



CABINET – 29 MARCH 2019

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL'S LOCAL PLAN REVIEW: NEW DIRECTIONS FOR GROWTH

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet of the response submitted on behalf of the County Council to the consultation issued by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) relating to the Local Plan Review: New Directions for Growth.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the response set out in Appendix A to this report which has been submitted to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, as the views of the County Council, be noted.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. To inform Cabinet of the response submitted to the Local Plan Review Consultation, to ensure alignment with the strategic outcomes of the County Council's Strategic Plan, alignment of Local Plans with the Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) and to influence the content of Local Plans in the interests of local communities.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. The response on behalf of the Council to the consultation was submitted to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council on 5 March 2019.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

5. On 23 November 2018, the Cabinet approved the Strategic Growth Plan "Leicester and Leicestershire 2050: Our Vision for Growth".
6. Each of the nine other partners approved the SGP through their respective governance processes between October to December 2018, including HBBC on 27 November 2018.

7. Leicester and Leicestershire's Strategic Growth Plan and its delivery through Local Plans are important contributions to achieving the vision set out in "Working Together for the Benefit of Everyone", the County Council's Strategic Plan for 2018-22 which was approved by the Council in December 2017.
8. On 2 March 2018 the comments of the County Council were submitted to HBBC in response to their Local Plan Review: Scope, Issues and Options consultation. In brief, the main focus of the comments submitted was that it is preferable to seek to focus growth in a limited number of places as this provides the best opportunities to secure delivery of the necessary supporting infrastructure (both physical and social).

Resource Implications

9. There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

10. As this matter relates to the formulation of Local Plans, a copy of this report will be circulated to all members of the County Council.

Officers to Contact

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PART B

Background

11. The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) and its delivery through Local Plans are important contributors to achieving the vision set out in “Working Together for the Benefit of Everyone”, the County Council’s Strategic Plan for 2018-22 . The SGP and Local Plans support all five strategic outcomes but in particular the following two outcomes:
 - i. “Strong Economy” outcome, with the following supporting outcomes:
 - Leicestershire has the right infrastructure for sustainable growth; and
 - Leicestershire is an attractive place where businesses are supported to flourish.
 - ii. “Affordable Quality Homes” outcome, with the following supporting outcomes:
 - Leicestershire has the right number and types of homes in the right places to meet needs and support economic growth;
 - There is enough suitable housing to support independence for those with social care needs; and
 - Development does not have a negative impact on the environment or health and wellbeing of existing communities.
12. At its meeting on 23 November 2018, the Cabinet approved the SGP “Leicester and Leicestershire 2050: Our Vision for Growth”.
13. The SGP has been prepared jointly by the eight local planning authorities (the district councils), the County Council as the highway authority, Leicester City Council as a unitary authority with combined planning and highways responsibilities and the LLEP.
14. The SGP 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 extend beyond the conventional timeframe of a Local Plan.
15. The SGP supports partners to plan effectively for the future, giving Local Plans a consistent framework, helping to make decisions on infrastructure and secure Government funding.
16. For the south west part of Leicestershire the SGP approved foci for growth are:
 - i. managed growth for Hinckley, further sustainable development consistent with the need to support local growth (in particular, aspirations for continued town centre regeneration and better services);
 - ii. the proposed A46 Expressway; and

