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## Report of the Director of Development

### Executive Board

Date: 19 December 2007

**Subject: YORKSHIRE & HUMBER PLAN (REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY) PROPOSED CHANGES FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION: LEEDS CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS**

#### Electoral Wards Affected:

All



Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In



Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)



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## Executive Summary

1. In September 2007, the Secretary of State issued "Proposed Changes" to the Yorkshire and Humber Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy) for public consultation. The deadline for comments on the Proposed Changes is 21 December 2007 and appended to this covering report (Appendix 1), are detailed City Council representations for Executive Board's consideration.
2. The issuing of the Proposed Changes for public consultation follows the preparation of the Yorkshire and Humber Plan Draft for consultation (December 2005), the Examination in Public (September – October 2006) and the Report of (the EiP) Panel May 2007. Throughout this process, the City Council has made a series of representations regarding the scope and content of the emerging Plan and has expressed concerns regarding their implications for Leeds. Whilst many aspects of the Plan are broadly consistent with the Community Strategy (Vision for Leeds) and reflect aspects of the adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and are therefore supported in principle, the City Council has fundamental concerns regarding a number of key elements of the Plan. Central to these concerns is the scale of housing (4, 300 p.a. net, commencing from 2008) and economic growth now envisaged by the Proposed Changes and the impact of this upon the fabric of the city and the relationship of this to a range of regeneration initiatives and the phasing of development. There are fundamental concerns also regarding the level of infrastructure (including transport, managing flood risk and community facilities) which is likely to be required to support the scale of growth proposed. Within this

context, whilst the RSS seeks to direct resources in broad terms to support the strategy of the Plan, there is no certainty that this will be adequate or deliverable.

3. Following consideration of representations on the Proposed Changes by the Secretary of State, it is understood that the Plan is due to be adopted in 'Spring 2008'. Once adopted, the City Council's Local Development Documents being prepared as part of the Local Development Framework will need to be in general conformity with the RSS.
4. At a regional level, the preparation of the "Proposed Changes" has generated considerable debate between local authorities and the Regional Assembly. Central to these discussions there have not only been concerns expressed regarding the scale, distribution and phasing of the Plan but also issues regarding perceived policy conflicts and tensions across the Plan and issues relating to infrastructure and delivery. As part of this process, the City Council has also raised specific concerns with the Regional Assembly (via Technical Advisory Group, Regional Planning Forum and Regional Planning Board) to incorporate as part of the Regional Assembly's own formal response to the Proposed Changes.

## 1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 Following consideration by the Development Plan Panel (18 December), the purpose of this report is to seek Executive Board's approval of the City Council's detailed representations and formal response (included as Appendix 1) to the Regional Spatial Strategy "Proposed Changes".

## 2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Introduced by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Regional Spatial Strategy is a new style of Plan, which sets out the framework for the future development of the Yorkshire and Humber region. The Plan sets out the overall scale, priorities, broad locations for change and development in the region over the period to 2026. Within this context, the document provides a framework for 'where things should go' and 'how much' development should take place. The Plan also includes a regional transport strategy and a series of sub regional (including Leeds City Region) and thematic (such as housing and the economy) policies.
- 2.2 Once finally adopted by the Government, the Plan will provide the statutory planning framework for the region and guide the preparation of Local Development Frameworks at a local authority level. Consequently, the Leeds Local Development Framework will need to be "in conformity" with the Regional Spatial Strategy and the RSS and LDF for Leeds will constitute the Development Plan for the City (eventually replacing Regional Planning Guidance and the Unitary Development Plan).
- 2.3 The issuing of the Proposed Changes for public consultation follows the preparation of the Yorkshire and Humber Plan Draft for consultation (December 2005), the Examination in Public (September – October 2006) and the Report of (the EiP) Panel March 2007. Throughout this process, the City Council has made a series of representations regarding the scope and content of the emerging Plan and has expressed concerns regarding their implications for Leeds. Whilst many aspects of the Plan are broadly consistent with the Community Strategy (Vision for Leeds) and reflect aspects of the adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and are therefore supported in principle, the City Council has fundamental concerns regarding a number of key elements of the Plan. Central to these concerns is the scale of housing (4, 300 p.a. net, commencing from 2008) and economic growth now envisaged by the Proposed Changes and the impact of this upon the fabric of the city and the relationship of this to a range of regeneration initiatives and the phasing of development. There are fundamental concerns also regarding the level of infrastructure (including transport, managing flood risk and community facilities) which is likely to be required to support the scale of growth proposed. Within this context, whilst the RSS seeks to direct resources in broad terms to support the strategy of the Plan, there is no certainty that this will be adequate or deliverable.

