



CABINET: 12 JANUARY 2021

Report of: Corporate Director of Place and Community

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Evans

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**SUBJECT: LIVERPOOL CITY REGION SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY –
SECOND ROUND OF CONSULTATION**

Wards affected: None (directly) – neighbouring authority consultation

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval of the proposed West Lancashire Borough Council response to the consultation on the Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy draft vision and objectives, and suggested policy approaches.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the comments at Appendix A be approved for submission to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority as West Lancashire Borough Council's consultation response on the emerging Spatial Development Strategy.
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3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) is preparing its first Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). The SDS is a statutory planning document, meaning that when it is published, it will form part of the 'development plan' for the six Liverpool City Region (LCR) local authorities alongside their own local plans and neighbourhood plans, and will be used in decision-making on planning applications within the LCR area.

- 3.2 The SDS will not form part of the development plan in West Lancashire, so its policies will not be used in the determination of planning applications in this Borough. Nevertheless, the SDS's strategy and policies may still affect West Lancashire, given this Borough lies directly adjacent to three of the LCR authorities, and sits within the same housing market area as Sefton, Knowsley, Liverpool and Wirral Councils, and within the same functional economic market area as all six of the LCR authorities.
- 3.3 Whether or not the SDS aims to fully meet the housing and employment land needs of the LCR may affect the housing and employment land needs of West Lancashire Borough (i.e. there may or may not be scope for one neighbouring authority to contribute towards meeting another neighbouring authority's unmet needs). Given these linkages, the LCRCA continues to engage with West Lancashire Borough Council under the 'Duty to Cooperate' and the current consultation on the SDS is part of this cooperation. However, the current Statement of Common Ground between the LCRCA, the six LCR authorities and West Lancashire Borough Council does confirm (under the Duty to Co-operate) that each authority will meet their own housing needs and that authorities will work collaboratively to meet employment land needs.

The First Round of Consultation

- 3.4 The first round of consultation on the emerging SDS took place for 13 weeks from October 2019 to January 2020. Consultees were asked what the main planning-related challenges were in the LCR, and what should be done to meet them. The consultation was noteworthy in terms of its innovative ways of getting different groups of people involved from different sections of the community. The web-based consultation platform was easy to use, and significant effort was made to engage with 'hard to reach groups' such as youth, and people from more deprived and minority communities. This is reflected in the good number of responses from such groups, and the nature of issues raised as being important (for example, the greatest number of representations were made on the topic of the environment and climate change).
- 3.5 WLBC offered its broad informal support to the SDS at the first round of consultation, and has since continued its regular liaison with the LCRCA at both officer and Member level.

The Second Round of Consultation

- 3.6 Building on the feedback received from its autumn 2019 engagement, the LCRCA is now seeking further views from stakeholders, this time on a proposed vision and set of objectives for the SDS. Round 2 of the SDS consultation is also seeking people's views on the approaches to a number of key policy areas. These policy areas reflect feedback received from Round 1, the emerging evidence base, and other strategies, policies and proposals of the LCRCA.
- 3.7 At this stage, the SDS is not proposing strategic policies in relation to housing or employment needs in the City Region. These matters are expected to be consulted upon in summer / autumn 2021, by which time the government's intentions with regard to the proposed reforms of the planning system may be clearer.

- 3.8 Notwithstanding the government's publication of the Planning White Paper in August 2020 which proposes significant reforms to the existing planning system in England, the White Paper's lack of detail on the role of Spatial Development Strategies, and the currently unknown timescale for the introduction of the proposed reforms, the LCRCA is nonetheless progressing the SDS, albeit with a degree of adaptability in mind.
- 3.9 The second round of consultation on the LCS SDS runs from 10 November 2020 to 1 February 2021 and is using a similar web-based platform to the first round of consultation, although understandably, Covid-19 restrictions are limiting other forms of public engagement.

