



LGR in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Huntingdonshire District Council's Consultation Response



Contents

Option A	3
Option B	7
Option D	11
Option E	17



Option A

Question	HDC response
1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?	Neither agree or disagree
2 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?	Somewhat agree
3 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?	Somewhat agree
4 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?	Somewhat agree
5 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?	Neither agree or disagree
6 To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?	Somewhat agree
7 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?	Somewhat agree

Question 8 – Justification for answers 1 to 7

Huntingdonshire District Council considers that this option displays the advantage of a two unitary model, where both unitaries are relatively well balanced in terms of size and capacity.

The disadvantages relate to the inability of this model to reflect the nuances, specialities and challenges of all the key parts of the region. In particular, this model is likely to lead to a focus towards the existing urban centres of Peterborough and Cambridge. The opportunities and requirements of the growing towns and rural communities that make up the middle of Cambridgeshire may be underplayed. In particular, the delivery expertise focused on this area may be lost and growth delayed. Similarly, the opportunities relating to potential defence investment may be underplayed or lost.

A three unitary model, with the correct boundaries, provides the opportunity to respond to the opportunities and challenges of the non-city area of the region.

Whilst this option does reflect the objectives and targets contained in the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan, it may not be able to deliver the level of economic growth of other options.

Sensible geographies and economic areas

This option does create a balanced approach but one where the focus is on Peterborough and Cambridge city areas. The implication of this is that defence, rural and new settlement opportunities may be underplayed or underestimated. Whilst not carrying as much risk as Option D this could undermine the delivery of investment that is the subject of the recently signed agreement between [Huntingdonshire and the MOD](#).

In the Option A supporting business case, the links between Huntingdonshire and the Cambridge growth area are underplayed – in order to support the case for Huntingdonshire being part of the northern unitary.

Delivery of outcomes in proposal

A key driver for this option is the simplicity of having two unitaries, combined with the focus on growth that could be provided by the unitary centred on Cambridge. It is acknowledged that the balance means that delivery and service continuity risk is reduced in this option.

Right size to improve capacity and withstand financial shocks

The proposal places emphasis on size being the key determinant of sustainability and viability despite the evidence being inconclusive. For example, it dismisses a three unitary option as a concept without undertaking comparative analysis and therefore hyperbolic statements in its submission such as “moving to three unitary councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would be considerably more costly” lack foundation.

The proposal’s assertion as to why a two unitary option is preferred over a three unitary option are based on a three unitary option that involves the added disruption of splitting a district council in half. It has not, for example, considered its preferred option against Option E which does not involve splitting a district council in half.

The line of argument that bigger councils are better is based upon work undertaken by PwC for the County Councils’ Network (CCN) which has since been countered by the District Councils’ Network (DCN) whose own work concluded that [“The evidence gives no reason to assume that smaller unitary councils will be less efficient, sustainable or effective due to their size”](#).

It should also be noted that the methodology used by PwC for both its CCN work and the specific financial appraisal in the Option A proposal is likely to result in an overstatement of the redundancy and retirement costs. This is because it has calculated costs and savings associated with senior management based on the total changes rather than the net movement i.e. the reality is that many of the staff whose roles are extinguished as a result of their organisations disappearing will not be made redundant and are likely to transfer on vesting day before taking new roles in larger management functions in the new organisations.

High quality sustainable public services

The two unitary model provides a balance in terms of area and population, reduces service delivery risks and provides a longer-term opportunity to improve services through transformation or review.

It should be noted that the support of the Police service to this option was given prior to D and E being described. The police restructuring announcements of 26 January 2026 make the current status quo less relevant as a restructured police force may not align with the current county boundary.

Informed by local views to meet local needs

The initial engagement took place alongside the original options excluding D and E. A number of letters of support were written without knowledge of options D and E or sight of the business cases for any options. Options have not been comprehensively re-tested and therefore comparisons between the current options are difficult to make.

Limited additional engagement has been carried out by South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils– however, not in respect of all options.

Support devolution arrangements

In terms of representation, a two unitary model would leave the Combined Authority Board with only two members working alongside the Mayor. There is a risk that priorities that are unrelated to Peterborough or Cambridge may be overlooked, such as the growth of defence in Huntingdonshire, the growth and increased prosperity of rural market towns in the region, and the facilitation of housing delivery in areas like Tempsford, Huntingdonshire, and the Fens. This risk may also be seen in high-risk services, with social care potentially focusing on urban issues rather than hidden rural deprivation and challenges of connectivity.

Enables stronger community engagement

This option provides the opportunity for continued empowerment based on established boundaries.



Option B

Question	HDC response
1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?	Somewhat disagree
2 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?	Somewhat agree
3 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?	Somewhat agree
4 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?	Somewhat agree
5 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?	Neither agree or disagree
6 To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?	Somewhat agree
7 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?	Somewhat agree

Question 8 – Justification for answers 1 to 7

Huntingdonshire District Council considers that this option is a two unitary model which does not display the full advantages of other two unitary models or the benefits of a three unitary model. The reason for this is the unbalanced nature of the two new councils.

This option underplays the risk associated with the Greater Cambridge council in terms of delivery capacity, financial strength and service resilience.

Sensible geographies and economic areas

This option is unbalanced in terms of the size of each authority and the range of issues that each will have to deal with. Greater Cambridge could struggle because of its small size and ability to provide the capacity and capability to deliver growth alongside the range of other council services. Peterborough could struggle to manage the range of challenges and opportunities associated with the diverse characteristics of its geography and population. The Northern unitary would also be significantly larger than the Southern, resulting in an authority that is far-removed from local communities with a lack of economic focus due to the high sector diversity.

This option does underplay the relationship between Huntingdonshire and greater Cambridge. It also underplays Huntingdonshire's role in supporting growth in line with specific national policy initiatives such as the Oxford to Cambridge corridor and new town agenda.

Delivery of outcomes in proposal

A key driver for this option is the simplicity of two unitaries combined with the focus on growth that could be provided by the unitary centred on Cambridge. The option underplays risk relating to the size of the southern council and the possibility that it may not have the capacity or capability to continue to deliver growth alongside the delivery of services. This would undermine the Greater Cambridge focus.

The risk relating to size and capacity could be mitigated by sharing services with a Huntingdonshire based authority (Option E). A three unitary option with significant services shared between two could deliver the advantages of the two unitary model in terms of risk and size and the advantages of a three unitary model in terms of specialisms and ability to respond to economic opportunities. The existing three councils (Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire) already operate shared services in IT, Legal and Building Control so there is existing precedent to continue these arrangements.

A large northern authority could lead to overreach in terms of the range of potentially conflicting priorities. This could undermine the delivery of promised outcomes.

Right size to improve capacity and withstand financial shocks

The proposal focuses on assessing three types of two unitary solutions and dismisses three unitary solutions as not financially sustainable. However, this conclusion has not been empirically tested and lacks substance. The proposal makes a statement on page 67 that “Options D and E propose three unitary councils for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which would not be financially sustainable for the region” but provides no analysis to support the statement. It references work undertaken for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils by Pixel Financial Management as justification for this but their report (May 2025) states on page 5 (paragraph 20) that “There is no evidence that authorities in this 200-350,000 group are struggling financially any more than larger authorities” which is the range in which three unitary councils under, for example, Option E, would fall. Indeed, the Pixel report at no point dismisses the viability of a three unitary option.

The arguments for the preferred two unitary option i.e. the favouring of Option B over Option A and C lack credibility. It describes Option A as leaving the “Northern council” with “severely inadequate reserves” and Option C as being “financially unsustainable” and predicting an “immediate budget gap” for the “North-East Council”. However, in Table 1 within Appendix 2 of the submission, there is no material difference between the predicted budget position for the North-East Council in Option C and the Northern Cambridgeshire council in the preferred Option B. In terms of reserves sufficiency, the analysis does show Option B councils as having a more balanced position compared to the two councils in Option A but once the reserves are shown as a percentage of revenue i.e. accounting for size difference, the positions look very similar for each of the councils across all of the options.

