

PAPER NO. 6

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 4th DECEMBER 2017

Meeting: Executive

Date: 4 December 2017

Subject: Strategic Growth Plan

Report of: David Atkinson – Head of Planning & Regeneration /
Chris Brown – Interim Principal Planning Officer

Portfolio Holder: Councillor King

Status: For Decision and Recommendation

Relevant Ward(s): All

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To advise Executive of the work undertaken to date in the preparation of a Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester & Leicestershire.

2. Recommendation:

2.1 That Executive recommends to Council that the Strategic Growth Plan be published for a period of public consultation in accordance with the consultation process and timetable outlined in this report.

2.2 That Executive notes and endorses the process which has been undertaken in the preparation of a Draft Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester & Leicestershire.

2.3 That Executive notes that the Consultation Draft Strategic Growth Plan has been endorsed by the Members' Advisory Group (MAG) which oversees the preparation of the Plan;

2.4 That a further report is brought back to Executive and Council to consider the consultation responses and to approve the final version of the Plan.

3. Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 To demonstrate support for the collaborative working that has taken place across the seven Districts/Borough Councils, Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and the Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership;
- 3.2 To note that the Members Advisory Group (MAG) has been engaged in and supports the proposed document;
- 3.3 To ensure that all partners are in support of the process and that it is consistent across the County, and that all residents and stakeholders have an opportunity to make comments on the proposals; and
- 3.4 To ensure that there is an opportunity to scrutinise the final version of the plan before it is agreed.

4. Key Facts and Analysis

Background

- 4.1 Until 2010, the strategic planning framework for Leicester & Leicestershire was set out in the East Midlands Regional Plan (2009), the regional spatial strategy for the East Midlands. In 2010, however, regional spatial strategies were abolished by Government and local planning authorities were encouraged to consider strategic planning within the context of the '*duty to co-operate*' imposed by the Localism Act 2011.
- 4.2 In Leicester and Leicestershire, recognising that the strategy of the East Midlands Regional Plan would be implemented through proposals in the current round of Local Plans, the local planning authorities decided that strategic planning for the longer term would be more effective if undertaken across the City and County as a whole. Responding to the important role of the Leicester & Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) in the delivery of infrastructure and economic growth, the LLEP became an additional partner in the process.
- 4.3 The Strategic Growth Plan has, therefore, been prepared jointly and on a collaborative basis by the ten partner organisations in Leicester & Leicestershire; i.e. all eight of the local planning authorities, the County Council as highway authority, the City Council as a unitary authority with combined planning and highways responsibilities, and the LLEP. Leicester & Leicestershire is fortunate in that the Housing Market Area, the Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) and the area covered by the LLEP are the same: having the same geographical boundaries for these areas means that it is easier to plan for the future. Although there is a need to collaborate with authorities outside Leicester and Leicestershire, the intention is that provision for housing and economic development needs will be met from within the area.

- 4.4 The Strategic Growth Statement, published in August 2016, stated that the ten partner organisations had agreed that the Strategic Growth Plan would:
- be clear about the opportunities and challenges that are to be faced;
 - provide an agreed scale and direction for future growth, reflecting the evidence available and the will of the partners;
 - create a single consistent strategic framework for Local Plans, economic investment plans, transport and other infrastructure plans;
 - ensure that Leicester & Leicestershire is positively positioned to take advantage of private sector inward investment opportunities and national programmes for investment; and
 - provide the right conditions for the growth of indigenous businesses, and, at the same time, protect the area's natural resources, environment and historic assets.
- 4.5 The current Consultation Draft Plan takes forward this work. It sets out a strategy for the growth and development of Leicester & Leicestershire in the period to 2050. This time period allows the partners to think about the longer term needs of the area and to consider opportunities which might extend beyond the conventional timeframe of a Local Plan. Within this longer time period, however, MAG has also considered the distribution of housing and employment land for the periods 2011-2031 and 2011-2036 so that the partners have a more detailed framework for the preparation of Local Plans.
- 4.6 The Strategic Growth Statement was the first stage in the preparation of the Plan. Having completed governance procedures in early summer 2016, it was the subject of public consultation in August/September 2016. The document stated the ambition of the partners was to overcome the problems that are experienced by existing communities, and to accommodate growth in new developments that have a real sense of place and purpose. It also explained that the partners wanted to raise the bar in terms of the quality of development so the focus has been on how the City and the County can be improved for local people and businesses, and, therefore, how growth can be delivered at the right time, in the right place, with the essential supporting infrastructure that it needs. Consultation responses were reported to MAG in early 2017.
- 4.7 Throughout the discussions on the Strategic Growth Plan, the focus has been on defining a long term future for Leicester & Leicestershire, looking ahead as far as 2050. This end date was chosen, in part, to provide additional flexibility in terms of the potential solutions that might be considered but also because other stakeholders were known to be planning for, and trying to secure funding for, projects with end dates which extended well beyond the timeframe of a Local Plan.

- 4.8 Since work started on the Strategic Growth Plan, other organisations have progressed their own work at different speeds (e.g. Network Rail, Highways England, the Midlands Connect Partnership) but there has been a constant dialogue to ensure an awareness of their emerging policies and proposals, and that projects considered to be vital to the future of Leicester & Leicestershire were appropriately incorporated in emerging plans, strategies and funding programmes.
- 4.9 As the Consultation Draft Plan has been developed, Members have previously been advised of progress through Member briefing sessions that have been open to all members.
- 4.10 In addition the Planning Portfolio Holder has attended a number of MAG meetings, as the Council's representative, at which the shape, structure and content of the Consultation Draft Plan has been discussed.

Proposed Consultation process

- 4.11 With the Consultation Draft Strategic Growth Plan having been endorsed by MAG, a period of public consultation now needs to take place. The detail and the extent of consultation that is to take place will vary between the partner organisations, to provide flexibility for each to reflect their own practices. In reality, however, there needs to be an 'agreed minimum' level approach which each local authority will adopt. It is recognised that the LLEP has a different role in this process.
- 4.12 The following will provide the basis of the public consultation. The public consultation will relate to the following:
- The Consultation Draft Plan;
 - A short, simple consultation summary and guidance leaflet. It is anticipated that this would constitute an A3 sheet of paper folded in such a way that the reasons for preparing the plan are set out on the front page. The strategy diagram of the Strategic Growth Plan will be included on the centre spread along with explanatory notations. The final page should provide details of proposed housing numbers and ways in which consultation responses can be submitted;
 - Copies of all documentation supporting the Strategic Growth Plan;
 - A standard presentation format to be used by each of the partner organisations engaged in the preparation of the Strategic Growth Plan across the Leicester and Leicestershire area, with notes, to be used by individual partner organisations in order to ensure that a consistent message is conveyed.
 - A consultation questionnaire; and
 - One or more joint press releases.

- 4.13 The consultation process will be managed, primarily, through the plan-wide website for the Strategic Growth Plan (<http://www.l1strategicgrowthplan.org.uk/>) and also through partner's individual websites. It is understood that all material will be held on the plan-wide web site for the Strategic Growth Plan with appropriate links from partner organisations. The on line consultation form will be hosted on the Strategic Growth Plan web site and the results will be collated centrally whilst ensuring that feedback for each planning authority area can be provided. Arrangements will also be made for comments to be submitted by post.
- 4.14 The management of the consultation process will be divided between tasks undertaken centrally under the management of the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Planning Manager and tasks undertaken locally lead by each partner Council. A strategic communications group made up of communications officers from each of the partner Councils has been established to support the consultation and coordinate this work. The final details of the approach to consultation are currently being developed and will include the following:
- Designing the draft Plan and summary leaflet;
 - Developing new and maintaining the Strategic Growth Plan central website content;
 - Manage the web-enabled consultation questionnaires;
 - Alert Duty to Cooperate and other specific consultation bodies;
 - Prepare news release and coordinate Public Relations.
 - Co-ordinate responses to social media activity;
 - Design the consultation survey and questionnaire;
 - Monitor responses;
 - Produce overall analysis report of consultation responses;
 - Provide partner Councils with relevant sub – sets of responses relating to matters arising local to each for local analysis;
 - Prepare exhibition materials for use at consultation events;
 - Collate feedback from consultation events via a template;

Each Planning Authority will ensure that locally the following tasks are undertaken: Tasks that it are currently proposed should be undertaken locally include:

- Proof checking of the documents to be published for consultation;
- Maintaining an information page on each partner Council's website linked to the central Strategic Growth Plan website;
- Input to and verify Duty to cooperate organisation contact details.
- Promoting the consultation in media local to each partner Council's area and responding to queries arising;
- Promote the consultation via partner Council's own social media platforms as needed;
- Provide feedback on the consultation questionnaire and survey design;

- Undertake local analysis of consultation results;
- Plan local consultation events, promote those events locally and complete a template to record feedback from each local event;
- Plan and undertake local member engagement.

4.15 It is proposed that consultation should start during week commencing 8 January 2018 and continue for twelve weeks (thereby ending sometime during the first week in April 2018, depending on the start date). It is important to note that in this report the Executive are considering recommending to Council that the Draft Strategic Growth Plan be published for consultation only, the approval for adoption of the Plan is not being sought at this stage.

4.16 All consultation responses will be reviewed and reported, in the first instance, to MAG. At the same time, consideration will be given to whether amendments to the Draft Plan will need to be made.

4.17 It is anticipated that the final version of the Strategic Growth Plan will be presented to MAG for consideration in summer/early autumn 2018. If agreed, it will proceed through the governance arrangements of the partner organisations.

5. Legal Issues

5.1 The ongoing work of the Strategic Growth Plan is being led by the Joint Strategic Planning Manager and there are no legal or procedural barriers currently identified. A legal opinion will be sought by the Joint Strategic Planning Manager as the Strategic Growth Plan progresses to consultation.

6. Resource Issues

6.1 No resource issues: ongoing work inputting to the Strategic Growth Plan can be undertaken within existing resources of the Strategic Planning Team and Head of Planning and Regeneration.

7. Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

7.1 There are no equality issues as a result of the report.

8. Risk Management Implications

8.1 The Executive is advised that not recommending to Council the approval of the Draft Strategic Growth Plan for consultation will significantly increase the risk of the Plan being delayed. As referred to at paragraph 4.14 above it is important to note that the Executive are considering recommending to Council that the Draft Strategic Growth Plan be published for consultation only, the approval for adoption of the Plan is not being sought at this stage.

9. Consultation

9.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Portfolio Holder.

10.1 Options

10.1 To recommend to Council not to support the publication of the Strategic Growth Plan between the Councils of Leicester and Leicestershire for consultation – it is recommended this approach is not supported.

11. Background Papers

11.1 As detailed in the body of this report.

Previous report(s): None

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: No

Ward Members Notified: NA

Appendices:

A. Leicester and Leicestershire 2050: Our Vision for Growth (November 2017).