

**LEICESTERSHIRE TOGETHER (LOCAL STRATEGIC  
PARTNERSHIP) BOARD**

**Tuesday 21st February 2006**

**THE REGIONAL PLAN REVIEW – OPTIONS FOR CHANGE  
FURTHER RESPONSE ON THE SCALE OF GROWTH**

**REPORT OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Purpose of Report**

- 1 To inform the Leicestershire Together Board of the discussion that took place on an appropriate scale of growth, particularly in terms of new housing provision, for Leicestershire and Leicester at the wider key partners meeting held on 25 January 2006; and in this context to recommend a further response to the 'Options for Change' consultation paper issued by the East Midlands Regional Assembly.

**Background**

- 2 The LT Board considered a draft response to the Options for Change document at its meeting on the 12 December 2005, and a response was submitted to the Regional Assembly prior to the consultation deadline on the 16 January 2006. The Leicestershire Together response left aside detailed comments on the overall issues of growth and included instead reference to a combination of preferred options. **Options 1C or 2B** for Leicester, which would meet the objective of continued growth and regeneration in Leicester whilst minimising the impact on surrounding districts. For Leicestershire one of **Options 1B, 2B and 3B** was expressed as the most appropriate, as it would adopt an approach to the distribution of housing similar to that taken in the recently approved Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan (the Options Table for the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area is attached for information at Appendix 1).
- 3 It was agreed that a further report would be submitted to the LT Board following detailed work on the level of development which allowed for housing, employment land, transport and economic policy and proposals to be consistent. To this end a wider key partners meeting was held in January 2006.

**Discussion at the wider key partners meeting**

- 4 The wider key partners meeting was very helpful and constructive. Representatives from districts councils, the Housing Corporation, ENABLE, and planning and transport officers from the City and County attended and contributed to the discussion. Representatives gave their views on an appropriate scale of growth for Leicestershire and Leicester. The scale of growth is expressed by housing provision figures for each of the nine options contained in the Options for Change document.

- 5 The majority of individual responses supported Option 2B with caveats which included development being focused on Principal Urban Areas (PUAs), the protection of urban green space, the need for significant infrastructure investment, the need for strong and effective cross-border working arrangements and concern regarding the loss of greenfield land. Some district councils were supporting the policy approach set out in Option 2B, rather than the specific district level housing figures included in the option. The table below summaries the preferred options of partners on the Options for Change consultation.

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Preferred Option</b>
Blaby District Council	2B with provisos
Charnwood Borough Council	Principles closest to 2B with provisos
Harborough District Council	Principles of 2B
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	2B
Melton Borough Council	2C
North West Leicestershire District Council	2B/2C
Oadby and Wigston Borough Council	1B
Leicester City Council	2B
ENABLE	2B
LSEP	Officer preference for 2B

- 6 The LSEP was unable to be represented at the partner meeting. The Options for Change document was considered by the LSEP Board at its meeting on the 1 December 2005 and did not arrive at a formal view on an appropriate scale and distribution of growth. In discussion with officers at the LSEP a preference for Option 2B has been expressed.
- 7 Work undertaken by Leicestershire County Council's Research and Information Team, with input from Leicester Shire Intelligence, on population/housing change and workforce implications was considered. This indicated that on the basis of the information available the 'best fit' between the estimated number of jobs in 2016 and the estimated workforce in 2016 for Leicester Shire was represented by Option 2B. It was noted, however, that new information on both jobs and household forecasts is expected in the next two months.
- 8 Severe reservations were expressed by transport officers from the City Council and the County Council regarding transport funding and the transport options which are likely to be available in the future. As an example reference was made to a current

Leicester Regeneration Company study into the implications for transport infrastructure from planned housing and employment. Early indications suggest that radial routes and the City road network will not be able to support demand, even before growth in neighbouring districts is accounted for.