High quality sustainable public services

The two unitary model reduces service delivery risks and provides a longer-term opportunity to improve services through transformation or review. However, because one unitary is relatively small there are greater risks attached to service delivery – prior to and immediately after vesting. There are also risks around service delivery in the large authority in the North, particularly with place-based services such as waste and street cleaning. This could have cost and efficiency implications for the unitary authority.

Informed by local views to meet local needs

Initial engagement took place alongside the original options excluding D and E. Several letters of support were written without knowledge of D and E or sight of the business cases for any options. Options have not been comprehensively re-tested and therefore comparisons between the current options are difficult to make.

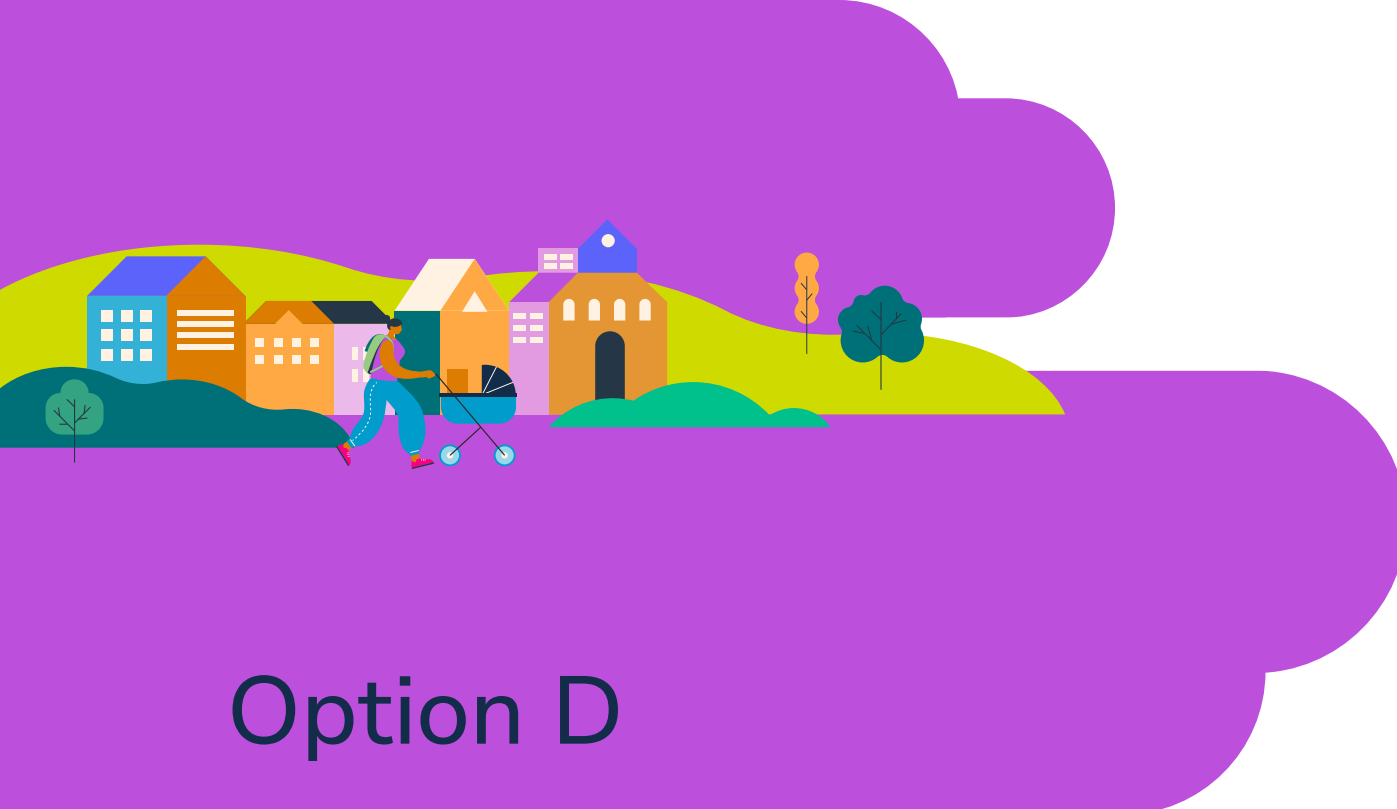
Limited additional engagement has been carried out by South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils – however, not in respect of all options.

Support devolution arrangements

In terms of representation, a two unitary model would leave the Combined Authority Board with only two members working alongside the Mayor. There is a risk that priorities that are unrelated to Peterborough or Cambridge may be overlooked, such as the growth of defence in Huntingdonshire, the growth and increased prosperity of rural market towns in the region, and the facilitation of housing delivery in areas like Tempsford, Huntingdonshire, and the Fens. This risk may also be seen in high-risk services, with social care potentially focusing on urban issues rather than hidden rural deprivation and challenges of connectivity.

Enables stronger community engagement

This option provides the opportunity for continued empowerment based on established boundaries.



Option D

Question	HDC response
1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?	Strongly disagree
2 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?	Strongly disagree
3 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?	Strongly disagree
4 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?	Strongly disagree
5 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?	Neither agree or disagree
6 To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?	Somewhat disagree
7 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?	Strongly disagree

Question 8 – Justification for answers 1 to 7

Huntingdonshire District Council considers that Option D is by far the worst option for both Huntingdonshire and the wider region. It carries a significant risk in terms of undermining the economic growth potential and contribution that the region will provide in meeting national growth targets. It also carries a significant risk relating to continued service delivery when the new councils are being set up.

Huntingdonshire considers that the boundary change proposed in this option is not justified by a strong public service or financial sustainability argument as required by MHCLG. The option is least aligned with MHCLG's assessment criteria compared with other options. The added complexity and cost associated with boundary and service changes are not justified by any identified benefit or savings.

Whilst this option is described as enabling 'place-based leadership,' the division of Huntingdonshire – a well led and historic council area – would lead to the undermining of the current approach to place-based leadership.

This option creates an unbalanced three unitary model with the central area relatively weak in terms of finances, delivery capacity and sector focus. It is unlikely that this will enable the regions' opportunities or challenges to be dealt with. Existing inequalities are likely to increase.

The disadvantages of the three unequal authorities are unlikely to be outweighed by increased growth in the two other councils. Delivery capacity currently available in Huntingdonshire will be split and the developing focus on defence will be diluted or lost.

Sensible geographies and economic areas

The economic geographies associated with this option lead to fundamental contradictions with the stated objectives of 'place based leadership'.

The option is justified as supporting diversity across the regions. However, the diversity mentioned is based on a narrow definition and focuses on protecting the characteristics of Peterborough. This is a limited argument. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is a diverse region in a multitude of ways and every option will have to consider incorporating diversity within policy and decision making. Peterborough itself has an urban centre, characterised by a higher percentage of non-British residents ([77.9% British in Peterborough](#) vs [90.9% British in Huntingdonshire](#)). However, the existing Peterborough City Council area includes a strong rural presence surrounding the city, characterised by small towns and villages. Peterborough will therefore always have to consider diverse interests in any unitary configuration.

A fundamental disadvantage is that this option splits Huntingdonshire, a historic and well led area with unifying characteristics based on its economy, housing markets, development opportunities and economic sectors. These are woven together in a number of small market towns.

The division of an existing sensible geography will also lead to the sector specialities of the middle unitary being given less of a priority.

The option completely ignores the loss of 'branding' value and delivery capacity associated with splitting Huntingdonshire and does not justify the change by setting out the exceptional circumstances (financial, service quality, delivery or community) that would justify a boundary change.

