

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Cabinet	
MEETING	1st April 2022	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3349
TITLE:	West of England Combined Authority Spatial Development Strategy	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
None		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The West of England Combined Authority draft Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) is scheduled to be considered by the West of England Combined Authority Committee on 8th April 2022. This meeting provides Cabinet the opportunity to consider its key priorities for the SDS.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Cabinet is asked to set out its key priorities for the West of England Combined Authority draft Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).**

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 The SDS is being prepared by WECA in collaboration with the constituent Unitary Authorities of Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, and South Gloucestershire Council). The purpose of the SDS is to set out the strategic spatial framework for the sub-region's housing, employment, infrastructure and other growth over the next 20 years. Once adopted, the SDS will form part of the Unitary Authority statutory Development Plans and must be taken into account when planning decisions are taken in any part of the sub-region. Planning applications should be determined in accordance with it, unless there are sound planning reasons (other material considerations) which indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 The Unitary Authorities' will need to review and update their Local Plans accordingly and all subsequent Development Plan Documents and Neighbourhood Plans have to be in general conformity with the Spatial Development Strategy. The SDS will set the development requirements for each of the Unitary Authorities,

including housing (implementing the Government's Standard Methodology) and employment land. It will need to take account of national requirements to seek to address the full needs for development across authority boundaries.

- 3.3 The SDS is underpinned by key evidence which will also be relevant to the preparation of UA Local Plans, such as assessments on housing needs, employment space, carbon impact, land availability, transport and other infrastructure, and renewable energy. The SDS will need to be informed by the West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy and supported by an Infrastructure Investment Delivery Plan.
- 3.4 The next step in the preparation of the SDS is the agreement and publication of the draft SDS for a statutory 12-week public consultation where members of the public, statutory consultees and any other interested parties will be invited to comment on the draft SDS. To proceed to consultation, the SDS requires the agreement of all four authorities.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Under the legislation establishing WECA, the Metro Mayor is required to publish a Spatial Development Strategy and keep it under review. As the strategic plan for the West of England Combined Authority Region, the Strategy sets out the direction of travel for the sub-region's housing, employment, infrastructure and other growth over the next 20 years. Part 4 of the West of England Combined Authority Order 2017 provides WECA with the power to exercise functions relating to the Spatial Development Strategy.
- 4.2 The preparation of the SDS must also be informed by a sustainability appraisal and meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
- 4.3 Authorities involved in plan-making are required to cooperate with each other and other bodies when preparing plans which address strategic, cross-boundary matters. This includes strategic policies in spatial development strategies and local plans. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that these authorities should produce, maintain, and update one or more Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) throughout the plan-making process. A number of SoCG have therefore prepared for the SDS, including with adjoining authorities and other bodies.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The preparation of the SDS has been funded through the WECA Investment Fund as well financial and staff resources in the Combined Authority and Councils. Much of the SDS evidence base is also relevant to UA Local Plan work and joint commissioning of evidence has enabled financial savings for the authorities.
- 5.2 In light of the complexity and scale of growth arising from responding to national housing targets via the SDS, further funding has been made available from the WECA Investment Fund to support the preparation of Local Plans. The B&NES business case for drawing down funding from the Investment Fund to support for the preparation of its new Local Plan is pending approval. This will cover

masterplanning and transport work needed for the new Local Plan. Any costs over and above the Investment Fund would need to be met from a Council corporate contingency budget or one-off reserve.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 WECA needs to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the preparation of the SDS and should respond to any identified adverse impacts, including in the arrangements for consultation. This will need to be a background paper to the SDS.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 The SDS will direct growth for the Region over a 20-year period and in doing so it must seek to set a clear direction of travel towards net zero new development and climate adaptation). Its policies must provide a robust basis for the UAs to respond to the Climate Emergency in their own Local Plans.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Preparation of the SDS is a statutory obligation on WECA. In formulating the SDS, WECA will have needed to assess the reasonable policy options via a sustainability appraisal, which will also explain the justification for the selection of the preferred policy framework.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The SDS has been developed in collaboration with the three Combined Authority Councils. As a plan-making authority, the Combined Authority is required to cooperate with other authorities and bodies when preparing the SDS, notably neighbouring authorities and infrastructure providers. Full details of the engagement undertaken and agreed positions and next steps is provided in the supporting Statements of Common Ground.
- 10.2 A public consultation "Spatial Development Strategy Future of the Region Survey" exercise in November 2020 was also undertaken to inform the Objectives and policy focusses which underpin the SDS.

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Background papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u><i>The full feedback report on The Future of the Region survey.</i></u> • <u><i>The Future of the Region survey responses.</i></u> • <u><i>Summary of the Spatial Development engagement process.</i></u> • <u><i>Integrated Impact Assessment for the SDS – scoping report.</i></u> • <u><i>Statement of Common Ground Version 3 - Summary</i></u> • <u><i>Statement of Common Ground Version 3</i></u> • <u><i>Evidence base for Net Zero Building Policy - Embodied Carbon</i></u> • <u><i>Evidence base for Net Zero Building Policy - Operational Carbon for Non Domestic Buildings</i></u> • <u><i>Net Zero New Buildings Evidence and Guidance to Inform Planning Policy</i></u> • <u><i>Statement of Common Ground Version 2</i></u> • <u><i>Employment Land Spatial Needs Assessment (ELSNA)</i></u> • <u><i>Employment Land Spatial Needs Assessment (ELSNA) summary</i></u> • <u><i>Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA)</i></u> • <u><i>Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) summary</i></u> • <u><i>Infrastructure Investment Delivery Plan (IIDP) Topic Paper: Issues and Options</i></u> • <u><i>Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Methodology Statement</i></u> • <u><i>Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Scoping Report</i></u> • <u><i>WECA Area Statement of Common Ground Version 1</i></u>
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