

Strategic Southern Expansion of Peterborough

WORKING PAPER 02: OPTIONS FOR GROWTH

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MAY 2004

WP02



Working Paper 2: Options for Growth

As set out in *Working Paper 1: Setting the Scene*, Peterborough has a legacy of large scale planned growth and development as a result of its New Town designation in 1971, and the city has a proven track record in delivering this growth. This Working Paper makes an initial observation of the potential options for accommodating long term sustainable growth at Peterborough which the City Council and other decision makers may wish to consider as part of an emerging growth strategy for the city.

Moving forward with planned growth at the levels suggested by the Sustainable Communities Plan is about achieving more than physical growth. In a continued tradition of the principles employed to deliver the new town of Peterborough over the past 30 years, growth is also about **economic growth** - growing confidence in the city to fulfil its sub-regional or regional centre role, and making sure that jobs can be delivered with and close to homes; **sustainable growth** - creating patterns of growth which do not worsen travel patterns, generate excessive energy consumption and minimise the effect on the physical environment; and **social growth** - maximising the potential of Peterborough's citizens to engage and positively participate in its continued development.

What type of growth might be appropriate for Peterborough?

There are several options for patterns of growth which the City Council and other decision makers could consider as a way in which to accommodate the levels of development proposed for Peterborough. Although these Working Papers do not include an in-depth assessment of each option - recognising that the City Council will have to undertake this work as part of the Growth Area and LDF process - one or a combination of these options could be selected:

- (i) **Urban Concentration:** where 'gaps' are filled within the existing urban area, making the best use of under- or previously developed land and making more efficient use of the available land and existing transportation and social infrastructure. On initial observation, it is considered that the opportunities for significant development to be accommodated in this way within Peterborough may be limited;
- (ii) **Urban Expansion:** where the city expands on its outskirts, rounding off those undeveloped parts of the edges of the settlement. There are opportunities for sustainable urban expansions if the scale of development is sufficient to deliver a genuine mix of uses and the requisite transportation and social infrastructure. Initial investigations suggest that this may deliver some of the growth sought under the Communities Plan, but that there may be difficulties of strategic sustainability in terms of delivering the requisite level of jobs and support services with new housing if a certain scale of development is not reached in any one location;
- (iii) **Corridor Growth:** this type of growth usually follows significant committed or planned investment in transportation infrastructure (road and/or rail), and concentrates new development along these corridors, maximising the development opportunities which are generated as a result of the new infrastructure. It is noted that whilst investment in past strategic infrastructure (East Coast Main Line, A1(M)) has assisted the growth of Peterborough as a whole, there has been little opportunity for individual developments to deliver new strategic public transport /strategic road improvements which increase the strategic sustainability of growth patterns;
- (iv) **Continuation of 'Township' Growth:** the 'Township' concept pioneered by Peterborough has proven to be an effective way in which to deliver large scale growth. However, it is observed that improvements in terms of the strategic sustainability of the townships and their ability to deliver jobs as well as housing would result in a more effective delivery of the type of growth sought in the *Communities Plan*.

Based on our professional judgement, we consider that the pattern of growth most appropriate to Peterborough and most likely to deliver the quantum of development sought in the most sustainable manner is the **continuation of the 'township' growth** option. This would give 'design coherence' to the expansion of the city, would help focus on the regeneration of existing townships where necessary, and would relate new growth to the established and distinctive pattern of existing development which makes Peterborough special.

