

**West of England Partnership
Planning, Housing & Communities Board
13 July 2010**

Delivering Sustainable Development within the West of England

Purpose

1. To advise the Board on the purpose and rationale for producing a Joint Supplementary Planning Document (JSPD).
2. To inform the Board on the route map to complete the JSPD for adoption by the four Councils anticipated by March 2011.

Background

3. The West of England Partnership and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) have prepared a Delivery and Infrastructure Investment Plan ('DIIP') for the sub-region. The plan was concluded in March 2010 through the 'Single Conversation' and is in response to one of the principle 'asks' negotiated with government contained in the West of England Multi-Area Agreement ('MAA').
4. The DIIP identifies the spatial or 'place-based' priorities for public investment in support of development over the next five years to 2015. These priorities are drawn from emerging Core Strategies and are underpinned by a sub-regional development trajectory together with an indication of the levels of public investment needed to support infrastructure and affordable housing provision. The plan therefore reflects a sequential approach to managing growth in new homes and jobs where the most sustainable locations for development are prioritised.
5. The MAA also makes a commitment to embody this plan in a Joint Supplementary Planning Document (JSPD), to be included within each local authority's Local Development Framework (LDF).¹ In endorsing this commitment the Partnership Board has also emphasised the importance it attaches to concluding this JSPD as soon as possible, whilst ensuring it does not duplicate work undertaken by the local authorities on their Core Strategies.
6. On 22 April 2010 the Board considered a report which set out the broad scope of the JSPD, together with an indicative timescale for producing the document. Members identified the sub-regional development trajectory as a key element. The timescale for producing the document is linked to the publication of Bath and North East Somerset Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment ('SHLAA'), as this is a critical part of the evidence base (anticipated October 2010).
7. In agreeing to the continuation of work to prepare the JSPD, the Board recognised that whilst the focus of the document should be on demonstrating a 5-year land supply for housing, this would also need to be reinforced by the principles underpinning

¹ West of England Multi-Area Agreement, Aug 2009 (pages 16 &17, summary of actions, benefits and barriers)

sustainable development and place making, including Green Infrastructure and Urban Design.

8. The Government Office for the South West (GOSW) was consulted and supports this approach. The Partnership Office is continuing to engage GOSW as the document progresses and further comments are detailed later on in this report
9. On 7 June 2010 the Partnership Office held a workshop with planning colleagues from the four Council's. The purpose of the workshop was two fold. Firstly to check the reasons for doing this work including the scope of the document, particularly in light of the evolving regional planning policy context. Secondly to appraise the technical requirements for completing the document in a timely and robust fashion. This report reflects the outputs from this event.

Implications of the proposed abolition of Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (SWRSS) together with planned changes to public sector funding arrangements

10. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has written to local authorities to confirm the new coalition government's intention to rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies.² This will enable Councils to allocate new housing and employment numbers in their Core Strategies and determine planning applications without the framework of regional plans. The Secretary of State expects local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate to have regard to his letter as a material consideration.
11. In light of this Bristol City Council has indicated that, in its view, the emerging SWRSS should not be given any significant weight in the Examination of the Core Strategy (now in progress).³
12. At the time of writing this report there has been no policy guidance on the implications of the intended abolition of RSSs and the transitional arrangements which should apply. However any announcements from government will be reported verbally to the Board.
13. Notwithstanding any further policy guidance on this matter, the Council's Core Strategies have adopted an evidence based approach to housing and employment numbers. It would therefore be important for the Council's to consider which issues of a sub-regional significance should be addressed as part of the JSPD.
14. All government departments and Councils are undertaking a review of their spending plans in light of the recent budget announcement. The HCA continue to commit to the DIIP and are working with the Partnership towards further prioritisation in light of expected funding cuts. In the short term the HCA has frozen approvals on its investment plan including any provisional allocations identified in the DIIP.
15. The availability of funding of major infrastructure projects identified in the DIIP is unlikely to be made clear until the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) is announced in the Autumn. Notwithstanding this the government has also announced its intention to provide incentives to Councils to deliver sustainable

² Letter from The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP to the Leaders of all English Local Authorities, dated 27 May 2010.

³ Letter from Bristol City Council to Mr Simon Emerson, dated 28 May 2010.

communities, including for new homes and businesses. Whatever the final shape of these proposals the four Councils will work jointly in planning the delivery of growth and distribution of homes and jobs across the West of England, through the Infrastructure and Investment Programme Board.

