

Littleport Vision



2030



Executive Summary



The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is working alongside District Councils to produce a new Growth Masterplan for every Market Town.

The Littleport plan, the Littleport Vision 2030, aims to increase economic output (GVA) and ensure Littleport residents have access to a good job within easy reach of home.

The plan seeks to increase the GVA output of Littleport to help achieve the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority commitment to double the size of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy over the next 25 years.

Alongside this, improvements to the town centre, the station gateway and the creation of a country park will make Littleport a vibrant and attractive fenland community.

Littleport is a small market town, but one that is growing fast. However, a lack of available business premises is hindering employment growth.

A number of sites for employment and housing have been identified through the ECDC Local Plan process. But whilst there is a willingness to develop these sites, delivery is constrained by the ability to deploy the appropriate infrastructure provision.

The vision document is about attracting investment. The Littleport Vision 2030 demonstrates how a relatively small financial input can unlock and accelerate delivery of these sites.

The two commercial projects need around £3.5m to enable and will result in a 38% increase in GVA. The Eco Business Park drives GVA productivity output by developing higher level jobs within the local economy.

The A10 Roundabout projects also create jobs and additional GVA, but not factored here is the enabling of housing development in close proximity. Both projects therefore have potentially strong returns for relatively low investments.

Introduction



The Littleport Vision 2030 is

Increased economic output and improved opportunities for the people of Littleport to work nearer to home.

An enhanced town centre, station gateway and a new country park.

The Combined Authority is committed to the future prosperity and success of every market town in the county and is investing in making this a reality through the masterplan programme.

The Devolution Deal with Government, secured in March 2017, included a target to increase economic output by nearly 100% in the next 25 years, from £22bn to over £40bn. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) highlights the actions needed to achieve this and make the region a leading place in the world to live, learn and work. Market towns are expected to contribute to this GVA Growth.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is working in partnership with local authorities to develop a Masterplan for Growth for every market town in the combined authority area. These will be non-statutory plans that establish how the future growth of the town will contribute to the Combined Authority's 2030 ambitions:

- Access to a good job within easy reach of home (which should include analysis of the sectors which will play the most significant role in the economic future of the town)
- Healthy, thriving and prosperous communities
- A workforce for the modern world, founded on investment in skills and education
- Environmentally sustainable
- UK's capital of productivity and innovation

A Masterplan for Growth will mean that in every single town there is:

- A shared ambition for the future which authorities, businesses and communities can unite behind;
- Which focuses collective resources against the same priorities, and crucially;
- Which unlocks new investment from the CPCA and other agencies

Littleport is a small market town of more than 10,000 people, located on the A10 between Ely and Downham Market. The communities of Black Horse Drove and Little Ouse form part of Littleport parish, although they are separate settlements.

A significant amount of housing development has taken place in Littleport in recent years, within the built up area of the town and on new sites to the west, but a number of employment sites remain undeveloped.





There are not sufficient jobs for all residents and many people commute out of the town for work in Ely and elsewhere. One of the key challenges facing Littleport will be to provide future commercial and employment growth in the town to offer stronger alternatives to out-commuting.

The town centre is a vital community hub, but has a limited range of shops and in common with the wider Cambridgeshire economy, has seen the loss of retail floor space, which has been reallocated to other uses, particularly housing, in recent years.

A number of sites for employment and housing have been identified through the ECDC Local Plan process. But whilst there is a willingness to develop these sites, delivery is constrained by the ability to deploy the appropriate infrastructure provision. Funding is needed to unlock these sites and accelerate growth.

The Littleport Vision 2030 is being led at a local level to consolidate the many positive aspects of the town's ambitions to achieve growth and prosperity for its people and businesses. To support this, East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) has worked with key stakeholders and representatives to consider;

1. The Local Plan
2. Transport and connectivity
3. Further housing provision and local amenity
4. Viability of sustainable employment and commercial development growth

5. Linkage to the wider Cambridgeshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS)
6. Mechanisms for unlocking inward investment

Underpinning this work are the key objectives of increasing economic growth and developing opportunities, for the people of Littleport, so that they can live and work in their community. As a measure of future economic growth, the Vision adopts the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) commitment to double the size of the wider economy over the next 25 years as its own goal. An adopted Gross Value Added (GVA) measurement will be used to calculate baseline and future success against the Vision's ambitions.