Nevertheless, the City Council and others will need to make the decision on which pattern of growth - or combination thereof - to promote through the Growth Area and LDF process. If the decision is taken to proceed with the **continuation of 'township' growth** option (either alone or in tandem with other growth patterns), then there are several overarching planning principles which we think should guide new planned development at Peterborough:

Guiding Principles

- Going a stage beyond the original township concept, the design of any new townships should be expanded to consider the potential for interrelationship between townships, where 'clusters' of townships operate to support a broader range of facilities still delivered in line with principles of sustainable development;
- In line with the government's objective to secure employment-led growth, employment development (which should not discount retail and leisure development) should be implemented in a more sustainable manner and more closely integrated into the form of new townships;
- Very importantly, new townships should be oriented to public transport corridors - especially where potential exists to open new rail stations or to introduce high quality, bus-based rapid transit. Townships should be designed to favour internal movement by public transport, by cycle and on foot over travel by private car.
- The strategic allocation of land should continue to respect important environmental constraints wherever possible, but should recognise that there may be occasions where trade-offs need to be made between the environmental designation of an area and its potential to contribute to new township development.

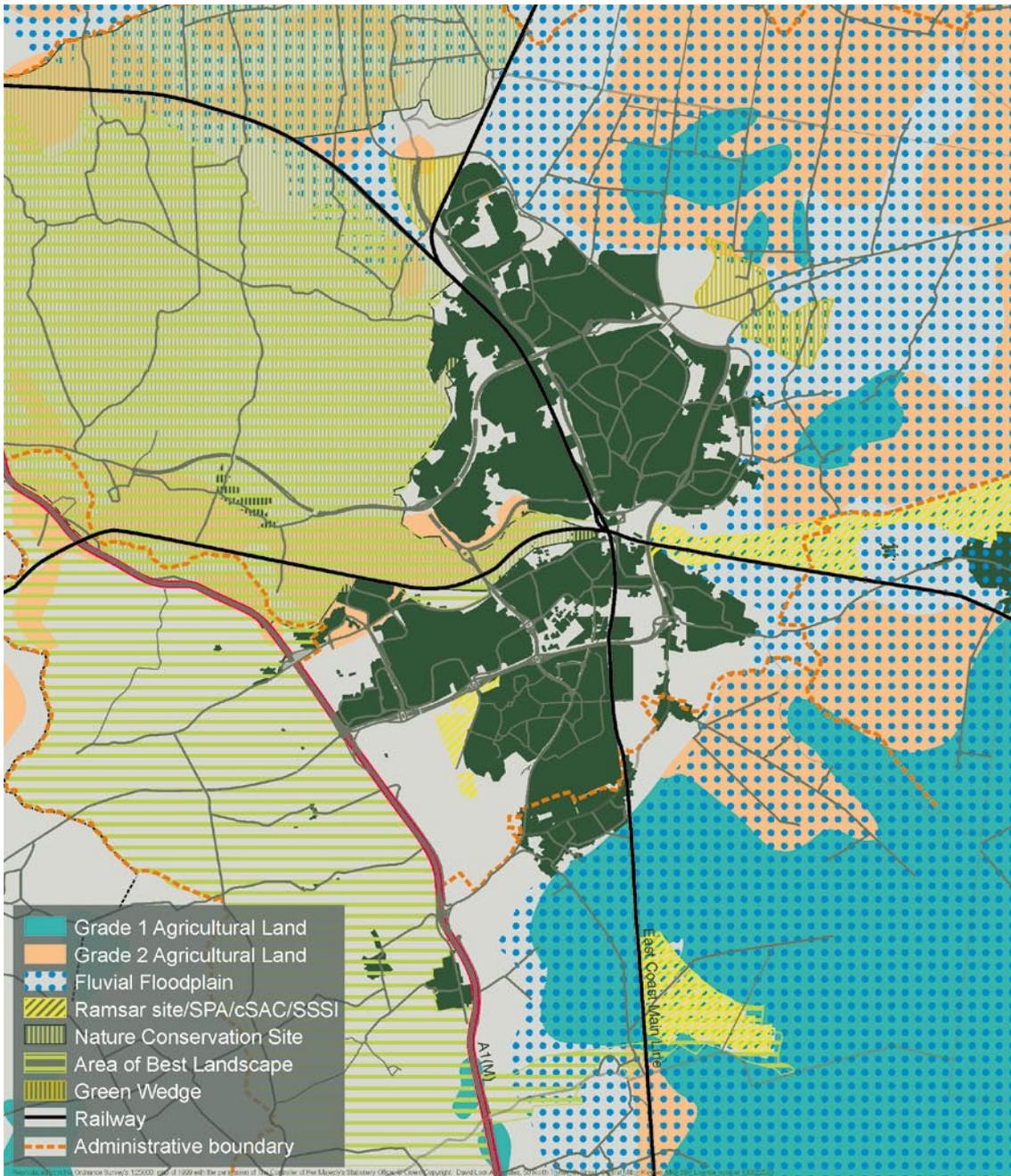
Where should new growth be directed?

