

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL – TUESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2018

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| Title of report | LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE AUTHORITIES' JOINT STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN |
| Key Decision | a) Financial No b) Community Yes |
| Contacts | <p>Councillor Trevor Pendleton 01509 569746 trevor.pendleton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Place 01530 454555 james.arnold@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Planning Policy Team Manager 01530 454677 ian.nelson@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> |
| Purpose of report | For Council to approve the revised Strategic Growth Plan |
| Council Priorities | <p>Participation in the development of the Strategic Growth Plan will support the following priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building Confidence in Coalville - Homes and Communities - Businesses and Jobs |
| Implications: | |
| Financial/Staff | <p>Already budgeted for, with an earmarked reserve to cover the cost of evidence base, administration associated with the consultations and a contribution to the Joint Strategic Planning Manager role.</p> <p>Staffing implications are considered as part of normal workloads and establishment.</p> |
| Link to relevant CAT | None |
| Risk Management | Risks have been managed by the Joint Strategic Planning Manager |
| Equalities Impact Screening | An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken and forms part of the evidence base for the plan |
| Human Rights | An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken and forms part of the evidence base for the plan |

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| Transformational Government | The draft Joint Strategic Growth Plan has been prepared in collaboration between the City and County Councils of Leicester & Leicestershire, as well as each of the District and Borough Councils, and the LLEP. |
| Comments of Head of Paid Service | The Report is Satisfactory |
| Comments of Section 151 Officer | The Report is Satisfactory |
| Comments of Monitoring Officer | The Report is Satisfactory |
| Consultees | Cabinet Local Plan Committee |
| Background papers | <p>Strategic Growth Plan Consultation Draft – which can be viewed at http://www.llstrategicgrowthplan.org.uk/the-plan/stage-two/draftplan/</p> <p>Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/strategic_growth_plan</p> <p>Sustainability Appraisal https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/strategic_growth_plan</p> <p>Report to Cabinet, 9 October 2018</p> <p>Report to Local Plan Committee, 7 November 2018</p> |
| Recommendation | <p>IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:</p> <p class="list-item-l1">(I) THE REVISED STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN (SGP) “LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE 2050: OUR VISION FOR GROWTH” BE APPROVED; AND</p> <p class="list-item-l1">(II) THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (OR EQUIVALENT) OF EACH SGP PARTNER AUTHORITY, FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH THE LEADER OF THAT AUTHORITY AND THE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING MANAGER FOR THE SGP, BE AUTHORISED TO AGREE, PRIOR TO PUBLICATION, ANY FINAL MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE SGP WHICH DO NOT SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGE THE OVERALL CONTENT OR PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT.</p> |

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This Council, working with Leicester City Council, the County Council, and the LLEP has been working on the preparation a Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) for Leicester and Leicestershire.
- 1.2 The abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies by the government in 2010, coupled with the need for local planning authorities to consider strategic planning within the context of the 'duty to co-operate' required by the Localism Act 2011 created the need for a new approach to strategic planning across Leicester & Leicestershire.
- 1.3 In Leicester & Leicestershire, it was decided by the local planning authorities that long term strategic planning would be more effective if undertaken across the City and County and to include the local enterprise partnership, the LLEP, as a partner.
- 1.4 The SGP has therefore been prepared jointly by the eight local planning authorities (the borough and district councils), the County Council as the highway authority, the City Council as a unitary authority with combined planning and highways responsibilities. Each of these is represented on a Members' Advisory Group (MAG) which, supported by senior officers, has overseen the preparation of the Plan. The LLEP attends MAG in the capacity of an observer; Homes England (formerly the Homes & Communities Agency) attends the senior officer group in the capacity of an observer.

2.0 THE PROCESS TO DATE

- 2.1 To date the preparation of the SGP has involved agreeing a Strategic Growth Statement which set out the rationale and proposed process for the preparation of the SGP, identified the defining characteristics of the local area and challenges faced by the partners, outlined the evidence base that would be assembled and the spatial options to be considered in formulating a SGP, and set out initial objectives and ambitions for the future. It was considered by Council on 28 June 2016.
- 2.2 A Consultation Draft SGP was considered and endorsed by the Members' Advisory Group in November 2017. It was subsequently approved for the purpose of public consultation by Cabinet on 14 November 2017 (other authorities also gave approval for the purposes of public consultation). More details of this are set out in section 3 of this report.
- 2.3 A further report which established the Council's formal response to the SGP was considered by Cabinet on 1 May 2018.
- 2.4 The meeting of MAG on 24 September 2018 considered and agreed a revised SGP. A copy is attached at Appendix A of this report.
- 2.5 Each of the local authorities across Leicester & Leicestershire are being recommended to approve the revised SGP during autumn/winter 2018.