Delivery of outcomes in proposal

This option underplays the significant risks attached to the delivery of services and the wider growth agenda. The option contradicts stated objectives of place-based leadership – splitting one of the existing well-established areas.

New boundaries are not closely aligned with the key economic sectors, undermining delivery and growth opportunities. There would be a specific risk to the defence sectors, the development of which is covered by a recently signed [Huntingdonshire/MOD agreement](#).

The time and resource required to split Huntingdonshire will significantly delay and dilute delivery focus – jeopardising short and medium-term growth.

This option also reduces the chance that one of the key opportunities associated with LGR – the review of organisation and service operating models to deliver more efficient services – will be delivered. This option is driven by the creation of a new council based on an existing unitary, which in the recent past has faced financial and governance issues including the issuing of a Section 114 notice. Other options are more likely to lead to a fundamental review of operating models – providing the opportunity to deliver wider governance and organisational change and benefit.

The diversion of resources from service delivery towards splitting an existing authority will increase the risk of not achieving 'safe and legal' at vesting date. There will be specific service risks associated with those services delivered within a specific geographical area or relying on fixed assets.

Right size to improve capacity and withstand financial shocks

The financial analysis is largely backward looking in the supporting evidence for this proposal, relying on the CIPFA resilience index which is based upon data that is a number of years old. There is a limited forward-looking assessment i.e. one year based on a 2026/27 position but this does not account for the latest settlement position.

The assessment RAG rates the net budget position of each of the options under consideration according to high, average and low risk. However, there is marginal difference in the net budget positions of some unitary councils rated as high risk compared to others rated as average risk. It should also be noted that the final/actual 2026/27 settlement has resulted in slightly lower overall funding (2.5%) than predicted in the submission while forecast spend remains largely the same and that even such a minor change in those is likely to cause, under this, albeit crude approach, conclusions to change.

Based on the financial analysis provided in this proposal, there are no financial reasons to favour Option D as the preferred option over Option E while the boundary change required for Option D cannot be justified by exceptional financial, savings or efficiency benefits.

High quality sustainable public services

The justification for this option is partly set out in the report 'Case for Cities' which suggests that LGR should be underpinned by City based unitary authorities such as Peterborough. Whilst this proposal may create a stronger Peterborough authority by allowing extensive housing growth beyond its current border, there is a significant risk that this option could undermine the growth opportunities and quality of services for the wider region and over-burden neighbouring rural communities. It will also create a weak Mid Cambridgeshire authority in the centre of the region.

Based on an expanded but largely existing Northern unitary authority, this option provides fewer opportunities to improve services or resolve underlying financial and governance issues of the current Peterborough authority.

The North of Huntingdonshire would lose its defence and corridor focus, and the south of the current Huntingdonshire geography would be aligned with rural areas rather than the Cambridge growth area.

This option will cause significant issues relating to the delivery of a range of services. Current district services will be more difficult to consolidate and transfer and county services more difficult to divide. There will be complexities in delivering district services across the new border line, with waste vehicles in the 'Mid' unitary having to continually cut through the Northern or Southern unitary, including through Huntingdon town, as demonstrated by the below map. This would lead to increased costs of services and more time on journeys, reducing efficiencies.