Peterborough's 'urban form' (pre-Hampton) has previously been likened to a "battered butterfly with tattered wings", where Stanground is the 'head', with the historic core/Bretton/Werrington and Orton as the two 'wings'. Hampton has helped to strengthen the south western 'wing', but the level of growth now sought offers an opportunity to balance the two 'halves' of the city in a sustainable manner, maintaining the primacy and accessibility of the City Centre as its centrally-located core..

The results of a strategic 'sieve' analysis (shown on the plan overleaf) indicate that large scale expansion in an easterly direction is constrained by the strategic constraints of Grades 1 and 2 high quality agricultural land and the fluvial floodplain. The search for unconstrained land focuses attention on a large area to the south of the city (south of Hampton) and on smaller areas on its northern and eastern fringes, with development opportunities to the west of the city constrained to a degree by landscape designations.

Thus, the major opportunities for the development of new strategic expansion areas /'townships' (each of which would be in prestigious 'gateway' locations) lie:

- (i) **south of the city**, around the A1/A15/A605 and the East Coast Main Line;
- (ii) **north of the city**, broadly within the 'triangle' formed by the East Coast Main Line, the Spalding line and the Maxey Cut;
- (iii) **west of the city**, to the north of the Nene Valley Railway in the Castor/Ailsworth area.
- (iv) **north east of the city**, to the immediate east and south east of committed development at Paston Reserve;
- (v) **the south eastern fringe of the city**, in areas to the to the immediate north and south of Stanground.



Strategic 'Sieve' Analysis

South of the City

Based on this 'sieve' analysis, we consider that the most significant prospect for a new township - in terms of scale and opportunities for strategic sustainability - is south of the city in the area between the A1/A1139 (Fletton Parkway)/A15, south of Hampton. This presents an opportunity for:

- Prestige employment located on two key gateways into Peterborough from the south (A1/A605 and A1/Norman Cross), with associated housing, shopping, leisure and other facilities;
- Potential to capitalise on the 'Cambridge Effect', attracting economic development to the south of the city which can no longer be accommodated in or around Cambridge;
- Orientation of the development area northwards, allowing westward links with Hampton; integration with Orton; and integration with Yaxley (designated Rural Growth Settlement) operating as part of the Greater Peterborough area;
- Capitalising on the potential from any future A1 and ECML upgrading;
- A natural boundary to development created by the fluvial floodplain and Fens to the south, providing a robust southern boundary which could be strengthened through additional planting to provide an environmental link to Holme Fen SSSI.

Potential difficulties with land south of the city relate to the administrative difficulties of delivery due to the straddling of administrative boundaries (Huntingdonshire District), and the need to safeguard the Orton cSAC which lies immediately to the west of Hampton.

North of the City

There is an additional strategic opportunity to the north of the city between the ECML and the realigned A15. This presents opportunities for:

- Prestige employment located on a key gateway to Peterborough from the north, with associated housing, shopping, leisure and other facilities;
- A new railway station on the ECML with direct access to the city centre which may bring forward new stations at Werrington and Hampton - strengthening a high quality, spinal, sustainable transport corridor through the city.
- Scope to enlarge the development area to the north and east, allowing a better relationship with Werrington.

Potential difficulties in relation to this land relate to the desire to integrate Glington with Greater Peterborough (it is recognised that this would be precluded by the current Green Wedge designation in the Local Plan and may involve the loss of some higher grade agricultural land).

West of the City

Although relatively free from strategic constraints (and therefore offering 'in-principle' potential for strategic expansion), there is no recognisable physical boundary acting as a natural defining edge to strategic growth, and the majority of the area is not well-connected to the strategic rail or road system. Any large scale development to the west of the city would be constrained by the limestone upland area (containing ancient woodlands, attractive villages and historic parks and gardens) which is designated as an Area of Best Landscape. Within the Area of Best Landscape lies the Site of Nature Conservation Importance preserving the nature conservation interest of the area around Milton Park. Further south, significant areas of high quality agricultural land are a constraint to development along the Nene Valley.

North East of the City

Although a 'Green Wedge' designation limits the eastern extent to which development could reasonably extend, there is an area of unconstrained north and south of the A47. This presents an opportunity for:

- Prestige employment on a key gateway from the east, with associated housing, shopping, leisure and other facilities;
- Maximising any investment in the A47 as strategic infrastructure;
- Scope to enlarge the Paston Reserve development area, rounding off the north east of the city (providing that the relationship with smaller settlements to the east and its Green Wedge can be addressed satisfactorily);
- Maximising any investment in ancillary retail/education/community facilities which is already committed as part of the Paston Reserve development.

Potential difficulties in relation to the North East of the City relate to:

- its remoteness from strategic public transport infrastructure in this part of Peterborough;
- its proximity to smaller settlements to the east, precipitating fears of strategic coalescence.

South Eastern Fringe of the City

Large scale strategic nature conservation designations constrain development to the east of the City (Nene Washes cSAC) and to the south (Holme Fen SSSI). However, there is a smaller scale strategic opportunity to the south east of the city focused around the committed development at Stanground South, but also including an area north of Stanground, presenting opportunities for:

- Prestige employment on a key rail gateway from the east (on Felixstowe-Holyhead TEN route), with associated housing, shopping, leisure and other facilities;
- A new railway station with direct access to the city centre and to potential additional stations on ECML;
- Capitalising on the potential created by the A605 Stanground bypass;
- Scope to enlarge the Stanground South development area south of the by-pass, rounding off the south east of the city (providing that the relationship with Farcet and its Green Wedge can be addressed satisfactorily).

Potential difficulties in relation to the Stanground North area relate to:

- the provision of road access to the site from the south west (Peterborough);
- its location astride the Peterborough/Fenland district boundary;
- loss of some high quality agricultural land; and
- its proximity to Whittlesey, precipitating fears of strategic coalescence.

Each of these opportunities will be assessed by the City Council and others involved in the strategic analysis of the city to accommodate the scale of growth now proposed for Peterborough. However, we conclude from our analysis that the area south of the city offers the most significant opportunity to deliver a strategically sustainable development, in terms of its scale, strategic infrastructure and relative freedom from strategic environmental constraints.

Subsequent Working Papers in this series explore in more detail the way in which the area south of the city could be designed and delivered to meet in full the requirements of the Sustainable Communities Plan.

WORKING PAPER 2: TECHNICAL APPENDIX - SOURCE INFORMATION

The strategic 'sieve' analysis was undertaken on the basis of the following sources of information in addition to our local knowledge of the Peterborough area:

- Adopted *Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Structure Plan* (October 2003).
- *Peterborough Local Plan (First Replacement) Second Deposit Draft* (March 2002).
- Agricultural Land Classification Map for England and Wales: Eastern Region (1:250,000 Series (published 1993).
- Environmental and nature conservation information from English Nature (www.english-nature.org.uk)
- Environmental and floodplain information from the Environment Agency (www.environment-agency.gov.uk)