



Report to Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee

Date:	16 February 2023
Title:	Key planning, transport and regeneration strategies alignment update
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr Peter Strachan, Cllr Steve Broadbent
Contact officers:	Rosie Brake, Hannah Joyce, Claire Phillips, Shabnam Ali
Ward(s) affected:	All
Recommendations:	To note the three-way relationship between the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire, Local Transport Plan 5 and the Regeneration ambitions for Buckinghamshire and how they are being synergised and aligned.
Reason for decision:	To ensure the Select Committee is kept up to date with the alignment of the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire, Local Transport Plan 5 and the Regeneration Frameworks.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the three-way relationship between the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire (LP4B), Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) and the Regeneration ambitions for Buckinghamshire and how they are being synergised and aligned. It examines how the three interlink in terms of their scope and programme of work, and how communication and engagement will be managed and integrated. Please note that overall scrutiny of LTP5 sits with the Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 The Council is preparing a number of plans and strategies that will need to interlink and reinforce each other, taking their cues from Council-wide strategic documents such as the Corporate Plan and the Strategic Vision. It is important that these strategies present consistent ambitions and synergise their proposals, rather than conflict with, each other. Principal among these are:
- a) Local Plan for Buckinghamshire
 - b) Local Transport Plan 5
 - c) Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework and the Regeneration Strategies for Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham
- 2.2 We aim to align this work along a range of dimensions, including: scope of work; overall programme and dependencies; and the timing of engagement and consultation with the public.
- 2.3 It is worth noting that the LP4B must also take account of – and can provide a statutory underpinning to – a range of other important plans and strategies either adopted or under development within the Council, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Design Code pilot. We will be happy to return to the committee on these matters on a future occasion.

Scope of work

- 2.4 The LP4B is one of the Council's key corporate priorities. The Plan provides a major opportunity to shape the direction of growth of Buckinghamshire over the next 15 – 20 years. It will set out areas for new housing and employment, while also designating areas for protection and enhancement, such as our valued landscapes, natural habitats and heritage.
- 2.5 It will designate not only where and how much new development takes place, but also the quality required for that development and will secure the infrastructure (or funding for infrastructure) to support it. The LP4B is a plan with statutory force, setting out rules with which development proposals must accord, to have planning permission granted.
- 2.6 As a local transport authority, the Transport Act 2000¹ requires the Council to prepare an LTP which typically looks forward over 10-15 years. LTPs must:
- a) Set out the long-term strategic priorities and objectives for transport in Buckinghamshire
 - b) Be in the form of a strategic policy document and separate shorter term implementation plan

¹ https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/38/pdfs/ukpga_20000038_en.pdf

- c) Be supported by an evidence base which outlines the current baseline and future projections with regard to transport connectivity, accessibility and carbon emissions.
- 2.7 The Council is preparing an overall Regeneration Framework for Buckinghamshire, and supporting Regeneration Frameworks and Strategies for Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham town centres.
- 2.8 The Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework sets out the strategic priorities to guide the overall direction for regeneration activity in different places across Buckinghamshire.
- 2.9 It sets out the role our market towns and villages play in achieving our ambitions for regeneration as key local centres for our people and our businesses. The document will also help to guide and support regeneration and placemaking activity at a local level.
- 2.10 The place-based strategies are developed in close collaboration with local regeneration boards and stakeholder groups, drawing on local knowledge and sensitive to local priorities. They can inform the Local Plan development process in the short term by setting out the areas of focus and ambition for the town centres. In the longer term they can help to underpin Local Plan work in demonstrating the deliverability of proposals.
- 2.11 Work on Aylesbury has identified our key priorities for regeneration in the town centre. To realise these opportunities, a plan for developing investment proposals that allow the Council to bid for future funding opportunities as well as attracting third party investment in the town centre is being developed.
- 2.12 The High Wycombe Regeneration Strategy is a refresh of a 2019 version created by Wycombe District Council. The Strategy has been updated to reflect the move to a Unitary authority with a focus on High Wycombe town rather than the former district area. In addition, the strategy reflects a post Covid-19 world in which our work, shopping and leisure habits have changed. We are currently engaging with stakeholders on the proposed vision, themes and locations.
- 2.13 The Chesham Regeneration Strategy is focused on the Town Centre with its purpose to create an overarching document enabling local strategies such as the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan as well as Buckinghamshire-wide frameworks such as the LTP. It is driven by a locally generated vision, building on the town's strengths in heritage, culture, and location, to become resilient, adapting to the changing economic climate, vibrant and diverse, thriving for both now and the future. The strategy will set the aspirations to guide change, creating priorities for action.
- 2.14 The opportunities for the scope of these plans to work together to achieve more than the sum of their parts include:

- a) Plans for town centre regeneration can inform how much growth the LP4B can allocate to town centres, and how much remains to be sourced from other supplies of land.
- b) By integrating social, economic and physical priorities, in line with local needs and ambitions, they can improve the quality of places, in a way that is locally sanctioned.
- c) Regeneration studies can also identify or generate requirements for development – infrastructure, open space, transport initiatives, public realm enhancement – that can be incorporated as rules into the LP4B to be delivered through planning obligations which support local communities’ ambitions. The transport initiatives can be designed to align with the LTP5 objectives.
- d) Ultimately, the LP4B will need to demonstrate to the examination Planning Inspector that regeneration proposals have a reasonable prospect of delivery, so the more that the studies can demonstrate in terms of landowner commitment, achievability and viability, the better this will support the LP4B process.
- e) In terms of LTP5, an understanding of the patterns of travel activity associated with settlements of different types and sizes, and the Council’s ambitions for the transport network, can help inform the proposed distribution of growth in the LP4B. This includes locating new developments in already well connected locations, identifying the need for new travel links and highlighting issues of funding and deliverability.
- f) This is an iterative process as it is likely there will also need to be growth in areas that will generate the need for entirely new transport links. LP4B can plan for this from the outset, achieving further transport benefits through scale or comprehensiveness and ensuring new communities are well connected by the most sustainable (i.e. low carbon) transport options.
- g) When the LP4B reaches the stage of allocating land for growth, it can set out rules to support the Council’s transport objectives through allocating development and infrastructure in appropriate locations, ensuring the delivery of high quality public realm, compact 20-minute neighbourhoods, high quality long-term public transport provision and, where necessary, highway efficiency/capacity improvements.

2.15 LTPs are likely to become the focus of engagement between central and local government around future funding for transport improvements. Grants from Government make up a significant proportion of the Council’s capital funding for new infrastructure schemes. Ensuring the LP4B, the Regeneration Frameworks and LTP5 are aligned will mean we can maximise opportunities for funding from new

developments which will both complement public investment and deliver our strategic objectives for infrastructure delivery. [The regional transport strategy](#) prepared by England's Economic Heartland will also inform the development of LTP5.

Programme and dependencies

- 2.16 The programmes for both LP4B and LTP5 are subject to considerable uncertainty as we wait to hear more detail from the Government.
- 2.17 For the LP4B, this rests on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) and the following secondary legislation and guidance. We set out more detail on this uncertainty in our previous report to the Committee in October 2022. Similarly, for LTP5, we are still awaiting detailed guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT).
- 2.18 The Council is still waiting to hear about the success of its Levelling Up Fund Round 2 submissions which included regeneration proposals for Aylesbury and High Wycombe. The outcome of this bid will impact on the programme of our key town centres strategies as there will be a requirement to ensure delivery of any successful projects by 2025.
- 2.19 The LP4B team is currently gathering evidence which will feed into a range of approaches to growth we will be developing through 2023.
- 2.20 The DfT have stated that they require LTPs to be largely completed by spring/summer 2024 in order to inform funding discussions with the Treasury for the next Spending Period (2025+).
- 2.21 The Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework and the Aylesbury and High Wycombe place-based strategies are proposed to be completed in early 2023. We note that the Aylesbury Regeneration update was also discussed at Select Committee in December 2022.
- 2.22 We are tracking the following dependencies across these pieces of work:
 - a) The capacity delivered by town centre regeneration will be a key piece of the jigsaw as the LP4B develops options for growth across Buckinghamshire
 - b) Sites put forward through the brownfield call for sites and the emerging process for assessing land available for development, can inform proposals for growth in our town centres
 - c) Future transport connections identified in LTP5 can also help inform proposals for sustainable growth across Buckinghamshire and maximise the scope for developer contributions.
 - d) The LP4B team will need to test options for growth for their transport impacts. We will consider these impacts together with transport colleagues

to assess their compatibility with LTP5 objectives, including carbon impacts. Our conclusions will inform the later drafts of both the LP4B and LTP5.

- e) As the LP4B develops, we will need to incorporate any requirements arising from the LTP and regeneration strategies into the plan's rules for site allocations.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Not applicable at this stage.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 The harmonisation of these three approaches will not require additional funding. The development of the strategies is being funded from existing Council budgets: the Local Plan has a dedicated Revenue budget of £3m over 4 years; the Regeneration Strategies are being developed by staff in the Regeneration Team, with external input funded from revenue budgets; the LTP is funded from the Transport Strategy budget plus £178K grant from the Department for Transport.
- 4.2 The delivery of projects within the LP4B, LTP5 and Regeneration Strategies will require funding on a case-by-case basis, generally from external funding sources such as developer contributions and government grants.
- 4.3 The statutory instrument which brought Buckinghamshire Council into being requires the Council to have a Local Plan in place by April 2025. At present it must be prepared according to the [Town and Country Planning Regulations 2012](#). However, legislative change is on the horizon with the [Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill](#). We have briefed the committee before on the uncertainties associated with this process.
- 4.4 The Local Plan process itself is adequately resourced, as previously reported to the committee. The delivery of the Local Plan aspirations will be resourced principally from planning obligations and the adoption of the Plan will also provide a robust justification for bidding for forward funding from grant or lending sources. Having an up to date Plan in place will also facilitate the Development Management process, leading to fewer appeals and / or dismissal of appeals, together with their associated costs and unwanted effects.
- 4.5 The Transport Act 2000² requires the Council to prepare an LTP which typically looks forward over 10-15 years. Once adopted it will inform funding discussions with Treasury for the next Spending Period (2025+).

² https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/38/pdfs/ukpga_20000038_en.pdf

4.6 The regeneration of town centres will require inward investment, and investment options and opportunities, including Government Grants like the Levelling Up Fund, and developer-led opportunities, will be developed alongside the strategies.

4.7 Harmonisation of the three approaches will strengthen any business cases developed for funding bids.

5. Corporate implications

5.1 Working together, the LP4B, LTP5 and the regeneration framework and strategies will be instrumental in delivering against Corporate Plan priorities such as increasing prosperity, strengthening our communities and improving our environment. They will support the ambitions of the Buckinghamshire Strategic Vision by creating the conditions for successful businesses, vibrant and connected places, and a thriving culture, heritage and natural environment.

5.2 The strategies present significant opportunities to reduce carbon consumption by locating development in the right places, such as town centres, and establishing initiatives to travel sustainably or reduce the need to travel. These support the 'regulatory' and 'enabling change' approaches of Buckinghamshire's [Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy](#).

5.3 The Council's land holdings present an opportunity to facilitate the delivery of development (where appropriate), generate value, and give the Council leverage in wider development negotiations.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 The teams have engaged, and will continue to engage, with Members through verbal and written briefings, creating the opportunity for Members to have any questions answered.

6.2 The teams also intend to engage with Parish and Town Councils through the Community Boards as their plans and strategies develop, to support the identification of local priorities.

6.3 In terms of the regeneration frameworks and strategies, the following member boards and groups are engaged in the development of the programme:

- a) High Wycombe – High Wycombe Regeneration Board takes place once a quarter. The Council also meets regularly with the High Wycombe BIDCo and Town Centre Partnership with Cressex BidCo

- b) Chesham – Chesham Regeneration Group takes place once a quarter. The Council has also started to engage with the Chesham Town Team, which represents key local stakeholders.
- c) Aylesbury – Garden Town Strategic Oversight Board takes place every quarter. Representatives include Buckinghamshire Council Members, Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Homes England.

6.4 Overall scrutiny of LTP5 sits with the Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 It is important that the Council provides consistency and continuity in its communication with the public and that we coordinate efforts to ensure we avoid ‘consultation fatigue’.
- 7.2 Both the LP4B and LTP5 teams are considering engagement on Visions, and/or Themes and Objectives early in 2023. We’ll be working together to ensure that these are compatible and that the public recognise any distinctions. It’s worth observing that while different plans or strategies across the Council may develop distinct Vision statements to serve their specific purposes, we work together to ensure that they are all following a consistent direction, harmonising and not conflicting.
- 7.3 Later in 2023 the LP4B team is working towards public engagement on growth options; subsequent to that, the LTP5 team will follow on later with a consultation on the draft LTP5.
- 7.4 In terms of the regeneration frameworks and strategies, the Council is currently engaging with stakeholders on the proposed vision, themes and locations for the Chesham and High Wycombe town strategies.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 Officers will continue to report regularly on strategy alignment, as well as providing updates on individual plans and strategies.

9. Background papers

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the Cabinet

Member to consider please inform the Democratic Services team. This can be done by telephone [] or email []

