Sustainability Assessment - Comments

The single driver behind Anglian Water (AW) pursuing a relocation of the CWWTP is the request from the joint Councils for AW to test a viable alternative site to fulfil the Councils’ vision for North East Cambridge as represented in the area action plan NECAAP, adopted by Council into the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan First Proposals Policy S/NEC. Both plans have been developed with the assumption CWWTP will relocate, but neither are dependent on it (S Kelly Nov 2021).  Despite this, neither the SA nor SEA in either plan identify or assess the significant effects the relocation will have on the site identified by AW as a ‘viable’ alternative within the Greater Cambridge area.

The existing CWWTP underwent extensive investment in 2016, at the time it was described by the Environment Journal (2016) as being future proofed for decades to come and to have secured its position as the eastern region’s green energy generating giant; it has capacity to absorb the housing targets of both the existing and emerging Local Plan including Waterbeach Newtown.  This fact, that there is no operational need for CWWTP to relocate even with the ambitious housing targets of these Local Plans, has meant AW are dependent on external funding, in this case £227m of public money via HIFF.  Joint Councils supported the HIFF application and thus the principle of relocation of the CWWTP to enable the fulfilment of the vision for NECAAP, however this was before AW undertook identifying and concluded on a ‘viable’ site selection.

The site identified by AW is an area subject to the emerging Local Plan in the Cambridge Green Belt; identified in the supporting Green Belt Study (2021) as an area of high sensitivity where development would have ‘very high harm’ to Green Belt purpose.  This ‘very high harm’ is attributed to the area not least because of the openness of the Green Belt but also the contribution three adjacent Conservation Areas, historical assets, and medieval villages within them make to the Historical Setting of Cambridge. Significant Green Infrastructure also identified in the emerging Local Plan will be impacted by the relocation including: the River Cam Corridor; SSSI sites; registered Historical House and Gardens; extensive PRoW network; National Trust Wicken Fen Vision.

Since the site selection for relocation by AW there has been no public consultation on the consequences or environmental effects of the Councils pursuing NECAAP /S/NEC in the context of the relocation to Honey Hill, nor has any alternative vision for NECAAP been presented in the emerging Local Plan First Proposals.