

SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 3rd SEPTEMBER 2008
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE
DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform the Commission of the programme for responding to consultation on Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Plan and the current position on issues that will be taken into account.

Background

- 2 The draft East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (the Regional Plan) was published by the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) for consultation in September 2006. It sets out the strategic planning framework for the East Midlands for the period 2001 to 2026. Elements of the draft Regional Plan, including district level housing provision figures, were based on formal advice provided to EMRA by the County Council.
- 3 An independent Panel considered representations on the Regional Plan at an Examination in Public (EIP) between May and July 2007.
- 4 The Panel Report was published on 28 November 2007. It contained conclusions about the draft Plan and recommendations to the Secretary of State about changes that could be made. The Panel's recommendations were made following consideration of the representations submitted on the draft Plan and discussions at the EIP.

Previous Decisions

- 5 In December 2006 the Commission was consulted on the County Council's comments on the draft Regional Plan.

The Proposed Changes

- 6 The Proposed Changes have been published for a 12 week consultation period ending 17th October 2008. They can be accessed on the link:
<http://www.goem.gov.uk/goem/planning/regional-planning/?a=42496>. Whilst many of the Panel recommendations have been taken on board, the Secretary of State seems to have taken a pragmatic attitude to some of the more controversial recommendations. In particular, she declined to invite local planning authorities to submit further evidence on the distribution of housing provision, because to do so would give local authorities favoured status at this stage. Instead, district housing provision figures based on the Panel's recommendations are included for general consultation.

7 The main issues for consideration and comment are set out below.

Housing

8 The broad strategy for the distribution of housing in Leicester and Leicestershire is unchanged. This includes urban concentration within and adjoining Leicester and the Sub-Regional Centres. However, it is proposed to increase the total housing over the 25 year period from 2001 to 2026 for Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA) by 2,500 from 94,500 to 97,000. This increase is 875 more than the 1,625 increase recommended by the Panel. In detail, the proposed changes on housing are as follows:

- The largest increase, of 875 dwellings, is proposed for Oadby and Wigston, in accordance with representations made by the Borough Council;
- A small increase is proposed for Harborough, with a specification that 820 dwellings should be within or adjoining the Leicester Principal Urban Area (PUA);
- Small increases are proposed for Leicester City and all remaining districts;
- No size is prescribed for Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) to Leicester or the Sub-Regional Centres, although the total amount of housing within Blaby, Charnwood and Harborough to be located within or adjoining the PUA is prescribed;
- It is proposed that a redistribution of district and county apportionments to meet the HMA minima via sound joint strategies will be acceptable, provided the target of 47% of housing within or adjoining the Leicester PUA is achieved;
- There is a proposed change to the text relating to development southeast of Leicester, indicating that a number of factors make the prospect of planned sustainable urban extensions to the PUA in Harborough or Oadby and Wigston difficult without sustained and significant transport infrastructure investment. The previous wording indicating that the cost and feasibility of providing transport links to the major road network, rule out the prospect of planned sustainable urban extensions;
- Annual rates of housing provision over 5 year periods to 2016 and over the 10 year period from 2016 to 2026 are set out for each district and unitary authority area.

Eco-Towns

9 There is a short reference to eco-towns, making it clear that the proposals are outwith the scope of this Regional Plan but will be tested as part of the next review of the Regional Plan (see para 14 below). Changes are also proposed to the wording relating to development south-east of Leicester, which is the broad location of the Pennbury Eco-town proposal. These proposed changes are described in paragraph 11 above.

Burton upon Trent and Swadlincote

10 It is proposed that consideration be given to the functional relationship between Burton upon Trent and Swadlincote, including transport improvements such as the A38/A511 corridor and the National Forest rail line.

Next Review of the Regional Plan

- 11 An immediate partial review of the Regional Plan is considered necessary. It is intended that this would address:
- An increase in levels of housing provision responding to Government targets;
 - Revised provision for affordable housing;
 - Consideration of any eco-town proposals which successfully pass through the ongoing national Eco-town assessment process;
 - A revision of the Regional Transport Strategy;
 - A review of renewable energy targets.

Strategic Comments on the Proposed Changes

- 12 A schedule of draft comments is set out in Appendix 1.

Timetable for Decisions

- 13 Comments on the draft Regional Plan have to be submitted to the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) by the 17th October 2008. It is proposed that the County Council's full response is considered by Cabinet on the 1st October, taking account views of the Scrutiny Commission. Draft comments will also be reported to Leicestershire Together (LT) (Strategic Senior Officer Group on 3 September and LT Board on 15 September).

Equal Opportunities

- 14 No direct issues arising.

Environmental Implications

- 15 The Regional Plan contains policies relating to a range of environmental matters, including:
- Climate Change;
 - Biodiversity;
 - Landscape and urban form issues;
 - Buildings and Built Environment.

Detailed comments relating to these matters will be prepared and reported to Cabinet on 1st October.

Recommendation

- 16 It is recommended that:
- (a) proposed arrangements for responding to the Proposed Changes be noted; and
 - (b) the Commission gives initial consideration to the comments set out in Appendix 1.

Background Papers

Draft East Midlands Regional Plan: East Midlands Regional Assembly. September 2006

East Midlands Regional Plan: Report of the Panel. November 2007

East Midlands Regional Plan: Proposed Changes. CLG. July 2008

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