- 9 Environmental issues were raised, in particular the loss of biodiversity, which in some instances is often greater on brownfield sites than greenfield sites. The importance of exploring opportunities to link a Community Forest with green wedges in an integrated manner with new development was also emphasised. The need for a strong policy framework to cover the specification of new development to reduce wider environmental impact was also raised.
- 10 The importance of providing sufficient levels of affordable housing both in the City and in rural areas was also stressed.
- 11 It was recognised that all nine options would require greenfield land take to deliver new development. To ensure that urban extensions into greenfield areas only come forward when they are required it was suggested that the concept of phasing needs to be introduced within the Regional Plan.
- 12 Finally, discussion took place on the new Growth Point initiative. Officers at Leicester City Council are leading the preparation of a paper on a possible bid for consideration at a meeting of the Three Cities Leadership Group on 9 February 2006. It was clarified that the initiative would not require additional housing to accommodate overspill from the South East and hence housing provision at the level suggested by Option 2B should be sufficient to meet the initiative's criteria.
- 13 Following the wider key partners event a joint Leicestershire position response has been prepared (see Appendix 2). This recommends that a preference for Option 2B with strong provisos is expressed by Leicestershire Together as the most appropriate scale of growth for Leicestershire and Leicester, and it is recommended that paragraphs 16 to 21 in Appendix 2 are submitted to the Regional Assembly as the further response of the County Council to the Options for Change consultation.
- 14 Leicestershire County Council's Cabinet will also be considering this joint response at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2006, and a verbal update on the discussion and outcome at Cabinet will be provided at the Leicestershire Together Board.

### **Next Steps**

- 15 The responses submitted to the Regional Assembly during the Options for Change consultation will inform the development of a 'preferred option'. This preferred option is likely to be a composite option, rather than one of the nine options presented as part of the Options for Change consultation. A preferred option paper will be prepared for consultation during late Spring/early Summer 2006. It is intended that the Draft Regional Plan will be submitted to Government for consultation in September 2006. An Examination in Public will follow in early 2007, with the Panel Report published in mid 2007 and the publication of Proposed Changes and the issue of the final Regional Plan in early 2008.

**Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the Board consider and approve comments set out in paragraphs 16 to 21 in Appendix 2, for submission to the East Midlands Regional Assembly as Leicestershire Together's further response to the Options for Change consultation.**

**Officers to Contact**

Sharon Wiggins	0116 265 8234	swiggins@leics.gov.uk
Andrew Simmonds	0116 265 7027	asimmonds@leics.gov.uk

## Appendix 1

**Table 1: Leicester & Leicestershire**

Area	Current Provision (pa) <sup>1</sup>	Current Annual Build Rate <sup>2</sup>	ODPM Trend (pa) <sup>3</sup>	1A	1B	1C	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	3C
<b>Whole HMA</b>	<b>3,034</b>	<b>3,114</b>	<b>3,170</b>	<b>2,530</b>	<b>3,030</b>	<b>3,160</b>	<b>3,170</b>	<b>3,790</b>	<b>3,950</b>	<b>3,800</b>	<b>4,550</b>	<b>4,740</b>
Leicester	950	670	470	380	950	1,090	470	1,180	1,360	560	1,420	1,630
Leicestershire	2,084	2,444	2,700	2,150	2,080	2,070	2,700	2,610	2,590	3,240	3,130	3,110
Blaby	233	295	330	260	230	250	330	290	310	400	350	370
Charnwood	470	505	460	370	470	490	460	590	610	550	700	740
Harborough	378	527	490	390	370	400	490	470	500	590	570	600
Hinckley & Bosworth	340	451	430	340	340	360	430	430	450	510	510	540
Melton	210	158	220	180	210	170	220	260	220	260	320	260
NW Leicestershire	368	415	540	430	370	310	540	460	390	650	550	470
Oadby & Wigston	85	93	230	180	90	90	230	110	110	280	130	130

### Note

<sup>1</sup>From the latest version of the relevant Structure Plan

<sup>2</sup>Average Annual Build Rate for the period 1999 to 2004

<sup>3</sup>2002 ODPM Interim Household Projections (unadjusted) & 2003 Population Projections.

