

## Report to Cabinet

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Buckinghamshire Strategic infrastructure Plan</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Monday 24 July 2017
<b>Date can be implemented:</b>	Tuesday 1 August 2017
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<b>Local members affected:</b>	All
<b>Portfolio areas affected:</b>	Planning and Environment

*For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444*

### Summary

This report sets out the progress so far on the preparation of the Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan (BSIP) and sets out recommendations for agreement on phase 1 spatial principles to manage growth in Buckinghamshire. The principles are based on the County Council's Strategic Plan outcomes (2017-2020) and clearly set out the County Council's position on growth in relation to County Council services and strategic infrastructure investments. The Strategic Infrastructure Plan is not a statutory planning document, it is intended to add value to infrastructure planning through the Local Plan process; influence and engage key stakeholders in managing and mitigating growth impacts, including promoters of national infrastructure projects. The BSIP is intended to overcome the difficulties in planning for growth by taking a positive approach to development and outcome maximisation both in the delivery of services and strategic infrastructure investment.

### Recommendation

That the County Council note the progress so far in the development of the Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan and adopt the following spatial principles to influence and shape future development in Buckinghamshire:

- Concentrated rather than dispersed housing and employment development

- Development that is well connected to transport corridors and transport hubs
- Growth patterns that respect the County's environmental and other planning constraints (including Green Belt and AONBs).

## **A Narrative**

### **1.0 Purpose of the report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the work undertaken so far on the preparation of a Buckinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan (BSIP) and to endorse part 1 of the work around spatial principles.

1.2 A key objective of the BSIP is to engage the Districts and the Local Enterprise Partnership in preparing, updating and refreshing work previously undertaken by Shared Intelligence two years ago, including the spatial principles for growth. This Cabinet report is the first stage in this process, to gain Buckinghamshire County Council's strategic leadership with this process.

1.3 The shift in approach from reacting to unplanned housing growth to a more responsive, planned approach enables the County Council to shape and influence growth as a key stakeholder alongside the Districts and the LEP. As the only Local Authority managing growth across the whole of the County geography the County Council is well placed to guide and influence spatial development in order to respond to service pressures and prioritise infrastructure investment according to needs. The adoption of spatial principles enable the County Council to most effectively plan and deliver services and work with key stakeholders to meet needs in the most efficient and integrated way. Commonly agreed strategic, spatial principles across all key stakeholders enable the effective co-ordination of growth and strategic infrastructure priorities across the District Local Plans, County-wide strategies and the Strategic Economic Plan for Bucks.

1.4 This report introduces the first part of the BSIP recommendations from Local Partnerships, a set of spatial principles around which to engage and influence key stakeholders including the District Local Plans, adjacent Local Authorities, government agencies and promoters of nationally significant infrastructure projects. The second part of the BSIP, prepared by Local Partnerships will include more detailed modelling and prioritisation of strategic infrastructure priorities – to be reported to Buckinghamshire County Council's Cabinet later this year, anticipated in October after engagement with the Districts and Local Enterprise Partnership over the summer. The BSIP has been informed to date by the emerging District Local Plans and the infrastructure needs assessed so far jointly with the Districts through the Infrastructure Delivery Plans supporting each Local Plan in Bucks.

### **2.0 Background**

2.1 The BSIP is intended to update the spatial principles and strategic infrastructure priorities of the Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Plan, commissioned by the Local Enterprise Partnership with and on behalf of Bucks County Council and Districts in 2015.

### **3.0 Buckinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan**

3.1 The BSIP is needed to manage growth in Buckinghamshire to address the impact on services and infrastructure alongside the emerging District Local Plans and the Strategic Economic Plan, prepared by the Local Enterprise Partnership. The County Council commissioned Local Partnerships, a public sector consultancy owned jointly by the Local

Government Association and HM Treasury to undertake this work in December 2016. The work has been commissioned in two parts, set out below. Taken as a whole, parts 1 and 2 of the BSIP set out the County Council's vision for social, economic and environmental well-being in Buckinghamshire as set out in the County Council's Strategic Plan 2017-2020.

### **3.2 Methodology and approach**

3.3 The Spatial Principles proposed in this report are based on the County Council's Strategic Plan, a corporate planning framework which sets out the County Council's vision for Buckinghamshire. The aims and objectives set out in the County Council's Strategic Plan can also be used to prioritise infrastructure and measure success in the delivery of outcomes (a parallel piece of work informing part 2 of the Strategic Infrastructure Plan and expected to be reported to Cabinet in October 2017).

3.4 The Districts have been engaged so far in the development of the BSIP through their respective Local Plan processes and the Bucks Planning Group, which brings together County and District members and officers with responsibility for planning, transport and the environment with representatives from the Local Enterprise Partnership.

3.5 Local Partnerships, on behalf of the County Council has interviewed each of the Districts, at Leader and Chief Executive level, or their representatives in the preparation of this part 1 report and it has been regularly discussed at Bucks Planning Group meetings with District Cabinet members and officers. Local Partnerships has also met and interviewed the heads of service and key members of staff of Buckinghamshire County Council responsible for delivering and planning for the County's services and the executive team of the Local Enterprise Partnership. Information was obtained and discussed on how County Council services are planned and delivered at present, along with the opportunities that growth (and other strategic infrastructure proposals) provides for delivering these services in the future.

### **3.6 Part 1 – Spatial Principles**

3.7 The spatial principles presented in the Part 1 report, produced by Local Partnerships underpin the County Council's position on known infrastructure and growth proposals alongside the District Local Plans. They are also intended to form the basis of the County Council's approach to longer term proposals, beyond the current Local Plan period of 2033 in Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe and 2036 in Chiltern and South Bucks.

3.8 Local Partnerships recommend the following spatial principles:

- a) Concentrated rather than dispersed housing and employment development
- b) Development that is well connected to transport corridors and transport hubs
- c) Growth patterns that respect the County's environmental and other planning constraints (including Green Belt and AONBs).

3.9 These principles broadly reflect the settlement options proposed by the emerging District Plans and underpin the County Council response to the District Local Plans so far, as reported to the TEC Select Committee in March, report appended. These principles are intended to guide:

- ✓ the planning and delivery of services that the County Council is responsible for;
- ✓ the identification of strategic infrastructure priorities for investment;
- ✓ County Council consultation responses to the emerging District Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans in Buckinghamshire as well as all statutory and non- statutory

consultation responses affecting Buckinghamshire from adjacent Local Authorities or agencies;

- ✓ decision-making regarding growth in Bucks and influence key stakeholders;
- ✓ spatial development in Buckinghamshire in order to maximise outcomes and minimise impacts arising from growth.

### **3.10 Part 2 – Prioritisation and Delivery Options**

3.11 Part 2 of the BSIP uses a business case model to inform decision-making for strategic infrastructure planning, prioritisation and delivery options and will follow in a later report, expected to Cabinet in October. The second stage of the infrastructure work will look at the cost of the infrastructure, how it could be funded and how it will be delivered.

## **4.0 The Role of the County Council in Spatial Planning**

4.1 Buckinghamshire County Council has a non-statutory role in strategic development planning since the abolition of Structure Plans in 2004. However, the County Council has an obligation through the National Planning Policy Framework to work collaboratively with other bodies, to ensure that strategic priorities across local authority boundaries are properly coordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans. Buckinghamshire County Council has continued to respond positively to sustainable development on strategic planning matters and continues to work alongside the Districts, the Local Enterprise Partnership and central government on spatial planning matters affecting strategic infrastructure, growth and development across the whole County of Buckinghamshire.

4.2 Buckinghamshire County Council has a statutory responsibility for strategic planning as the County Highways Authority, County Transport Authority, County Flood Authority, County Education Authority and County Minerals and Waste Planning Authority and as the strategic authority with responsibility for Public Health. The County Council also fulfils other functions which advise on planning proposals such as the County Archaeology service which maintains the Historic Environment Record, the County Ecology service which has responsibility for monitoring and protecting the natural environment including the maintenance of the Bucks and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre and ecological resource of the County and the Public Rights of Way service which has responsibility for the managing and maintaining the County's Definitive Map. Aside from these statutory responsibilities the County Council fulfils an important role as a service commissioner and provider, landowner, landlord and commissioner of strategic infrastructure. The County Council provides an important strategic leadership role for the whole of the County, in terms of planning and delivering services and strategic infrastructure.

4.3 The County Council is not the Local Planning Authority for Buckinghamshire (with the notable exception of minerals and waste planning) as such the County Council is not seeking to take over the spatial planning role within the County; this role is clearly taken by the individual District Councils through their respective Local Plan processes. As such the County Council is not seeking to make any new proposals for growth but to set out a non-statutory, strategic infrastructure plan for Buckinghamshire with which to influence and engage key stakeholders in strategic planning; to co-ordinate and effectively manage the strategic infrastructure and service pressures arising from housing and employment growth and nationally significant infrastructure projects within and across the border of Buckinghamshire.

4.4 Spatial planning has an impact on service delivery and strategic infrastructure planning. The location and form new development takes will affect how efficiently the Council can deliver

its own services - in particular new highways and transport schemes, mitigation of flood risk, broadband, environmental impacts and take account of additional service demands arising from new housing growth including school places, health and social care services, countryside and environmental services. The BSIP has taken into account how these services are planned and delivered currently, as well as the opportunities to deliver them more efficiently, particularly in the light of continuing growth. Clear spatial principles relating to growth and infrastructure are needed to ensure the service outcomes for the people of Buckinghamshire are delivered in the most effective and efficient way.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

5.1 The County Council has commented at each stage of the District Local Plan process in each of the Districts in Buckinghamshire, each response is consistent with the spatial principles recommended in this report, as reported to the TEC<sup>1</sup> Select Committee in March 2017.

5.2 The conclusion of the Local Partnership's part 1 BSIP report is that commonly agreed spatial principles are needed which provide a clear spatial framework for managing growth in Bucks. Adoption of these spatial principles by the County Council is needed to:

- a) effectively engage with key partners and stakeholders in managing growth;
- b) enable the efficient planning and delivery of Council services and
- c) maximise the value / mitigation of national infrastructure projects and proposals in Buckinghamshire.

## **6.0 Next Steps**

6.1 The immediate next step is firstly to invite the Bucks District Councils and LEP to respond to the spatial principles recommended in this report and feedback through the Bucks Planning Group. Secondly, the Districts, BTVLEP and the County Council will need to meet perhaps as a workshop in August to discuss early prioritisation of strategic infrastructure and the process for preparation of Delivery Plans. Thirdly the Districts and BCC will need to work on the preparation of business cases for the Housing Infrastructure Fund; the deadline for submissions is the end of September.

6.2 BCC as a statutory consultee will need to respond to each of the Draft Local Plans during their public consultation periods, expected to be over the next few months. The County Council will continue to work with each of the District Local Planning Authorities and the LEP on the evidence base for the prioritisation and delivery of strategic infrastructure to support the Local Plans. Meanwhile County Council services will be preparing for growth through ongoing collaborations with Local Authorities and key agencies in each of the Districts. This process is ongoing and represents a long term commitment to sharing, refreshing and prioritising strategic infrastructure needs, service needs and funding strategic infrastructure investments.

6.3 The next stage of the BSIP will be to consider the Part 2 BSIP report of infrastructure prioritisation and consultation with the Districts and BTVLEP. The part 2 work will recommend criteria and economic modelling for strategic infrastructure prioritisation and report through the County Council, Local Enterprise Partnership and Bucks Planning Group in the autumn.

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<sup>1</sup> Transport, Economy and Communities Select Committee of Buckinghamshire County Council

## **B. Other options available, and their pros and cons**

6.4 An alternative option to the spatial framework for growth set out above is to continue the current operating model of BCC reacting to unplanned growth, planning with uncertainty and managing unrealistic expectations for County Council services, infrastructure plans and investment. The County Council has very good relationships with development management teams in the districts and negotiates contributions for many of its services however; there is limited opportunity to deliver the transformational infrastructure without significant government investment. The current approach is reactive, ad hoc and incremental based around individual planning applications which weakens resource efficiency and the realisation of benefits. The shift towards a more plan-led approach to development through the Local Plans will reduce uncertainty and closer co-operation on the sequencing and phasing of development will enable more strategic co-ordination of service and infrastructure pressures. The real challenge is in the delivery of critical, strategic infrastructure to enable the implementation of the Local Plans and join up service and infrastructure pressures across Local Plan geographies at a County wide spatial scale.

6.5 The County Council has a strategic co-ordinating role for shaping and influencing growth to deliver County wide benefits – a programme based approach is an option that would demonstrate visibility and transparency for County Council decision-making. Alternative models of service delivery and infrastructure investment are needed to manage the scale of growth proposed in line with delivery of the County Council's strategic outcomes, as set out in the County Council's Strategic Plan. The pace and scale of growth and infrastructure projects proposed in Bucks is unprecedented outside London and needs to be well managed and co-ordinated to maximise resource efficiency and outcomes. The Bucks spatial geography is diverse and requires co-operation with adjacent local authorities, for example the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor in the north and the proposed expansion of Heathrow and Slough to the south. County wide co-ordination of growth based on commonly agreed spatial principles is needed to support the delivery of District Local Plans, deliver the benefits of sub-national growth plans and mitigate undesirable impacts on Bucks. Visibility and transparency of approach is needed that improves confidence and collaboration across key stakeholders.

## **C. Resource implications**

6.6 The purpose of developing Spatial Principles is to enable the County Council to influence growth proposals more efficiently so that they reflect the Council's priorities and enable it to deliver its services more efficiently.

6.7 This will allow the Council to use current resources more efficiently. It is too early to quantify the impact, however this is an area that should be considered in more detail and that should feed into the work on growth and infrastructure delivery.

## **D. Value for Money (VfM) Self Assessment**

NA

## **E. Legal implications**

6.8 The Spatial Principles are not part of the statutory planning process. However they will be used to respond to consultation on statutory documents.

## **F. Property implications**

NA

## **G. Other implications/issues**

NA

## **H. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views**

6.9 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment is championing this Part 1 report of spatial principles for the Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan with the support of the Leader of the Council. It has been discussed by the Districts who broadly support the need for an integrated strategic infrastructure plan but query the need for the County Council to adopt spatial principles for influencing infrastructure priorities / growth in Bucks, preferring to see the spatial principles for growth to be led through their emerging Local Plans. The Districts agreed to discuss more fully at the next stage – part 2 of the report, in terms of infrastructure prioritisation, programming and funding in order to deliver a co-ordinated programme to manage the strategic infrastructure needs of their Local Plans. It is supported by the Local Enterprise Partnership and has been referenced at the FPR Select Committee on 4 July, the TEC Select Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> July and full Council at the meeting on 13 July. Feedback from members at the Select Committees was that an annual review of the report is needed in order to be transparent on how the County Council is influencing growth and supporting the delivery of prioritised strategic infrastructure investment with the Districts.

## **I Communication issues**

NA

## **J Progress Monitoring**

NA

## **K Review**

NA

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## **Background Papers**

Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Plan Spatial Principles (Part 1) – Local Partnerships  
Ref *Spatial Principles cabinet supporting document V5 13-07-17 WAP1*

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### ***Your questions and views***

*If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.*

*If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Member Services Team by 5.00pm on Friday 21 July 2017. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to [democracy@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)*