

Agenda item 4

Coventry, Warwickshire and Hinckley and Bosworth Joint Committee

20th July 2017

Single Spatial Strategy

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Member on the issue of a Single Spatial Strategy ('SSS') for the Sub Region

Recommendation to Committee

- a. That the report and progress to date be noted; and**
- b. That the future work set out in the report be agreed**

2 Report

- 2.1 Members will recall that at their meeting in November 2016 a report was considered on the issue of a SSS for the Sub Region. As part of the 2014 Growth Deal the CW LEP is required to progress a single policy framework for the CWLEP area. That report is attached to this report (Appendix 1) as are the minutes (Appendix 2). The resolution of the meeting in November was that Members were still committed to looking at the issue of a SSS but due to ongoing work on several, individual Local Plans, Members wanted to prioritise progression of that work before returning to this issue in six months time.
- 2.2 It is worth reflecting on progress with those Local Plans and on a number of developments in the external environment.

3 Local Plan Progress

- 3.1 It is fair to say that the local planning authorities have made excellent progress over the last six months, leading to the following positions:

North Warwickshire – NPPF compliant Core Strategy adopted 2014; five year housing supply; the new Local Plan has completed its first consultation stage and a finalised plan is due to be submitted early next year.

Nuneaton – The Local Plan was submitted in June 2017 and will be subject to an examination later this year. Since the last Joint Committee meeting NBBC officers have been in detailed discussions with officers from other councils regarding the shortfall of housing in their plan against their objectively assessed housing need. As a result a far greater level of exchange and understanding of views has been achieved. Their Acting Head of Planning and Economic Development offered to meet with Cabinet Members of each Council and the offer was taken up by some. NBBC remains committed to its undertaking to work hard to seek resolution to the housing shortfall, notwithstanding that its plan has been submitted.

Rugby - Submission Local Plan was endorsed by Full Council on the 21st of June with submission in July. Hearings anticipated September, with adoption March 2018.

Warwick – Having completed the Local Plan hearings in 2016, consultation has been undertaken on some Main Modifications. The Inspector has now considered the representations from this consultation and is expected to publish his report in the Summer. It is hoped that the Plan will be adopted in September 2017.

Stratford – Following the successful adoption of the Core Strategy in July 2016, SDC is progressing on a number of accompanying plans to support delivery of the Core Strategy proposals including a Site Allocations Plan (to identify reserve sites), Gypsy and Traveller Plan, Long Marston Airfield Masterplan SPD, Canal Quarter Regeneration Masterplan SPD, Development Requirements SPD and CIL.

Coventry - The City's public examination hearings for both the Local Plan and City Centre AAP ended in January 2017 with a follow up consultation on proposed modifications in March and April. The Inspectors report is expected in September with adoption currently planned for October. Later this year Coventry will consult on its proposed CIL arrangements, transport SPD and urban extensions SPD.

3.2 The cost of this work is substantial and is shown at Appendix 3

3.3 It seems likely therefore that by mid 2017 across the sub region there will be a set of five adopted local plans (with Nuneaton's plan due to be adopted the following year) setting an overall policy framework for the Sub region to 2031. This will be a considerable achievement. However, Members will be aware that the need to update evidence bases is almost constant, given the statutory obligations to keep plans and policies updated. There will be a necessity therefore to review plans to ensure they reflect up to date circumstances and the latest available evidence.

3.4.1 The progress on the local plans has been underpinned by increasing levels of joint working work conducted on a joint cost sharing basis. The main areas of joint study have been:

- Water cycle study
- Joint Green Belt Study
- Updates of household forecasts and projections
- Common agreed methodology for SHLAA and SHMA

4 External Environment

4.1 The planning policy implications of the recent general election are not yet known. The Secretary of State remains the same but there is a new minister for Housing and Planning, the Reading MP Alok Sharma. It is perhaps worth noting that the former Housing and Planning Minister, Gavin Barwell, is now the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff. Before the election, in Feb 2017, the Government set out a comprehensive reform agenda in a Housing White Paper "Fixing our broken housing Market". This promised a wide range of updated guidance, including updating the National Planning Policy Framework and the introduction of increased performance targets to ensure delivery of increased housing numbers. Members received a presentation on the White Paper at their last meeting.

4.2 The Government made it clear in the White Paper that joint strategic working was to be encouraged particularly in metropolitan areas where city regions create challenging growth issues whose solutions invariably involve cross boundary working and agreements. At the very end of the last Parliament the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 was enacted and incorporates Secretary of State powers to direct councils to prepare joint development plan documents where they are reluctant to undertake planning on a voluntary basis

4.3 In February 2017, the West Midlands Combined Authority's Land Commission produced a report which included the suggestion of a joint plan for the Combined Authority area. It also advocated the designation of regional growth points and the development of a number of initiatives to improve the delivery of housing and employment growth, and infrastructure needed to achieve the ambitious targets that have been set out in the WMCA Strategic Economic Plan.