3.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 3.1 A 17-week consultation period took place from 11 January -10 May 2018 and summary documents are available. Activities included:
 - press releases, periodic media coverage

- emails/letters to statutory consultees
- emails/letters to organisations and groups identified by partners
- public exhibitions
- copies of the Draft SGP and summary leaflets
- paper copies of questionnaires and all evidence at main offices
- SGP website
- links to the SGP website from partner websites
- social media messages

- 3.2 A total of 588 responses were received, 79% of which were from members of the public. These comments have been analysed and considered during the preparation of the revised SGP. A summary of key changes is attached as Appendix B.
- 3.3 In line with the Statement of Community Involvement, those respondents who provided contact details have been informed that a revised plan has been prepared. The opportunity for further comment will take place during governance and/or the preparation of Local Plans.

4.0 THE REVISED STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN

- 4.1 The SGP will:

- 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;
- Give some control over accommodating and supporting future growth and help to protect and enhance environmental assets;
- 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.

- 4.2 There are risks in not having a SGP and these are summarised in Appendix C.

- 4.3 As the SGP has been developed, a number of events have been held for Members to keep them advised of progress. This has included all-Member briefings on the SGP at various stages in its preparation.

Key elements of the SGP

- 4.4 The SGP sets out a strategy for the growth and development of Leicester & 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. MAG considered the distribution of housing and employment land over the period 2011-31 and 2011-36 in the context of the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (January 2017) in order to give a more detailed framework for shorter term Local Plans.
- 4.5 There have been on-going discussions with organisations such as Network Rail and Midlands Connect to ensure that their emerging policies and proposals are incorporated in emerging plans, strategies and funding programmes where necessary.

- 4.6 The SGP proposes that more development will take place in major strategic locations with less development happening in existing towns, villages and rural area, in so doing to focus development along transport corridors and close to employment centres.
- 4.7 Five building blocks have been used to prepare the Plan:
- the existing settlement pattern
 - national policies, particularly in relation to planning, housing and infrastructure provision
 - the local economy and how it is supported by the Midlands Engine Strategy (March 2017)
 - road and rail networks and the proposals and priorities of the Midlands Connect Strategy (March 2017)
 - the area's environmental, historic and other assets.
- 4.8 Four priorities are identified:
- Creating conditions for investment and growth
 - Achieving a step change in the way that growth is delivered
 - Securing essential infrastructure
 - Delivering high quality development.
- 4.9 Analysis has indicated that through existing and emerging Local Plans and planning permissions provision can be made for the amount of new housing needed in the area to 2031. This will be achieved through a mixture of major strategic sites already identified in Local Plans (approximately 40%) and smaller scale growth on non-strategic sites (approximately 60%). The proposed new spatial distribution of strategic development, therefore, does not need to focus on this time period but it remains an important part of the plan e.g. we wish to accelerate the delivery of consented and allocated sites and we need to secure the infrastructure which is essential to their success.
- 4.10 Beyond 2031, the SGP proposes that more growth should be directed to strategic locations. This requires new strategic infrastructure to open up land for development and the Midlands Connect Strategy (setting out key transport priorities for the East and West Midlands) lays the foundations for this.
- Proposed Growth Areas*
- 4.11 The proposed growth areas are:
- Leicester City
 - The A46 Growth Corridor
 - The Leicestershire International Gateway
 - The A5 Improvement Corridor
 - The Melton Mowbray Key Centre for Regeneration and Growth
- 4.12 Coalville, Hinckley, Loughborough, Lutterworth and Market Harborough are identified as areas where growth would be managed in Local Plans.

- 4.13 In the villages and rural areas, the SGP proposes that there will be limited growth consistent with providing for local needs.

