage) will create an extension to the existing north Stevenage community.
- 3.3 This joint statement needs to be considered in the context of the emerging NHDC Transport Strategy as per the scope covered within this agreed direction of travel.
- 3.4 All sites within NHDC need to be promoted in line with the emerging NHDC Transport Strategy following the agreed aims and objectives.