

FULL COUNCIL

12th DECEMBER 2018

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & REGULATORY SERVICES

STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Members to consider and approve the revised Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (the revised SGP) which is attached as Appendix A to this report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that:

- i) **The Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) “*Leicester and Leicestershire 2050: Our Vision for Growth*” (Appendix A) be approved;**
- ii) **The Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader and the Joint Strategic Planning Manager, 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, and**
- iii) **The Council welcomes the identification of Melton as a “Key Centre for Growth and Regeneration” and notes the constructive approach taken by the Council in accommodating wider growth needs. In so doing, the Council requests the Leader and officers continue to seek commitments from partner organisations for appropriate external support and funding to facilitate this ambition, as well as working to influence the most favourable possible design to Melton of any new infrastructure; , in particular the alignment of the ‘A46 Expressway’.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 On 12th July 2016, the Council approved the Strategic Growth Statement for consultation. This formed the first stage in the development of the Strategic Growth Plan “SGP”. The Statement:
- 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 generic spatial options to be considered in formulating a SGP, and
 - set out initial objectives and ambitions for the future.
- 3.2 A Consultation Draft SGP was considered and endorsed by the Members’ Advisory Group on 6 November 2017. It was subsequently approved for the

purpose of public consultation by Council on 4th December 2017. A 17 week consultation period began on 11 January 2018 and closed on 10 May 2018.

- 3.3 The Council submitted its comments on this draft following consideration at Council on 22nd February 2018.
- 3.4 The report to Council on 4th December 2017 set out the background to the development of the draft SGP including the revocation of regional spatial strategies by the government in 2012 and the resulting need for local planning authorities to consider strategic planning within the context of the 'duty to co-operate' required by the Localism Act 2011.
- 3.5 In Leicester & Leicestershire, it was decided by the Local Planning Authorities (LPA) that long term strategic planning would be more effective if undertaken across the City and the County, and included the local enterprise partnership, the LLEP, as a partner.
- 3.6 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 and the City Council as a unitary authority with combined planning and highways responsibilities. Melton Borough Council has been fully engaged at each stage of its development. 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.
- 3.7 The SGP will:
- support partners to plan effectively for the future, giving Local Plans a consistent framework, help 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, and
 - provide confidence to the market, Government, local businesses and residents that the local councils and the LLEP are working together to manage the growth of the area in a plan-led and co-ordinated manner.
- 3.8 There are risks in not having a SGP and these are summarised in Paragraph 9 below.
- 3.9 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, most recently on 21st November 2018. The draft Plan also went through normal governance procedures in November 2017.

3.10 Key elements of the SGP

- 3.10.1 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.

3.10.2 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.

3.10.3 The SGP proposes that most development will take place in major strategic locations with less development happening in existing towns, villages and rural area; in so doing, it allows new development to be focused along transport corridors and close to employment centres.

3.10.4 The five building blocks that have been used to prepare the Plan are an understanding and appreciation of:

- 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), and
- our environmental, historic and other assets.

3.10.5 Four priorities are identified in the SGP:

- creating conditions for investment and growth
- achieving a step change in the way that growth is delivered
- securing essential infrastructure
- delivering high quality development.

3.10.6 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.

3.10.7 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.

3.11 Proposed Growth Areas

3.11.1 The proposed growth areas are:

- Leicester City

- the A46 Growth Corridor
- the Leicestershire International Gateway
- the A5 Improvement Corridor
- Melton Mowbray Key Centre for Regeneration and Growth

3.11.2 Coalville, Hinckley, Loughborough, Lutterworth and Market Harborough are identified as areas where growth would be managed in Local Plans.

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

3.11.4 The identification of Melton Mowbray as a 'key centre' has included the extension of its potential to accommodate additional growth beyond that originally proposed in the Consultation Draft SGP. It is proposed that Melton Mowbray will accommodate some 5320 houses – 2000 greater than the 'organic' identified need based on current analysis - in the period 2031 -2050 in pursuit of this status, and 800 greater than in the Draft SGP. Overall this means that provision in 'strategic sites' at Melton Mowbray will accommodate 3800 houses (an increase by 800 from Draft stage). Details of this, and the other changes arising in response to consultation responses, are set out in Appendix B.

3.11.5 Members are advised that contributions made by the Council during the consultation process have been secured in relation to the positive impact on infrastructure, rail improvements and desirability of improved connectivity both within the SGP area and its wider surroundings.

3.11.6 The developing Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) is a driver for the distribution of the anticipated UK Shared Prosperity Fund and that the emerging LIS specifically references the SGP as a key driver. Therefore the identification of Melton as a key centre for growth and regeneration should assist in leveraging additional funding support to assist in supporting the Council's aspirations in this regard.

3.12 Environmental Implications

3.12.1 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) (SEA) has been undertaken together with a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The outcomes are available to view in a report supporting the SGP. 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.

3.12.2 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.

- 3.12.3 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.

3.13 Relationship with the Adopted Melton Local Plan

- 3.13.1 The Local Plan contains a review trigger in which it specifically cites that a review will take place depending of the impact of the final version of the SGP, i.e. if it creates a level of growth of a spatial distribution that is not consistent with its current content. However, the SGP has a strong synergy with the Local Plan and for the plan period of the latter the documents complement one another. The Local Plan will be the subject of review during its lifetime and the SGP will be a factor guiding any updates that arise as a result.
- 3.13.3 The Plan Period of the SGP overlaps with that of the Local Plan in that its impact take effect from 2031 whilst the Local Plan runs to 2036. The figures stated in the SGP therefore incorporate a proportion of the growth already identified in the Local Plan (circa 1200) and Members will be aware that the 'sustainable neighbourhoods' established by the Local Plan have a capacity in excess of the delivery expected up to 2036 (1700 and 1500 respectively). It is anticipated that these factors would make significant contribution to the future growth aspirations identified in the SGP.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The plan sets out the longer term growth implications for the Borough and for Melton Mowbray in particular, with a horizon extending to 2050. Its timeframe includes that of our current Local Plan (2011 -36) and there is a very strong synergy with its content over that period.
- 4.2 The Draft Plan is referenced in the Local Plan under Policy SS6 as a potential trigger for review of the plan, should it in its final version result is quantitative of spatial requirements that are not compatible with the Local Plan.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no immediate resource implications for the Council as support for the development of the Plan is being resourced through existing staffing and operational budgets. The long term delivery of the SGP will be dependent on the necessary resources being secured to finance the delivery of key infrastructure

required to enable the delivery of the SGP. It will be important that such infrastructure is delivered in parallel with the growth outlined in the SGP.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

- 6.1 The Council is a legal duty to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of its Local Plan in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. The duty to cooperate was created in the [Localism Act 2011, and amends the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#).

The duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree. But local planning authorities should make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters before they submit their Local Plans for examination. Before independent examination of the Councils Local Plan the Council demonstrated that it was complying with the duty.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 7.1 There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES

- 8.1 By seeking to secure 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.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.

9.0 RISKS

L I K E L I H O O D	A	Very High				
	B	High			3,7,8,11	
	C	Significant			1,2,5	
	D	Low		10	4,6,9	
	E	Very Low				
	F	Almost Impossible				
			Negligible 1	Marginal 2	Critical 3	Catastrophic 4
			IMPACT			

Risk No	Risk Description
1	The revised NPPF makes it very clear that government wants LPAs to work together, specifically preparing joint statutory Local Plans.
2	The revised NPPF strengthens the requirements of the 'Duty to Co-operate', effectively turning it into a 'Duty to Agree'.
3	The revised NPPF establishes a mandatory requirement for a Statement of Common Ground and sets out a timetable for its preparation.
4	Clear demonstration of failure to work co-operatively, lack of strategy to address acknowledged development requirements and no framework for Local Plan. Consequential, ad hoc and piecemeal development pressures which would be difficult to resist.
5	The SGP is intended as a framework for Local Plans. If this does not exist, then the Duty to Co-operate will need to be re-cast in a different form.
6	Local Planning Authorities will have to return to relying on disaggregated and piecemeal ways of securing infrastructure.
7	Different mechanisms to make the case for arguing for strategic infrastructure would have to be devised. Returning to disaggregated and piecemeal means of doing this might not deliver provision at the scale and pace required. Lack of infrastructure is currently delaying the delivery of some growth that already benefits from planning permission and, as a result, pressure continues to be exerted on other sites.
8	The SGP demonstrates to Government the effort that has already been made by the partners to accommodate development via existing Local Plan allocations and planning permissions. This provides a good platform to negotiate infrastructure funding and other work with Government in order to accelerate delivery.
9	Powers exist already for the government to transfer control to the County Council if the partners fail to co-operate and manage growth positively and proactively through a plan-led approach.
10	There is intense pressure for development in the logistics sector in the Leicestershire and Leicestershire area. Both the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (January 2017) and the new standard methodology for calculating housing needs (set out in the revised NPPF) indicate a similar scale of housing need across the Leicester & Leicestershire housing market area.
11	Growth likely to gravitate towards existing infrastructure and major employment centres. Continued pressure also in villages and rural areas across the Leicester & Leicestershire area.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no implications for Climate Change.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 A 17-week consultation period took place from 11 January - 10 May 2018 and summary documents are available. This 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

11.2 A total of 588 respondents 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.

11.3 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 the preparation of Local Plans.

12. WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All Wards

Contact Officer: J Worley

Date: 29th November 2018

Appendices: Appendix A: Strategic Growth Plan
Appendix B: Summary of key changes from Consultation Draft Plan

Background papers:

- Reports to council 12/7/16, 4/12/2017 and 22/2/2018
- Consultation reports
- Equalities & Human Rights Impact Assessment
- Sustainability Appraisal