

Local Members Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee - Thursday 19 September 2019

Draft Strategic Infrastructure Plan

Recommendations

I recommend that:

- a. The Select Committee considers and comments upon the draft Strategic Infrastructure Plan in terms of the broad approach, scope and time horizon (20 year period, up to 2038) in producing a macro-level framework capable of articulating the scale of infrastructure investment required to support the long term sustainable growth of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
- b. The final version of the Strategic Infrastructure Plan is brought to the Select Committee in late Winter 2019/20 along with an overview of the progress made in forging Strategic Relationships with key infrastructure providers and external funding providers.
- c. The Select Committee considers and comments upon how the emerging Strategic Infrastructure Plan could be used to shape and influence policy associated with the recently announced pledge by the new Prime Minister to review planning regulations as part of a wide-ranging drive to tackle the nation's housing crisis.

Report of Cllr Mark Winnington, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

Summary

What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - a. Provide the Select Committee with an opportunity to shape this work as an important component in developing a clearly defined strategy for Staffordshire County Council engagement in housing policy and strategy delivery to support the implementation of housing schemes, both directly and indirectly (referred herein as the Housing Strategy);
 - b. Provide the Select Committee with an opportunity to select any specific infrastructure themes for consideration and comment in more detail at a future meeting(s);
 - c. Provide the Select Committee with an opportunity to shape and influence the extent in which the Strategic Infrastructure Plan will form part of the Housing Strategy that will be brought to the Select Committee in late Winter 2019/20.

Report

Background

2. The Staffordshire County Council (SCC) Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022 (the Strategic Plan) (SCC 2018a) includes Housing as one its five priorities; to '*Support the construction of more housing to meet the growing needs of our families and people young and old.*'
3. The sub-headings under this priority are:
 - a. Strategic Infrastructure Plan;
 - b. Housing offer; and
 - c. Housing delivery.
4. An introduction to the concept of the Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP) was considered at the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee on the 18th September 2018. An overview of the emerging SIP subsequently formed part of the item 'Delivering Housing in Staffordshire' at the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on the 1st March 2019. It was resolved by the Committee that an advanced draft version of a clearly defined strategy (the Housing Strategy) be brought to the Select Committee in early Autumn 2019.
5. The SIP will form an important component of the Housing Strategy and the Select Committee are provided with an opportunity to shape and influence the SIP at this draft stage with the intention to finalise the document throughout the Autumn months.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. The draft SIP is framed around nine key themes that consider 'Transport, Education, Health, Community, Green Infrastructure, Utilities and Flood Defences'. The draft 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 requires a new bridge and bypass).

9. The draft SIP considers the level of infrastructure investment over a 20 year period up to 2038. It is based on the adopted Local Plan coverage for the area produced by the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), including the County Council in its role as the Waste Planning Authority. Many of the adopted local plans are based on a spatial strategy and site allocations up to 2030 +/- a few years (the exact dates are documented within Appendix 1 of the 1 March 2019 Select Committee papers). The draft SIP extrapolates data from these published sources and is based on an agreed approach with the LPAs.
10. In considering an appropriate methodology on which to base the extrapolation of data, it was necessary to take account of a recent change in Government policy. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have made changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). MHCLG have introduced a Standard Methodology with the intention of simplifying the process in which the preparation of a local plan should quantify its housing number requirements (n.b. the standard method identifies a minimum annual housing need figure, it does not produce a housing requirement figure).
11. However, if a local plan is refreshed before the end of the intended adopted local plan period (e.g. 2030), then there is a case for reprofiling the annual housing delivery figures based on the new adopted local plan period (e.g. from 2021 with a five year extension up to 2035). This is an important starting point on which to base predictive models used in producing the SIP. This matter is dealt with in page 13 of the SIP presented as Appendix 1.
12. It is possible that the housing projections will be revised upwards in future years depending on growth scenarios relating to High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) and the wider West Midlands Conurbation housing market area. Therefore, the housing and population forecasts in the draft SIP should be considered as a minimum in terms of long term planning for infrastructure provision.
13. The draft SIP provides a macro level indication of the level of investment in infrastructure that is required to facilitate sustainable development in the area. The SIP is based on adopted local plans and various infrastructure delivery plans. Therefore, the investment levels are based on a continuation of the existing strategies, with the exception being a potential new settlement in the Borough of Stafford (the Meecebrook garden settlement proposition).
14. Furthermore, the Midlands Engine, and Midlands Connect strategy is based on seeking the benefits of agglomeration across the region. The main emphasis is placed on enhancements to the existing strategic and major road network, with particular focus on improving east-west connectivity. There are no new major road or rail schemes identified in the draft SIP (other than HS2), but this may change in future years.
15. In terms of the what the draft SIP is showing in terms of the scale of financial investment required, is to provide an insight to the multiple-stakeholders that contribute to the making of 'place', and what needs to happen if the area is going to be successful in delivering on its plans.

16. The broad discussions at the previous Prosperous Select Committee were around the potential importance of forging strategic relationships with a number of external infrastructure providers (particularly statutory utilities) to ensure the various development, investment and delivery plans were aligned. There was also consideration around the benefits of longer term (10 years+) financial settlements and investment periods with Central Government and its agencies (existing regime is typically based on up to 5 year review cycles).
17. The policy implications associated with the Devolution agenda, and local government finance (e.g. Self-sufficient local government: 100% business rates retention) also continue to be relevant.
18. The draft SIP could form an important evidence base in future policy discussions with Central Government.

Link to Strategic Plan

19. Support the construction of more housing to meet the growing needs of our families and people young and old.

Community Impact

20. This report provides a status update on the Delivery Plan 2019/20 to develop a clearly defined strategy for SCC engagement in housing policy and strategy delivery to support the implementation of housing schemes, both directly and indirectly. At this stage, the report is not proposing a change to any County Council policy or service. As such a full assessment of community impact is not considered relevant in this instance.

List of Background Documents:

MHCLG, 2019. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. *Guidance Housing and economic needs assessment*. 22 July 2019

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments#housing-need>

SCC, 2018a. Staffordshire Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022

<https://www.intra.staffordshire.gov.uk/ppp/planning/stratplan/Strategic-Plan-2018-22.aspx>

SCC, 2018b. Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee. 19th September 2018. Item 22. *Delivering Housing in Staffordshire: Joint Report of Cabinet Member for Commercial and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth*

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=868&MIId=8804&Veir=4>

SCC, 2018c. Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee. 1st March 2019. Item 45. *Delivering Housing in Staffordshire: Joint Report of Cabinet Member for Commercial and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth*

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/%28S%28mcpprs45tonyxo55nsbzyt55%29%29/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=868&MId=8809>

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