

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director of Economy and Environment

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
Date:	28 January 2016
Subject:	South East Lincolnshire Draft Local Plan

Summary:

This report updates Members on the progress of the South East Lincolnshire Draft Local Plan and its implications for the County Council.

Actions Required:

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the contents of this report. These comments will be forwarded to the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan Team for their consideration.

Background

1. The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan is a statutory planning document currently being prepared by the South East Lincolnshire Joint Policy Unit (JPU) on behalf of the South East Lincolnshire Joint Planning Committee. This is a specially constituted statutory body designed to deliver a comprehensive local plan covering Boston Borough and South Holland District. Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) is a statutory partner with representation on the committee and also provides officer time to support the work programme of the JPU.

2. The Local Plan will guide development and the use of land in South East Lincolnshire from the 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2036, and will help to shape how the area will change over this period. The Local Plan must be based upon adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the area's characteristics and future prospects, and must reflect the vision and aspirations of the local community. It will need to deal effectively with the issues facing the area, and has many roles, including:

- identifying those areas of land that need to be developed for new homes, shops, or employment uses in order to meet the area's needs;
- identifying those areas of land which must be protected from development – perhaps because of their historic or environmental importance;
- ensuring that infrastructure and local facilities are provided at the same time as new homes; and

- setting out policies against which planning applications can be judged.

Consultation

The Joint Committee originally intended to produce the Local Plan in two parts:

- a Strategy and Policies development plan document (DPD) that would set out the vision, priorities and policies, and identify broad locations for change, growth and protection; and
- a Site Allocations DPD that would identify the sites that would be developed for specific uses, and the areas where particular policies would apply.

The first two public consultation stages were concerned with the production of only the Strategy and Policies DPD, and were:

- an initial stakeholder engagement/visioning exercise in January – April 2012; and
- a public consultation on the Combined Preferred Options and Sustainability Appraisal Report (the Preferred Options report) in May – June 2013.

Subsequently, the Joint Committee decided to produce the Local Plan as a single document, and hence, this draft Local Plan (including site options for development) includes the vision, strategic priorities, policies and options for allocations of land for development. However, it is based upon the earlier work, and seeks to deal with the issues raised by consultees at the first two stages of consultation.

Since no site-specific proposals, other than broad locations have been the subject of previous public consultation, the majority of sites featured in the Policies Map are being treated as 'options', from which 'preferred options' will be identified following consideration of the comments received during the public consultation.

The remaining stages are set out below:

Stage	Date
Public consultation on the Draft Local Plan – this stage	January to February 2016
Public consultation on the Publication Draft Local Plan	June-July 2016
Formal submission of the Publication Draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate	August 2016
Independent Examination	November 2016
Adoption of the Local Plan	February 2017

Formal consultation on the Draft Local Plan commenced on Friday, 8 January 2016 and will last for six weeks. All comments must be received by 5 pm on Friday, 19 February 2016. The consultation documents include the Draft Local Plan (comprising the Policies Map, Insets and written statement) and the Joint Committee-approved background papers.

In addition to this draft Local Plan, a suite of documents forms the evidence base to support the policies and proposals in the Draft Local Plan. All of these documents can be viewed on the Local Plan website at www.southeastlincslocalplan.org. In order to provide further assistance in understanding the contents of the Draft Local Plan, the following documents will be available to supplement the documents making up the Local Plan evidence base:

- a non-technical summary of the sustainability appraisal;
- an interim statement on the 'duty to cooperate'; and
- a draft version of the South East Lincolnshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

A hard copy of the Draft Local Plan has been sent out with the agenda for members of the Committee. The Policies Map and Inset Maps are available for inspection at:

<http://www.southeastlincslocalplan.org/wordpress/south-east-lincolnshire-local-plan-draft-for-public-consultation-january-2016/>

The written statement sets out the vision for South East Lincolnshire, the strategic priorities for the area and thirty-two policies to guide the development and use of land within it. Most of the policies can be split into two categories: those providing strategic direction and those providing general guidance on day-to-day development-management matters. The remainder relate to site-specific proposals for development.

Within the written statement, each boxed policy is followed by a section setting out the 'justification' for it. Prior to each policy box is an 'options considered' section which details the different approaches to policy formulation that have been considered. The choice of preferred option has been informed by a process of 'sustainability appraisal'. A second process of sustainability appraisal has then been applied to the emerging policy to inform its final wording.

Content of the Draft Local Plan

The main policy approach may be summarised thus:

- It is a plan which welcomes growth in jobs (17,600), homes (18,250) and supporting infrastructure;
- Growth is focused in or adjacent to the main urban centres of Boston (5,900 dwellings), Spalding (5720 dwelling) and Holbeach (1,340 dwellings);
- Significant growth is also promoted in the larger villages (classified as "Main Service Centres"), particularly Long Sutton, Kirton and Swineshead;
- Limited growth is allowed in the remaining "Minor Service Centres";

- Policies to ensure infrastructure is delivered alongside growth, with specific infrastructure requirements listed for the major sustainable urban extensions;
- A strategic approach to managing flood risk, including required mitigation where appropriate;
- Policies to protect the special features of South East Lincolnshire, including protected habitats, historic environment, pollution, climate change, open space and design; and,
- Support for sustainable transport measures as well as highways improvements.

Key Issues for Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)

LCC as a key partner has been closely involved in the formulation of the Local Plan and supports the overall approach to promoting and managing growth in South East Lincolnshire. There are a number of key issues for LCC to consider:

- The total number of homes to be built (730 p.a.) is slightly higher than the historic average since 1976, but is considered deliverable;
- Although the preferred spatial strategy is one of relative urban concentration in the context of a sparsely populated rural area, there is considered to be too much housing targeted at Minor Service Centres which are relatively unsustainable compared to larger settlements;
- Related to the previous point, LCC believes the growth potential of Holbeach should be enhanced by increasing the housing target to c. 2,000. This will allow two major housing sites (one partly owned by LCC) to contribute financially to improved education, health and highways improvements. Officers will make a detailed representation on this matter;
- LCC has committed some of its capital programme to highway improvements in Spalding (£10m contribution to delivery of the Spalding Western Relief Road) and Peppermint Junction in Holbeach;
- There will be increased pressure placed on LCC's budgets and resources in a time of austerity in the following ways:
 - Social Services – in addition to the national trend of an ageing population, South East Lincolnshire is considered an attractive destination for retirees in-migrating from more expensive parts of the country;
 - Children's Services – additional schools and nurseries will be required to meet the growing population along with the necessary teachers and support staff;

- Transport – increased traffic and demands on public transport will require additional investment in roads, bus services and cycle provision;
- Health – although a NHS responsibility, additional GP surgeries will be required and provided via the planning process.
- Reductions in central government departmental spending will be offset by greater demands on the private sector through developer contributions (Community Infrastructure Levy and Sc 106 undertakings). However, lower land values, especially in Boston, may prove to be a challenge.

Conclusion

This is an ambitious but deliverable Local Plan which seeks to balance the government's requirement that local authorities meet their own objectively assessed housing need with protection of the natural environment. Jobs growth will support an increasing population and improved tax revenues will be available to fund the necessary physical and social infrastructure required for sustainable and civilised living,

Consultation

Policy Proofing Actions Required

N/A

Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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