

## RURAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

8 SEPTEMBER 2010

### REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

#### REVOCATION OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES

##### 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report advises the Committee of the Government's decision to revoke, and its intention to, abolish Regional Strategies. The matter was considered by the Melton Local Development Framework (MLDF) Task Group at its meeting of 8 July 2010, and the conclusions and recommendations of the Task Group are also reported.

##### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 **The Melton Local Development Framework Task Group has recommended that:**

- 1 **the abolition of regional strategies and the transfer of regional housing and planning powers to local planning authorities is welcomed;**
- 2 **in the interim the East Midlands Regional Plan housing provision for Melton of 3,400 dwellings (170 dwellings per annum) between 2006 and 2026 should continue to be used; and**
- 3 **the Assistant Chief Executive cooperate with other local planning authorities in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area on this matter.**

##### 3.0 KEY ISSUES/BACKGROUND

3.1 On 6 July 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the revocation of Regional Strategies with immediate effect. A letter to local planning authorities included some 'question and answer' advice on issues that may immediately arise from the announcement.

3.2 At its meeting of 8 July 2010, the MLDF Task Group welcomed the revocation of Regional Strategies and the transfer of housing and planning powers to local planning authorities.

3.3 Planning authorities are being encouraged to continue preparing Local Development Frameworks for their area.

3.4 With regard to the housing provision for Melton, Members will be aware that the Regional Plan identified a requirement of 3,400 dwellings (170 dwellings per annum) between 2006 and 2026. This provision took account of Melton Mowbray's status as a sub-regional centre within the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area. This housing requirement has been removed with the revocation of the Regional Plan.

3.5 The MLDF Task Group considered the question of alternative housing provision in the light of:

- the level of provision submitted to the original East Midlands Regional Plan examination (so-called Option 1 targets);
  - the Council's position with regard to the housing provision in the various stages in the preparation of the East Midlands Regional Plan;
  - Local consultation undertaken by the Council in 2005 which was used to inform our position with regard to the East Midlands Regional Plan housing provision; and
  - The lack of evidence to suggest an alternative provision.
- 3.6 The Task Group was also mindful of the work already undertaken by the Council and others. Any target selected may be tested during the examination process, especially if challenged, and the Council would need to be ready to defend it. In conclusion, the Task Group recommended that in the interim the East Midlands Regional Plan housing provision for Melton of 3,400 dwellings (170 dwellings per annum) between 2006 and 2026 should continue to be used. The matter will be further addressed and finalised through the preparation of the MLDF Core Strategy.
- 3.7 The Task Group recognised that there will be a continuing need to cooperate with other local planning authorities in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area on housing growth.
- 3.8 The Council will need to review and/or revise other emerging policies in the light of the revocation of the East Midlands Regional Plan while making sure that we meet the requirements for soundness under the current legislation. Environmental and climate change policy areas will be particularly affected. When undertaking consultation and sustainability appraisal on draft policies, we will need to take an approach that considers the stage reached, the extent of work already undertaken and the scope of the policy changes we are making.

#### **4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The abolition of regional strategies would effectively transfer decision making powers on strategic housing and planning to the Council. The development of policies in this area would be through the Melton Local Development Framework Core Strategy.
- 4.2 In determining planning applications local planning authorities must continue to have regard to the development plan. In Melton, this will now consist only of the 'saved' policies of the Melton Local Plan (with the exception of minerals and waste matters). Local planning authorities should also have regard to other material considerations, including national policy. Evidence that informed the preparation of the revoked Regional Strategies may also be a material consideration, depending on the facts of the case.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 On 24 May 2010, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Chief Secretary to the Treasury announced that the Government would save over £6 billion from spending during this financial year. Included in that savings package were £1.166 billion reductions in grants to local government. The Housing and Planning Delivery Grant is included in the savings package.

5.2 In the Coalition's programme for government there is a commitment to provide incentives for local authorities to deliver sustainable development, including for new homes and businesses.

5.3 The transfer of decision making powers on strategic housing and planning to the Council will have significant resource implications. The Council will become responsible for developing the evidence base for these policy areas, consultation on them and for defending them at public examination.

## 6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Regional Strategies have been revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

6.2 In the longer term the legal basis for Regional Strategies will be abolished through the "Localism Bill" that is being introduced in the current Parliamentary session.

## 7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no community safety implications concerning this report.

## 8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 There is a close relationship between housing provision and the projected number of households. Life expectancy and net migration have large impacts on projected household growth.

## 9.0 **RISKS**

9.1 At present, ignoring the East Midlands Region Plan's housing targets would present a significant risk. The Council would need to have its own robust and evidenced targets in place quickly to avoid open season for housing development in the area. How different those targets might be from the Regional Plan figures is difficult to say, however the Council would need to do some considerable work to prove lower or higher demand if it wanted to adopt different figures.

9.2 The policy vacuum caused by the revocation of Regional Strategies is likely to lead to greater uncertainty within the development industry and more decisions taken on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate and ultimately by the courts, rather than by local planning authorities.

## 10.0 **CONSULTATION**

10.1 In determining the Council's position with regard to the early stages in the preparation of the Regional Plan, the Council undertook community consultation on housing provision.

10.2 With the abolition of regional strategies, the development of strategic housing and planning policies in this area is expected to be through the Melton Local Development Framework Core Strategy. Further consultation on strategic housing and planning policies is likely to be necessary prior to submission of the Core Strategy.

## 11.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

11.1 The impact of a revised housing provision could be borough-wide.

## 12.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

12.1 Household growth is linked to climate change through the amount and location of housing in relation to jobs and facilities, commuting patterns (distances and mode) together with the availability of sustainable transport (bus, rail, walk and cycle) versus car use.

12.2 Regional Plan policies concerning energy efficiency standards for new development and priorities for low carbon energy generation (including renewable energy targets) have now been removed.

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Date: 16 August 2010

Background Papers: Report to MLDF Task Group 8-7-2010: Abolition of Regional Strategies (including appendices)  
'Dear Chief Planning Officer' letter, Chief Planner, Department for Communities and Local Government, July 2010  
East Midlands Regional Plan  
Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3)  
Implications of the Abolition of Strategic Regional Planning for the East Midlands, East Midlands Leaders' Board, June 2010

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