

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 16 October 2019

The Staffordshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan



Cllr Mark Winnington, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth said,

“The Staffordshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan will make a huge difference to our communities in making sure opportunities to secure new infrastructure are properly considered.

Planning at the strategic scale allows stakeholders to understand the cumulative impact of growth and being clear on the vision and structural requirements of Staffordshire’s communities through their local and neighbourhood plans.

This Plan will provide an important evidence to be used by decision and policy makers in navigating the statutory processes.

It is clear that we need to plan over much longer periods of time so that development can contribute to the needs of residents rather than causing a deficit that needs to resolve through ad-hoc grant funding programmes.

We are now better placed to provide the system leadership necessary to bring the weight of our ambition to bear.”

Report Summary:

Due to its unique location and quality environment, Staffordshire faces continued pressure for growth. Growth that increases the prosperity of our residents, higher valued jobs and good quality sustainable new homes is welcomed. But associated with growth is the requirement of infrastructure, in the broadest sense, to support it. Through the preparation of the Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP), we now have a clearly articulated county wide infrastructure requirement identified to support the planned growth through the District Councils local plans and Infrastructure Delivery Plans. The SIP creates an opportunity, through our Leadership role, to lobby and press for long term coordinated investment in Staffordshire, at scale. This will contribute towards preventing unplanned unsustainable growth, which does not have the required associated infrastructure, that is so vital to further enhance the quality of living that is associated with Staffordshire.

Recommendations

I recommend that:

- a. The final Staffordshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP) is issued to statutory providers to form evidence base material to underpin the preparation of their investment and delivery plans.

- b. That the SIP is used to forge Strategic Relationships with key infrastructure providers, funding agencies and policy makers to ensure that their plans are aligned to meet the growth ambitions for Staffordshire.

Local Members Interest
N/A

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Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

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Report of the Director of Economy Infrastructure & Skills

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. Staffordshire County Council (SCC) has statutory responsibilities over a wide range of infrastructure policy, planning and implementation that contribute to the making of a place. Through our various service areas, SCC act as an enabler of strategic scale development and co-ordinates our activities with external bodies (e.g. utility network providers).
2. SCC work closely with the borough/district Local Planning Authorities and contribute to the production of infrastructure delivery plans. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has undergone a series of revisions in recent years to increase the emphasis on ensuring that development is supported by infrastructure. Demonstrating ‘whole plan’ viability and increased monitoring of infrastructure spending are now key features of the NPPF.
3. Funding for infrastructure in the decade that followed the global financial crisis of 2007–2008 has been increasingly channelled into competitive bidding processes with a high bar to clearing their prioritisation criteria. Central Government have signalled their intent to better support strategic tier councils through longer term funding settlements or bespoke deals where new infrastructure will directly unlock specific strategic scale development opportunities.
4. Furthermore, a number of external infrastructure providers have indicated that they would like to work with strategic tier authorities to improve their ability to plan over a longer time frame (over 20 to 30 years). This would help them adopt a more strategic approach to investment and provide more resilience against piecemeal development. In the case of transport, this sort of thinking and approach is already in motion through the Midlands Connect sub-national transport body.

5. The recent changes in national policy are reflected in the County Council's adopted Strategic Plan 2017-2022 that sets the context for the preparation of the SIP with supporting text that states,
 - a. "to support the construction of more homes. Importantly the plan will make sure new developments are supported by employment opportunities, high quality transport, green spaces, places to go out and excellent digital connections like superfast broadband, self-build, bespoke modular build and more developments by smaller house-builders to increase the range of housing types and designs and speed up construction".
6. The SIP provides a holistic and cumulative view of the wide range of infrastructure delivery plans for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent geography and pick up cross-boundary issues of strategic importance (e.g. the Drakelow former power station site on the Derbyshire border that required a new bridge and bypass).
7. The production of the SIP commenced in December 2018 and funded through an external grant. A working draft version was published for internal stakeholders in Summer 2019. The external capacity and expertise to prepare the SIP is being provided by AECOM and involves engagement with the SCC Operational Management Team, district/borough council Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and a wide range of other statutory infrastructure providers. This engagement typically comprises data collection and workshops for validation/quality assurance testing.
8. The SIP is framed around nine key themes that consider 'Transport, Education, Health, Community, Green Infrastructure, Utilities and Flood Defences'. The SIP provides an executive summary that is presented as Appendix 1.
9. The key findings establish the anticipated level in housing growth over the 20-year period to 2038 alongside a population projection forecast and additional job forecast. Delivering the necessary infrastructure to support that growth from now to 2038 is estimated by AECOM to cost £4.11 billion in 2018 terms. This represents an estimate of capital delivery costs only and does not include the additional annual revenue requirements and maintenance costs.
10. The study has reviewed the potential costs of delivery alongside currently identified secured funding, potential funding from public, private and developer contributions highlighting a remaining funding gap estimate of £2.29 billion at 2018 prices.
11. The SIP articulates the impact of economic growth and provides an insight to the strategic importance of infrastructure led development plans. It demonstrates the emphasis that should be placed on securing financial contributions from the development industry during both the local plan preparation stage and subsequent development management process.
12. The SIP provides an important evidence base to hold more robust discussions with developers, utility providers, and to better support the Local Planning Authorities in plan making. The strategic scale development proposals in near

- proximity to the administrative border are also identified, and the SIP will enable a more joined up 'One Staffordshire' voice to be heard when considering cross-border activities.
13. The findings of SIP provide SCC with the evidence base it needs to make the case for investment across Staffordshire to close the funding gap. It will require a tailored approach to each component of this industrial sector to create the right conditions for growth and investment.
 14. For example, Western Power Distribution is the electricity distribution network operator for the Midlands and is changing ways of working to get ready for the roll-out of smart grid technology. The implication for SCC is to be able to influence and secure targeted investment to reinforce the electricity distribution network to bring forward strategic scale housing and employment.
 15. SCC is likely to benefit from forging Strategic Relationships with providers such as Western Power Distribution. This will ensure that their move towards 'smart grid' technology will support clean growth through adoption of new technology such as electric powered vehicles. Similarly, targeted investment such as we have seen in recent years through the 'Keele Deal' will need to focus on how we can accelerate bringing forward low carbon energy demonstrator projects; and how the Staffordshire communities can capitalise on the benefits of being at the forefront of advanced research, development and manufacturing industries.
 16. The action that emerges from consideration of the SIP in our future business planning process will need to result in the delivery of the local plan strategies prepared by the LPAs. The SIP is the start of the process in being able to articulate our infrastructure requirements at scale for our sub-regional geography and providing the confidence to stakeholders that Staffordshire at the front of the queue in securing public and private investment
 17. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1: Draft Strategic Infrastructure Plan – September 2019

Community Impact Assessment – Summary Document

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