

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

Ramboll has been commissioned to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the approaches being considered as part of the draft North East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NEC AAP).

The plan is currently referred to as the Cambridge Northern Fringe Area Action Plan in the Councils' Local Development Scheme. Reflecting the more comprehensive vision being envisaged for the area, and the need to integrate development better with surrounding communities, the Councils consider that the plan should be renamed the 'North East Cambridge Area Action Plan', and they are seeking views on this. From this point in this document onwards we refer to the Area Action Plan as the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan, and the area being considered as North East Cambridge (NEC).

A Scoping Report for the Cambridge Northern Fringe East (CNFE) Area Action Plan was produced in August 2014<sup>1</sup> and provides context for the appraisal and identifies issues of particular importance to the area.

An Issues and Options 1 report was produced for consultation in 2014 and recognising the challenges involved in relocating the Anglian Water's Water Recycling Centre (WRC), the report set out four potential options for the potential redevelopment of the area. An Interim SA Report was prepared to accompany the 2014 Issues and Options document and was subject to public consultation. While the results from the consultation indicated a strong preference for variations of Options 2 and 4, Cambridge City Council members considered the cost and challenge of relocating the Water Recycling Centre under Option 4 was unfeasible, rendering the option impossible to implement. Work on preparing the AAP was paused at this point to consider the way forward, and whilst the Councils Local Plans were progressed.'

Since consultation on the Issues and Options document there have been a number of significant developments that affect and inform the preparation of the AAP including:

- The new north Cambridge Railway Station and extension of the Guided Busway have opened;
- The Ely to Cambridge Transport Study has been completed, highlighting the constraints and opportunities of North East Cambridge;
- The Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) – the HIF is an initiative that was established in July 2017 to unlock challenging sites for the redevelopment of significant housing. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority endorsed a bid submitted by Cambridge City Council and Anglian Water to relocate the WRC releasing the site for comprehensive regeneration. The HIF bid has been shortlisted and therefore the AAP is required to be progressed, prompting a need to revisit the development potential of NEC and the balance of the land use mix to be delivered from that previously proposed under the previous Issue and Options draft of the AAP.

In light of these developments, the Council therefore felt it necessary to assess a new set of development options for the future of the site and have also proposed to include the Science Park to the west whilst updating the name of the AAP to North East Cambridge (NEC).

This report is the SA Report which outlines the results of an appraisal of the sustainability effects of the plan's options (also referred to as reasonable alternatives) contained within the new Issues and Options 2019 consultation document. The SEA Directive and transposing SEA

Regulations require the identification, description and evaluation of the likely significant effects on the environment of “reasonable alternatives” taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme” (Reg 12 (1(b))).

## 2.2 The Area Action Plan

The NEC site, located between the A14, Chesterton and King’s Hedges wards and bounded by The Cambridge – Kings Lynn railway line, contains one of the last substantial brownfield sites within the city. The site straddles the administrative boundaries of Cambridge City Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and therefore the Councils have decided to take a co-ordinated approach to development through providing a commitment to prepare a joint Area Action Plan (AAP) for the area. This approach is to seek the wider regeneration of this part of the city with the creation of a revitalised, employment-focused area centred on the new transport interchange created by Cambridge North Station. As discussed above, the AAP comprises a wider area than the Cambridge Northern Fringe East policies in the Local Plans, incorporating the Cambridge Science Park to the west of Milton Road.

The Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans were adopted in 2018. Policy 15 of the Cambridge City Council Local Plan and Policy SS/4 of the South Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan allocate the CNF East for development. The policies say that “the amount of development, site capacity, viability, timescales and phasing of development will be established through the preparation of an AAP for the site.” The AAP is intended to provide a detailed and pro-active policy framework to guide development, regeneration and investment decisions across the area.

The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan also identifies the Cambridge Science Park as suitable for intensification. It is proposed to extend the AAP boundary to include Cambridge Science Park to the west of the site. This is to allow for comprehensive development of the area north of Cambridge.

The NEC AAP will provide the opportunity to engage the community and stakeholders in the consideration of such matters in a formal and structured process. It is expected that, through consultation, the AAP will establish a more definitive shared vision and objectives for the area as a whole as well as its constituent parts, and will set out the policies, proposals and site allocations required to ensure growth and development is promoted, coordinated and managed to deliver that vision and the social, environmental and economic outcomes sought.

## 2.3 How to comment on this report

This report does not constitute an environmental report (in the English planning system called a SA report) under the SEA regulations. At the issues and options stage, it is good practice to produce fairly brief reports which can then be developed into the formal (regulation compliant) SA report at a draft plan stage. This report has been prepared for consultation alongside the NEC AAP Issues and Options 2019 consultation document in order to present the potential sustainability implications of the issues and options. If you would like to make a comment about this report, please use the following contact details:

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