

**REPORT TO THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MEETING ON 15 JANUARY 2020**

Status: For Discussion
Title: Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan
Originator: Rob Thornhill Joint Strategic Planning Manager
Where from: Scrutiny Task Group – Strategic Growth Plan
Where to next: Cabinet

Objective: For Members of Communities Scrutiny Panel to consider and agree the recommendations to Cabinet in paragraph 3.10 below.

1. Outcome sought from Panel

1.1 That the recommendations set out below are agreed for consideration by Cabinet.

2 Background

2.1 In December 2018 Harborough District Council approved the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (<http://www.llstrategicgrowthplan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Final-LL-SGP-December-2018-1.pdf>). In Summer 2019 a Scrutiny Task Group was set up to consider the Strategic Growth Plan from the Harborough perspective.

2.2 The Task Group met four times between July and November 2019. The Group heard from the Joint Strategic Planning Manager and three organisations opposed to the Strategic Growth Plan (or elements of it) namely: Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Willoughby Waterleys Residents Association (WWRA), and South East Leicestershire Action Group (SELAG). All of which articulated their concerns in a clear and concise way and the Task Group would like to thank all parties for their well-considered and constructive input.

3 Points for discussion

3.1 It is important to recognise that Harborough needs to accommodate significant and sustained growth in the long-term with or without the Strategic Growth Plan. How growth is accommodated is one of the most significant long-term challenges facing the District, and one there is no easy answer to.

3.2 The Long-term growth challenge facing Harborough does not stem directly from the Strategic Growth Plan itself. National Planning Policy requires authorities to, as a

minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas where sustainable to do so.

- 3.3 Against this context, Harborough's housing requirement has increased by 60% to 557 homes per year in the recently adopted Local Plan, compared to 350 homes per year in the Core Strategy 2011. Neighbouring Leicester City has declared an unmet housing need. All three major national political parties are saying they want to build more homes and the Government has set an ambitious target to build a minimum 300,000 homes a year nationally by the mid-2020s.
- 3.4 In this respect, the long-term growth challenge facing the district exists with or without the Strategic Growth Plan. To date, the majority of new housing in Leicester & Leicestershire has been built on small and medium-sized sites in the City, Market Towns, Villages and Rural areas. Some of this development has been unplanned. Often these developments make little or no contribution to infrastructure or services and, instead, rely on existing facilities. This has created significant problems. Some communities feel overwhelmed by the speed and scale of change. Others are disadvantaged by pressures on local schools, health centres and recreation facilities. Congestion on local roads and public transport is a frequent cause of complaint.
- 3.5 This situation is strongly reflected in Harborough, where the overwhelming majority of development over the last few years has taken place on small and medium sized sites 'bolted-on' to existing towns and villages, often with limited contributions to infrastructure and services. The reliance on small and medium sized sites will continue in the period up to 2031 as existing planning permissions are built out.
- 3.6 The Strategic Growth Plan seeks to move away from this approach and relieve development pressure on existing towns and villages by opening up new areas capable of delivering large scale growth (e.g. new communities) along the Priority Growth Corridor - reducing the amount of growth in the towns and villages in the District. The Task Group considered indicative alternatives to the Strategic Growth Plan (Appendix A). These alternatives show the amount of housing in existing towns and villages could be substantially lower if the aspirations of the Strategic Growth Plan are realised. This is because, it potentially opens-up opportunities to provide new communities and investment in infrastructure, compared to the more 'traditional' approach to housing delivery in the district which has focussed the majority of development in existing settlements on small and medium sized sites.
- 3.7 Members consider there has been a lack of investment in infrastructure across Harborough District. In this context, the Strategic Growth Plan offers an opportunity to work with partners to increase infrastructure investment into the area and relieve pressure on existing towns and villages. This is an opportunity that should be welcomed and explored. Notwithstanding this, the strategic growth plan is a long-term vision to 2050 and doesn't provide all the answers. HDC would like to put on record that whilst it welcomes the opportunity to explore the potential opportunity with partners, it will consider alternatives through its next Local Plan (based on up-to-date detailed evidence at the time) to ensure; more detailed consideration; further opportunities for public consultation; and that development is accommodated in an appropriate way for Harborough District.