The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan contains policies for Littleport and a study of the regionally important A10 trunk road, which runs adjacent to the town has been conducted. This work has produced a considerable amount of information which will be used to identify the key interventions needed to deliver employment growth for local people in the Littleport area and to increase GVA.

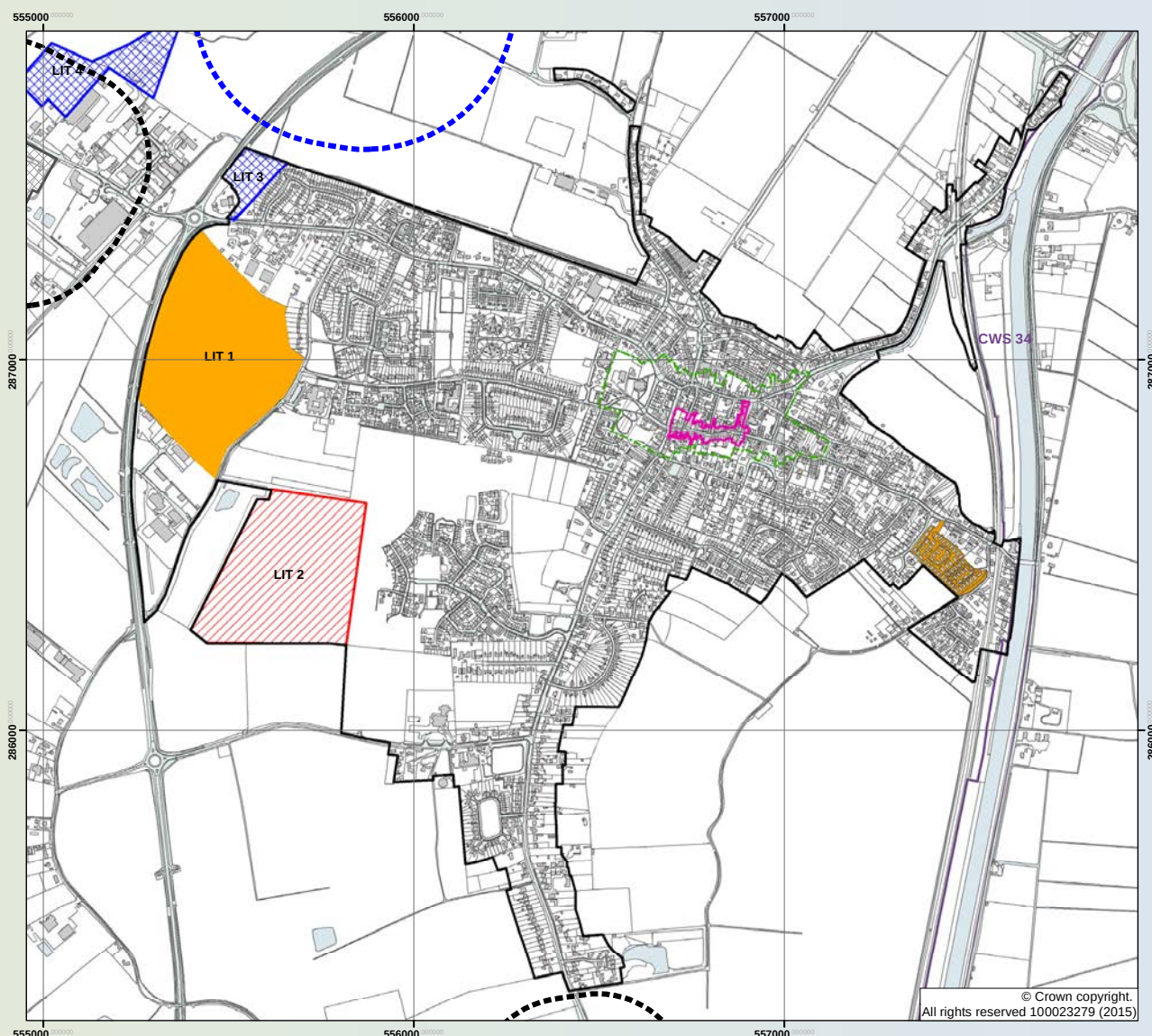
The output from the process, this Littleport Vision 2030 document, is a prospectus for Littleport which identifies the infrastructure required to deliver each site, an indication of needed interventions and sources of investment, with an impact analysis on growth (GVA) for the area.

