



**Report for: Cabinet 5th August 2010
Planning Committee 18th August 2010**

**Subject: Programme of Core Strategy preparation and changes to
planning policy arising from the new government**

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1.0 Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is

- to inform members of anticipated changes to strategic planning proposed by the new government; and
- to summarise work on the preparation of the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies and recommend delaying publication of the next version of the Strategies.

2.0 Changes to planning policy arising from new government

2.1 The new coalition government published its 'Programme for Government' on 20th May 2010 which sets out its aspirations for a five year term of office. Under the theme of 'communities and local government' the following points relate to the future of strategic planning:-

- 'We will promote decentralisation and democratic engagement and the giving of new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals'.
- 'We will rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and return decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils'.
- 'In the longer term, we will radically reform the planning system to give neighbourhoods far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live, based on the principles set out in the Conservative Party publication 'Open Source Planning'.
- 'We will publish a simple and consolidated national planning framework covering all forms of development and setting out national economic, environmental and social priorities'.
- 'We will maintain the Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other environmental protections and create a new designation

(similar to SSSIs) to protect green areas of particular importance to local communities’.

- 2.2 In line with the second bullet, the Secretary of State announced the revocation of Regional Strategies on 6th July 2010 (attached as **Appendix A**), with immediate effect. This announcement was accompanied by guidance for local planning authorities and a Parliamentary Statement. These supporting documents provide guidance on the approach to be taken by local authorities in the short term and also provide an indication of likely future changes to the existing system. Key points arising are as set out below.

The Development Plan

- 2.3 The development plan will now comprise only any adopted Development Plan Documents, saved policies and any old style plans that have not lapsed.

Role of national planning policy

- 2.4 The planning policy statement on Regional Strategies is cancelled and references to regional strategies in other planning policy statements are no longer valid. However, there is a continuing need for local planning policy and decision-making to be in conformity with national planning policy, including with existing planning policy statements.

Implications for local people

- 2.5 The Parliamentary Statement reiterates that greater power will be put in the hands of local people. Future reform will make it easier for local councils, working with their communities, to agree local plans to maximise the involvement of neighbourhoods.
- 2.6 Powerful incentives will be introduced so that people see the benefits of building so that there are real incentives to build homes and these incentives will be introduced early in the spending review period.

Policy preparation

- 2.7 Local Planning Authorities should continue to develop LDF core strategies to guide development in their areas. Local authorities may wish to review their plans following the revocation of Regional Strategies.
- 2.8 There is a continuing need for planning policy to meet the requirements of soundness under the current legislation and this will still need to be tested through the examination process. Inspectors will also continue to test the evidence put forward by local authorities and others who make representations.

Locally derived housing targets

- 2.9 Local planning will be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision in their area and identifying a long term supply of housing land. It will still be necessary to justify the housing numbers used in plans in line with current policy in Planning Policy Statement 3. Evidence that informed the preparation of the revoked Regional Strategies may continue to be a material consideration.

Provision for travellers

- 2.10 Local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand and in line with current policy and based on the evidence of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments. The regulations and guidance on the methodology of preparing these assessments will be reviewed in due course.

Implications for Gedling Borough Council

- 2.11 For Gedling Borough, the development plan now comprises the saved policies of the Gedling Borough Replacement Local Plan (certain policies saved July 2008) and not the East Midlands Regional Plan (March 2009). Applications for development will therefore be judged against the policies within this and national planning policy documents (PPG's and PPS's) as amended.
- 2.12 The Parliamentary Statement gives support for the continuation of work on the Aligned Core Strategies. Whilst the Council now has an opportunity to review the Core Strategy in light of the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy, until best practice guidance has been received which will set out how housing need should be assessed at the local level, it is considered that it would be premature to review the Aligned Core Strategy.
- 2.13 Clearly, the methodology for deriving housing need for the Borough and the level of need established are fundamental elements that have implications for much of the Core Strategy. Until this guidance has been received, any work progressed on this element of the document may be abortive. However, work will be undertaken to assess whether a review would be appropriate in the future.
- 2.14 There is a clear indication that future work on the Core Strategy will continue to need to be based on a robust and comprehensive evidence base and in accordance with national legislation and guidance. This will continue to be tested at examination stage to ensure that the final document is 'sound'. It is also worth bearing in mind the statement in the Conservative Party Green Paper "Open Source Planning" issued shortly before the election that "planning inspectors will have to consider whether the local authority has conducted a professional assessment of the housing need for their locality (i.e. following best practice guidance). Should the Secretary of State be advised that any

local authority has not adequately performed this task, he or she will reject the local plan in question.”

- 2.15 This means that the housing need for Gedling Borough will continue to be based on the latest population projections, the needs of the regional economy, evidence from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, advice on the impact of affordability and the availability of suitable land. The Council will need to continue to collect reliable information to justify our housing supply policies through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.
- 2.16 The Parliamentary Statement advises that evidence that informed the preparation of the revoked Regional Strategies may continue to be a material consideration. This evidence includes the work on population projections and assessment of housing need that underpinned the housing targets of the East Midlands Regional Plan. As such, it is likely that account will still need to be taken of this evidence to some degree. The anticipated good practice guidance on determining housing need at the local level will have clear implications for how far a locally derived figure will differ from the figure of 8000 dwellings (2006-2026) set by the Regional Plan.
- 2.17 Notwithstanding the overall figure of need, a key implication of the revocation of the Regional Strategy is the removal of the requirement to accommodate a percentage of those dwellings within the Principal Urban Area, thereby providing the Council with greater flexibility over where future housing development is accommodated.
- 2.18 The Council will continue to need to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land, although clearly the overall target of housing land may alter.
- 2.19 Future reform of the strategic planning system is expected to put greater power in the hands of local residents within Gedling Borough. More details are awaited as to how this will be put into practice. These changes will be accompanied by the introduction of ‘powerful incentives’ so that local residents can see the benefits of development and it is understood that the detail of these incentives will be consulted on later this year.
- 2.20 Local authorities are encouraged to continue to work together across administrative boundaries to consider cross boundary issues. It is understood that the forthcoming Decentralised and Localism Bill will include a statutory obligation for councils to co-operate across area boundaries. This obligation will clearly have implications for progressing the housing/employment allocations at Top Wighay Farm.
- 2.20 In conclusion, therefore, work undertaken on the Aligned Core Strategies to date fits well with the approach to strategic planning set out in the Ministerial Statement. The ‘Option for Consultation’ stage

now reached offers an opportunity to reflect on recent and forthcoming changes to the policy preparation system before progressing to the next formal stage.

3.0 Programme of Core Strategy preparation

- 3.1 Notwithstanding recent announcements by the new Government (as outlined above), work has been continuing on preparing the next version of the Aligned Core Strategies in conjunction with the other Greater Nottingham authorities. The main elements of the work programme for the lead up to the next stage consist of:-
- Developing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan
 - Traffic modelling
 - Site master planning for Sustainable Urban Extensions and other named sites
 - Employment land
 - Retailing
 - Sustainability appraisal
 - Equalities impact assessment
 - Habitats regulations assessment
 - Redrafting the policies, vision and objectives of the Aligned Core Strategy
 - Housing supply
- 3.2 The councils aim to have processed all representations on the Option for Consultation stage (published in February 2010) by summer 2010. A report of consultation is being prepared, which will set out what representations have been received and how they have been taken into account.
- 3.3 Given the implications of the government announcements, an autumn publication of the Aligned Core Strategies (in accordance with the Council's Local Development Scheme) is no longer considered possible or appropriate. It is therefore considered that publication of the next version be delayed, pending further guidance on strategic planning.
- 3.4 Progress on the preparation of the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies was discussed at the meeting of the Joint Planning Advisory Board on 22nd June 2010. It was agreed at the meeting that work should continue on collating the evidence base and supporting information for the Aligned Core Strategies, where this remains relevant in the light of the uncertain future planning arrangements. It was also agreed to delay the publication of the next version of the Aligned Core Strategies, pending further guidance on strategic planning.

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 It is RECOMMENDED that members note the contents of section 2.0 of this report. It is also RECOMMENDED that, in accordance with the decision made by JPAB, it is agreed:

- a) that work continue on collating the evidence base and supporting information for the Aligned Core Strategies.
- b) to delay the publication of the next version of the Aligned Core Strategy, pending further guidance on strategic planning.