- iii. the A5 Improvement Corridor.
17. The Strategic Planning Group (SPG) has asked the Interim Joint Strategic Planning Manager to prepare a protocol for considering how partners can ensure the alignment of Local Plans with the SGP. This could include standard wording in Local Plan documents explaining the role of, and steer provided by, the SGP. If a protocol is agreed this could form in the future a further route through which a strategic level response to Local Plan consultations is made. The protocol will be considered by the Members' Advisory Group (MAG) with a view to its subsequent approval by the constituent partner authorities.
 18. Between January and March 2018, HBBC carried out a Scope, Issues and Options Consultation on their Local Plan Review. Comments were also sought on their revised Statement of Community Involvement as well as submissions via a 'Call for Sites'.
 19. In January 2019, HBBC started an eight-week consultation as part of their Local Plan Review entitled 'New Directions for Growth'. It forms an early stage in their Local Plan Review, which will extend to 2036, and supplements the consultation on options undertaken by HBBC in March 2018. A fresh 'call for sites' was also undertaken during this consultation period which ended in early March 2019.
 20. This is the first consultation on a Local Plan review in Leicester and Leicestershire to take place since the approval by partners of the SGP in December 2018. It is therefore appropriate, at this stage, to consider compliance of the potential options for growth with the strategic steer provided by the SGP.

Response to HBBC's Local Plan Review: New Directions for Growth consultation

21. The new directions for growth consultation sets out three possible broad directions for growth:
 - i. North West of the Urban Area;
 - ii. M42 Opportunity Area; and
 - iii. North East connections to Leicester.
22. Six questions were posed to encourage responses to the consultation to be made. The questions are set out with the full responses from officers at the County Council in Appendix A to this report. Many key service areas responded including transport, education, strategic property services, economic growth and ecology.
23. In summary, there were a number of concerns highlighted within the responses which are detailed below.

Lack of clarity/structure of consultation/lack of liaison

24. It is not particularly clear that this formed an additional consultation, further to HBBC's Scope, Issues and Options consultation undertaken in early 2018.
25. The six questions posed potentially lead the reader rather than encourage open responses to the three broad directions for growth.
26. It is disappointing that HBBC had not discussed the consultation document with the County Highway Authority in its early stages of plan making as this is the most conducive way of developing a robust transport evidence base and proportionate package of supporting transport requirements, which are key considerations to the 'soundness' of the plan.
27. The County Council has invested very substantially in transport infrastructure improvements across the existing urban areas of the Borough over the past decade and have worked closely with the Borough Council to deliver new growth in these areas. In light of this, the tone and leading nature of Question One is surprising and disappointing.

Strategic Planning matters and Alignment with Strategic Growth Plan

28. Of the three options put forward in this consultation, developing on the edge of Hinckley, to the north west of the town, alongside the A47 would represent the most sustainable solution. The other two options are not considered to be compliant with the SGP. Although it is recognised that Local Plans are required to consider all reasonable alternative options through the Sustainability Appraisal process, it is considered that the document should have explained that two of the possible broad directions for growth do not align with the steer provided by the SGP. HBBC is the first authority to consult on an emerging Plan following agreement of the SGP and it is crucial that the strategy is not undermined at the first opportunity.

Potential opportunities for Growth

29. There may be opportunities for growth on land to the east of the IM Properties site (east of the M69). This site's proximity to the employment opportunities being created by the new DPD hub and other businesses will help to reduce the need for residents to travel.

Strategic Property Services Asset Management response

30. The Strategic Property Services Asset Management Group response in relation to the County Council's role as landowner, in addition to expressing the strategic policy concerns outlined above, focuses on the promotion of Middlefields Farm, Hinckley, situated to the north of the urban area with land to both the north-east and south west of Stoke Road.
31. In addition to responding to the consultation, appropriate submissions have also been made to the Call for Sites (which is part of the Local Plan-making

process) in respect of the above site together with the following, all of which have been submitted to previous Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs) and Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments (SHELAAAs):

- Land at Barton Road, Barlestone (Osbaston Parish); and
- Potential smallscale sites in rural settlements through the Borough.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

32. There are no equality and human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Environmental Implications

33. There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet on 23 November 2018: Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan – Consideration of Revised Plan for Approval

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4603&Ver=4>

Report to full Council on 6 December 2017: Strategic Plan and Single Outcomes Framework

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=5104&Ver=4>

Appendix

Appendix: Leicestershire County Council officer response to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's New Directions for Growth Consultation