



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 7th FEBRUARY 2018

**LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE DRAFT STRATEGIC GROWTH
PLAN**

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Scrutiny Commission with the opportunity to consider the Consultation Draft Strategic Growth Plan (known hereafter as the draft SGP), and for its key comments on the document to be forwarded to the Cabinet.
2. Appended to the report are written submissions from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project and Leicestershire County Council's Public Health Department. These were requested by the Scrutiny Commissioners. The Home Builders Federation was also invited to submit a written representation but declined to do so.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

3. In June 2016 the Cabinet approved the Strategic Growth Statement for consultation. This formed the first part in the development of the SGP. The Statement set out the rationale and proposed process for preparation of the SGP, identified the defining characteristics of the local area and challenges faced by local authorities, outlined the evidence base and spatial options to be considered in formulating an SGP, and set out initial objectives and ambitions for the future.
4. The Consultation Draft Strategic Growth Plan was considered and endorsed by the Members' Advisory Group (MAG) on 6 November 2017. The County Council is represented on the MAG by the Deputy Leader, Mr Rhodes. On 24 November 2017 the Cabinet considered and agreed a report on the consultation process for the draft SGP. Leicester City Council and the Leicestershire district councils also considered and agreed the consultation process through their respective governance processes. A twelve week consultation period began on 11 January 2018 and is due to close on 5 April 2018.
5. The Cabinet will consider the draft SGP on 9 March 2018 and will submit its views within the consultation period. The Cabinet will take the views of the Scrutiny Commission into account when forming its response to the consultation.
6. All consultation responses will then inform the final version of the Strategic Growth Plan which will be submitted to the Cabinet and other partners for approval in the

Summer of 2018 after it has been considered by the MAG. Subject to approval it is expected that the final SGP will be published in Summer/Autumn 2018.

Background

7. Until 2010, the strategic planning framework for Leicester and Leicestershire was set out in the East Midlands Regional Plan (2009), the regional spatial strategy for the East Midlands. In 2010, however, regional spatial strategies were abolished by Government and local planning authorities were encouraged to consider strategic planning within the context of the 'duty to co-operate' required by the Localism Act 2011.
8. In Leicester and Leicestershire, recognising that the strategy of the East Midlands Regional Plan would be implemented through proposals in the current round of Local Plans, the local planning authorities decided that strategic planning for the longer term would be more effective if undertaken across the City and County as a whole. In view of the important role of the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) in the delivery of infrastructure and economic growth, it became an additional partner in the process.
9. The draft SGP has therefore been prepared jointly by the ten partner organisations in Leicester and Leicestershire, i.e. all seven of the local planning authorities in the county, the County Council as the highway authority, the City Council as a unitary authority with combined planning and highways responsibilities, and the LLEP. Leicester and Leicestershire are fortunate in that the Housing Market Area, the Functional Economic Market Area, and the area covered by the LLEP have the same geographical boundaries, making it easier to plan for the future. Although it is necessary to collaborate with authorities outside Leicester and Leicestershire, the intention is that provision for housing and economic development needs will be met from within the area.
10. The development of the SGP is being overseen by the MAG, comprising representatives from each of the local authorities, together with the LLEP whose representative attends as an observer. The MAG is supported by a Strategic Planning Group, made up of senior officers from the local authorities. The MAG is responsible for assisting in the proper execution of the statutory Duty to Co-operate, by which local planning authorities and other key stakeholders, including the County Council, are required to co-operate on strategic planning issues, including employment and housing land provision, affecting local plans. A key element is overseeing the preparation of the Strategic Growth Plan.
11. The need for an SGP was explained in the Cabinet report of June 2016. In summary it will -
 - (a) Support partners to plan effectively for the future, giving Local Plans a consistent framework and helping to make decisions on infrastructure and secure Government funding.
 - (b) Give some control over accommodating and supporting future growth and help to protect and enhance environmental assets.
 - (c) Provide confidence to the market, the Government, local businesses and residents that the local councils and the LLEP are working together to improve the area.

12. There are also risks in not having a Strategic Growth Plan - the inevitable development would be unplanned and lack infrastructure, local councils could not protect key assets, development/ investment would go elsewhere, the 'duty to co-operate' would not be met, and decisions may be taken away from local people.
13. The Strategic Growth Statement was the first stage in the preparation of the Plan. This was the subject of public consultation in August/September 2016. Consultation responses were reported to MAG in early 2017.

