

Executive

7th October 2008

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Adopted Regional Spatial Strategy and Partial Review

Summary

1. This report describes the background to the development of the recently adopted Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), summarises its key points and highlights key issues for York. The report then outlines the purpose and key timescales for the Partial Review of the RSS which has now commenced to address the challenges coming out of the Housing Green Paper. The report seeks approval of the response made by officers to the Call for Evidence, which is the first stage of the review process.

Background

2. The Yorkshire and Humber Plan (the Regional Spatial Strategy or RSS) was published in May this year. The RSS sets out the broad development strategy for the Region and covers topics such as housing, economic development, transport, the environment and regeneration. It forms part of the statutory Development Plan for York and our Local Development Framework (LDF) will need to be in 'general conformity' with it. This report summarises the key elements of the recently adopted plan and highlights some key issues for York. A full copy of the adopted RSS is available to view in the members library and on-line at www.goyh.gov.uk/goyh/plan/regplan/?a=42496
3. The Assembly have now started work on a Partial Review of the adopted RSS. It will look at how the region can accommodate housing growth coming from the Government's Housing Green Paper, published in summer 2007. The review, entitled 'The Housing Challenge, Yorkshire and Humber Plan - Update 2009' will test the scale of growth and explore locations for and infrastructure needed to accommodate this growth.
4. To start the process the regional assembly issued a Call for Evidence asking for strategic ideas on how we can best accommodate growth in different parts of the Region. The consultation ran from the 30th May until the 11th July 2008. Given the constrained timescales officers submitted a response based on comments previously agreed by the Executive and submitted as part of the recently adopted RSS consultation process. The response submitted to the

Call for Evidence is attached as Annex A to this report. Members are asked to note and comment on the response submitted. Further copies and information about the Call for Evidence consultation documents and the Partial review can be found on the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly website: <http://www.yhassembly.gov.uk/Our%20Work/Regional%20Planning/Regional%20Spatial%20Strategy%20Partial%20Review/>

Background

5. Work on the Regional Spatial Strategy, which is led by the regional assembly, started in 2005. Officers and key members have been actively engaged in its production from the outset given its importance as part of the statutory Development Plan for York. We submitted comments through the Executive at Issues and Options stage, at Draft Plan stage, appeared at the Examination in Public and responded to the Proposed Changes published by the Secretary of State following the examination. The adopted RSS overall provides a sound approach to development in the region and many of the issues we raised during the preparation and formal consultation processes were incorporated into the final plan. There are however some outstanding issues we have as highlighted in paragraph 7 of this report.

Summary of key points in the adopted RSS

6. The key elements of the adopted RSS are:
 - Confirmation of higher housing growth to deliver over 22,000 homes each year in the region from now until 2026. The figure in the draft RSS (2005) was approximately 16,000 new dwellings per year. This rise was based on higher population, household and economic growth projections since the draft plan was published.
 - Confirmation of expected job growth of around 29,000 per year and policies to support economic development in city and town centres and other locations. The figure in the draft RSS was 19,000 new jobs per year.
 - Detailed policies for seven 'sub areas': Leeds City Region; South Yorkshire; Humber Estuary; York; Vales and Tees Links; the Coast; and Rural North Yorkshire. These reflect functional areas in terms of economic, housing and other functions rather than just focussing on traditional local authority boundaries. We supported the idea of a 'York sub area' that stretched beyond our administrative boundaries.
 - Development to be focussed on the 'Regional Cities' of, Hull, Leeds, Sheffield and now Bradford; and eleven 'Sub Regional Centres' - Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Halifax, Huddersfield, Wakefield, Scunthorpe, Grimsby, Harrogate, Scarborough and York. It allows for limited growth in the 3 rural areas of Craven, Hambleton and Ryedale.
 - The Plan proposes around 5000 more affordable homes, and a better mix of housing including more homes for families and for the elderly.

- A target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region by 20%-25% by 2016 from 1990 levels with further reductions thereafter, and policies to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- A robust strategy to manage flood risk, based on protecting cities and towns and the transport network, ensuring new development is in lowest risk areas, and improving flood storage and land management.
- The plans sets out a sustainable waste management strategy and to protect and improve water supply, water quality, woodlands, agricultural land, biodiversity, historic environment, and the region's diverse areas that protects landscape, biodiversity and other aspects of the environment.
- Its sets out priorities for transport management and investment, and a focus on making best use of existing infrastructure and to deliver a coordinated approach to development and infrastructure improvements.
- The Green Belts in the region are to remain unchanged. However West Yorkshire may need to consider how best to accommodate planned growth in the Leeds City Region and York has a requirement to set its detailed Green Belt boundaries.

Key Issues for York

7. The key issues for York are:

- **York identified as a Sub Regional Centre** - we had asked for it to be considered as a regional centre alongside Leeds, Sheffield, Hull and Bradford to reflect its key regional role. Bradford has been re-designated as a Regional Centre but not York. The other sub regional centres are Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Halifax, Huddersfield, Wakefield, Scunthorpe, Grimsby, Harrogate, and Scarborough.
- **Green Belt** – Policy YH9 – states that the detailed inner boundaries of the Green Belt around York should be defined to “establish long term development limits that safeguard the special character and setting of the city. The boundaries must take account of the levels of growth set out in RSS and must also endure *beyond the Plan period.*” (my emphasis in italics). The Plan runs to 2026. The Assembly had asked for the wording to be “endure well beyond the Plan period.” If we assume 20 years from adoption of the LDF (20 years has been seen used in the past as a reasonable view of ‘permanence’ in Green Belt terms) then that would take us to 2030. In terms of the LDF process the time period the Green Belt boundaries should endure to will influence how much land we need to exclude from the Green Belt to ‘reserve’ for longer term development.
- **Housing numbers** – York is now required to deliver 640 new homes per year from 2004-2008 and then 850 homes per year from 2008 to 2026. This equates to 17,860 new dwellings to 2026. In the draft RSS the figures were 640 homes per year from 2004 to 2016 and 620 homes per year from 2016 to 2021. The adopted RSS housing requirements for York

represent a significant uplift compared to the draft plan figures. We will have to 'reserve' land for future development beyond 2026 (the period of adopted RSS) to set a Green Belt boundary that endures 'beyond the plan period' (see 'Green Belt' above).

- **Affordable Housing** – Policy H4 confirms that we should be seeking over 40% affordable housing in the North Yorkshire districts (including York) as they are seen as areas of high affordable housing need. The plan recommends that this is reviewed in more detail in the light of emerging housing market assessments. York's Housing Market Assessment (2007) concludes that 50% is justifiable based on need. Through the LDF process and the Affordable Housing Policy Review requested by the Leaders we are reviewing our approach including the issue of an appropriate percentage and should be able to report back to members in late Autumn.
- **Employment numbers** – Adopted RSS identifies potential annual job growth for York is 2130 jobs per annum from 2006. That would be 42,600 additional jobs to 2026. This is way above our own projections of 1060 additional jobs per annum which were based on detailed projections done for our Employment Land Review (ELR) stage 1 study (SQW, 2007). This figure has been confirmed as reasonable by the consultants (Entec) who are doing the second stage of our Employment Land Review, which will be published in the autumn. The Plan does urge caution in using the figures beyond 2016 and says that local employment land reviews should "take account of the potential job growth set out in RSS....along with more detailed local forecasts." The detailed local forecasts for York from the SQW study will provide us with a strong basis when we discuss 'conformity' issues with the Assembly, to ensure they accept our case.
- **Employment land** - identifies a need for 90 hectares of additional land for industry and storage/distribution (i.e. B1(b), B1(c), B2 and B8 uses). This is way above our own projections of need from the SQW Stage 1 ELR. The second stage of the Employment Land Review (Entec), to be published in the Autumn, will further review these needs and advise accordingly.
- **York Sub Area policy** – Policy Y1 provides a good context for developing York's LDF. Key messages are: to focus most development on the City of York; safeguard its historic setting and environmental capacity; recognises importance of Science City, York Northwest and the expansion of the University; develop York as a key node for public transport for the sub-area; implement stronger demand management; improve access between York and Scarborough/east coast; recognition of York as a key driver of the Leeds City Region economy; spread the benefits of York's economic success wider in the sub area including to Malton and Selby.

- **Leeds City Region policies** – Policy LCR1 now has clear references to the role and importance of York. It also now identifies York Northwest as a key regeneration priority. But we do have a concern that in terms of settlement hierarchy York now plays a ‘second tier’ role compared to the Regional cities of Bradford and Leeds. We need to ensure that this does not adversely affect our economic, retail and other key roles in the region. Policy LCR2 deals with Regionally Significant Investment Priorities. York Northwest is now included as one of 8 priorities. It was not at Proposed Changes. This is a significant ‘win’ as it should help to prioritise investment of public sector resources.
- **Regional Transport priorities** – unchanged much from Proposed Changes document. One specific to York – B5 “Improved accessibility to York city centre and investment opportunities of sub-area significance in the York sub area.” We argued it should be a higher “A” priority but it remains a “B” priority in the published plan. We had argued that improving the outer ring road should be identified as a specific transport priority but this was not included in adopted RSS. However we have been successful in submitting a Phase 1 of the Access York major scheme bid which includes some investment to improve the outer ring road alongside new and improved park and ride sites.
- **Green Infrastructure** – there is a new policy requiring local authorities to develop Green Infrastructure policies and approaches in their LDF’s. We are already developing a Green Infrastructure Strategy for York to address this requirement, with support from Natural England.

Partial Review of RSS - the Housing Challenge

8. The Regional Assembly have now embarked upon a Partial Review of RSS to seek to achieve the higher housing numbers that have come from the Housing Green Paper. The timescales are much tighter than that for preparing the recently adopted RSS. It needs to be adopted by 2010.
9. The recently adopted RSS is seeking to accommodate 22,000 new homes per year. The regional assembly will be set a range of figures to test through the RSS Review process by the Secretary of State. This will be informed by advice given by the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit (NHPAU) who have said that the region should provide between 23,800 and 26,400 new dwellings per year to 2026. This equates to a 9-18% increase on the recently adopted RSS.
10. The context for the RSS Review is therefore a likely requirement for even higher levels of housing growth across the region. It is looking at three key issues:
 - **level** of housing growth - to be higher than the recently adopted RSS
 - **location** – what broad locations ?

- **infrastructure** – what are the requirements to deliver this increased level of housing ?
11. The Assembly are proposing to carry out this Partial Review by looking at the potential in each of the seven 'sub areas'. The issue of York's role as part of two sub areas – the Leeds City Region and the York sub area is therefore critical – and York's capacity to accept higher levels of growth are therefore important issues that will have to be addressed through this review process.

Timescales

12. The RSS Review process includes the following key stages:
- Develop the 'evidence base' To September 2008
(This includes the Call for Evidence by July 2008)
 - Consultation on Strategic Options Nov/Dec 2008
 - Prepare Draft RSS Review document Jan/March 2008
 - Regional Planning Board Approve April 2009
 - Submit to Government May 2009
 - Examination in Public Feb 2010
 - Adoption of Revised RSS Late 2010
13. There has been significant concern by local authorities across the region at the higher levels of housing to be tested. This has been strong in the Leeds City Region where a significant proportion of the region's housing and job growth will be located and which has already taken a significant uplift compared to figures in the draft RSS published in late 2005. The idea of planning for even higher levels of housing growth given the increasingly difficult conditions in the economy and housing sectors has been a particularly strong view coming forward.
14. To progress the Review the regional assembly have already commissioned a range of studies around transport opportunities and constraints, critical infrastructure needed, flood risk and the impact of climate change.
15. As part of this 'evidence gathering' stage they also prepared a Call for Evidence document asking for strategic ideas on how best to accommodate growth in different parts of the Region. We have submitted a response to this Call for Evidence which is attached at Annex A to this report. Given the very tight timescales for responding our submission was based on responses previously agreed by the Executive and submitted as part of the recently

adopted RSS consultation process. It highlights key concerns about capacity and infrastructure in achieving higher levels of growth and suggests that growth should be looked at in the context of the whole York sub area rather than just a focus on the City of York. Members are asked to note and comment on the response we submitted.

Consultation

16. Given the very short timescales to respond to the Call for Evidence it was not possible to carry out consultation or seek member approval of our proposed response. We therefore based our response on the key issues agreed by the Executive in response to previous consultations on the recently adopted RSS.
17. There will be a formal period of public consultation by the Assembly in November and December when they consult on Strategic Options. This will give an opportunity for the Council and other key stakeholders in the city to respond to the emerging ideas on how additional growth can be accommodated.

Options

18. Members have the following options to consider in relation to the officer response to the 'call for Evidence' as part of the Partial Review of the RSS.

Option 1: To approve the response submitted by City of York Council officers

Option 2: To seek amendments to the response which can then be forwarded on to the Regional Assembly

Corporate Priorities

19. The recently adopted RSS and its Partial Review are important in the context of many of the corporate objectives of this council., and in particular in relation to the Corporate Strategy 2007/11: Corporate Priorities for Improvement :
 - Decrease the tonnage of biodegradable waste and recyclable products going to landfill
 - Increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport
 - Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces
 - Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city

- Improve the economic prosperity of the people of York with a focus on minimising income differentials

Implications

20. The following implications have been assessed:

- **Financial** - None
- **Human Resources (HR)** - None
- **Equalities** - None
- **Legal** - None
- **Crime and Disorder** - None
- **Information Technology (IT)** - None
- **Property** – None
- **Other** – None

Risk Management

21. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, there are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

22. That the Executive:

- i) Approve the officer response to the Call for Evidence as part of the Partial Review of RSS, as set out in Annex A to this report, subject to any changes recommended by the Executive.

Reason: So that the response that had to be submitted to the Yorkshire and Humber assembly for consideration by the 11th July 2008 can be endorsed.

- ii) That any amendments or further comments be forwarded to the Regional Assembly

Reason: So that any changes recommended as a result of discussions at the meeting can be fed into the RSS Partial Review process.

Contact Details

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Report Approved **Date** 23/9/08

Specialist Implications Officer(s):

N/A

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

- Partial Review of RSS - Call for Evidence – (May 2008)
- Adopted RSS (May 2008)
- RSS Proposed Changes (October 2007)
- Examination in Public – Report of the Panel (March 2007)
- Draft RSS for consultation (Dec 2005)

Annexes

Annex A: officer response to the Call for Evidence as part of the Partial Review of the RSS. (July 2008).