4.4 Together with the existing commitments through the original City Deal, it is clear that the coordination of planning activity across market and economic areas is still an important policy issue. Meetings were held with DCLG officials in 2016 and 2017 and they were complimentary about the progress being achieved in Coventry and Warwickshire, for example through the two MOUs. Officials were keen to see this progress maintained towards the creation of a forward looking strategic framework that could tackle the continuing pressure to accommodate growth at a strategic scale.

- 4.5 It is relevant to note that joint strategic working is now becoming increasingly commonplace in and around major cities and towns where tight boundaries and green belt designations require a more strategic scale approach. Current plans are at various stages in Leeds, Cambridge, Northamptonshire, Gt Manchester and Bristol. Recently Oxford and its surrounding District authorities have committed to production of a joint growth framework to 2036, which seeks to address the city's tight urban boundary. In Leicestershire all the local authorities have jointly sponsored a major housing and employment forecast that now forms the basis of local plan reviews and a move to a non-statutory spatial strategy. There is widespread recognition that in order for areas to remain competitive some issues need to be tackled by a wider strategic approach to policy making and provision for growth
- 4.6 Although the supply of readily available housing and employment sites will be improved through the adoption of the existing draft plans there continues to be pressure for the release of more land to support the economic growth of the area. Members will be aware of a number of studies, particular with regard to employment land, which suggest that more land needs to be made available including:
- CBRE Employment Land Use Study CW LEP June 2105
 - West Midlands Joint Chief Executives' Report
 - Strategic Employment sites study by P Brett & JLL. Sept 2015
 - Appeal Decision 2016 St Modwen in North Warwickshire
- 4.7 More recently, Sajid Javid announced at the Local Government Association conference the intention to confirm the five yearly review of Local Plan's as a minimum. In addition he confirmed the intention to have a standard methodology for housing numbers, likely to be published later this month. Both announcements enhance the need to review our assessment of need once the new data is released.

5 **Suggested future work**

- 5.1 As an interim measure and to illustrate the continued commitment to joint working, Members resolved in November 2016 that proposals to compile a 'Compendium Spatial Framework' for the CWLEP area (in essence a virtual SSS based on the existing plans) continue.
- 5.2 This would pull together and summarise the existing strategic level policies and growth to 2031 embodied in the current up to date planning strategies and set it alongside the main infrastructure improvements and provision of major facilities such as new schools. The use of a web based presentation format will allow the use of mapping and links to the more detailed evidence bases contained on the individual local authority web sites.
- 5.3 This framework will be easily accessible to a wide variety of audiences and users and provide a "one stop shop" for all relevant strategic level planning based information with signposting of where to find details and more information

- 5.4 A local web based development consultancy, Lightmedia, has been appointed and work is currently progressing supported by all Districts/Borough Council, the City Council and the County Council. It is hoped that by autumn 2017 this will be up and running. The company has met the Planning Policy Officers from the sub-region and a prototype of the website is awaited. It is expected that it will require updating at least annually. Each local authority will however be able to update their page as and when required.
- 5.5 The next piece of work that is likely to be commissioned will be a scoping of the current employment land position and the existing supply/demand balance. Employment supply is being used up faster than anticipated in most areas. There is increasing evidence that though there are large new allocations in the latest round of plans the overall quantum and type of provision may need review and updating in subsequent plans.
- 5.6 Also in 2018 there will be a need to refresh the housing need figures for all areas, given that further population and housing projections will be published then by the Office for National Statistics and Government. It is anticipated that this work, and the employment work, will be jointly commissioned as before in order to save resources and benefit from an agreed evidence base, a reminder that the evidential 'building blocks' for a SSS are already in place.
- 5.7 It is unlikely that any additional funds will be needed for that work and none are asked for as a result of this report; they will be commissioned on the same basis as existing studies by the Local Planning Authorities and there may be scope for contributions from the CWLEP and Warwickshire County Council, as there are linkages with work they are doing on employment provision and infrastructure.
- 5.8 It would seem therefore that once the raw data from those studies is received the individual member authorities of this Committee could align work on allocations within their own areas and produce these at the same time. To be very clear, each local planning authority would retain its autonomy on planning issues and matters would have to progress by unanimous agreement.
- 5.9 It may be that a 'compendium/jigsaw' approach continues to be the favoured method but it is clear that a genuinely joint approach to distribution could maximise the effectiveness of decision making on a number of issues, particularly new settlements and ensuring that infrastructure delivery is at the heart of planning for the sub region. A sub regional approach will especially be able to pick up joint road issues such as the A5 and A46 as well as HS2 and airport plans. This cross authority approach would enable the Highway Authorities to support Local Plans and the economic objectives of the sub-region.
- 5.10 It is proposed this work is overseen by the Warwickshire Lead Officers group, which Coventry and the LEP are part of and then be fed into the new joint arrangement supporting this Committee and the LEP.
- 5.11 It is also proposed that a Member Working Group be established, as has happened on various projects recently, for Leaders/Portfolio Holders to give

oversight and leadership on the issues contained in this report. Reports to the LEP would also be envisaged as required.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (01827 719438).