

OVERVIEW

Each district of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is different; hence we have developed distinct strategies for the geographical areas of Peterborough, Greater Cambridge, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, and Fenland. These are set out in this chapter, and each reflects local transport constraints, opportunities, and patterns of growth.

Each strategy outlines the major schemes expected to be delivered within each area to deliver our objectives, both directly by the Combined Authority and in partnership with other local and national stakeholders. Some aspects of the strategies are, by necessity, still under development and hence all schemes will need to demonstrate value-for-money and affordability, together with alignment with our strategic priorities before they are able to proceed.

Each strategy is set out below, and includes:

- Summary of recent and planned growth, and local transport constraints;
- Progress and projects delivered to date; and
- Transport schemes to help deliver each strategy.

DRAFT

HUNTINGDONSHIRE

Background

Huntingdonshire is the largest district in Cambridgeshire, with a population of 170,000 across an area of over nine hundred km². It is predominately rural in nature, with a sparse population density of just four people per acre – compared to seventy-five in Cambridge – with local employment and key services focused in the large towns of Huntingdon and St Neots, together with St Ives to the east. Huntingdonshire's towns, such as Ramsey and rural villages have strong links to neighbouring communities, including Cambridge to the east, Peterborough to the north and Bedford to the south-west. These provide employment, shopping, leisure, and health services to complement those available within the district and generate significant long-distance travel demand.

Recent Developments

Huntingdonshire's population has grown by around 20% over the past two decades and is now home to over 56,100 residents (mid 2020), partly in response to housing market pressures in and around Cambridge, Peterborough, and London. Recent housing and employment growth have been concentrated in and around the district's main towns, and to a lesser extent within the larger villages, placing a significant pressure on the region's transport infrastructure.

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 outlines proposals for at least 20,100 new homes (both market and affordable), together with 14,400 additional jobs, in the period 2011-2036. Development will be focused in four spatial planning areas, reflecting their status as the district's traditional market towns and most sustainable centres. These are: Huntingdon, including Brampton and Godmanchester, and the new settlement of Alconbury Weald; St Neots, including Little Paxton and the urban extension at St Neots East; St Ives; and Ramsey, including Bury and the former RAF Upwood site.

Transport Challenges

Reflecting the district's rural geography, local communities rely on the private car for the vast majority of trips. For example, approximately 79% of journeys to work within the district are by private car, which contributes towards local congestion and poor air quality. High traffic flows, particularly through rural villages and high streets, have a negative impact on the local environment, and make it less attractive to walk or cycle for local journeys. Many rural, single-carriageway roads, with high traffic speeds and substandard alignments have poor road safety records and can present challenges for freight transport. While the region benefits from excellent strategic links, including the East Coast Main Line and the A14, A428 and A1, these also suffer from significant traffic congestion, particularly at key junctions having adverse impacts on the environment and health. In addition, those who lack access to private transport – particularly within rural villages – often have limited access to good quality and affordable public transport that exacerbates social exclusion and can mean that some are 'forced' into car ownership as they feel they have little practical alternative to access employment or other key services. This only serves to increase the sense of social isolation and exclusion for those without access to a private car as for many years, bus services, particularly within rural areas, are infrequent and costly, and community transport for those not directly served by bus does not always provide a meaningful service. Connected, dedicated, high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure is limited outside of Huntingdon, St Neots and St Ives and deters the use of active modes and contributes to poor health outcomes. Greater emphasis will be afforded to providing the missing links within the network and capturing opportunities for longer distance cycle routes for commuting and recreation.

Aside from the East Coast Rail Line and the Guided Busway, linking Huntingdon, St Ives and Cambridge, there is a notable lack of sustainable, high-quality, long- distance public transport connectivity from Huntingdonshire. This acts to limit the commuting opportunities of residents in Huntingdonshire, making it difficult to travel to employment, health, leisure, retail, and education opportunities further afield, such as at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus or Cambridge Regional College.

Future development, in particular at Alconbury Weald, is dependent on securing significant upgrades to the region's transport infrastructure and network. If new growth areas are to be attractive places to live and work, they need to be well-integrated into the fabric of the region's transport network, including the highway network (and the A1 and A14) without worsening congestion; and include seamless public transport connectivity between market towns and to Huntingdon, Cambridge, and London (including prospect of railway station at Alconbury Weald). A new rail station at Alconbury Weald would enable a north-south rail connection and bring benefits to residents, workers and businesses within the new development and create valuable links to other economic hubs. Environmental constraints of such transport infrastructure must also be mitigated, with measures implemented to maximise carbon and health benefits of the scheme.

Progress to date

The *Transport Strategy: Huntingdonshire* work is being progressed with the objective to enable residents to access key services required to enjoy a good quality of life. The improvements must ensure that residents are able to live a safe, and active lifestyle, whilst supporting the needs of the local economy; enhancing the natural environment; and tackling the challenges of climate change to thereby ensure that our carbon targets are met. Recent improvements have been made including the £1.5bn A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme. The first section of this route, between Swavesey and Brampton Hut at the A1 to the south of Huntingdon, opened in December 2019, with the remainder of the route opened in May 2020.

This scheme included the removal of the A14 viaduct over Huntingdon Town Centre helping to create a more attractive environment within the town, with the wider upgrade of the route alleviating a serious bottleneck on the major highway link between Cambridge and Peterborough. Major investment is also being delivered in St Neots, where an investment was agreed by the Combined Authority Board in June 2018. This package of interventions was designed to pave the way for accelerated growth within the town. These initiatives were outlined in the St Neots Masterplan. In addition, the town centre of St Neots has been supported by funding from the Future High Street Fund (FHSF). This investment will deliver six projects, with an aim of transforming the town for the benefits of local people, businesses, and visitors.

In October 2021, we started a new Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service in west Huntingdonshire named TING. The service employs four small single deck buses of Stagecoach East to provide bus services on demand across 360 km² of the region. Passenger levels have continued to increase significantly, and we have extended the 6-month trial for a further 3 months (the maximum permitted on this contract). This additional time will be used to review progress and potentially tender for a revised service to commence in July 2022, upon the successful completion of the trial.

Our Approach

Sustainable alternative travel modes will be key to Huntingdonshire however the need remains to invest in targeted highway networks, such as the A141 and St Ives Improvements that will address issues for all users (including active travel and public transport users). In order to address climate change targets a greater emphasis on how active travel modes can be supported in highway

improvements will be required. Our approach will seek to prioritise improving access to new developments, together with improving strategic connectivity to Greater Cambridge and the rest of the country.

Our strategy for the bus network is key to delivering this, with frequent services on 'core' inter-urban routes, such as St Neots – Cambourne – Cambridge and Alconbury – Huntingdon – St Ives – Cambridge and Peterborough.

The bus network is key to delivering greater connectivity throughout the Combined Authority area linking larger towns with some smaller villages through more frequent local routes and establishing frequent services for core inter-urban routes. Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 identifies Ramsey as a Spatial Planning Area and one of four market towns within Huntingdonshire suitable for sustainable growth. The Spatial Planning Areas are responsible for providing approximately three quarters of the district's objectively assessed need for housing and the majority of employment and retail growth. Therefore, in order to maximise accessibility within and to/from these areas, a comprehensive package of local routes and DRT options will be provided. This will offer an integrated and sustainable network, with an attractive and consistent frequency, linking larger towns and some smaller villages, such as Huntingdon – Brampton – Buckden – St Neots, Ramsey, and Huntingdon – Godmanchester – Papworth Everard – Sawtry – Yaxley and Cambourne.

We will review and assess the public transport offer, limitations, and barriers within Ramsey to identify infrastructure that would improve the network in and around the town. In addition, a review of levels of service at evenings and weekends will be undertaken and improvements made to the services provided during these times. In addition, improved bus priority measures, particularly within Huntingdon, have the potential to deliver faster, more reliable journeys that can compete with the car on journey times.

Many Huntingdonshire residents, however, live within smaller villages outside of the reach of existing bus services, or receiving an infrequent service. Working in partnership with Huntingdonshire District Council, building on the TING trial, we will ensure that local community and demand-responsive transport provides accessibility for all, seamlessly integrated into the bus and rail network with dedicated interchanges and joint ticketing wherever possible.

