



## Report of the Director of City Development

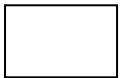
### Development Plan Panel

Date: 22 June 2010

Subject: Leeds LDF Core Strategy – The changing context post election

#### Electoral Wards Affected:

All



Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

### Executive Summary

1. The Coalition government has recently indicated that it plans to rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies. RSS for Yorkshire and the Humber (2008) currently provides the context for the Leeds Core Strategy.
2. This report considers the implications of this proposed change and concludes that current progress on the Leeds Core Strategy should be maintained.

## **1.0 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the new government's proposals for changes to the planning system and to consider their implications for the Core Strategy.

## **2.0 Background information**

- 2.1 On 20 May 2010 the new government published "The Coalition: our programme for government". Among many proposals is the clearly stated intention to "rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and return decision making powers on housing and planning to local councils". The proposals also herald a radical reform of the planning system in the longer term, a simple and consolidated national planning framework, abolition of the Infrastructure Planning Commission and protection of the green belt and green spaces. This is broadly consistent with the proposals set out in the Conservative Party publication "Open Source Planning".
- 2.2 Members will be aware that the context for the Leeds Core Strategy has been the Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber, published in May 2008. This established a wider planning framework of spatial principles and objectives, including setting targets for housing growth. Section 24 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that local development documents, such as the Core Strategy, must be in general conformity with RSS and that the local planning authority must request an opinion on conformity from the regional planning body. The Leeds Core Strategy has thus been prepared with this in mind.

## **3.0 Main issues**

- 3.1 Section 10 (5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 authorises the Secretary of State at any time to revoke an RSS. Although the Coalition publication is very clear on the intent to abolish RSS there is no indication of what transitional arrangements (if any) will be put in place until the "radical reform" of the system is delivered, presumably through a new planning act.
- 3.2 However, it seems clear that the Coalition government expect plans to be developed at a local level and unless and until the system is replaced that means the LDF, including the Core Strategy.
- 3.3 Notwithstanding the present uncertainty this would suggest that we need to press ahead with work on the Core Strategy and other LDF documents. Following the abolition of RSS many of the principles established in the Core Strategy will remain valid. The concentration on urban transformation and the established regeneration priorities; climate change and sustainability; and protection of green belt and green spaces are likely to remain the cornerstones of any plan.
- 3.4 One of the most contentious issues in the emerging Core Strategy has been the scale and location of housing growth. The Core Strategy Preferred Approach anticipated a possible change in the housing targets. Paragraph 5.3.30 provides that

*"...The Council is aware that the targets may be reviewed either through the Integrated Regional Strategy or a change in national policy. The spatial approach, priorities and phasing of the Core Strategy are considered to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate changed circumstances. In the event that the housing target is reduced this would have the effect of extending the life of the identified supply in the sequentially preferable locations and would mean that less PAS and Green Belt land would be needed or conceivably none at all."*

- 3.5 Given that a potential change to housing targets was anticipated and that the principles and priorities of the plan are likely to remain valid in the absence of RSS abolished, there is a strong basis for progressing the Core Strategy. The current phase of reviewing consultation responses allows some time for further national guidance to emerge.
- 3.6 Members need to be aware of this changing context when considering the Council's response to the representations. This will be particularly relevant when dealing with "Managing the Needs of a Growing City".

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

- 4.1 None. Members will be updated on the changing policy context as details emerge. The impact of any changes will be considered by the Panel prior to proposals being submitted to Executive Board for Publication and Submission.

#### **5.0 Legal and resource implications**

- 5.1 The Council will need to respond to any new requirements that arise from the changes being promoted by the new government. This could give rise to new areas of work, including technical studies and research. Any such work and resource commitments will need to be addressed within the context of the overall budget and priorities.

#### **6.0 Conclusions**

- 6.1 Notwithstanding the anticipated abolition of RSS and expected changes to the planning system the need for strategic planning at the local level remains. At present this will be encompassed in the Local Development Framework of which the Core Strategy is the key document. The emerging approach in the Core Strategy is sufficiently flexible to accommodate emerging changes, particularly the removal of the RSS housing targets, which was anticipated in the previous consultation draft. In the circumstances it is considered important that work on the Core Strategy is continued. The further impact of any further changes to the system will be reported to Panel as they become clear.

#### **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 Development Plans Panel is recommended to note the contents of this report.