- 3.8 The Strategic Growth Plan indicates a priority growth corridor around the south and east of Leicester that includes a proposal for an Expressway. HDC consider it important that other alternatives, including those to the west are considered. HDC should therefore make contact with Midlands Connect to seek clarification that alternatives to an expressway South and East of Leicester are being considered.
- 3.9 If the route of an Expressway around the South and East of Leicester cannot be delivered then the Task Group considers that a review of the housing distribution should be instigated. The Council Resolution of 10th December 2018 to approve the Strategic Growth Plan includes informative caveats ([minutes of meeting of Council - 10 December 2018](#)). These should be reiterated to the Members Advisory Group for Leicester & Leicester (MAG).
- 3.10 Following debate and discussion over the last few months, the Task Group agreed the following recommendations to the Communities Scrutiny Panel:

	Item:
i.	That the Communities Scrutiny Panel notes that the Harborough District needs to accommodate significant and sustained growth in the long-term with or without the Strategic Growth Plan. The long-term growth challenge facing Harborough does not stem directly from the Strategic Growth Plan itself.
ii.	That the Communities Scrutiny Panel notes the amount of housing in existing towns and villages of Harborough District could be substantially lower in the longer term (2031-2050) if the aspirations of the Strategic Growth Plan are realised.
iii.	That there has been a lack of investment in infrastructure across Harborough District and the Strategic Growth Plan offers an opportunity to work with partners to increase infrastructure investment into the area and relieve pressure on existing towns and villages. This opportunity should be explored, including consideration of the principal radial routes into and out of Leicester such as the A426, A5199, A6 and the A47.
iv.	That HDC puts on record that alternatives to the spatial strategy in the Strategic Growth Plan will be considered through its next Local Plan (based on up-to-date detailed evidence at the time) to ensure; detailed consideration of development opportunities; further public consultation; and that development is accommodated in an appropriate way for the Harborough District.
v.	HDC should contact Midlands Connect to seek clarification that alternatives to A46 Expressway South and East of Leicester are being considered and also to emphasize the importance of improving the A5 corridor.
vi.	That if the route of the A46 Expressway as envisaged in the Strategic Growth Plan (i.e. around the South and East of Leicester) cannot be delivered, then a review of the housing distribution should be instigated.
vii.	That the Council Resolution of 10 th December 2018 to approve the Strategic Growth Plan which includes informative caveats, is reiterated to MAG and a link to that resolution should be included in the Report to Community Scrutiny Panel.

- 4 Equality Impact Assessment Implications/Outcomes (attach completed EIA)
- 4.1 An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment was carried out during the preparation of the Strategic Growth Plan.
- 5 Impact on Communities
- 5.1 There are no direct impacts on communities from the contents of this report which is for the Communities Scrutiny Panel to review the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Task Panel relating to the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan.
- 6 Legal Issues
- 6.1 None as far as this report is concerned.
- 7 Resource Issues
- 7.1 None as far as this report is concerned
- 8 Community Safety Implications
- 8.1 None as far as this report is concerned.
- 9 Risk Management Implications
- 9.1 The Strategic Growth Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that the Harborough District, as part of the wider Leicester and Leicestershire area, has a strategic planning framework in place and available to guide the delivery of future growth through the development of future local development plans for the District; which Harborough District Council will prepare. Without such a strategic planning framework being in place to provide guidance in this way growth could potentially come forward in the years ahead in ways that are not coordinated with the delivery of important supporting infrastructure.
- 10 Consultation
- 10.1 Consultation was carried out during the preparation of the strategic growth plan and there will be further opportunities for consultation through subsequent Local Plan preparation.
- 11 Background Papers
- 11.1 Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan - <http://www.llstrategicgrowthplan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Final-LL-SGP-December-2018-1.pdf>
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Previous report(s): None relating to the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan to the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: Y/N

Appendices:

A. Potential Indicative Options for distributing housing in Harborough District