Our approach will integrate all forms of public transport – including rail services, local buses and community and DRT – to provide a seamless, attractive, and comprehensive rural public transport network. We will work to adapt existing rail and bus stations in rural travel hubs, offering improved real-time information provision, waiting facilities and cycle and car parking, supported by a more unified, integrated ticketing system. The importance of first/last mile connections should not and will not be under-estimated – investment will be forthcoming to ensure safe, well-maintained links are provided to travel hubs and major attractors, including key transport hubs. As part of this overarching package, due consideration will be given to car share schemes, improving the safety of our active travel routes, whilst and examining the appropriate implementation of e-bike and e-scooter schemes within the towns of Huntingdonshire.

We will also explore opportunities to enhance strategic public transport accessibility and support growth through new infrastructure, including improving multi-modal connectivity to Alconbury Weald with the potential for a new railway station being investigated with partners. In addition, we support the delivery of East West Rail (EWR) to provide a direct rail service from Cambridge to Oxford. Local connectivity into the EWR route is key to maximise the potential of the scheme and ensuring the people of Huntingdonshire have increased opportunities to access key employment, education, retail,

and health destinations. This includes lobbying the EWR Company to provide an appropriate station in the St Neots vicinity. This will help to significantly reduce journey times to major cities elsewhere, creating new opportunities for work and leisure for our residents while supporting expanding the labour market and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's productivity.

Additional targeted highway, active travel and public transport improvements are required at major development sites such as Alconbury Weald and Ramsey, to support the delivery of much-needed homes and jobs in a sustainable manner. We will actively engage with central Government to secure the investment required to improve access to these sites, particularly addressing the A141 corridor, helping to create faster, more reliable journeys by all modes. It is important that this project is accelerated and delivered as soon as possible to ensure that the planned housing delivery can move forward in a timely manner.

Investment in improved regional highway connectivity, such as the dualling of the A428 between Cambourne / Caxton Gibbett and the Black Cat Roundabout, will also improve accessibility to Greater Cambridge and the rest of the country and help to make Huntingdonshire more attractive.

It is important, however, that the delivery of much-needed improvements to our key road corridors is not at the expense of better walking, cycling and public transport connectivity, and does not result in car dependency. Active and sustainable travel options will be provided alongside highway improvements. These will be planned in accordance with the highest design standards to minimise the impact on the natural environment, and to reduce traffic in local residential streets.

New, high-quality active travel infrastructure – will also help to make active travel a safer and more attractive option for local journeys within and between our towns and villages. More journeys on foot and by bike will also help to alleviate traffic congestion and improve air quality, whilst allowing those without access to a car, or unable to drive — more independence and opportunity to travel. Twelve electric charging points have been installed in Huntingdon, St Neots and St Ives, and we will continue to support electric vehicle charging and infrastructure for electric public transport; in partnership with Huntingdonshire District Council and national government with the aim to reduce carbon emissions and improve local air quality.

Key to ensuring a safe, accessible transport network for all that supports social inclusion and access to opportunity is our package of investment and financial support for our rural public transport network, including DRT. More people will have a genuine alternative to the car in the form of access to reliable, comprehensive public transport. The Bus Reform work will be complemented by the lessons learnt from the TING trial in West Huntingdonshire, to ensure all within Huntingdonshire have an affordable, sustainable, public transport option that provides access to employment, education, shopping, and recreation, at a reasonable frequency. In relation to bus service improvements, larger settlements will be prioritised as there will be sufficient critical mass in these areas to make particular services viable. This programme will then be expanded to the more remote and low population density villages once bus usage has become more normalised.

Strategic Projects

North / South

The A1/A1(M) runs through the middle of Huntingdonshire, acting as a key strategic route to London and Northern England, together with a key local corridor between St Neots, Huntingdon and Alconbury. Between Junction 10 at Baldock (in Central Bedfordshire) and Junction 14 at Alconbury, the route suffers from significant congestion and a poor safety record, due to a sub-standard

alignment, numerous at-grade right-turn junctions, and five roundabouts on an otherwise grade-separated route between the M25 and Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the North East of England.