### Overall Scope and Content of the Yorkshire & Humber Plan

- 2.5 The Proposed Changes structure of the emerging Plan is now ordered as follows:
1. **Introduction** (*Providing background information on the role, purpose and coverage of the Plan*).
  2. **Spatial Vision and Core Approach** (*Sets out the international/national context to preparing the Plan & develops a spatial vision and spatial objectives for the Region*).
  3. **Delivering the Core Approach** (*Sets out an approach to 'managing change' and a basis for delivering the Core Approach set out in section 4*).
  4. **Leeds City Region** (*Describes the composition of the Leeds City Region and identifies specific policies*).

5. **South Yorkshire** (*As above for South Yorkshire*).
6. **Humber Estuary** (*As above for the Humber Estuary*).
7. **York** (*As above for York*).
8. **Vales & Tees Links** (*As above for Vales & Tees*).
9. **Coast** (*As above for the Coast*).
10. **Remote Rural** (*As above for the Remoter Rural Areas*).
11. **Economy** (*Sets out spatial policies to compliment the Regional Economic Strategy*)
12. **Housing** (*Sets out detailed policies and operational approach for managing the provision of new housing*).
13. **The Regional Transport Strategy** (*Sets out an overarching Transport Strategy for the Region*).
14. **Environment** (*Provides more detailed policies and operational priorities for managing the environment*).

2.6 Consistent with the reforms to the planning system (following the introduction of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004), the Proposed Changes are also accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal. The purpose of this is to consider the extent to which the RSS is consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and is environmentally sound in its approach. Within this context, the Plan has been appraised against 15 SA/SEA objectives and the “positive”, “neutral”, “negative” or “no impact” effects of the Plan’s policies upon these objectives recorded. The Sustainability Appraisal has also been presented for comments as part of the Proposed Changes consultation process. With this context, the City Council has specific concerns regarding the approach of the SA and its conclusions for Leeds, which have been subsequently included in the representations (Appendix 1).

### 3.0 Main issues: The City Council’s Response

3.1 As emphasised in para. 2.3 above, the City Council has made a number of representations throughout the preparation of the Draft Plan. Whilst some of these have been supported by the Proposed Changes, in other areas concerns remain or have been heightened by subsequent changes to the draft Plan. Detailed representations are included as Appendix 1. These can be summarised as follows:

#### **Spatial Vision & Core Approach**

- Spatial vision for Leeds needs to be clearer,
- There are a series of tensions and policy conflicts when applied to the local Leeds level,
- Policy YH2 – Climate Change, regional target for CO2 reduction needs to be reinstated,
- Policies YH5 & YH6 – Regional Cities & Sub regional Cities & Towns & Principle Towns, qualification needed to ensure “town and city centres” are the first choice location for “main town centre uses”, Local authorities need to be given discretion to identify ‘principle town centre designation’,
- Policy – YH7 – urban areas such as Leeds, should be allowed scope to identify their own town and local service centres (in reflecting the RSS approach to rural areas).

#### **Delivering the Core Approach**

- The Proposed Changes provide no further certainty regarding the delivery of infrastructure (relating both to existing requirements and the need to deliver future longer term requirements – to achieve ‘transformation’ and the scale of housing and economic growth envisaged).

## **Leeds City Region**

- The strategy for regeneration and growth needs to be revised to more fully reflect the operation of the dynamics of the Leeds City Region rather than focusing upon the West Yorkshire component,
- Policy LCR2 – the Proposed Changes weakens the Policy with regard to the need for major infrastructure and investment programmes to support growth locations (i.e. Leeds),
- The Policy wording of LCR2 requires clarification regarding descriptions such as “northwards” to Leeds.

## **Economy**

- There is a need for more realism in the job growth and employment land forecasts, with a phased approach to accommodate any growth above the current baseline forecasts (the Proposed Changes forecasts are almost three times bigger than the baseline forecast),
- Policy E2 – Town Centre & Major Facilities – references to ‘job growth’ and ‘job creation’ need to be clarified, along with the role of such centres in achieving anticipated growth,
- Policy E2A – the policy needs to be clarified to ensure that Regional City Centres, Sub Regional Centres and town centres are the focus for ‘main town centre uses’.
- Policy E3 – Land & Premises for Economic Development – needs to emphasis that additional floor space for growth needs to be accommodated in city and town centres,
- Policy 3 C – the definition of “market ready sites” needs to be clarified.