Interventions that will be explored include:

1. A Littleport business growth zone extending south along the A10.
2. The creation of a 'Gateway area' close to the railway station
3. Options for Littleport town centre
4. Housing and amenity development
5. Investment in skills and innovation
6. Continued Improvement in digital connectivity

The Littleport Vision 2030 sets out how these sites can start to deliver jobs and homes as soon as possible

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015



**Policies Map (April 2015)
Littleport (Insert Map 8.25)
Key:**

- Development Envelope
- Housing allocation
- Employment allocation
- Housing led/mixed use
- LIT X Local Plan Policy
- Town centre boundary
- Conservation Area
- Mobile Home Park
- County Wildlife Site
- Mineral & Waste Existing Site
- Waste Consultation Area
- Water Treatment Works Safeguarding Area



The adopted 2015 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan¹ provides for an estimated 1,346 new dwellings (2013-31) and 1,500 jobs over the same period.

The Littleport Vision 2030 supports additional housing and employment allocations and identifies housing and employment growth beyond these levels at the Station Gateway and also potentially in the town centre.

It is key to ensure, however, that the level of housing and jobs are balanced otherwise commuting will continue to rise and the town will become a dormitory.

¹ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/east-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2015>

Littleport Business Growth Zone



Littleport, with its excellent transport connections has a history of nurturing and developing a variety of business types.

Littleport is home to a range of businesses. The largest industry sectors in Littleport are construction (23% of Littleport businesses) agriculture, forestry and fishing (12.5%) and professional, scientific & technical and business administration & support services (both 9%).

The industry sectors that employ the greatest numbers of Littleport residents are manufacturing, health and construction.

This market town's development of businesses and housing is currently away from the 'hot spots' of Ely and Cambridge and provides

a significantly lower cost location. The A10 growth corridor therefore could become extended with Littleport's housing and commercial developments.

espace North Business Centre provides serviced and flexible office space for start-ups, small, growing and established businesses and a number of businesses have flourished and out grown the centre. However, there is no moving on space in Littleport so these businesses are forced to relocate elsewhere.

Further employment growth is hindered by low commercial stock availability, a result of poor return on investment for potential investors due to the high cost of enabling necessary infrastructure such as road improvements.



Through the Government's Enterprise Zone (EZ) initiative, a series of specific EZs exist where conditions have been set to stimulate business growth. The Combined Authority intends to build on this with the development of locally designed spaces where high-value businesses in key sectors can locate and be supported to thrive.

ECDC will work with the Combined Authority to establish a Littleport Business Growth Zone. The Zone will offer bespoke support, tailored to meet the needs of businesses on a case by case basis, but will include access to incentives such as access to local business support, access to loans, business rates discounts and grants. There are opportunities in Littleport now to provide new commercial enterprise space including R&D, and high quality facilities for start-up SME and potentially larger employers, which will also facilitate accelerated delivery of mixed residential and commercial schemes. But capital investment is needed to unlock and accelerate delivery of these important employment areas.

Planning applications for two sites have previously been submitted to the local Planning Authorities and the landowners maintain a desire to develop these sites, but the high cost of enabling infrastructure and poor return on investment has stalled any development.

The impact of a relatively small grant to fund these schemes will be highly significant. The project's impact on accelerated growth, delivery of essential homes including affordable, and much needed commercial floor space provides a strong return on investment for this developing A10 corridor.

A mixed housing and employment scheme to the east of the A10, will largely focus commercial property development upon micro and SME type businesses (start-ups).

A new business park concept for the proposed A10 roundabout (west) will be geared towards good quality B1, B2 commercial development and marketed to various sectors.

Outputs from each of these schemes:
Eco Business Park (required grant approx. £2m TBC)

- 42,000 square feet of commercial space brought to market
- 400 new jobs in 16-30 new tenant businesses
- Reshaping of local economy with R&D/high tech
- Creation of employment zone for local populous (reduce out commuting).

A10 Roundabout project (required grant approx. £1.5m TBC)

- New mix of businesses attracted to this low cost area
- Resulting in 500+ new jobs
- 100,000 square feet of new commercial stock brought to market (30 new businesses)
- Accelerated delivery of 250 homes including affordable dwellings.

Both the Eco Park and A10 roundabout developments benefit from their close proximity of the nearby railway station (under 2 km). With fast links to Cambridge, London and other major destinations, the station is an important fit with the wider rail infrastructure



investments and developments in Ely and Soham. These wider investments will result in a half hourly service from Littleport to Cambridge in the future.