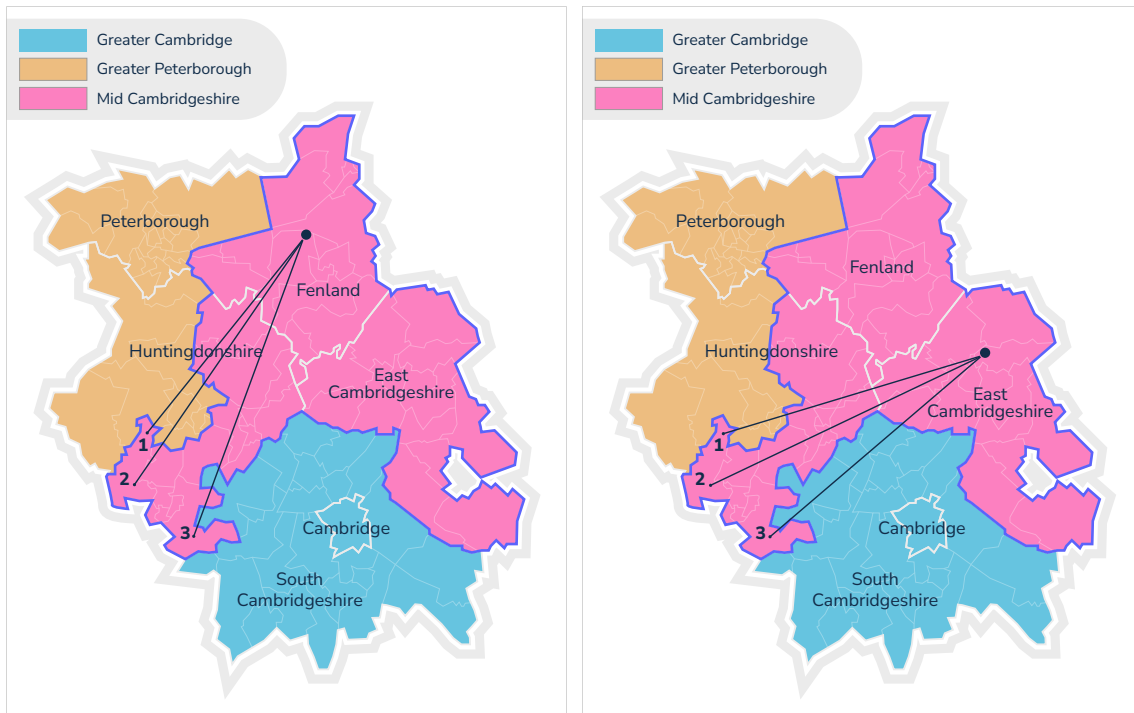


Figure 1 – Map to show distance to settlements in Hunts from new operational centres at Ely or Fenland in the ‘Mid’ unitary.

There are also additional complexities in splitting District services, including splitting a planning service and Local Plans, leading to confusion for residents and developers over area policies and decision-making processes.

Option D underestimates the political and other resource that will be required to set up two new unitaries that are not based on existing boundaries, due to the lack of an existing ‘anchor’. There is a greater risk, underneath Option D, that ‘Day 1’ is not achieved in a safe and legal manner.

Informed by local views to meet local needs

Initial engagement around LGR took place alongside the original options excluding D and E. A number of letters of support were written at this stage without knowledge of options D and E or sight of the business cases for any options. Options have not been comprehensively re-tested and therefore comparisons between the current options are difficult to make.

Limited additional engagement has been carried out by South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils – however, not in respect of all options.

Support devolution arrangements

The risk around this option – particularly relating to economic growth – means that this option is least likely to support the regional objectives of the Combined Authority.

In representation terms having three authority members of the Combined Authority Board, along with the Mayor, is likely to support the range of social and economic issues that CPCA investment will need to tackle.

Enables stronger community engagement

The splitting of Huntingdonshire will make it difficult to continue to deliver community engagement activities in the current Huntingdonshire area. Potential risks relating to engagement could undermine the delivery of growth targets along with other public services.

The real risk of this option undermines the stated 'place based' approach to engagement and leadership.

Question	HDC response
If this proposal is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary changes to what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change?	<p>Strongly disagree</p> <p>Huntingdonshire considers that the boundary change proposed in this option is not justified by a strong public service or financial sustainability argument. In fact, the option is less aligned with MHCLG's assessment criteria than all other options. The added complexity and costs are not justified by any identified benefit.</p> <p>Boundary changes are not justified by potential benefits. The change would increase costs, not deliver efficiencies, make services harder to deliver and put at risk the delivery of economic and housing growth.</p> <p>The justification is not related to community consultation and will lead to the breakup of a historic and unified area.</p> <p>The justification for the northern unitary is linked to the creation of a council of a viable size – largely based on the existing Peterborough council geography.</p>



Option E

Question	HDC response
1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?	Strongly agree
2 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?	Strongly agree
3 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?	Somewhat agree
4 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?	Somewhat agree
5 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?	Neither agree or disagree
6 To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?	Strongly agree
7 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?	Strongly agree

Question 8 – Justification for answers 1 to 7

Option E is Huntingdonshire District Council's preferred option, one that outperforms options A, B and D.

- It optimises opportunities for economic growth in line with delivering the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan's aspirational target (increasing GVA to £97.1bn by 2050).
- It aligns with the delivery of other national priorities (Oxford to Cambridge Corridor and New Towns plans).
- It links economic geographies to the new council areas, providing the focus for growth in key sectors, including defence, and providing the Combined Authority with the opportunity to deliver a clear and well understood growth strategy linked to the specialisms of the three unitaries.
- It builds on existing delivery experience, reducing delivery risk to inward investors, infrastructure providers and house builders.
- It provides administrative boundaries that enable efficient, safe and legal service delivery from Day 1, as well as the opportunity for more efficient services in the longer term.

The financial assumptions made around Option E are not overambitious, but realistic in terms of costs and benefits. The assumptions are based on the experience of councils that have already undergone LGR.

The risk relating to the size of the central council could be mitigated by sharing services between a Huntingdonshire and greater Cambridge based authority. These three unitary options could be additionally bolstered by the opportunity to share significant services between two authorities which could deliver the advantages of the two unitary model in terms of risk and size and the advantages of a three unitary model in terms of specialisms and ability to respond to economic opportunities. These shared service mechanisms are already in place (shared IT, Legal and Building Control) and could be strengthened by Option E.

Sensible geographies and economic areas

Option E provides the strongest place based and sector focus of all options being considered.

This option responds to the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review \(CPIER\)](#) findings along with helping to deliver the objectives of the [Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan](#) – in terms of providing the opportunity to maximise economic growth and making the most of the regions national and international position.

The council considers that this option is the one which is most likely to lead to the delivery of the Combined Authority's aspirational target of achieving £97.1bn GVA by 2050.

The economic geography and sector focus enabled by Option E, reflects emerging defence opportunities underpinning the significant investment already made at RAF Molesworth and the investment commitment relating to the [defence cluster around RAF Wyton](#).

Overall, the option takes advantage of the delivery experience developed in the area, supporting the continued delivery of jobs and housing focused on Huntingdonshire, Peterborough and Greater Cambridge. The pace of this delivery can be retained, and growth can still be met in the two city regions.

This option provides the strongest underpinning of wider regional objectives with a single delivery line between the unitary authorities, Combined Authority and potential development corporations in Greater Cambridge, the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor and at [the new town at Tempsford](#). It respects people and place by keeping established communities intact, not only respecting patterns of growth, but also patterns of behaviour, acknowledging concerns from residents about rural areas being overlooked and establishing councils that are close to communities, with strong democratic representation.

Delivery of outcomes in proposal

The continued delivery of jobs and employment is at the centre of this option. It is based on council areas with established teams with delivery expertise.

The new council areas align growth with the sector specialisms built up within Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and Greater Cambridge.

The focus, delivery experience and clarity of purpose enabled by this option enables the creation of a clear and robust growth and delivery strategy that can be clearly understood by residents and potential investors. Similarly, growth and the continued delivery of wider public services is based on established geographies.

This option also enables service risks to be mitigated – for example through the sharing of services with neighbouring unitaries i.e. Huntingdonshire and Greater Cambridge (where shared services are currently being delivered).

Right size to improve capacity and withstand financial shocks

Unlike the other proposals, this proposal has not included estimates for the benefits that could be achieved from LGR through redesigning services or transformation-driven efficiencies, due to the uncertainty attached to the values and proven difficulties achieving these within the five-year post implementation period which has been adopted for appraisal purposes.

