

APPENDIX 5

East Midlands Regional Plan: Partial Review

Section 4 (4) Authority Advice to the East Midlands Regional Assembly

Transport

Background

1. The County Council has been asked to advise on revisions to the Regional Transport Strategy in the context of the Government's "Delivering a Sustainable Transport System" (DaSTS) policy, based on the transport needs, opportunities, and priorities in their area, reflecting their preferred spatial development option. The advice should consider the types of transport improvements and interventions that, integrated with development, will deliver the most sustainable outcomes and impacts. This advice should be based on the period from 2006 to 2031.

Spatial Development Options

2. The current Partial Review timetable has not allowed the opportunity for further transportation evidence to be provided to inform a decision on the spatial strategy options.
3. In the absence of any evidence at present to the contrary, there is broad support in transportation terms for the continuation of the current spatial development strategy and scale and broad distribution of housing as set out in the currently adopted Regional Plan up to 2026, Option 1 in the consultation options. Even this, however, is not without significant delivery challenges in many areas (e.g. at Loughborough).
4. Therefore, given the lack of time to undertake a thorough assessment of the transportation implications of the Options put forward, the Highway Authority endorses the view set out in Appendix 3 that a review of the strategy and the scale and broad approach to distribution beyond 2026 would be better undertaken as part of a future full review of the Regional Plan, i.e. the first Single Integrated Regional Strategy.
5. The assessment of the current Options has been undertaken through a review of the limited existing evidence set out below:
 - County Council transport assessment evidence used to identify the five potential Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE) locations (Loughborough, Coalville, Hinckley, Blaby and South of Charnwood adjoining PUA plus Ashton Green) in the current Regional Plan;
 - Work associated with Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). This has updated and refined the earlier Regional Plan evidence;
 - Leicester and Leicestershire HMA Authorities 'Growth Infrastructure Assessment' (April 2009);
 - Regional work to progress the Government's DaSTS approach. Both County and City highway authorities have been involved in this.

6. It is important to note that the County Council's previous assessment evidence was prepared in late 2006 and early 2007, based on certain assumptions at that time about the *broad* location of development and the likely availability of public and private sector funding to deliver the necessary supporting transportation infrastructure. Whilst the EIP Panel did not question the general soundness of the work for the purpose it served, they did not accept specific conclusions in respect of Loughborough. Furthermore, elements of it have now been superseded by more recent transport modelling work carried out by the district councils including, for example, for Charnwood, that considers alternative locations for growth and which highlights the potential opportunities and limitations.
7. The previous assessment pointed towards the general view that even to deliver the currently proposed levels of housing growth, further, significant investment in transport projects is required, including some major road infrastructure as well as public transport and other facilities that promote modal shift; notwithstanding that aspects of the work have been superseded, this view still remains valid. The Partial Review timetable has not allowed the opportunity to review whether funding assumptions remain reasonable in the changed economic climate, which has a direct bearing on the consideration of options for future growth and the affordability and deliverability of associated infrastructure (transportation and otherwise).
8. There are a number of further pieces of evidence 'in the pipeline' which would increase our ability to undertake a more thorough transportation assessment of the Partial Review options and which might even identify the need to change the current strategy. These include:
 - Ongoing work associated with Local Development Frameworks (LDF);
 - A study to assess the impact of housing growth on the Leicester PUA, due for completion March 2010;
 - The development and launch of the Leicester and Leicestershire Integrated Transport Model (LLITM), due for April 2010;
 - The finalisation of the Regional Transport Study;
 - The development and launch of a Regional (Ptolemy) Model;
 - Further regional DaSTS studies and work;
 - The Leicester & Leicestershire Economic Assessment, due early 2010;
 - Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3). Whilst continuation of the current spatial development strategy is supported in the context of our current Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2, 2006-2011), work is now underway to prepare LTP3. Development of an evidence-base is one of the first key objectives; this is due to be in place by the end March 2010. LTP3 itself is due to be in place by 1 April 2011 and will be the key strategic and delivery document for transport in Leicester and Leicestershire. This will be developed using the five DaSTS goals as the strategic drivers and will outline types of transport improvements, interventions and activities that will be undertaken to deliver our objectives across all of the DaSTS goals. LTP3 will contain a long-term strategy, in the context of the RSS and RTS and, more locally, the SCS and LAA, with a vision for transport to 2026.

9. It is also necessary to know the potential strategic growth locations and associated dwelling numbers to be able to give evidence based advice on the transport implications. Additional transport studies will be required to provide a sound evidence based approach before an assessment of the transport implications of any proposal can be undertaken with any confidence. However, the current approach adopted by EMRA, i.e. to assume the further housing growth to take place in the period from 2021 to 2031, even though a substantial proportion of it is actually required to meet demand pre-2021, increases the difficulties of attempting to model the situation (which would be problematic enough in any event, i.e. seeking to determine what the transport world of 2031 might look like).
10. Determination of funding priorities might also be driven by housing and economic growth considerations. With an ever-tighter funding situation, it may eventually prove necessary to concentrate funding in areas that can deliver the most growth and/or most quickly.
11. Two other points that it is felt we should mention from a transportation perspective are:
 - Whilst the SWOT analysis undertaken to define the County Council's response to the consultation questions and the Section 4(4) advice is undoubtedly a fair assessment of the position, in terms of transportation a new settlement option may be appropriate for the wider region in the longer term; in principle, this could offer the best opportunity to implement transport solutions to mitigate against the impact of housing growth. Constraining considerations to the HMA level fetters proper consideration as to whether it might be the best solution for the region.
 - Further housing growth at the sub-regional centres would also need to be matched by new employment growth, otherwise commuting by car to Leicester and elsewhere would be exacerbated and thus have an adverse impact on the congestion. This emphasises the need to review housing growth and employment provision at the same time, through the first Single Integrated Regional Strategy, and informed by the economic assessment and further employment evidence.

Regional Transport Strategy (RTS)

12. If the revised RTS is to be found to be sound, it should look at the impacts of housing growth in a coordinated way across the region, i.e. at a strategic level what are the cumulative impacts of growth on the region's transport systems and what broad measures are required to mitigate those impacts, rather than potentially inconsistent, piecemeal approaches at an HMA level. It appears that the RTS 'failed' last time around due to, in part, the lack of a coordinated approach. Ptolemy is the only tool that would enable a coordinated approach, and EMRA appear to be best placed to use this once the full regional version of the model becomes available; again, this does not fit with the current review timetable.

Transport Response to Consultation Questions (Section 16)

Question 1:

- The regional level transport outcomes and challenges are generally accepted as a sound basis for reviewing the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), and the proposed structure for the revised RTS is generally considered to be sound and fit for purpose.
- As discussed in paragraph 7 above, it is necessary to know the potential strategic growth locations and numbers of dwellings to be able to give evidence based advice. Additional transport studies will be required to provide evidence based approach before an assessment of transport implications can be undertaken with any confidence.

Question 2:

- The Highway Authority has been involved in the DaSTS work that has led to the identification of challenges, and in general terms the regional level challenges support this work. However, in the context of the Regional Plan the concerns outlined below and in paragraph 8 above apply:
 - There still appears to be a lack of strategic linkage between the RTS and the RSS. The Ptolemy work that EMRA has commissioned will not fully provide an evidence-based comparison of the housing spatial options put forward for consultation, and it is not clear how the comparative implications of the options in terms of helping to meet the challenges is to be demonstrated.
- It is recognised that substantial transport assessment work is planned in the HMA (see paragraph 6 above). It is through this work that an appropriate transport evidence base will be developed to enable the identification of transport interventions over the medium and longer term.

Question 3:

- See comments above.