Figures have been rounded

### **Further proposed response to the Options for Change document on an appropriate scale of growth for Leicestershire and Leicester**

- 16 A wider key partners meeting including representatives from district councils in Leicestershire, the Housing Corporation, ENABLE, and planning and transport officers from Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council was held on 25 January 2006. The meeting was very helpful and constructive and the following paragraphs represent a Joint Leicestershire position on an appropriate scale of growth for Leicestershire.
- 17 Over the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area, Option 1B, which broadly equates with existing policies in the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan, is considered to be achievable. Option 2B, which would imply a level of housing development in Leicester and Leicestershire broadly 25% higher than the Structure Plan is considered amongst partners in the Leicester and Leicestershire area as the preferred option with strong provisos. This preference was not unanimous amongst all partners with Oadby and Wigston Borough Council preferring Option 1B, Melton Borough Council preferring Option 2C and North West Leicestershire District Council preferring Options 2B/2C. Furthermore, it is important to note that many of the district councils that have expressed a preference for Option 2B support the policy approach of urban concentration plus regeneration rather than the specific district level housing figures.
- 18 On balance Option 2B is considered to reflect the most appropriate scale and distribution of growth for Leicester and Leicestershire. This is the majority, but not unanimous, view of the key partners. This option is currently supported by analysis of population/housing change and workforce implications for Leicester and Leicestershire. This analysis indicated that on the basis of the information available the 'best fit' between the estimated number of jobs in 2016 and the estimated number in the workforce in 2016 for Leicester Shire was represented by Option 2B. It was noted, however, that new information on both jobs and household forecasts is expected in the next two months and that this analysis would therefore need to be undertaken again with the new data.
- 19 In addition to the reservations and subsequent caveats expressed by individual partners in their responses to the Regional Assembly in achieving Option 2B, severe reservations have been expressed by transport officers from the City Council and the County Council regarding transport funding and the transport options which are likely to be available in the future. As an example reference was made to a current Leicester Regeneration Company study into the implications for

transport infrastructure from planned housing and employment. Early indications suggest that radial routes and the City road network will not be able to support demand, even before growth in neighbouring districts is accounted for. A call to consider spare infrastructure capacity in determining the location of new development was also made.

20 In conclusion, it is considered that Option 2B most closely reflects an appropriate level of growth for Leicester and Leicestershire subject to the following strong provisos:

- a. Significant new funding would be needed for infrastructure investment to support increased levels of development; in particular new funding is needed for transport infrastructure, social infrastructure and affordable housing.
- b. Affordable housing provision is a key issue in the City and in rural areas in Leicestershire and mechanisms for providing sufficient levels of affordable housing need to be secured. A major advantage of option 2B is that it will provide greater levels of affordable housing than lower growth options. The 'Roof Tax' which is being used in Northamptonshire and the wider Milton Keynes and South Midlands area to help deliver affordable housing and other infrastructure could be an attractive mechanism for Leicester and Leicestershire.
- c. Reassurance is sought that the final provision figures allocated to individual districts will be on the basis of policy rather than past trends. It is considered that the use of past trends to inform policy should occur at the Housing Market Area level only and not at district level.
- d. Option 2B is ambitious and in order for it to be successfully delivered needs to be subject to increasing the take up of brownfield land for development in Leicester City. To aid this process an effective phasing policy needs to be introduced within the Regional Plan to ensure that further greenfield urban extensions (which could impact on sensitive green wedges) are not brought forward for development unless they are needed later in the Regional Plan period, enabling brownfield regeneration in Leicester City and the wider Principal Urban Area to take priority.
- e. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council has concerns about the physical ability in terms of land available in sustainable locations in the Borough to deliver the scale of growth associated with Option 2B, and consequently support Option 1B for the Borough.
- f. A concentration policy for housing development within the urban areas could lead to the displacement of employment development to greenfield sites on the edge of the urban areas. This emphasises the need for an integrated approach to the future location of development and emphasises the importance of urban capacity work to be undertaken for Principal Urban Areas to inform the distribution and level of provision. This also necessitates the need for strong and effective cross-border working arrangements.
- g. A strong emphasis will need to be given to the protection and enhancement of urban green spaces to ensure they do not come

under undue pressure for development and to ensure that they add to the quality of the environment in urban areas. Furthermore, emphasis also needs to be placed on green wedges and the importance of exploring opportunities to link Community Forests and green wedges with new development.

- h. The nine options considered as part of the Options for Change process do not take account of expected new Households Projections which are likely to increase the required level of housing provision, or the expected 'policy on' job forecasts which are similarly likely to increase the number of anticipated jobs.

- 21 It needs to be emphasised that the views above have been informed by the analysis undertaken on the Options for Change consultation document and supporting information available at January 2006, as such these views may change in the light of new information.