Cabinet 9th June 2005

Report of the Head of Planning Services

Item 6 Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy – East Midlands Regional Plan to 2026

Purpose of Report

To advise Cabinet of proposals for a review of the East Midlands Regional Plan to 2026. This takes the form of a Project Plan published for consultation. The potential implications for Charnwood are identified and a recommended response to the Project Plan is presented for Cabinet approval.

Recommendation(s)

1. that the East Midlands Regional Assembly be advised that the sub-regional debate concentrates excessively on the Three Cities – Derby, Nottingham and Leicester to the exclusion of the proper consideration of their inter-relationship with and influence over the communities within their wider hinterlands, including Charnwood.
2. that provision be made within the structures established for the preparation of the Regional Plan for the direct engagement of the District Councils individually in the development of Sub-Regional and Regional strategies.

Reason(s)

To ensure that the East Midlands Regional Assembly is informed of concerns over the limited opportunities currently provided for the direct involvement of District Councils in the development of the Regional Plan and encouraged to put in place the structures required to ensure their effective and productive engagement in the process.

Policy Context

In establishing the strategic land use planning context for the East Midlands region up to 2026, the East Midlands Regional Plan will have implications for the Council’s main priority and is relevant to all six strategic aims.

Background

The first Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands (RPG8) was issued by the Secretary of State in 1994. The RPG was revised in 2002 and more recently in March 2005, following a Public Examination in 2003. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this latest version of RPG8 is now the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands and forms part of the statutory development plan. However, it was developed before the new planning legislation came into effect and therefore does not fully comply with the new requirements.

The East Midlands Regional Assembly, as the Regional Planning Body, has announced a review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, to be known as the ‘Regional Plan’. The review will provide housing figures for districts and take account of recent Government initiatives such
as the review of policy on waste and latest information from the 2001 Census and regional monitoring reports. It will also roll forward the Regional Spatial Strategy five years to 2026.

The Regional Spatial Strategy is a long term strategy which will embrace:

- The scale and distribution of new housing;
- Priorities for the environment such as countryside and biodiversity protection; and
- Transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, mineral extraction and waste treatment and disposal.

To start the process, a document ‘Proposals for a Review of the East Midlands Regional Plan to 2026’ has been published by the East Midlands Regional Assembly for public consultation. The closing date for comment is 8th July 2005. The Council is invited to give its views on the draft ‘Project Plan’ which includes:

- The vision and objectives of the review
  - the vision is the same as the recently revised Integrated Regional Strategy
  - the existing 10 objectives of the current Regional Spatial Strategy

- Key issues to be addressed by the review
  - Housing (including housing figures for districts and the proportion that should be affordable)
  - Employment and the economy (including employment land figures for districts)
  - Transport
  - Environmental quality and protection
  - Waste
  - Energy
  - Sub-regional, ie Three Cities sub area, and regional cross border issues

- Who is going to undertake what work and by when. The overall time table is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Consultation on Draft Project Plan – April 2005 to July 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Developing Policies and Options – September 2005 to September 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Submitting Draft Regional Plan to Government for Public Consultation September 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Examination in Public – early 2007</td>
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<td>Stage 5</td>
<td>Panel Report – mid 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 6</td>
<td>Publication of Proposed changes and Issue of Final Regional Plan – early 2008</td>
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- How the Regional Assembly intends to consult and involve local communities in the review.
Issues for Charnwood

Charnwood falls in the centre of the Three Cities Sub Region. This is influenced by the cities of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. Loughborough is identified as a Sub-Regional Centre.

The Regional Plan will have a significant impact upon policy making at the local level, in particular, the Local Development Framework will have to conform to it. There are concerns about the level of influence the Council has in terms of preparing the Regional Plan.

For example, the Draft Work Programme indicates that the Regional Plan will apportion housing (including a ‘Leicester policy area’ share) and employment land figures to Districts. It states that this work will be led by the Regional Assembly with the advice and support of the five County Council and Unitary Councils. The Regional Assembly expects the County and Unitary Councils to work closely with District Councils to develop local allocations on a consistent basis. It is unclear how this approach will be undertaken. This approach is mirrored for many of the other key work areas such as revised car parking standards and Sub Regional Issues. For other work areas the Regional Assembly will work alongside the Highways Agency on transport issues and the Environment Agency on water management.

Other than public consultation stages, the opportunities for the Borough Council to have a more direct input to the Regional Plan are limited through the current officer and member working arrangements:

- Councillor Max Hunt represents the Council on the Regional Assembly;
- Councillor Simon Galton of Harborough District Council currently represents Leicestershire Districts on the Regional Planning Board;
- An officer from Harborough District Council represents Leicestershire Districts on the Spatial Planning Regional Officer Group;
- Guy Longley represents Leicestershire Districts on the Three Cities Sub Area Strategy Officer Working Group.

This limited involvement means that officers and members do not have access to the full debate or the opportunity to influence directly the various initiatives and studies undertaken to inform the Regional Plan or the Sub Regional strategy. It is recognised that each district cannot attend each regional officer or member meeting but there is a need for adequate arrangements to allow districts to have appropriate input into the Regional Plan.

The Government is concerned about the level of community involvement and the level of ownership in the planning process. This is particularly true at the regional level. The County and Unitary Councils have named officers as main contact points to help raise awareness of the Regional Plan and its importance. Given the growing importance of the Regional Plan in terms of its direct influence on local planning, it seems appropriate that District Councils have a similar role given their relative closeness to the local community.

Key Decision: No

Background Papers:
- Proposals for a Review of the East Midlands Regional Plan to 2026
- Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report
(see Regional Assembly’s website www.emra.gov.uk/regionalplan)
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