



Introduction



At its best planning is driven by a vision to create places where people want to live and work. However, too often in the past plans have been drawn up and development has gone ahead without proper attention to the nuts and bolts, the infrastructure, that make places work. It is not difficult to recall major developments where essential services have been lacking. Local Development Frameworks (LDF) must now address this head on.

Statutory Background

Planning Act 2008

The Act, which establishes the Community Infrastructure Levy, stresses a rigorous approach to infrastructure and the need to ensure that it can be funded (wholly or in part) by the owners and developers of land. For the purposes of the Act infrastructure includes:

- roads and other transport facilities;
- flood defences;
- schools and other educational facilities;
- medical facilities;
- sporting and recreational facilities;
- open spaces; and
- affordable (social) housing.

The Act allows for this list to be amended





PPS12

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning (PPS12, 2008) emphasises the importance of spatial planning in creating strong, safe and prosperous communities and the critical role in providing supporting infrastructure. It requires the Core Strategy to provide supporting evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the development proposed for the area, taking into account the amount, type and distribution. Infrastructure planning for the Core Strategy should also include the specific infrastructure requirements of any strategic sites which it allocates. Local authorities should undertake timely and effective discussions with key infrastructure providers when preparing a Core Strategy. The time horizon of the Strategy should be at least 15 years from the date of adoption. The evidence should cover who will deliver the infrastructure and when. The Core Strategy should work in parallel with other strategies and investment plans of the local authority. Infrastructure planning should identify:

- needs and costs;
- phasing of development;
- funding sources; and
- responsibilities for delivery.

PPS12 encourages joint working and advises that critical discussions on infrastructure capacity and planning should be carried out over a larger area than a single local planning authority. It also requires the LDF Annual Monitoring Report to indicate how infrastructure providers have performed against the programmes for infrastructure in support of the Core Strategy and may reprioritise any previous assumptions made regarding infrastructure delivery.

Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework

Preparing a comprehensive infrastructure plan to cover the demands of the Core Strategy and major sites will be a huge challenge for local authorities in terms of both workload and the ability to bring to bear the right specialist skills. As a consequence most local authorities will use consultants to carry out the work. This is the approach adopted by Huntingdonshire District.



Process

In 2008 Huntingdonshire District commissioned a multi-disciplinary team of consultants to carry out a study of the infrastructure needs of the District arising from the Preferred Options Core Strategy up to 2026. Tendering for the contract was subject to EU procurement rules; and the form of contract also allowed the client to use the consultants for additional work without retendering. Corporate services in the District Council were part of the stakeholder group. The Framework was published in January 2009. The purpose and scope of the study was to:

- assist in taking forward the Local Development Framework;
- determine the scope and scale of public and private sector financial contributions; and
- to agree a way ahead.

The key steps in preparing the Framework included:

- a review of existing policy;
- a review of existing delivery mechanisms;
- housing/population and employment growth projections; an infrastructure review;
- housing and business markets analysis;
- infrastructure needs analysis;
- growth constraints and risk analysis;
- proposals for delivering infrastructure for growth; and
- an infrastructure delivery model.

The process of carrying out this work included thorough consultation with all stakeholders involved in delivering the growth agenda within Huntingdonshire. This included not only central, regional and local government, but also infrastructure and service providers. This consultation process has included a series of one-to-one meetings and consultations, focus groups and collaborative workshops. The Local Strategic Partnership was briefed and encouraged to take part.

Scope

Table 1 sets out the scope of the infrastructure included in the Framework. The District Council has adopted policy of seeking 40% affordable housing in new development and this infrastructure element is excluded from the Framework. What might be termed low carbon infrastructure that addresses future climate change issues is not addressed directly.





Table 1: Infrastructure included in the Framework

Infrastructure Sector	Services	
Transport	Highway improvements	Strategic Local
	Public transport	Local Service Improvements
	Cycling and walking modes	Local
Utilities	Water	Supply Waste disposal
	Flood risk	Assessment Protection steps
	Energy	Gas Electricity
Green Infrastructure	Green corridors	Landscape Waterways Routes
	Local sites	Landscape Amenities
Economic Infrastructure	Workforce	Skills and training
	Facilities	Managed workspace Business support
	Regeneration	Town centres
	Tourism	Strategic landscape projects
Social Infrastructure	Education	Nursery Primary Secondary
	Health care	Primary Care beds
	Leisure and recreation	Leisure and sports centres All weather pitches
	Community Facilities	Multipurpose centres Library
	Open space	Outdoor sports Allotments Informal Play spaces
	Emergency services	Police Safer Neighbourhood Team accommodation Emergency services