Consultation Draft Strategic Growth Plan

14. The Draft SGP (appended as Appendix A), sets out a strategy for the growth and development of Leicester and Leicestershire in the period to 2050, enabling partners to consider the longer term needs of the area and opportunities which might extend beyond the conventional timeframe of a Local Plan. The MAG has considered the distribution of housing and employment land over a shorter time frame (2011-2031 and 2011-2036) in order for a more detailed framework for the preparation of Local Plans to be in place.
15. Since work started on the Strategic Growth Plan, other organisations have progressed their own work at different speeds (e.g. Network Rail, Highways England, the Midlands Connect Partnership) but there has been a constant dialogue to ensure an awareness of their emerging policies and proposals, and that projects considered to be vital to the future of Leicester and Leicestershire were incorporated in emerging plans, strategies and funding programmes.
16. As the Consultation Draft Plan has been developed, a number of events have been held for Members of the County Council to keep them advised of progress. Internal Member briefings have been held on 1 November 2017, 27 September 2017, on the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) on 7 February 2017 and on the earlier Strategic Growth Statement on 10 June 2016.

Key elements of the Consultation Draft Strategic Growth Plan

17. The strategy of the draft SGP proposes to build more development in major strategic locations and to reduce the amount that takes place in existing towns, villages and rural areas. In so doing, to focus development along transportation corridors and close to employment centres.
18. Five principal building blocks have been used to prepare the draft SGP:
 - a) The existing settlement pattern;
 - b) Understanding of national policies;
 - c) Understanding of the local economy and how it is supported by the Midlands Engine Strategy;
 - d) Understanding of the local road and rail networks and how they are supported by proposals in the Midlands Connect Strategy; and
 - e) Recognition of the environmental, historic and other assets.
19. Four priorities are identified:

- f) Creating conditions for investment and growth;
 - g) Achieving a step change in the way that growth is delivered;
 - h) Securing essential infrastructure; and
 - i) Delivering high quality development.
20. Analysis has indicated that through our existing and emerging Local Plans and planning permissions provision can be made for the amount of new jobs we need up to 2031. This will be achieved through a mixture of major strategic sites already identified in Local Plans (approx.40%) and smaller scale growth on non-strategic sites (approx.60%). The draft SGP therefore, does not need to focus on this time period.
21. Beyond 2031 it is proposed that provision for more of Leicester and Leicestershire's growth is made in strategic locations. To do this new strategic infrastructure which will open up sites for development is considered to be required, and the Midlands Connect Strategy lays the foundations for this.

Proposed Growth Areas

22. The proposed growth areas are as follows:
- j) **Primary Growth Areas:** The A46 growth corridor (the 'expressway' proposal for the A46), and Leicester (our 'Central City');
 - k) **Secondary Growth Areas:** The Northern Gateway, and the Southern Gateway;
 - l) **Key Centres:** Melton Mowbray and Lutterworth;
 - m) **Areas of managed growth in Local Plans:** Coalville, Hinckley, Loughborough and Market Harborough.
23. In villages and other rural areas the draft SGP proposes there will be limited growth in the future, consistent with providing for local needs.
24. Notional capacity of strategic growth areas has been estimated, and Appendix B of the draft SGP indicates how this growth would be distributed across the eight local planning authorities in Leicester and Leicestershire. It should be noted that the longer term requirements for employment land are not quantified due to the considerably greater market variability than the need for new homes.

Consultation responses

25. A consultation questionnaire has been produced for use, and is appended as Appendix B to this report. It is suggested that Scrutiny Commission, in its consideration and deliberation of the draft SGP, focuses on the questions posed in the consultation questionnaire.
26. All consultation responses received on the draft SGP will be reviewed and reported, in the first instance, to the MAG. At the same time, consideration will be given to whether amendments to the Draft Plan will need to be made.

Resource Implications

27. There are no resource implications arising from this report. Officer time and funding for consultancy work have been contributed by all partners. The cost of future communications work will need to be funded by partners.

Timetable for Decisions

28. It is expected that the final version of the Strategic Growth Plan will be presented to the MAG for consideration in summer/early autumn 2018 and subject to it being supported would then be submitted to the partner authorities for approval (in the case of the County Council this would be by means of a further report to the Cabinet).

Background papers

29. Report to the Cabinet – 24 November 2017 – Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan – Consultation arrangements
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s133402/Consultation%20draft%20Strategic%20Growth%20Plan%20Cabinet%20report.pdf>
30. Report to Cabinet – 17 June 2016 – Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan – Strategic Growth Statement
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4603&Ver=4>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

31. A copy of this report will be circulated to all members under the Members News in Brief service.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

32. The Strategic Growth Plan, and the Local Plans which are subsequently formulated within its framework, have significant implications for disadvantaged people living in Leicestershire. By seeking to ensure economic growth is secured and an appropriate provision of affordable homes is made, the County Council can contribute to the needs of disadvantaged groups.
33. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) has been undertaken. The outcomes of the most recent assessment are available to view as part of the consultation process.

Environmental Implications

34. A Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment has been undertaken. The outcomes are available to view as part of the consultation process.

Appendices

Consultation Draft Strategic Growth Plan – Appendix A

Consultation questionnaire – Appendix B

Submission from the Campaign to Protect Rural England – Appendix C

Submission from the Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project – Appendix D

Submission from the Public Health Department – Appendix E

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