

## 4 Conclusions

- 4.1 This document has considered the sustainability implications of the information and options presented in the Issues and Options document for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- 4.2 The themes set out in the Issues and Options document discuss a number of ideas that would have positive effects regarding sustainability. However, whether such effects come forward and the significance of these effects depend on the exact policies that come forward in the Local Plan.
- 4.3 The spatial distribution options have been assessed at a high level against each SA objective. However, many of the potential effects identified are dependent on the exact location, layout and design of development.
- 4.4 Option 1 performs well compared to most of the other options, as development would be able to take advantage of the existing infrastructure in the city and would facilitate travel by sustainable modes of transport. However, it is unlikely that this option would be able to meet all of Greater Cambridge's development needs and could still lead to likely significant negative effects, particularly with regards to the historic environment of Cambridge. It would also restrict meeting the economic potential of the Greater Cambridge, particularly if it were unable to meet identified growth needs, and would bring limited opportunities for provision of new infrastructure, and therefore may result in capacity issues at existing services and facilities.
- 4.5 Option 2 is considered to perform very well, because it is a brownfield site, and it is relatively well located to the jobs, services and amenities of the city compared to most of the other options. It is of a scale that would allow for a good range of homes, employment, services and facilities to be delivered to create a cohesive community. It is also not particularly affected by biodiversity or heritage designations, although negative effects on these assets cannot be ruled out. It would, however, lead to the permanent loss of the airport itself and its economic and educational activity at this location.
- 4.6 Option 3 also performs reasonably well, as new homes on the edge of Cambridge would benefit from the existing services, facilities, transport links and employment in Cambridge and is likely to provide some new services and facilities. However, the range of facilities provided would likely depend on the size of the extension, and smaller extensions could lead to capacity issues at existing services and facilities. Extensions to Cambridge are likely to have significant impacts on the landscape and the historic environment setting of Cambridge, although this depends to some extent on the location and design of development. High quality design will be crucial. Of critical importance in achieving the sustainability objectives is how new development on the edge of Cambridge integrates with the existing city and with neighbouring communities, in order to become part of the city rather than separate districts. Genuinely mixed development with clear access by public transport, cycling and walking linked into neighbouring areas would help to achieve this, with green infrastructure and networks playing a key role.

- 4.7 Option 4 performs well against social and economic objectives, as a new settlement is expected to provide new services and facilities. In addition, new settlements provide a greater opportunity to incorporate sustainable design, such as creating walkable neighbourhoods and including district heating systems. Although there is no guarantee best practice would be delivered, the Local Plan could require sustainable design to be incorporated. The new settlements will have to be of sufficient scale to become coherent new communities, with a good range of services and facilities, such as healthcare and a secondary school, as well as to become attractive to business investors in order to provide a range of jobs. New settlements have a longer lead-in time and therefore would be unable to provide new housing and employment earlier on in the plan period. New settlements are also likely to have environmental impacts, particularly in terms of landscape, as they are necessarily large developments that may be less able to avoid sensitive features. They may also be some distance from the main centre of economic activity, Cambridge, leading to longer journeys for commuters and a temptation to travel by car. However, there is potential for public transport links to be provided as a perquisite to new development.
- 4.8 Whilst Option 5 could help to support local services, the lack of access to services, facilities and jobs in larger settlements is likely to be an issue. It is likely to lead to high levels of car dependency, increasing carbon emissions, and significant expansion of smaller settlements could harm their character and historic assets. As such, it is likely to be the least sustainable option, although it could form a smaller part of the overall strategy.
- 4.9 Option 6 would enable residents and businesses to have good access to services and facilities, whilst providing more opportunity to protect the historic environment of Cambridge. However, there is potential for adverse effects on environmental objectives, depending on where development is located, and it may prove challenging to create distinctive new communities with a sense of place, depending on where particular developments come forward under this option and their relationship to existing communities.
- 4.10 In practice, there are pros and cons with all of the options, and so the challenge for those preparing the Greater Cambridge Local Plan will be to take those aspects from each of the options that perform well against the SA objectives to create a coherent spatial strategy that performs well in sustainability terms. The options will need to be developed in more detail, including identification of potential specific locations for development, with a greater understanding of the scale, type and mix of development that can be delivered on site, the identification of the infrastructure requirements required for delivery, and the relationship with existing settlements and networks. The SA will be able to assess these options in more detail and with greater certainty helping to lead to the most sustainable strategy overall.

## Next steps

- 4.11 This SA Report will be available for consultation alongside the Issues and Options document. Following this consultation, the responses received and the findings of the SA will be considered and incorporated into the next iteration of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

LUC

December 2019