

Economic Development Sub-Committee

Item No.....

Report title:	Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor
Date of meeting:	24 November 2016
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe - Executive Director, Communities and Environmental Services
Strategic impact Working collaboratively with local partners along the A11, the aim is to promote and exploit the economic potential presented by the common assets between Norwich and Cambridge and most importantly the corridor that links them. Based on the initial corridor geography from Newmarket to Norwich, a report undertaken by Bruton Knowles estimated the strategic impact and the economic benefits will be significant as outlined in section 2 below. Evidence was presented in the report that the significant benefits of the corridor would only come about through a proactive programme by public sector partners to attract and kickstart significant long term private sector investment.	

Executive summary

This project is about exploiting growth potential, in one of the County's most important growth locations. The employment sites along the A11 in Norfolk incorporate many of the county's primary inward investment and growth opportunities – as well as a significant amount of planned housing growth.

The Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor concept was devised following a study by Bruton Knowles, funded by Breckland, South Norfolk and West Suffolk Councils, which highlighted the opportunities along the A11 between the two cities; triggered by the completion of the road's dualling. The City of Norwich as well as key locations along the route such as Hethel, Wymondham, Attleborough, Snetterton and Thetford encapsulate the theme of innovation and technology especially in ICT, Science, Agritech, Automotive Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing.

The partnership driving the initiative also now includes East Cambridgeshire, St Edmundsbury, Norwich City Council, Suffolk County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough and New Anglia LEAs. Norfolk County Council is also supporting this partnership and together this is a powerful group of organisations working together with a common purpose to promote this major economic opportunity.

The aims of the partnership are to raise the profile of the Corridor, attracting new business investment where there is synergy with our key sectors, and especially where there may be links with the powerful cluster of over 1000 businesses in the Cambridge area. It also aims to help unlock the various sites along the route, supporting master planning, bidding for funding to invest in infrastructure and even undertaking speculative or bespoke development if appropriate.

Recommendation – That members formally approve Norfolk County Council signing the Memorandum of Understanding and joining the partnership.

1. Proposal

- 1.1 For the County Council to agree formally to be part of the partnership of local authorities and LEPs that has come together to realise the economic growth potential of the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor.
- 1.2 The County Council has a key role to play in supporting the aims of the project.
 - It owns Hethel Engineering Centre, and seeks to deliver the long held ambition to establish a technology park nearby
 - It has extensive links with many of the key businesses, as well as the key institutions
 - It is a key delivery partner in the Eastern Agritech Initiative
 - It has access to considerable experience in the planning and delivery of infrastructure and other development
 - It could be a development partner to help deliver investment
 - It leads on inward investment activity across the County.
- 1.3 This report and recommendation does not commit the Council to undertake any specific investment – any such recommendations will be the subject of separate reports backed up by a clear business case.
- 1.4 Signing the MOU makes no direct financial commitment

2. Evidence

- 2.1 Evidence to support the strategy has been based on a report undertaken by Bruton Knowles, funded by Breckland, South Norfolk and West Suffolk Councils which estimated the following economic benefits could be brought to the area as a result of a co-ordinated campaign of activity to enable and encourage investment. The report estimated the benefits would be;
 - 14,900 additional jobs (gross)
 - 8,700 additional jobs (net)
 - Estimated £558 million net additional GVA
 - 708,000 m² of employment space
 - Approx. £905 million in construction investment
 - Space for 20,000 homes across the Corridor;
 - Commercialisation of research;
 - New business start-ups and growth;
 - Attraction of inward investors

3. Financial Implications

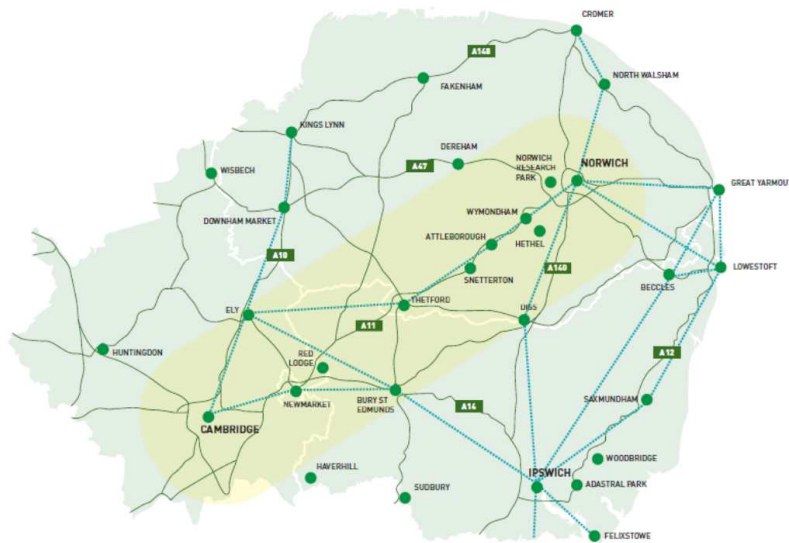
- 3.1 There are no direct implications.

4. Background

- 4.1 In 2014, the A11 was finally dualled, between the junction with the M11 and Norwich. It created an opportunity to promote our dualled connection to the national trunk road network. However, it also significantly improved connectivity between Norwich/Norfolk and the major economies of Cambridge and London.

4.2 The concept of a growth corridor is not new, with probably the first recognised as such being the Silicon Valley in the early 1970s in California. But closer to home we recognise the M4, the M62, the M11 and Motorsport Valley as examples of growth corridors – especially as they are focussed on one or two key sectors such as motorsport, meditech, media or ICT.

4.3 The creation of an A11 technology corridor, with the aim of securing substantial economic growth, focusing on advanced manufacturing & engineering and agri-tech, together with wider target sectors and other opportunities of importance to the local economy was a natural progression. Also recognised, was the need to align employment growth with a significant increase in housing accommodation within the A11 Corridor to meet the needs of predicted population growth. The A11 is also recognised by the LEP in the Strategic Economic Plan. The map below outlines the broad coverage of the corridor, which is deliberately vague at the edges.



4.4 In 2015, three councils, Breckland, South Norfolk and West Suffolk, funded a comprehensive study of ‘corridor’ sites and also looked at the rationale and business case. The resultant ‘Bruton Knowles’ report set out the potential benefits of a corridor focussed project and this led to the setting up of the current partnership. As of August 2016, the partnership comprises:

- Breckland Council
- East Cambridgeshire Council
- Forest Heath Council
- St Edmundsbury Council
- Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP
- New Anglia LEP
- Norfolk County Council
- Norwich City Council
- South Norfolk Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council

4.5 Although Norfolk County Council – through the economic development team – has worked closely in recent months to support the partnership it has not yet formally agreed to sign the MOU. This report seeks that commitment.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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