Development of these sites will provide an increased number and importantly range of employment opportunities to Littleport. They will attract new business to Littleport to create extra employment and boost the local economy. The latest available data (2017) shows that Littleport generates £143m p.a. GVA/hour worked from 2125 jobs.

The Eco Business Park and A10 roundabout proposals will create 38% GVA growth and 900+ jobs. This will result in Littleport generating £200m p.a. GVA/hour worked from 3000 jobs.

The purpose of this Vision document is to attract investment. The CPCA will be looking for good returns on investment (ROI) in the form of progressive GVA growth. The two commercial projects need about £3.5m to enable.

The Eco Business Park is attractive - it effectively drives GVA productivity output by developing higher level jobs within the local economy. It will provide an innovative, high quality, sustainable development. The proposal intends to raise the benchmark to augmenting the profile of the area and attract new ventures/businesses as well as provide follow on space for growing companies at espace North.

The A10 Roundabout Project also creates jobs, but not factored in here is the enabling of housing development in close proximity, that will also provide good ROI. Both projects therefore have potentially strong returns for relatively low investments.

Doubling the size of the Littleport economy to £286m over 25 years will require further intervention to create additional employment and housing growth. This can be delivered as part of improvements to the town centre and creation of a station gateway. Options for both these areas will be reported in a future update to the Littleport Vision, once feasibility work has been completed.



Littleport Eco Park - artist's impression.

Creation of a Station Gateway



Littleport railway station is a key transport hub for the town and its importance will increase as planned improvements to the service to Ely, Cambridge and London King's Cross are delivered, resulting in longer and more frequent trains.

ECDC has recently provided additional car and cycle parking to serve the station and address existing parking problems in the area. However the stations immediate surroundings provide low amenity and a visually unwelcoming arrival point into the area. With its proximity to both the rail network and the river, the area does have potential to provide an attractive entrance to Littleport (Gateway) and deliver a mixed live/work hub.

A key element of the Littleport Vision 2030 is to ensure that sufficient land and commercial premises are available to allow business growth. Development of the station area as a new gateway, with premises and visual appeal, will help attract businesses. This should be fully exploited to meet objectives connected with raising GVA and work-live local.



ECDC wishes to develop initial concept ideas for development of the Littleport Station Gateway area, which will provide a broad vision for the development of the area, including mix of land uses and indicative layout and good connectivity to the station from the town centre and housing developments. Proposals to enhance the marina and the riverside will also be included.



Options for the Future of Littleport Town Centre



Population and employment growth must be supported by improvements in shops, services and facilities.

A priority is to develop the retail offering and attract a range of new and relevant outlets to increase the attractiveness of Littleport town centre as a shopping and leisure destination for the growing local population.

However, Littleport town centre is facing challenges for a number of reasons:

- It is not located on the most active route into and through the town
- It is no longer at the centre of the village
- Traditional town centre uses are leaving the town
- Town centre uses such as community and leisure are declining
- Businesses and other activities are relocating outside the centre.

In addition to this, the way people shop and use their town centre is evolving in line with national trends and influenced by changing technologies. Development of the town centre needs to embrace and adapt to these challenges. This should include a mix of office and retail development supporting community or leisure uses to support the town centres attractiveness and amenity. Light touch interventions will not be enough. Recent conversion of retail units to residential dwellings means that strategic thinking will be needed to renew and reshape the town centre in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.

A range of options for potential changes that can be made to enhance and improve the town centre to ensure it meets the needs of local residents will be explored with key stakeholders, the Parish Council, businesses and the local community.



Increase Skills Levels



In order to improve social mobility and workforce productivity we need to address skills issues and raise aspirations in Littleport.

Progress is already being made with this. The Fenland and East Cambridgeshire Opportunity area Programme is working to raise aspiration and increase access for young people to a wide range of career choices and post-16 routes and Enterprise Advisors from local businesses are working with Littleport and East Cambs Academy to develop a careers and enterprise plan.

However, in order to ensure Littleport residents have the skills required to deliver the growth targets relating to GVA growth, the District Council will work with the CPCA Skills Team to assess local demand for skills – identify skill shortages and gaps and any hard to fill vacancies.

The CPCA Skills Hub proposes to fulfil a brokerage and facilitation role. This can be utilised to bring employers and providers in Littleport together. Training should be provided not only for young people, but should also target low skilled and low paid adult residents in the workforce and support adults in work to upskill.