Content of the SDS

- 3.10 The SDS will only deal with planning matters of strategic importance to the LCR. Its policies will be 'high level', leaving the more detailed planning policies to local plans to be prepared by the six LCR authorities, reflecting their individual local circumstances. In line with government Regulations, the SDS will not amend any existing Green Belt boundaries in the City Region.
- 3.11 The SDS will have regard to national planning policy (as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework), health, sustainable development, and climate change. It will be consistent with, and seek to bring together, a number of LCR strategies, for example the draft LCR Local Industrial Strategy and the LCR Transport Plan. As is the case with a local plan, the SDS will be backed up by a comprehensive evidence base, and will be subject to various assessments such as a Sustainability Appraisal and Health Impact Assessment. In addition, the LCR SDS will be subject to a 'Social Value Evaluation' to ensure emerging policies take account of wider community benefits and social aspects.
- 3.12 The SDS in its current form contains a proposed vision, 5 objectives, and 13 policy areas. The consultation can be accessed by following this link:
<https://lcrsds.commonplace.is/>

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR WEST LANCASHIRE

- 4.1 In terms of the content of the emerging SDS, there is little at present that would have a significant direct impact on West Lancashire, although this Borough's residents and businesses are likely to benefit from being adjacent to a City Region that is thriving, healthy and successful, that is delivering sustainable development, and that is dealing with climate change and its implications.
- 4.2 In plan-making, the matters that usually tend to have the most significant cross-boundary implications are housing and employment land provision, and transport. Not meeting one's objectively-assessed needs for housing or employment land could lead to increased demand for land in a neighbouring authority area, and could influence commuting patterns and traffic levels. Provision of adequate transport infrastructure associated with proposed new development is vital in order to minimise or avoid negative effects on surrounding areas. As mentioned in paragraph 3.7 above, the emerging SDS is not yet considering housing and employment figures and their distribution across the LCR and so the potential for

cross-boundary impacts is not yet known, but the current LCR Statement of Common Ground is not seeking that West Lancashire would meet any of the LCR's development needs. The proposed response at Appendix A confirms this Council's position that it is not able to meet LCR development needs at this time.

- 4.3 Also, the proposed SDS policy areas do not yet refer to any specific developments or schemes, and thus the proposed response at Appendix A suggests that the next iteration of the SDS includes the proposals for the Skelmersdale Rail Link.
- 4.4 There are a number of other matters within the proposed policy areas that may have cross-boundary implications or that could offer opportunities for co-operation between the LCR and neighbouring authorities. These include management of water and flood risk, development of Green Infrastructure networks, enhancing broadband connectivity, and working to improve food security and decrease food miles.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Borough Council Members were given the opportunity to make comments on the emerging SDS, to be combined with officers' views to form a single West Lancashire Borough Council response to the LCRCA engagement. Feedback was received from one Member on behalf of their Party. In the light of these comments received, it is proposed that the representations attached in Appendix A be made on the LCR SDS.
- 5.2 Following receipt of stakeholders' comments on the proposed vision and objectives for the City Region and on the suggested policy approaches, the LCRCA intends to engage again with stakeholders on proposals for the spatial strategy for the City Region and on supporting policies which will include housing, employment and town centres along with strategic infrastructure. This further round of consultation is anticipated to be held in summer / autumn 2021.
- 5.3 Given housing, employment and strategic infrastructure (in particular, transport) are amongst the most likely topics to have cross-boundary implications, it is intended that West Lancashire Borough Council will continue to engage with the LCRCA on these matters, both leading up to and during the planned third round of consultation.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As there is little direct impact on West Lancashire from the proposed vision and policy areas of the emerging LCR SDS in its current early draft form, there are few or no sustainability implications from this report.
- 6.2 The proposed vision of the LCR SDS in its current form contains the following elements, which are supported:
 - A proactive, collaborative Spatial Development Strategy has been instrumental in delivering the goal of inclusive growth alongside environmental responsibility;

- Effective action to tackle Climate Change has been, and is being, taken; with measures put in place to increase our resilience to its effects.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial or resource implications for the Council as a result of the recommendation in this report.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Given that the recommendation in this report is simply to submit comments on draft planning documents produced by the LCRCA, there are no risks associated with this report that would need to be assessed.

9.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no specific, direct health implications for West Lancashire Borough from the emerging LCR SDS in its current form. In general terms, consideration of health implications is a key element of the SDS as it is being prepared, and if a successful SDS is delivered and implemented as intended, it should have beneficial health effects not just for the LCR, but for neighbouring areas such as West Lancashire too, given this Borough's strong linkages with the LCR.
- 9.2 The proposed vision of the SDS in its current form contains the following element, which is supported:
- Our health and wellbeing is fundamental in deciding how we shape the places we live, work and meet.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972) that have been relied on to a material extent in preparing this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is no direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Appendices

Appendix A – West Lancashire Borough Council comments on the emerging Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy.