



HUNTINGDONSHIRE



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OVERVIEW

Each district of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is different; hence we have developed distinct approaches for the distinct 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 approach outlines the major schemes expected to be delivered within each area to deliver our objectives, both directly by ourselves 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.

This section 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.

BACKGROUND

Huntingdonshire is the largest district in Cambridgeshire, with a population of 181,804 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 people per acre in Cambridge. Local employment and key services are focused in the market towns of Huntingdon, St Neots, and St Ives. Huntingdonshire's other towns are the smaller, more rural town of Ramsey and Godmanchester which is closely linked to

Huntingdon. All five of Huntingdon's towns and the many rural villages in the district have strong links to neighbouring communities, including Cambridge to the east, Peterborough to the north and Bedford to the southwest. 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 180,000 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 strategic expansion location of Alconbury Weald;
- St Neots, including Little Paxton and the strategic expansion location at St Neots East;
- St Ives; and
- Ramsey, including Bury and the former RAF Upwood site.



TRANSPORT CHALLENGES

OVERVIEW

The predominantly rural nature of Huntingdonshire means that the 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 issues such as local congestion, particularly within the market towns and also to poor air quality. The high traffic flows, particularly through rural villages and in the various high streets in the district also have negative impacts on the local environment and this contributes to making 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.

ACCESSIBILITY TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES

One of the key challenges facing the district is increasing the accessibility to essential services. Access to a range of places, especially for employment, education and leisure is essential for the residents of and visitors to Huntingdonshire. In terms of key movements and key service destinations, ensuring there is good, fast, and reliable connectivity to Cambridge, Peterborough and also within the district to the key market towns of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, and Ramsey is crucial.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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, training, and education opportunities further afield, such as at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

CROSS BORDER TRAVEL

There are strong employment links across the border to Central Bedfordshire and enhancing cross border journeys is an area identified as in need of improvement for Huntingdonshire.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Within the district, there are many residents who lack access to private transport – particularly within rural villages – and these areas often have limited or no access to good quality and affordable public transport. Subsequently social exclusion is exacerbated and as a result some people 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. 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 or connection. However, the Ting service in West Huntingdonshire provides for an innovative Uber-style bus service trial serving parts of Huntingdonshire, allowing access to key destinations for residents.

ACTIVE TRAVEL

Whilst some areas of the larger market towns do have a relatively good quality active travel network already in existence, well connected, dedicated, high-quality walking



and cycling infrastructure is limited outside of Huntingdon, St Neots and St Ives. These towns require updated and improved provision in many cases too. Safe, quality active travel opportunities are particularly limited in rural areas and villages. As a result, the use of active modes more widely is limited and contributes to poor health outcomes. A key challenge for the plan is to place greater emphasis on providing the missing links within the active travel network and capturing opportunities for longer distance cycle routes for commuting and recreation.

FUTURE GROWTH

Delivering the growth proposed in the *Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036* in a sustainable way for the transport network is a key challenge for the district. 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 without worsening congestion and provide seamless public transport connectivity between market towns and between the district and other locations such as Cambridge, Peterborough, and London.

A proposed new rail station at Alconbury would enable a north-south rail connection and bring benefits to residents, workers and businesses within the new development as well as creating valuable links to other economic hubs. The environmental impacts of such transport infrastructure must however be mitigated, with measures implemented to maximise carbon and health benefits of the scheme.

We will work closely with partners at Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) as well as Cambridgeshire County Council, Network Rail and National Highways and other key stakeholders to help secure funding sources, recognising too that HDC are a Community Infrastructure Levy charging authority, to enable the required infrastructure for this growth to be delivered.

PROGRESS TO DATE

In recent years, progress has been made on several different transport issues for Huntingdonshire:

A14

The £1.5bn A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme is one such example. 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.

ST NEOTS

Major investment is also being delivered in St Neots, agreed by our Combined Authority Board in June 2018. This package of interventions was designed to pave the way for accelerated growth within the town and 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) that will deliver six projects; aimed at transforming the town for the benefit of local people, businesses, and visitors.

DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT

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 providing an innovative 'Uber-style' service across parts of Huntingdonshire.



Passenger levels have continued to increase significantly, and the service has now been extended and fully funded to run until the end of 2023.

LOCAL VISION

Our vision for Huntingdonshire is:

To help tackle climate change and support growth within Huntingdonshire, allowing the economy to thrive, while promoting and enhancing active travel and tackling existing congestion.

The vision will be supported by the delivery of this Plan, the *Transport Strategy for Huntingdonshire* (TSfH) and a range of other child documents, including the *Active Travel Strategy* and the *Bus Service Improvements Plan* (BSIP).

OUR APPROACH

CONNECTIVITY

Creating better links between the five market towns within the district, as well as Greater Cambridge, Peterborough, South Cambridgeshire, and Fenland will make Huntingdonshire a more attractive place to live and work. It is also important that cross border and regionally and nationally strategic movements are enhanced.

Sustainable alternative travel modes, particularly public transport and active travel will be key to improving connectivity in Huntingdonshire. Public transport in all of its

guises remains a vital tool in sustainably moving people to and from their homes to key services.

BUSES

The bus network is key to delivering greater connectivity throughout our region linking larger towns with some smaller villages through more frequent local routes and establishing frequent services for core inter-urban routes, such as St Neots – Cambourne – Cambridge, Alconbury – Huntingdon – St Ives – Cambridge and Peterborough, Bedford – St Neots – Cambourne – Cambridge, Peterborough – Alconbury, Huntingdon – St Neots, Huntingdon – St Ives – Cambridge and Peterborough – Ramsey – Warboys.

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.

The revised BSIP will be an important tool for helping us to deliver bus service improvements in the region, and the TSfH will help us focus on the local bus network and the improvements and enhancements required both now and in the future with the new developments proposed.

RURAL BUS SERVICES AND DRT

As well as addressing the key intra-urban routes within Huntingdonshire, which are so important to the movement of workforce and the delivery of growth, we will also tackle the gaps in public transport provision in the rural areas, including the villages and the more rural town of Ramsey.

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 identifies Ramsey as a Spatial Planning Area and one of the main locations 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.

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.

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 HDC and building on the Ting trial, we will ensure that local community and DRT provides accessibility for all, seamlessly integrated into the bus and rail network with dedicated interchanges and joint ticketing wherever possible.

Again, the BSIP and the TSfH will be key to delivering these targeted improvements and we continue to investigate options for bus reform in the region.

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.

INTERCHANGE AND MODAL INTEGRATION

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 Mobility (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 be underestimated – investment will be forthcoming to ensure safe, well-maintained links are provided to Mobility (Travel) Hubs and major attractors, including key transport hubs. For example, we will investigate where best to locate any new bus stations or interchange facilities in Huntingdon and the market towns, where this is required. Wherever possible, these will be closely aligned with other modes and interchanges, for example rail stations.

As part of this overarching package, due consideration will be given to car share schemes, improving the safety of our active travel routes, whilst examining the appropriate implementation of e-bike and e-scooter schemes within the towns of Huntingdonshire.

RAIL

Improving the rail offering in the region is another key aspect of this Plan, including in Huntingdonshire.

We will explore opportunities to enhance strategic public transport accessibility and support growth through new infrastructure, including improving multi-modal connectivity to Alconbury Weald. This includes the potential for a new railway station



being investigated with partners at Alconbury Weald, as outlined in *Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036*:

“Transport infrastructure improvements proportionate to the scale of development including linkages to the Cambridgeshire Busway and the identified opportunity for provision of a railway station on the East Coast Mainline Railway”

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 and government 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.

ACTIVE TRAVEL

Active travel is a key element to our strategy for Huntingdonshire. Increasing uptake in the district is crucial and will take the form of better infrastructure and routes within our market towns, and also connecting villages to these towns where services can be provided.

New, high-quality active travel infrastructure helps 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.

We must acknowledge that in the more rural areas of Huntingdonshire this is a particular challenge, with distance to travel by cycle or walking as well as real and perceived safety issues providing a barrier to uptake. The *Active Travel Strategy* and

the TSfH will be key tools in helping to tackle these issues and for helping to ‘fill in’ gaps in the network and improve connectivity.

HIGHWAYS

Despite active travel and public transport measures being the priority, there remains a need to invest in targeted highway improvements in the district, such as the A141 and St Ives Improvements, so that the needs of all users are met.

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 Gibbet and the Black Cat Roundabout, will also improve accessibility to Greater Cambridge and the rest of the UK and help to make Huntingdonshire a more attractive place to live and work.

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.



ALTERNATIVE FUELS AND TECHNOLOGY

Sixteen electric charging points have been installed around Huntingdonshire, and we will continue to support electric vehicle charging and infrastructure for electric public transport; in partnership with HDC and central government with the aim to reduce carbon emissions and improve local air quality.

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 being a key local corridor between St Neots, Huntingdon, Alconbury and Peterborough. Between Junction 10 at Baldock (in North Hertfordshire) 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 linking Cambridge, Bedford, and Milton Keynes to Oxford, transforming public transport accessibility across the Oxford to Cambridge corridor. 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 central 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. With regards to the A141, a study has been undertaken on the options for improving the performance of the highway which has reached Outline Business Case (OBC) and we remain committed to delivering improvements. The multi modal offer for Alconbury will include working with partners to develop a new rail station, as outlined in *Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036*, 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 is currently being prioritised and worked on 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 extensive parish also 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.

A study will also 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.