One of the findings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Skills Strategy is that often school leavers do not possess some of the practical skills to function in the modern workplace. The CPCA is running a 3-year Work Readiness pilot programme. This could be rolled out to Littleport to develop students confidence and the personal skills required in the workplace and support them to gain recognised qualifications.



Improve Digital Connectivity



In order to attract businesses and encourage home workers Littleport needs to offer higher speed internet connections.

A review of the available data regarding the towns internet infrastructure should be conducted and, if required, a programme of retrofitting low rated residential and commercial areas be carried out.

Connecting Cambridgeshire is conducting a review of mobile coverage to identify any issues and gaps in coverage now and what is needed to prepare for 5G networks. This study area includes Littleport and ECDC would look to implement any recommendations from this study.

In order to support the town centre and local businesses, free town centre wifi should also be provided. The estimated cost of the required

infrastructure to cover Littleport Station, the new leisure centre/school site as well as the town centre is c.£15,000.

Benefits of this include:

- Improved speed and accessibility of internet in Littleport town centre
- Enable users to easily find shops, restaurants, services and events in the town.
- Creation of a digital platform where businesses can increase awareness and engage with customers.
- Allows more social interaction, helping to make the town centre an attractive meeting place and communal hub.
- Help keep people in the town centre for longer, spending money.
- Provide valuable marketing data such as how many people visit the town and where they go whilst they are here.

Deliver additional Housing



Littleport is located just a few minutes' drive north of Ely and the wider district is identified as being part of the top five areas nationally for future population growth. Littleport has a significant number of housing schemes in the pipeline including applications for around 1,000 homes over the next 5-7 years. This links in with major investments in new schools and leisure facilities.

In addition to the homes identified in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, new housing could be provided at the station gateway.



A New Littleport Country Park



Littleport is characterised by its slightly elevated location above the surrounding fenland landscape with the River Great Ouse and its floodplain to the east of the town. To the north-west of Littleport is the Ouse Washes, which is of international and national importance for its wildlife and rare breeding birds, and the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust's Welney Wetland Centre.

Although the town benefits from being located close to a key riverside walking/cycling route (which forms part of the national cycling network) direct access to the countryside particularly to the north and west of the town is limited.

Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) recommends

that everyone should have access to natural greenspace of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home. The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) identifies that Littleport (and surrounding Eastern Fen and Town area) has a significant total deficiency against this 2ha ANGSt standard.

The implications of this deficiency are two-fold. Firstly, the health and well-being of current and future residents may be adversely impacted through this lack of informal open space for residents to access and enjoy the open countryside. Secondly, this encourages people to travel further afield to more sensitive sites such as Chettisham Meadow SSSI and Ely Pits and Meadows SSSI, to access the countryside for activities such as dog walking, thereby increasing the risk to these important sites / habitats from visitor disturbance.

The CPCA's emerging Non-Statutory Strategic Spatial Framework states that putting nature at the heart of its ambition growth agenda is fundamental to both the success of the local economy and to quality of life and wellbeing. The CPCA has also recently endorsed a Vision for Nature which seeks to "put nature at the heart of the growth agenda" and sets out the need for environmental net gain.

The Littleport Vision 2030 supports the creation of an area of country park on The Moors, Station Road, thereby providing additional publicly accessible open space and better and more accessible links between the town, the River Great Ouse and the wider countryside to address this deficit. This will also create an attractive entrance to the Station Gateway and the Marina area.

The country park will also open up access to the riverside from the town centre and create opportunities for more leisure facilities along the river.

Sustainable Travel



Whilst Littleport benefits from a regular train service, which is due to improve with longer trains and a half hourly service in the future, other forms of public and active transport are poorly serviced.

The CPCA has devolved powers in public transport and is considering the case for bus franchising or a strategic bus partnership. The CPCA is therefore reviewing bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and has a stated aim of wanting to improve services in rural areas.

East Cambridgeshire District Council is planning to undertake its own review of bus services across the district to identify routes

that are viable or can become viable over a period of time. It will identify key bus routes for local residents that enable access to work, learning, healthcare and wellbeing support, food shopping and leisure. This will cover Littleport and take into consideration the proposals within the Vision document.

The District Council is also planning to produce a Cycling and Walking Strategy. This will look at strategic routes that would enable more people to walk and cycle for shorter journeys rather than use a car. This should include opportunities for people to walk and cycle around Littleport and to employment areas, Ely and neighbouring villages.