5.0 EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 By seeking to ensure that economic growth is secured, and appropriate provision for market and affordable homes is made, the implementation of the SGP can contribute to meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups across Leicester & Leicestershire.
- 5.2 An Equalities & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EqHRIA) has been undertaken. The outcomes of the assessment are available to view in a report which supports the SGP. The assessment considers a number of options for the spatial distribution of growth within Leicester & Leicestershire, including that of the SGP. It is clear that different options have the potential to impact, in different ways, on matters such as age, disability, race, religion or belief (some positive, some negative and some neutral). Other matters are not likely to be affected.
- 5.3 As this is a high-level strategic plan, however, the responsibility for mitigating any adverse impacts upon individuals or community groups will fall to subsequent statutory plans, primarily Local Plans prepared by individual authorities. In most cases, it will be important to ensure that specific infrastructure and services are planned effectively to deal with the specific needs of these groups. The EqHRIA ensures that the partner organisations are aware of the various impacts of the SGP and enables them to put in place any necessary mitigating measures and/or enhancements.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) (SEA) has been undertaken together with a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). These can be viewed at www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/strategic_growth_plan
- 6.2. The SA concludes that the SGP has the potential to deliver significant positive effects in relation to health and well-being; housing; and economy and employment. Minor positive effects are reported in relation to climate change and cultural heritage (although, in the case of the latter, minor negative effects are also reported as well). Minor negative effects are reported in relation to water; and moderate negative effects in relation to landscape and land. Mixed effects are reported in relation to transport and travel i.e. significant positive effects in relation to the focusing of development in strategic locations and minor negative effects in relation to potential congestion on nearby routes. Uncertain negative effects are recorded in relation to biodiversity and minerals. Where significant effects are identified, measures to mitigate these have been suggested, if possible. Further measures to enhance the positive effects have also been suggested, where possible.
- 6.3 The SA reports that the findings broadly support the preferred strategy as it would generate the most benefits in terms of employment and housing growth. It reports that the focus of growth at key areas of economic growth and infrastructure capacity is also likely to reduce the length of car trips, and encourage sustainable modes of travel (particularly where there are strong rail and bus links into the City of Leicester). It also states that, in terms of environmental effects, the preferred approach does not generate any major negative effects and performs better or the same as the alternatives in this respect.

6.4 The SA acknowledges the role of the SGP in establishing broad preferred locations for longer term growth to provide a framework for statutory Local Plans. It states that the broad locations would evidently be able to accommodate a range of different growth levels so, if subsequent work based on updated evidence confirms that a higher level of growth ought to be pursued in certain locations, then this can be considered at that stage. A higher level of growth (than the notional projected housing requirement) will have largely negative impacts. This is supported by the SA findings which suggest that the negative effects for every option would be likely to increase and this could lead to major negative effects on the built and natural environment, water and transport infrastructure.

7.0 WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE OF THE CHANGES?

7.1 In terms of North West Leicestershire the following changes are highlighted:

- The Northern Gateway which covered the northern part of the district and Charnwood has been redefined as "The Leicestershire International Gateway";
- For the period 2031 to 2050 the number of dwellings to be provided has been increased by 1,200 to 9,720;
- There is explicit support for the re-opening of the Leicester-Burton railway to passenger traffic; and
- Explicit support for the regeneration of Coalville

7.2 An additional 1,200 dwellings for the period 2031-50 would increase the total figure from 8,520 to 9,720 which equates to 68 extra dwellings every year. The annual requirement would increase from 448 dwellings to 511 dwellings. This is marginally more than the annual requirement in the adopted Local Plan (481 dwellings) up to 2031. This should be seen in the context that the scale of growth envisaged in NWL by the SGP so far is no higher than the requirement identified by the HEDNA, whereas most other authorities have significantly more growth than identified in the HEDNA. For example, Blaby is expected to take an additional 155%, Harborough 63% (allowing for a reduction of 2,000 dwellings) and Hinckley 17%. The comparable figure for NWL would be 14%.

7.3 Furthermore, such an increase is not considered to represent a challenge as our current Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment identifies the potential for just 22,000 dwellings over the next 20 years.

7.4 It is considered, therefore, having regard to the above that an additional 1,200 dwellings for the period 2031-50 is not unreasonable.

7.5 The support for both the re-opening of the Leicester-Burton railway and the regeneration of Coalville are to be particularly welcomed. The inclusion of the former is the first time that such support has been given in strategic plans.

8.0 WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

8.1 As noted the intention now is that each of the authorities should consider and sign off the revised SGP. The revised SGP was considered by Cabinet at its meeting of 9th October 2018 when it agreed to recommended approval of the SGP to Council. It was also due to be considered by the Local Plan Committee at its meeting of 7th November 2018. In view of the fact that this report had to be published prior to the meeting of the Local plan Committee, its comments will be reported via an update.

- 8.2 Subject to the SGP being approved by each of the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities as outlined at paragraph 2.5 of this report, the SGP will be used to guide the preparation of local plans.
- 8.3 Through the work of the Strategic Planning Group discussions have started in terms of additional work to help ensure the delivery of the plan, not only the housing and employment development, but also the key infrastructure that is required. These discussion will need to involve a range of partners including government agencies and the private sector.
- 8.4 A programme for this work will need to be developed when a new Joint Strategic Planning Manager is in post.