The level to which infrastructure should be assessed in an important consideration and the Huntingdonshire Framework identifies three layers:



1. Strategic Infrastructure: large scale projects that are significant at the districtwide and even sub-regional level, e.g. Great Fen project; external funding is required.
2. Local Infrastructure – Multiple Areas: projects that will benefit Huntingdonshire District as a whole, although some specific areas within the District will benefit more than others, e.g. rural skill development; pooled local funding is required.
3. Local Infrastructure – Specific Areas: projects that will be benefit directly local areas within the District, e.g. cycling and walking; local area funding is required.

Outputs

Priorities, timescale and trigger points for delivery are critical factors and the infrastructure is assessed against three criteria.

1. **Critical infrastructure** is infrastructure that this study has identified must happen to enable growth, e.g. National Grid upgrade.
2. **Essential infrastructure** is infrastructure that is required if growth is to be achieved in a timely and sustainable manner, e.g. rural skills programme.
3. **Desirable infrastructure** is infrastructure that is required for sustainable growth, but is unlikely to prevent development in the short to medium term, e.g. allotments.

The Framework's phasing programme shows these priorities.

On the basis of this assessment, the cost of the infrastructure is estimated to be between £1.905bn and £1.915bn. Public and private sector financing is identified and a financial profile over the plan period is prepared, which shows a significant gap in the early years diminishing over time.

The study concludes with an Infrastructure Delivery Model (IDM). This brings together all of the key outputs from the Local Investment Framework process enabling a cost/income analysis of the identified strategic and local infrastructure projects recommended to support the potential housing growth up to 2026. The purpose of the model is to provide Huntingdonshire District with a flexible analysis tool that can be updated and refined as project uncertainties are clarified.

The Framework was used to support the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, which was adopted by Huntingdonshire District Council on 23 September 2009 following independent examination by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

Looking ahead the consultants recommend further work, including: a comprehensive social infrastructure study to look in detail at the reduction and ageing of the existing populations of Huntingdonshire and what impact this will have upon the existing social infrastructure facilities; and that the population impacts and infrastructure requirements of the new housing developments are reviewed at regular intervals. The District Council expects to start updating the Framework from January 2010.



Key Lessons

Benefits

The benefits of the Huntingdonshire approach include:

- Preparation of a Framework outside the capacities of the existing staff
- Bringing in fresh outside perspectives
- Engagement of stakeholders and service providers in the planning process
- Delivery of a Framework that enabled the Core Strategy to be found sound and subsequently adopted
- Providing a model that facilitates future updating

Learning Points

The approach to the Framework set out in paragraphs above provides a good example of how an infrastructure study may be conducted. Other key learning points include

- Appoint multi-disciplinary consultancy team
- Consider engaging key stakeholders on a steering group
- Where possible do in parallel with both the Core Strategy and Site Specific Allocations DPDs to provide the comprehensive picture of likely development
- Build in existing commitments and possible windfall developments
- Identify clearly risks and uncertainties and consider contingencies
- Take into account changing demographics of the existing population
- Work with the County Council and adjoining Districts
- Consider the future contributions of CIL and S106 funding
- Although the aim is for long term planning, things will change, so consider the Framework as a snapshot and be prepared to update the framework periodically by:
 - ◇ Reviewing housing trajectories
 - ◇ Reviewing underlying assumptions
 - ◇ Checking against the emerging programmes of infrastructure providers

Challenges

Key challenges have been:

- Establishing a consistent view from providers of what infrastructure is required
- Getting infrastructure providers to agree likely costs beyond a 2-3 year time horizon
- Defining and agreeing with other agencies what is local and what is strategic
- Assessing strategic infrastructure is difficult with neighbouring local authorities at different stages in preparing infrastructure studies
- The impact of the recession on housing trajectories
- Accurately predicting future housing developments:
 - ◇ Fully identifying existing future commitments and assessing likely windfalls sites
 - ◇ Separating out the needs arising from existing commitments and those arising from growth proposals
- Estimating the impact of the changing demographics of the existing population on future infrastructure
- Clarifying the relationship with the possible introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the continuation of s106 funding
- Addressing low carbon infrastructure

With many thanks to
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