Action Plan

The action plan below sets out the first phase of growth delivery for Littleport. ECDC will work with the CPCA, key stakeholders, the Parish Council, businesses and the local community to deliver the interventions identified.

The first priority will be to secure the funding required to accelerate delivery of these schemes, which will unlock GVA growth in Littleport and provide much needed new employment opportunities.

To double the size of the Littleport economy will require a second phase of work to deliver the town centre and station gateway improvements. More work will therefore be undertaken in the future to programme the delivery of this shortfall through a subsequent update of the masterplan, once feasibility studies have been completed.

	Intervention/s	Link to CA Strategic Goal	Additional Jobs Created	Additional Housing Provided	Additional GVA Generated	Indicative Cost	Key Indicator/ Target	Timeframe short (0-5 years) medium (5-10) long (10-15)
Littleport Business Growth Zone	Create a Business Growth Zone within the town	Access to a good job within easy reach of home	TBC	N/A	To be determined	To be determined	Work With CPCA to establish a Littleport Business Growth Zone	Short
	A10 Roundabouts Project	The UK's capital of innovation and productivity	500	250	£54m	Approx £1.5m	Work with developers to progress delivery of the site	Short/medium
	Eco Park Project		400	N/A	£54m	Approx £2.0m	Work with developers to progress delivery of the site	Short/medium

	Intervention/s	Link to CA Strategic Goal	Additional Jobs Created	Additional Housing Provided	Additional GVA Generated	Indicative Cost	Key Indicator/Target	Timeframe short (0-5 years) medium (5-10) long (10-15)
Create a Littleport Station Gateway	Develop initial concept ideas for development of the Littleport Station Gateway area to provide a mixed use live/work hub.	Access to a good job within easy reach of home Healthy, thriving and prosperous communities	To be determined through business planning process	To be determined through business planning process	To be determined through business planning process	£150,000 for business plan development	Produce a business plan for development of the site Delivery of site	Short Medium/long
Options for the Future Littleport Town Centre	Explore a range of options to enhance and improve the town centre to ensure to meets the needs of local residents.	Access to a good job within easy reach of home Healthy, thriving and prosperous communities	To be determined through business planning process	To be determined through business planning process	To be determined through business planning process	£150,000 for business plan development	Produce a business plan for development of the town centre Delivery of site	Short Medium/long
Increase Skills Levels	Explore roll out of CPCA skills and Training programmes to Littleport.	A workforce for the modern world founded on investment on skills and education	N/A	N/A	TBC	TBC	Work with CPCA to develop a training programme for Littleport to include roll out of the Work Readiness Programme.	Short

	Intervention/s	Link to CA Strategic Goal	Additional Jobs Created	Additional Housing Provided	Additional GVA Generated	Indicative Cost	Key Indicator/Target	Timeframe short (0-5 years) medium (5-10) long (10-15)
Improve Digital Connectivity	Enable required infrastructure for town centre wifi –to cover station, new leisure centre/school site and town centre to support the town centre and local businesses.	Access to a good job within easy reach of home Healthy, thriving and prosperous communities	N/A	N/A	TBC	Approx £15,000	Install necessary infrastructure to launch free town centre wifi in Littleport Review the findings of the Connecting Cambridgeshire mobile connectivity survey work and implement any recommendations.	Short
Deliver Additional Housing	Deliver additional homes to those identified in the Local Plan to assist the CPCA in meeting its targets for housing delivery.	Healthy, thriving and prosperous communities A high quality, sustainable environment	N/A	To be determined through business planning process	To be determined through business planning process	To be determined through business planning process	Deliver additional housing as part of the Littleport Station Gateway and Littleport Town Centre projects	Medium/long
A New Littleport Country Park	Creation of an area of country park to provide additional accessible open space to address the current deficit.	A high quality, sustainable environment					Work with partners to enhance The Moors area and create a country park and access to the river and wider countryside	Medium

	Intervention/s	Link to CA Strategic Goal	Additional Jobs Created	Additional Housing Provided	Additional GVA Generated	Indicative Cost	Key Indicator/Target	Timeframe short (0-5 years) medium (5-10) long (10-15)
Sustainable Travel	Review of bus services and creation of a walking and cycling strategy	Healthy, thriving and prosperous communities A high quality, sustainable environment	NA	NA	NA		Engage in CPCA and ECDC Bus reviews Work with CCC and ECDC to produce a walking and cycling improvement plan for Littleport.	Short
Total Phase I			900+	250+	£54m	£4m		

