

Evidence required to support Planning Applications ahead of the North East Cambridge (NEC) Area Action Plan (AAP)

This note identifies the information required to be submitted in support of planning applications within NEC to enable the councils to determine compliance with the requirements of Policy SS/4 Part 4.e of the South Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan and Policies 14 and 15.e of the Cambridge City Council Local Plan. These policies are concerned with ensuring development does not compromise opportunities for the future redevelopment of the wider area.

Background

South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council are jointly preparing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for North East Cambridge, which will form part of the statutory development plan.

The area proposed to be covered by the AAP is shown in Annex 1. It includes the east of Milton Road – the area bounded by the A14, the railway and extending south to the Nuffield Road industrial area - and the west of Milton Road, including the Cambridge Science Park (CSP) and the Cambridge Regional College (CRC).

The area east of Milton Road is one of the last remaining significant brownfield sites in Greater Cambridge, extending to almost a square kilometre. It has long been an ambition of the local councils to take advantage of the opportunity this site affords to regenerate this part of the city and to support the continued economic success of the local economy.

Policy 15 of the City Local Plan, and Policy SS/4 of the South Cambs Local Plan, allocate the area for high quality mixed-use development, primarily for employment uses such as B1, B2 and B8, as well as a range of supporting commercial, retail, leisure and residential uses (subject to acceptable environmental conditions).

The local plans do not specify the amount of development, site capacities, or timescales for development, deferring such matters to the preparation of the joint AAP. This is because the planning of the area is affected by uncertainty over the future of the Anglian Water Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP), which covers a

significant part of the area and is a significant constraint on development of adjoining land.

Since the local plans were adopted the City Council has sought to secure funding, through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), to assist with the relocation of the WWTP off site. The vacated WWTP site together with land around the new Cambridge North station, the Cambridge Business Park, St John's Innovation Park, the Cambridge Science and other land, will, in accordance with development plan policy, provide the opportunity for the creation of a new urban quarter to the city which can make a significant contribution to the future housing and employment needs of Greater Cambridge.

To recognise this opportunity, the councils are preparing a joint Area Action Plan to guide the type, mix and location of development, ensuring this is coordinated, manages transport requirements, and delivers on a shared future vision of the place.

The councils recognise the component parts of the NEC AAP area will be developed out separately and at different times, potentially several years apart. While the councils wish to see early delivery on NEC, the councils consider that the future development context of NEC must be plan-led and not determined through planning applications for individual sites ahead of the AAP. As such, applications for development within the NEC AAP area that come forward ahead of the AAP, will need to satisfy the councils that they will not prejudice the future development of neighbouring sites or frustrate the delivery of the development aspirations for the wider NEC AAP area.

Pre-application discussions

For all development proposals, regardless of size or nature, the councils would strongly recommend prospective applicants engaging in formal pre-application discussions with planning officers. Details of the pre-application planning advisory service offered by the councils can be found on the [Greater Cambridge Shared Planning pre-application advice webpage](#).

Minor alterations and extensions to existing development and uses, including varying conditions

Where the development proposal relates to an existing development or land use, these are likely to be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that they are required for operational reasons and would not result in unacceptable impacts. In instances where these could prejudice potential future redevelopment in accordance with the AAP, the councils may consider granting temporary planning permission.

Meanwhile Use

The value of meanwhile use is recognised by the councils as a strategy for enabling early delivery of longer-term regeneration and development proposals. Meanwhile uses also have an early role in place making, by being able to quickly bring life and activity to an area before permanent development begins.

Ideally the meanwhile use would occupy a space which is intended to be available for at least five years, in order to offset the start-up costs and enable the establishment of viable businesses, noting the low cost and low-risk nature of the development makes them attractive to business start-ups, community groups and the creative and cultural sectors.

An application for meanwhile use will need to be supported by a statement setting out the process undertaken of engagement with the existing business and residential communities within and surrounding NEC. Further, the details within the Design & Access Statement should enable the councils to determine how the proposed meanwhile use:

- a) engages with the emerging Placemaking Strategy for NEC;
- b) contributes positively to the character and early activation of the area including community and identity development;
- c) reinforces the longer term uses planned for the area, including the consideration given to supporting meanwhile occupiers securing permanent spaces within developments and how this is intended to be secured;
- d) has addressed any potential impacts on the deliverability of neighbouring sites; and

- e) achieves acceptable design standards and does not give rise to an unacceptable impact on existing or proposed neighbouring uses, on the transport network, and to environmental conditions.

Major and new development (other than for minor alternations & extensions, and meanwhile uses, as addressed above)

Comprehensive development which is designed in consultation with the councils, surrounding landowners, occupiers and the local community is likely to result in planning applications being supported and will avoid any undue delays in the planning process, to the benefit of everyone involved.

In addition to the usual documentation required for validation of an application for planning permission, to ensure comprehensive and coordinated development is achieved, a masterplan will be required to accompany a planning application for schemes within the NEC AAP area, supported as necessary by parameter plans in relation to layout, scale, appearance, access and landscaping. Through the masterplan, the applicant will be required to demonstrate, to the LPA's satisfaction, how their proposal:

- a. Has regard to the existing site circumstances, including the existing character, neighbouring uses and constraints; implementing the Agent of Change principle so that new development does not materially affect the ongoing functioning of existing uses or cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of existing uses;
- b. Complies with the extant policies of the local plans, including recently published guidance for the NEC area on odour;
- c. Contributes to delivery of the vision and strategic objectives for NEC (as currently set out in the NEC AAP Issues & Options, Feb 2019) and the achievement of comprehensive regeneration of the wider NEC AAP area, including the timely and equitable provision of strategic social and physical infrastructure. Where appropriate, for example, this will include the provision of walking and cycling routes that integrate with existing and proposed networks within and outside of NEC, the delivery of a diverse network of connected and multifunctional open spaces and green links, the ability to connect and contribute to an NEC smart utilities grid, and the setting aside of land for future strategic infrastructure provision;

- d. Will integrate and complement successfully with existing and proposed neighbouring developments ensuring a continuity in the establishment of a neighbourhood character and supporting the timely delivery and optimised approach to the phasing of development across NEC. This should be demonstrated by submitting a geolocated 3D model in a readable format (i.e. FBX, OBJ, VU);
- e. Addresses the transport constraints identified in the A10 Study having regard to the development potential of the NEC AAP area (see County Transport position statement) and the need to minimise car trips and maximise the take-up of non-car modes including walking, cycling, and sustainable public transport;
- f. Takes account of the findings and recommendations of the relevant evidence base studies being prepared in support of the NEC AAP;
- g. Demonstrates sustainable development, in respect of design, community health & wellbeing, social integration, and environmental outcomes, in accordance with the high-level vision and strategic objectives as set out in the Issues and Options 2019 Consultation;
- h. Is supported by a Statement of Community Involvement detailing the engagement with the councils, surrounding landowners, occupiers and the local community.

Shared Planning Service

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Map of the NEC AAP Area

