**Strategic Planning - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Proposal – Initial Scoping**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough East Anglia Devolution Proposal currently states that the elected Mayor will have the power to *“create a non-statutory spatial framework, which will act as the framework for planning across the Combined Authority area, and for the future development of Local Plans. The spatial framework will need to be approved by unanimous vote of the members appointed by constituent councils of the mayoral Combined Authority. This approach must not delay the production of Local Plans” (Paragraph 21 bullet a).*

1.2 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough authorities have a strong history of working collaboratively on strategic and other planning matters. A recent manifestation of this is the *Memorandum of Co-operation[[1]](#footnote-1)* (MoC)produced to support current Local Plans. Aside from the devolution debate and proposals, officers have also been collectively discussing the approach to strategic planning in the future and the potential to produce a non-statutory spatial framework. An independently-facilitated workshop took place on 29th January 2016 to explore some of the implications and options for this.

1.3 Against this background the non-statutory spatial framework across the devolved area can be seen in a positive light. It should provide an opportunity to build on this existing collaborative thinking to support and add value to the approach to producing Local Plans.

**2. Scoping the Framework – Purpose and Content**

2.1 The East Anglia Devolution proposal included the same provisions for a strategic planning framework. The authorities concerned considered what the content of this document might be, which provides some useful initial thinking for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough context (see paper at Annex A).

2.2 The report of the Strategic Planning workshop earlier this year includes a recommendation that a scoping paper for the framework should be prepared[[2]](#footnote-2). The recommendation suggests that this should address the following issues:

* The type of framework required, i.e. its purpose and content, taking account of any models that exist elsewhere;
* The evidence required to produce it, including new evidence or a review of existing evidence;
* The technical support and resources required to produce the framework;
* The extent and nature of any stakeholder or public engagement; and
* The timetable for its production.

2.3 It is important that the purpose and content of the spatial framework is established from the outset, with consideration given to the following:

* A spatial Vision and Objectives
* Jobs and Homes
* Strategic Infrastructure requirements

2.4 These headline areas are consistent with the areas set out in the document at Annex A and appear appropriate in the context of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

2.5 Critical questions arise, however, about *how* these issues are addressed in the framework. For example, should the framework largely reflect a bottom-up compilation of individual district strategies, knitted together; or should it be genuinely spatial, leading and setting the strategy across the area, including, for example, the most sustainable distribution of jobs and homes? More fundamentally, is it difficult to avoid the latter approach as the development strategy set out in the 2003 Structure Plan, with an end date of 2016, is now largely exhausted?

2.6 This is turn raises questions about the parameters for producing a non-statutory document. Key questions include:

* How far is its preparation governed by the NPPF, e.g. the requirement that each local authority should accommodate its own objectively assessed housing need unless there are exceptional reasons why this cannot be done. Does this prevent an open approach to considering growth options across the wider area, including spatial (re)distribution of homes and jobs, or can this be done under the broad provisions of the Duty to Co-operate?
* What level and type of evidence is needed to support its production? Some matters are clear, e.g. a comprehensive update of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, but others will depend in part on the type of document it is and whether it covers other issues apart from the core topics listed above.
* What type and level of stakeholder engagement and public consultation would be needed?
* Would Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment be required; how would this relate to Local Plans, particularly, for example, the extent to which the framework could consider growth options which involve changes to Green Belt boundaries?

2.7 Clearly, these questions are inextricably linked to *what* the authorities (and the elected Mayor, of course) want the spatial framework to do in its role of acting *as the framework for planning across the Combined Authority area, and for the future development of Local Plans*. Key strategic issues arising from the current round of plan-making are likely to feed into this decision. For example, the extent to which more certainty and speed can be injected into the Local Plan process by having clarity in a higher level document on housing and jobs numbers, and strategic infrastructure requirements. Consideration will also need to be given as to how other spatial factors and partnerships play in and interact with the spatial framework. Consideration will need to be given to the future growth of London, the London – Stansted – Cambridge Consortium and the Local Enterprise Partnership’s economic vision/aspirations. There may also be others.

2.8 In addition to the above considerations, the timescale for the spatial framework itself will need to be explored. There appears to be two options: a timescale that matches the next round of Local Plans (to 2036 or 2040?); or a timescale that covers this period and looks beyond it, say to 2050 as a basis for longer-term forward planning. The preparation of the framework is likely to need to begin in earnest soon after the elected Mayor is in place, in February 2017. This should enable it to be developed during 2017/early 2018 to provide a basis for preparing the next round of Local Plans.

2.9 It may be helpful in thinking about the framework’s role to consider the current and historic approaches to strategic planning across the area. The most relevant documents in this regard are the MoC, the 2003 Structure Plan and the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the first a non-statutory document, the latter two statutory plans.

2.10 The table below sets out the approach taken to the different topics in each of these documents, for the sake of comparison and assessing the pros and cons of how they might apply in the new framework.