## **Housing**

- Fundamental City Council concerns regarding the scale and location of housing development and the impact upon Leeds,
- The approach to housing growth within the RSS conflicts with other RSS policy objectives (including Green Infrastructure, managing flood risk),
- Concerns regarding impact of Greenfield development upon regeneration projects and initiatives within the urban areas of Leeds,
- Greater emphasis therefore needs to be placed upon the role of major urban regeneration initiatives and clarity regarding the phasing of future levels of housing growth - linked to regeneration and the necessary infrastructure,
- The scale of housing growth envisaged is not supported by the necessary infrastructure,
- It is not clear how the housing requirement specifically relates to the new econometric forecasts included within the Proposed Changes,
- There are uncertainties regarding the specific housing requirements given that the YHRA have recently commissioned work on migration,
- Clarification is required on the use of the term Housing Market Renewal Area (Policy H2).

## **The Regional Transport Strategy**

- Fundamental concerns regarding the scale of growth presented and the adequacy of the Regional Transport Strategy to deliver high quality public transport and related mechanisms to deliver this,
- Policy T1 – Personal Travel Reduction & Modal Shift – the RSS needs to fully recognise the impact of national networks upon the local network, emphasis needs to be placed on the role of national networks to help address transport issues and not placing responsibilities just on the local network,
- Policy – T2 – concerns that town centres within the urban area are expected to have more restrictive standards than Regional Cities – which are considered to be too high. Linked to this are differential parking requirements across the region, without any clear rationale or justification,
- Policy T3 – Public Transport – no strategic policy direction is given on the role of Park & Ride,
- Policy – T9 – Transport Investment & Management Priorities – the approach envisaged is inadequate given the scale of ‘transformation’ and growth envisaged by the Plan.

## **Environment**

- Policy ENV1 – Development & Flood Risk – the Proposed Change needs to be reworded to ensure that a sequential approach is adopted to direct development to sites of lower risk appropriate to the vulnerability of the proposed use,

- Figure 15.1 needs to be revised to reflect the conclusions of the Leeds Strategic Flood Risk Assessment,
- Policy ENV13 – Objective A.1 refers to 'doubling' treatment capacity by 2020. Given that there is very little capacity in Leeds, and no doubt in the region, 'doubling' existing capacity seems insufficient. Consequently, the Proposed Changes need to be revised as the wording doesn't adequately reflect the massive step changes required nationally in terms of recycling, recovery and landfill diversion targets,
- Policy ENV15 – Green Infrastructure – The operation and delivery of the policy needs to be clarified in relation to conflicting and competing policy objectives included within the RSS (including substantial housing growth),
- Policy ENV10 – Landscape – the importance and future potential of landscape and wider countryside within West Yorkshire for biodiversity, recreation and amenity needs to be fully recognised.

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

- Previous City Council comments regarding the SA of the Draft Plan have not been addressed; these concerns relate specifically to adaptation and mitigation issues. Such issues are dramatically increased by the scale of housing and economic growth incorporated within the Proposed Changes,
- The City Council is concerned that the SA is not compliant with the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive – as the document does not show how comments on the SA have been taken into account and reflected in the Proposed Changes – a number of revisions are suggested in the SA but not reflected in the Proposed Changes,
- The fully impact and likely consequences of the Proposed Changes on Green Belt area and communities within the urban area is not fully reflected,
- The conclusion that the economic and social benefits of substantial housing development is 'balanced' is not backed by specific evidence,
- The Proposed Changes do not adequately take into account the full impact of flood risk in Leeds and the consequent impact on the RSS and its delivery,
- The SA incorrectly reflects the economic and employment land figures for Leeds and underestimate the economic growth the RSS is planning for – the employment land figures are 'net' rather than a 'gross' figure requiring a higher land take,
- Unlike the SA of the Draft Plan, the Proposed Changes SA does not record the impacts of the plan on a sub regional level. The SA at a Draft Plan stage highlighted a number of negative effects for Leeds, which are likely to be greater and impact detrimentally across other SA/SEA objectives as a consequence of the higher levels of growth included within the Proposed Changes. The SA is therefore fundamentally flawed.

## **4.0 Implications for council policy and governance**

- 4.1 The implications for council policy are summarised above. As noted above, once adopted the Regional Spatial Strategy will form part of the Development Plan to which the Leeds Local Development Framework will need to be in conformity and against which planning applications will be judged.

## **5.0 Legal and resource implications**

- 5.1 See section 4. above re. the need for conformity of the Local Development Framework with the Regional Spatial Strategy. There are resource implications for the City Council in relation to the RSS process, the implications of specific policies and the necessary infrastructure to support their delivery.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

- 6.1 This report has provided an overall update of the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and details of specific City Council formal representations to the Proposed Changes.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

7.1 Executive Board is recommended to:

- i). Note the contents of this report and to make any additional consultation comments,
- ii). To endorse and approve the schedule of representations contained in Appendix 1, as the City Council's formal response to the Proposed Changes, in the preparation of the Yorkshire & Humber Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy).