



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	East Midlands Regional Plan Partial Review: Options Consultation
---------------------	---

AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	23 rd September 2009
Key Decision:	NO
Listed on Forward Plan:	YES
Within Policy:	NO
Policy Document:	YES
Directorate:	Planning and Regeneration
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Richard Church
Ward(s)	Borough wide

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To identify the pertinent key issues that relate to Northampton within the East Midlands Regional Plan Partial Review: Options Consultation.
- 1.2 To set out and seek Cabinet approval of the Council's response to the consultation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the key issues that relate to Northampton as set out in the report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve the suggested comments and responses to the consultation as set out in Appendix 1.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1.1 The Regional Plan is the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands. It sets out a broad, long-term development strategy for the region. It identifies the scale and distribution of new housing and priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, energy, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. The current version of the Regional Plan was published by the Secretary of the State on the 12 March 2009.

3.1.2 The Government requires that a Partial Review of the Regional Plan be undertaken on a limited set of issues relating to housing, transport and climate change. The closing date for comments is **Tuesday, 6 October 2009**.

3.1.3 The timetable for the future stages of the review is:

- 26th March 2010: Submission of a Draft Revised Regional Plan to the Secretary of State, with a 12 week consultation period.
- September 2010: Likely start of Examination in Public.
- March 2011: Likely start of 12 week public consultation on Proposed changes to the Draft Revised Regional Plan.
- Autumn 2011: Likely publication of the Revised Regional Plan.

3.1.4 Cabinet was apprised of the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes Published for Consultation on the East Midlands Regional Plan and approved the Council's response on 26th September 2008.

3.1.5 The key points made at this time related to:

- The introduction of additional wording relation to the distribution of housing within the West Northamptonshire Housing Market Area (WNHMA): This point was accepted.
- Objected to the WNHMA being identified for strategic distribution sites: This point was not accepted.
- Required the target number of dwellings to be delivered in 2006/2011 (7250) to be reduced to reflect economic realities: This point was not accepted.

3.1.6 Monitoring of housing completions rates to date for 2006/2011 period confirms that 3551 dwellings were completed to 2008/2009. The RSS annualised target figure is 4350 (i.e. 1450 p.a.). The yearly figures were:

2006/07	1824
2007/08	1020
2008/09	707

The completions expected for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 are likely to be significantly lower than the 1450 p.a. target in the RSS. Best estimates at this time indicate an annual average of only 500 dwellings per annum. As an estimate, this might deliver some 4551 dwellings, over the 2006/2011 period, against the RSS target of 7250.

- 3.1.7 Whilst the total number of dwellings required by RSS are based on demographics and “housing needs”, it is the annual rate of required provision or “housing trajectory” that has been badly affected by the recession. It may be considered that the RSS review process should challenge and take the opportunity to review downwards the annual rates of provision so they are more realistic in the changed circumstances. Key criteria for this review should include the capacity of the development industry to deliver, the strength of the housing market, and the likely delivery of necessary infrastructure providing the capacity for growth. If the “housing trajectory” were to adopt a more realistic approach to delivery, it would stretch the timeline providing greater time for infrastructure to be funded and delivered.
- 3.1.8 This report has been prepared taking into account the Council response to the consultation on the Emergent Joint Core Strategy (8th September 2009).

3.2 Issues

- 3.1.5 A fuller explanation of the options and questions on a number of key issues identified within the Plan Review is set out within Appendix 1.

3.3 Population, Housing and Settlement Development

- 3.3.1 The Partial Review focuses on planning for housing provision in the post 2021 period. This enables the development of a regional policy framework for the medium to long term, whilst also allowing for local planning authorities to concentrate on Core Strategies in the short term based on the current Regional Plan. The Plan Review provides detail on an assessment of the latest national household projections and advice on affordability (2006-2031). Nevertheless at this stage it makes no recommendations about the numbers of additional homes that it will plan for in the period 2021-2031, neither does it give an indication of how it considers any additional housing should be apportioned between areas.
- 3.3.2 The RSS review consultation does indicate that regional housing provision should increase substantially from 21,500 new home per year (to 2026) to 28,000 homes per year. In the period 2021 – 2031, this indicates an additional requirement of some 75,000 new homes across the region. The review document suggests that this level of growth will have to be “rigorously tested” through the partial review process. **Experience has shown that testing of housing delivery numbers at regional level is weak and ineffective.**
- 3.3.3 It identifies alternative approaches to setting affordable housing targets by Housing Market Area (HMA) (2021-2031). It also sets out and seeks options on the future distribution of development in the West Northamptonshire HMA, ranging from focussing development and regeneration on Northampton and

Daventry through to a more even dispersal pattern of development across the area. It also suggests how Milton Keynes and South Midlands (MKSM) Part 'A' Policies (2006-2031) will be restructured.

3.4 Transport

- 3.4.1 The Plan Review provides some detail on Emerging Regional Transport Priorities. These will be used to inform the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), which will identify and prioritise large scale transport infrastructure projects and set the criteria for assessing the appropriateness of other transport expenditure priorities. The context for the review of the RTS flows from the critical panel report into the original RTS, which recommended an early review to correct its failings. The consultation document provides no detail of what could be proposed/required and further illustrates that this partial review is being driven forward without enough detail being known about key matters that should be available to guide policy and strategy.

3.5 Renewable Energy Generation/Carbon Reduction

- 3.5.1 The Plan Review seeks to address the need to plan for the extremely challenging step change in renewable energy generation required to meet national targets, and also the equally challenging carbon reduction targets for 2006-2031.

3.6 Aggregates

- 3.6.1 In the absence of clear national policy on the amount of aggregates required in the period 2016-21, the Plan Review asks for opinions on alternative approaches to the apportionment of aggregates extraction between County areas over this period.

3.7 Consultation Response

- 3.7.1 Suggested comments and consultation responses are highlighted in association with the fuller explanation of options and questions on a number of key issues identified within the Plan Review as set out within Appendix 1.

3.8 Choices (Options)

- 3.8.1 There are a number of choices available to Cabinet. It could either:

- Not respond to the consultation;
Or
- Respond as recommended in this report, with any additions Cabinet may consider appropriate.

- 3.8.2 This stage of the Partial Review of the Regional Plan is the start of a proposed amendment to regional planning policy that could have a significant impact on the future of Northampton's spatial development. It is therefore recommended that a response is required to ensure that we play an active role in seeking to shape the future development of Northampton. To not do so would undermine

the civic leadership expected of the organisation from the community that it represents.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1.1 Policy

4.1.1. The Partial Review of the Regional Plan, when completed, will up-date the Regional Plan, which, with the Regional Economic Strategy, will form the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS 8). All Development Plan documents subsequently produced that relate to Northampton will have to be in conformity with the Strategy.

4.1.2 Cabinet will be aware of the progress being made to date on two key policy documents, the JCS and the CAAP, which will play a significant role in shaping the future prosperity and improvement of Northampton. Cabinet will no doubt wish to carefully consider the response to the partial review of the RSS, so that their stated ambitions for the future of Northampton which needs a sound spatial plan to deliver quality development and infrastructure for the future.

4.1.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 None directly in relation to the proposed response set out in this report. Officers within the Council are likely to have to engage with the Regional Assembly in the process of the evolving Strategy. For the most part, this will be accommodated within the existing resources of Planning and Regeneration, although some other Council Divisions may have to contribute personnel from time to time to allow an adequate response to be provided.

4.2.2 The main risks are that if the Council does not engage at an appropriate level with the Regional Assembly in this process, that its reputation will be diminished as an organisation that can effectively represent Northampton's interests. It could also result in future development that is inconsistent with the interests of Northampton.

4.1.3 Legal

4.3.1 See above related to Policy. In addition, as part of the Development Plan, planning applications will have to be determined in accordance with policies within the Regional Strategy, unless there are convincing reasons otherwise.

4.1.4 Equality

4.4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been produced in association with the Partial Review documentation, but will be done as the review progresses to a draft revised plan.

4.1.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 4.5.1 All Councillors have been informed of the review and the fact that a paper seeking approval of the Council's response would be taken to Cabinet on the 23rd September 2009.
- 4.5.2 All Heads of Service, the Sustainable Development Officer, Housing Strategy and Policy Development Manager have been informed with a request for any views to be sent to inform the inclusion within this response.

4.1.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

- 4.6.1 The East Midlands Regional Plan sets out the strategic planning policy for the area. It and the Council's response in representing the views of the community are consistent with all of the Council's corporate priorities.

4.1.7 Other Implications

- 4.7.1 None.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1.1 East Midlands Regional Plan: Partial Review Options Consultation' June 2009 East Midlands Regional Assembly.
- 5.1.2 East Midlands Regional Plan' March 2009 East Midlands Regional Assembly.
- 5.1.3 East Midlands Regional Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy) – Secretary Of State's Proposed Changes Published For Consultation – Northampton Borough Council Cabinet Paper 23rd September 2009.

D K Bailey
Director of Planning and Regeneration
Ext. 7287

P Lewin
Planning Policy & Conservation
Manager
Ext. 8734