Purpose and Rationale for the JSPD

16. The four Councils face significant challenges in securing a sustainable future for the sub-region and ensuring it remains a place in which people want to live and work. These challenges include: a historic deficit in infrastructure and transport provision; the scale of housing and economic growth to meet existing and future needs; the need to achieve a balanced approach to ensuring that quality of life is enhanced and the environment protected and; managing and adapting to the effects of climate change.
17. To address these challenges it will be important for the Councils, their partners and the development industry to work together to achieve the shared spatial vision for the West of England, as expressed in emerging Core Strategies. This JSPD will therefore set out a positive planning framework to encourage development at the most sustainable locations together with an explanation of how the intended sequencing and phasing of development will maximise the value of investment in infrastructure to deliver new homes and jobs and support regeneration in areas such as south Bristol.
18. The document will also explain why ad-hoc or piecemeal development does not contribute to the spatial vision. Such un-coordinated development will compound infrastructure constraints result in un-sustainable service provision and inadequate housing supply and low quality environments with little or no functionality. Ultimately this will reduce economic competitiveness and miss opportunities for communities to manage growth and adapt to climate change.
19. In reinforcing the policies within emerging Core Strategies the JSPD will express a deliverable spatial strategy for the sub-region which provides for a more balanced and sustainable pattern of development, which is not reliant on urban extensions and has a greater focus on existing communities especially in south Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare and the north fringe of Bristol. The JSPD will also explain how a co-ordinated approach to growth will enable the authorities and the development industry to work together to better achieve positive spatial planning outcomes. In particular the approach will provide for communities which are:
 - Cohesive and integrated with each other and well connected with good transport services;
 - Well served with an appropriate range of services;
 - Environmentally sensitive;
 - Fair for everyone;
 - Have a thriving economy;
 - Well designed and built;
 - Active, inclusive and safe; and
 - Well run.
20. This approach will also enable balanced, phased sustainable development at a pace that delivers consistent housing supply to assist in meeting existing and future needs and improving housing affordability with sufficient infrastructure to enable those new communities to exist in a sustainable manner.

Route Map for completing the Joint Supplementary Planning Document

21. Broadly speaking there are five tasks which need to be undertaken to complete this JSPD, which can be summarised as follows:

- On going discussions with the four Councils to develop the scope and content of the document and the evidence which underpins it.
- Liaison with GOSW to ensure the technical requirements are met for producing the JSPD.
- Engagement with the HCA, the development industry and other partners.
- Undertaking formal public consultation on the draft JSPD.
- Regular reporting of progress to the Board eventually leading towards formal adoption by the four authorities.

22. The following key milestones will be used to monitor progress towards formal adoption of the JSPD by the four Councils. This is anticipated in March 2011. These milestones will be kept under review as government guidance on planning policy emerges.

- **June/July 2010 Engagement with the Development Industry**
Staging of informal meetings and events designed to engage the development industry, including Housing Associations and gain support. On 9 June 2010, officers presented an outline of the JSPD to the Single Conversation Delivery Partners Network Briefing. This will be followed up with further meetings involving the HCA and representatives of the development industry.
- **July/Aug 2010 review Sustainability Appraisals:**
Emerging Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisals need to be assessed to ensure they are sufficient to justify the options being considered and any likely significant effects. Further work maybe required which deals with the sequencing of development across the sub-region, with a view to including a high level sustainability appraisal statement as part of the JSPD.
- **Sept 2010 First draft of JSPD**
To be considered by the Planning Housing & Communities Board.
- **Oct 2010 Finalise SHLAAs**
Officers to consider the sequencing and phasing of housing delivery across the sub-region.
- **Nov 2010 Consultation draft SPD**
To the Board, Partnership Board and Council Cabinets
- **Dec – Jan 2011 Public Consultation**
6 week public consultation on the SPD content after the evidence base (including the SHLAA) is finalised.

- **March 2011 Adopt Final Version**

To be considered by the Board(s) for endorsement and recommendation to Council Cabinets for Adoption.

Added Value Statement

23. Government guidance suggests that local authorities should have clear reasons for producing Supplementary Planning Documents. In this case the JSPD will add value to the assessment of development proposals by supporting the spatial planning strategy for the sub-region, as expressed in emerging Core Strategies, which provide for a more sustainable pattern of development, focused on existing urban areas.
24. The adoption of a sub-regional development trajectory based on 5-year tranches will demonstrate a deliverable supply of housing as required by government guidance, set out in Planning Policy Statement 3 on Housing (PPS3).
25. The preparation of the JSPD will improve clarity on the approach to delivering sustainable housing in the sub-region, amplifying policy which will assist both developers in bringing forward appropriate schemes and local authorities in assessing the merits of proposals in a consistent manner. This will bring confidence and certainty for authorities and developers, enabling them to jointly manage expectations, build trust and ultimately help to discourage inappropriate and piecemeal development
26. A co-ordinated approach to development with a shared ownership of the spatial vision for the West of England will assist in maximising the value of investment in new infrastructure and with delivering the aspirations of the Sustainable Community Strategies.
27. The JSPD will provide further guidance on identifying the constraints to delivering schemes and ways in which these may be unblocked through collaborative working, and set out how planning applications will be considered by the authorities.

Consultation with GOSW

28. GOSW has been consulted on the content of this report and has commented as follows:

"GOSW supports the approach set out in this report. In the current climate where resources for infrastructure provision, both from private and public sources are likely to be limited, it is critical that the four authorities work closely together to maximise the benefits of development in priority areas. Whilst clearly the document cannot set new policy, it will help to clarify and explain strategic policy for the West of England. Furthermore we consider that the approach set out in the document meets the commitment in the MAA to produce SPD on this matter."

Environmental Implications

29. The JSPD supports delivery; it is not setting policy of itself but provides greater detail on policies in the Core Strategies. It is not therefore envisaged that the JSPD will be directly responsible for any environmental implications and no further information is

reported here. The JSPD itself will need to consider the impacts of the broad locations and sequencing of development as described in the high level sustainability statement

Recommendation

That the Board endorses the approach, scope and anticipated timetable for the production of the JSPD as set out in the report.

Appendices

None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 Background Papers:

None

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