The digitalisation strategies of new councils and choices made around systems, software and infrastructure will have a significant impact on the cost of transition and subsequent opportunities for change. Savings that each new council embarks on will also demand considerable expertise in both technical and non-technical aspects e.g. culture change and leadership.

There are significant values attached to both the costs and benefits associated with this in the other proposals which have not been subject to the scrutiny or due diligence that would normally be required for decisions of this magnitude.

Similarly, the opportunity to rationalise estate portfolios exists once new operating models are in place but, again, experience indicates that it is likely to take more than five years to identify and monetise surplus assets. Therefore, no receipts or savings have been attached to these in the proposal for Option E whereas large but poorly substantiated values have been included in the other proposals.

High quality sustainable public services

Because it is aligned with existing administrative boundaries, this option mitigates the significant service delivery risk of splitting existing council areas. Place based and geographically based services such as waste can be delivered easily through the transition period, following vesting. This also reduces complexity in disaggregating upper-tier services, such as Education and SEND provision, due to maintaining established district borders.

The three-authority model does pose short term risks relating to the relatively small size of Huntingdonshire. However, this is of a different order to the other three unitary option (Option D). The short terms risks in this option are balanced by this option's ability to deliver excellent economic development and growth focus – including the support of defence sectors.

The sector and economic advantages mean that this option has the greatest alignment with the Combined Authority's objective of maximising economic and housing growth, leading to a significant growth in population and potential council income in the medium term.

Specifically, Option E enables the retention of good practice in service delivery. In particular the good preventative practice in delivering social care services and the high pace of housing delivery, especially affordable housing. In the medium to long term, the Huntingdonshire council will be able to develop its service level delivery capacity because it will be supported by a rapidly growing population and economy driven by the growth of Tempsford, whether included in the new unitary geography or not, and established housing and economic clusters.

Informed by local views to meet local needs

Initial engagement around LGR took place alongside the original options excluding D and E. A number of letters of support were written at this stage without knowledge of options D and E or sight of the business cases for any options. Options have not been comprehensively re-tested and therefore comparisons between the current options are difficult to make.

Limited additional engagement has been carried out by South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils – however, not in respect of all options.

Support devolution arrangements

This option is considered to optimise the economic growth opportunity supporting the objective and policies of the combined authority.

In representation terms, having three member authorities on the Combined Authority Board, along with the Mayor, is likely to support a fuller range of social and economic issues that CPCA investment will need to tackle. This would have advantages over a two-pole model focused on Peterborough and Cambridge.

Enables stronger community engagement

Huntingdonshire currently demonstrates very good practice in terms of engagement relating to development as well as social and community development initiatives. This option would support the continuation of good practice relating to the Community Health and Wealth Fund – practice that has led to improved community resilience. This option provides the opportunity to develop this good practice and apply it to regional and nationally important projects.

Question	HDC response
<p>If this proposal is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary changes to what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change?</p>	<p>Strongly agree</p> <p>Option E suggests an amendment to the current Huntingdonshire boundary so that the new council covers the full area of the proposed Tempsford new town – the development area is currently split between Huntingdonshire, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.</p> <p>The consolidation of administrative areas would enable the more efficient delivery of both the new town and key elements of the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor – simplifying governance, accountability and planning. It would enable a single accountability line between council, potential development corporation, combined authority and Government.</p> <p>It consolidates the area required for development – simplifying and accelerating the delivery of new housing and, in the medium term, simplifying the delivery of council services across the new town (i.e. waste) and ensuring that high growth is maintained.</p> <p>This simplification builds on neighbourhood planning already taking place across these administrative boundaries (e.g. preparation of a renewed St Neots multi-parish neighbourhood plan) and the existing strong position of St Neots within the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor along East-West Rail. It reflects the dependence that growth in Tempsford would have on St Neots (within the current Huntingdonshire boundary), ensuring clear alignment of community behaviours. The boundary change could also support significant growth in St Neots by allowing expanded boundaries, moderating pressures on local schools, roads and GP surgeries and ensuring a strong two-way connection between the existing town and Tempsford.</p>

END