Therefore, we support improvements to the A1 corridor to be delivered by National Highways. The development of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement scheme will address one of the key existing congested interchanges. Throughout the development of this corridor, the needs of all modes need to be considered, addressed, and integrated into any scheme.

These improvements will help to provide capacity, together with improving safety along the corridor, reducing severance to local villages, and improving journey times and reliability for journeys to, from and within Huntingdonshire along the corridor.

East / West

East – West accessibility from Huntingdonshire, in particular to and from Cambridge, is limited, and hence we are supporting a number of improvements currently being developed by National Highways and the East West Rail Company.

EWR will provide a new railway corridor linking Cambridge, Bedford, and Milton Keynes to Oxford, transforming public transport accessibility across the Oxford to Cambridge. Unlike the rest of the route the Bedford and Cambridge line will follow a completely new route and therefore connectivity to the route and interchange points must and will be integrated into the fabric of the local area, ensuring good quality, sustainable first/last mile links are provided to key destinations, public transport hubs/networks and the active travel infrastructure.

Within the district, the improvements to the A428 between Cambourne / Caxton Gibbet and the Black Cat roundabout on the A1, and a new three-level grade-separated interchange between the A1 and the A428 is essential to improve east-west movements. In order to address government policy, we will lobby for improvements for all modes.

Local Projects

Alconbury

Significant new housing and employment growth is taking place in the Alconbury Weald area. To support this growth, a number of local schemes will be identified, developed, and implemented. These will provide improvements for all modes on the A141 around Huntingdon, safeguard an alignment for A141 to the north of Huntingdon and provide better multi modal accessibility to, in and around Alconbury Weald. This multi modal offer will include working with partners to develop a new rail station thereby increasing the accessibility of the area by sustainable means to key destinations.

St Ives and Wyton Airfield

Improvement projects in and around St Ives are planned to mitigate the impact of developments and connect the area's key residential and employment centres in a sustainable manner. The provision of a transport interchange could provide a focal point for high-quality bus and active travel infrastructure connecting St Ives (Busway) with Huntingdon, Alconbury Weald and potentially Wyton Airfield in the long-term.

Our A141 and St Ives Improvements project will be accelerated to reduce congestion and improve reliability across the study area to facilitate sustainable growth, improve the public realm, as well as improving connectivity through active travel modes, walking, and cycling. In addition, improvements to bus service provision and interchange will be taken in consideration.

Ramsey

Ramsey is a town about nine miles north of Huntingdon. The parish includes the settlements of Ramsey Forty Foot, Ramsey Heights, Ramsey Mereside, Ramsey Hollow and Ramsey St Mary's. Those without access to a private car can be socially excluded with limited opportunities to access the key employment, retail, health, and leisure opportunities in the neighbouring towns of St Ives and Huntingdon, as well as the city of Peterborough.

Following a thorough assessment of the TING (DRT) trial in West Huntingdonshire, it is expected that the service will be extended to incorporate Ramsey to increase accessibility to key destinations. In addition, a study will be undertaken to fully assess the transport challenges for the area inclusive of all modes. This study will also outline the potential options to address these challenges and how appropriate funding could and should be sought.

St Neots

St Neots is a town served by a fast rail link into London that makes it an attractive location for commuters. However, the limited public transportation links to and from the town centre to the train station, residential areas (old and new) and other key attractions such as education and employment locations is hampering connectivity for the town's population.

The Future High Street Fund scheme will contribute to the regeneration of St Neots Town Centre through a range of investments that will include residential development, office space re-configuration and the refurbishment of a range of community and arts provision at the Priory Centre. This will be supported by a number of transport interventions including enhanced active travel and public transport infrastructure as well as adjustments to car parking facilities and revamped wider public realm.

Regionwide initiatives

- E-scooter Trial and E-bikes (expansion of)
- Buses Reform - Enhanced Partnership and franchising
- ZEBRA - Zero Emission Buses
- Active Travel Schemes
- EV Charging Schemes and Outcomes from AFVS
- Demand Responsive Transport
- Bus Reform Task Force
- Digital Connectivity
- Vision Zero, including 20 is Plenty
- First and last mile (including freight)
- Heavy Commercial Strategy