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| **Topic** | **MoC** | **Structure Plan** | **RSS** |
| Spatial Strategy | Provides a spatial vision, objectives and approach, reflecting the existing strategy and some broad, indicative principles for how future growth might be accommodated in each district | Includes separate visions and strategies for Cambridge sub-region and Peterborough and North Cambs. Specific policies, including Green Belt release and new settlements | Largely reflects the structure plan |
| Homes | Indicates the number of homes required in each district and across the HMA, based on the SHMA | Summarises the evidence for the number of new homes and includes a policy distributing them to each district and within the Cambridge sub-region | Largely reflects the structure plan |
| Jobs | Indicates total jobs numbers in Cambridgeshire (but not districts) in the section summarising the evidence for future growth | Includes job numbers, an employment strategy and policies covering the general location of employment; strategic employment locations; and specific employment types | Includes job numbers across the region and sub-regions or areas; quite general and broad employment policy for the Cambridge sub-region |
| Strategic infrastructure | Refers to existing, known strategic infrastructure requirements as part of the spatial approach | Includes an ‘infrastructure provision’ policy for the Cambridge sub-region as well as specific requirements to support new settlements and urban extensions | Has a Regional Transport Strategy and broad investment priorities, but at a pretty high level |
| Other |  | A range of other topic-based policies, which could be relevant, e.g. movement and access, resources, environment and heritage | As for the Structure Plan – high level policies dealing with environment, water, etc. |

**3. Resources**

3.1 With regard to resources, the Devolution Scheme document says that *the Constituent Authorities have agreed the principle that the Combined Authority’s costs will be met as far as possible from existing resources. The statutory officers and support to the Combined Authority will be provided by the Constituent Authorities[[3]](#footnote-3).* So the local authorities will provide the main resource in steering and, possibly, producing the framework. However, the extent of the resources required may vary depending on agreed purpose and content of the spatial framework. Furthermore, subject to cost, the use of consultants in relation to particular areas of expertise such as establishing objectively assessed housing need will need to be considered.

**4. Governance**

**4.1** In terms of governance, broad arrangements are set out in the devolution proposal. However, consideration will need to be given to practical working arrangements as part of implementing the devolution proposals.

**5. Conclusions**

5.1 This initial scoping paper sets out some of the issues the authorities and elected Mayor will need to address in deciding how to develop the spatial framework for the devolved area. The most immediate of these that needs to be answered is, what is the specific role of the framework and how does this inform its content, level of detail and how will it need to be produced?

**Annex A**

**Strategic Framework for East Anglia (SFEA)**

The Strategic Framework will provide an overview of East Anglia and the development opportunities and pressures that it faces.

This will include a broad analysis of the impact of emerging Local Plans, increasing housing numbers from Strategic Housing Market Assessments/Objectively Assessed Housing Needs Studies and the impact in the uplift of the economy.

The focus of the Strategic Framework will include:

* Economic corridors across East Anglia – identifying where/how to link people and their homes and businesses;
* Major new settlements that stretch across local planning authority boundaries
* Information about the capacity of existing infrastructure to support planned and future development;
* Information on emerging development and future infrastructure requirements – allowing East Anglia to form a regional view of infrastructure needs;
* Supporting East Anglia in forming an overall picture of the cost of infrastructure requirements;
* Identifying where/how the non-delivery of infrastructure development presents a risk to sustainable growth, and the nature/scale of this risk; and
* Providing a basis for East Anglia engagement with national infrastructure providers and potential investors.

It will provide the opportunity to share resources on evidence, and will provide an overarching first point of contact for utilities and other inward investment.

**Potential Content of Framework Document**

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| **Topic Area** | **Framework to address** |
| **Spatial Vision** | To set out the overall spatial vision for the area taking account of cross boundary issues with adjoining areas (Beds, Essex, Herts, Leics, Lincs and the wider south east) and to identify and describe the key drivers and constraints in relation to growth. To include a spatial portrait and overall direction of travel.  To have a longer term vision – will need to look beyond 2036, and will need to ensure that full account is taken of economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development.  Testing options for new settlements and/or sustainable increases to existing settlements |
| **Homes** | What is the overall quantity of homes to be provided between 2016 and (at least) 2036?  What is the proposed distribution of housing growth between local planning authorities’ administrative areas? If there are constraints to growth how could these be addressed or alternatively to Strategic Housing Market Areas. If there are constraints to growth, how could these be addressed. The starting assumption - each local planning authority will accommodate its own requirement.  Information on types and tenures including possible shared approaches to meeting affordable needs and other forms of housing. |
| **Economic Development and Growth** | Strengths and weaknesses of the local economy, likely growth areas, patterns of distribution and inter-relationships. Delivers/informs the SEP and investment/economic strategies.  Identification of indicativeemployment growth targets and land supply implications/spatial implications for planning policy. |
| **Infrastructure** | Are there any key infrastructure constraints or opportunities (physical, social and/or environmental) which are likely to impede growth or influence its distribution *at a strategic scale*?  To address transport infrastructure (road, rail and other sustainable modes), green infrastructure, water issues (both supply and disposal), and flooding.  Potential to include high level statement in relation to other physical and social infrastructure approach – health, education, broadband etc if significant and cross boundary.  This element will need to have regard to the Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which may at some point be contained within the SFEA. |
| **Delivery** | Is the development market in the area likely to be sufficiently strong to support delivery of the growth needs identified in a sustainable manner?  Is any further stimulus necessary to deliver? |

1. *Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Memorandum of Co-operation, Supporting the Spatial Approach 2011-2031.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Strategic Planning in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Local Authority Workshop, Friday 29th January 2016* – Catriona Riddell Associates. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Scheme*, Introduction [↑](#footnote-ref-3)