

Report for Resolution

Report to Local Development Framework Working Party 12 January 2009
Executive 21 January 2009

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Report of Director – Regeneration and Development

Subject Regional Spatial Strategy Review

Purpose

To inform members about the proposed response to the East of England Regional Assembly as part of the review of the regional spatial strategy up to 2031, and to seek the Executives' endorsement of the advice by Norfolk County Council as the strategic planning authority under Section 4(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Recommendations

To endorse the advice from Norfolk County Council, as the Section 4(4) authority, to the East of England Regional Assembly as part of the review of the Regional spatial strategy to 2031.

Financial Consequences

There are no financial consequences of this report.

Risk Assessment

Failure to engage with the process of reviewing the Regional Spatial Strategy could give rise to reputational problems associated with not providing strategic leadership. The Regional Spatial Strategy will, once completed, be an important document influencing the long term development of the City. It is important that the City's needs and constraints are adequately taken into account in development of the Strategy.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority "Strong and prosperous city – working to improve quality of life for residents, visitors and those who work in the city now and in the future" and the short term corporate priority and action to complete the joint core strategy and start its implementation.

Executive Member: Councillor Morrey - Sustainable City Development

Ward: All

Contact Officers

Graham Nelson
Paul Rao

01603 212530
01603 212526

Background Documents

None

Report

1. The East of England Plan was published in May 2008. It provides the Regional Spatial Strategy for the region up to 2021. The East of England Assembly (EERA) has started an early review of the plan to take it up to 2031. This review will include reconsideration of proposed house building levels.
2. EERA has formally asked for advice from 'section 4(4)' strategic planning authorities (county councils and unitary authorities) to help with the review. The County Council are providing this advice for Norfolk, with the input from district planning officers. Initial advice has been prepared and now needs to be endorsed by the City Council as well as each of the other districts.
3. Norfolk County Council's proposed initial advice was reported to their Cabinet on 5 January 2009. It is attached to this report as appendix 1. Paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5 of the County Council's report summarise the position in Greater Norwich. The GNDP response on the RSS review was considered by the GNDP policy group at its meeting on 18 December 2008. That report is attached as appendix 2.
4. EERA required the testing of four housing growth scenarios in the period up to 2031: continuation of the RSS residual rate (710 dwellings per annum in Norwich); National Housing and Planning Advice Unit (NHPAU) lower rate (993 dpa in Norwich); NHPAU higher rate (1146 dpa in Norwich); and a projected economic growth based rate (844 dpa in Norwich).
5. The overall conclusion of the County Council analysis for Greater Norwich is that the emerging Joint Core Strategy is capable of providing for a continuation of RSS residual rates within the GNDP and is also capable of providing for further additional growth of up to around 2,000 dwellings to 2031 (this equates to 12,000 additional dwellings in the period to 2031 above those proposed in the emerging Joint Core Strategy). The analysis notes that this scale of growth will not be possible without significant investment in supporting infrastructure and that even higher rates of growth are not tenable as there is no evidence that the local economy could provide the jobs to support higher growth.
6. The County Council analysis within the GNDP is not broken down to individual District as it will need to be planned for jointly across the Greater Norwich Area. However, the assumptions underpinning this work are based on the expectation that in the longer term it will difficult to sustain the high rates of housing delivery in the City that have been seen in recent years and therefore it is the areas outside of Norwich City that are likely to have to provide for the majority of the growth in Greater Norwich.
7. At its meeting on 18 December 2008 the GNDP policy group resolved to advise the County Council that subject to further work to understand the impact of the recession on the local economy and a commitment to fund infrastructure already required to implement the Greater Norwich Development Partnership's Joint Core Strategy to 2026 and a clearer commitment to fund the necessary additional infrastructure required to 2031, 12,000 dwellings is considered the absolute maximum level of additional growth for the area in the period to 2031.

8. Across Norfolk as a whole the County Council analysis shows that due to environmental and other constraints it will be difficult to sustain even the continuation of RSS residual growth rates notwithstanding the marginally increased provision that may be capable of being achieved in Greater Norwich.

Conclusions

9. The County Council and its district partners recommend that there is potential capacity for Norfolk as a whole to plan for a rate of development approaching the RSS residual rate, subject to delivery of supporting infrastructure requirements. Any of the higher rates of development proposed are not viable.
10. The Executive is recommended to endorse the proposed County Council response to EERA as summarised above and set out in the appendices.