

EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL PLAN PARTIAL REVIEW

ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS PROPOSED BY THE EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Background

1. The four Options were assessed by a Project Group consisting of officers from the County and City Councils and representatives of the districts. A SWOT analysis was carried out for each Option (attached) on a geographical basis looking at the impacts on the HMA as a whole and on specific locations, particularly the Principal Urban Area (PUA) and Sub-Regional Centres (SRCs).
2. The assessment focused on the following factors:
 - Transport considerations;
 - Environmental constraints;
 - Employment considerations;
 - The capacity of the PUA and SRCs to accommodate additional growth;
 - Deliverability;
 - The need for infrastructure.

Factors Common to all Options

3. There are several common assumptions and issues that apply to all the Options. These include:

Assumptions

- The quantity of development planned in the different stages of emerging LDFs is accounted for, including the SUEs proposed in the Regional Plan and the Hamilton and Ashton Green developments proposed in the Leicester Local Plan;
- Generally, development in bigger units will provide the critical mass for provision of major infrastructure, such as transport, schools and employment;
- All Options allow for some development (about 5,000 dwellings) in smaller settlements (below SRC level) and in rural areas, to meet locally derived need including small-scale affordable housing and jobs in the rural economy.

Issues

- Uncertainty about the total amount of growth to be accommodated;
- Uncertainty about the timing of development proposed in emerging LDFs which run to 2026, and its relationship with the additional development required between 2021 and 2031;

- All Options involve a significant amount of new development which, combined with an accumulated backlog resulting from the recession, would be very difficult to implement;
- Uncertainty about the amount of development that can be accommodated within the existing built-up areas between 2021 and 2031;
- A threat that if the amount of development required cannot be achieved in and around the PUA and SRCs, there would be pressure for additional development in less sustainable locations;
- All new development would require significant investment in transport and other infrastructure, particularly to support urban extensions or a new settlement;
- Uncertainty about the amount of funding for infrastructure that may be available from developers and central government sources.
- The approach to the Partial Review should be evidence-led and based on an understanding of the capacity of settlements to accommodate further growth and the infrastructure required, including its cost, to ensure that the chosen strategy is founded on realistic judgements.

Conclusions on Options

4. The SWOT analyses are attached to this report. The main conclusions for each Option are:

Option 1

- Perhaps the “easiest” Option because it does not change the overall strategy;
- Under the current strategy, the most sustainable locations for development have already been taken up, so any additional locations would be less suitable;

Option 2

- Switching the focus from Leicester to the Sub-Regional Centres would reduce the competition for regeneration from greenfield development around the PUA;
- The evidence gathered for Local Development Frameworks on development constraints suggest that the scope to accommodate any significant development beyond that required to meet the adopted Regional plan requirement is very limited in some Sub Regional Centres including the largest SRCs;
- The smaller SRCs may not have the capacity for additional development;
- The character of Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray could be affected.

Option 3

- It could focus development and investment into the settlements with the main regeneration priorities;
- Concentrating development in the PUA and one or two SRCs would give the benefits of scale;
- Difficulty in finding sufficient capacity for development in more limited locations. The evidence gathered for Local Development Frameworks on development constraints suggests that the scope to accommodate any significant development beyond that required to meet the adopted Regional Plan requirement is very limited in some Sub Regional Centres including Loughborough and Coalville;
- Doubts as to whether the scale of development being concentrated in two or three places would be achievable in the time available;
- One or two districts would have to accommodate growth from the wider Housing Market Area;
- The character of Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray could be protected if not selected for major development;
- Would continue the existing strategy but shift the locational focus over time.

Option 4

- The PPS on Eco-towns states that Pennbury's location has not demonstrated the potential to meet the sustainability and deliverability requirements for successful development as an eco-town at this time;
- No other proposals for a new settlement have been forthcoming;
- Serious doubts as to whether the scale of development being concentrated in one place would be achievable in the time available;
- Doubts over the availability of funding for infrastructure.

References

1. East Midlands Regional Plan: Partial Review – Options Consultation Paper; EMRA June 2009
2. Sustainability Appraisal of the East Midlands Regional Plan: Partial Review – Options Consultation Paper; Land Use Consultants June 2009
3. Highways Transportation and Waste Management, Leicestershire County Council
4. Transport Assessment ; Charnwood Borough Council
5. Transport Assessment ; Melton Borough Council
6. Transport Assessment ; North West Leicestershire District Council
7. Chief Executive's Department, Leicestershire County Council
8. Sustainability of Land Use and Transport in Outer Neighbourhoods (SOLUTIONS), Cambridge University et al June 2009

9. Brownfield Market Signals, CPRE July 2009
10. East Midlands Regional Economic Strategy Draft Evidence Base, emda August 2009
11. Transport Assessment ; Harborough District Council
12. Community Services, Leicestershire County Council
13. Transport Assessment ; Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
14. Leicester City Council
15. North West Leicestershire District Council LDF Evidence Base
16. Leicester and Leicestershire Growth Infrastructure Assessment
17. Secondary Centres of Economic Activity in the East Midlands, University of Lincoln
18. Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel on the Proposed Development of an Eco-Town for Leicestershire, Leicestershire County Council.
19. Options Consultation Workshop Summary July 2009
20. PPS 1 Supplement on Eco-towns
21. District council officer views
22. Leicestershire County Council Cabinet Report 8th Sep 2009