

Post SHMA Strategic Work Programme Update

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Growth Board (the Board) with an update on the Post-SHMA Strategic Work Programme (the Programme).

Background

2. The Board, at its meeting on 30 July, endorsed a revised version of the Programme, designed to consider the implications of the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment and associated issues of unmet housing need in Oxford, in line with the Duty to Co-operate.
3. This report updates the Board with progress against this revised Programme. A Programme summary is attached as an Appendix.

Assessment of the unmet need of Oxford City

4. The first key project within the Programme was to agree the figure for unmet need in Oxford City. This was done by asking the critical friend to critique the Oxford SHLAA, the Cundall report commissioned by South, Vale and Cherwell, the Oxford response to this and any other relevant information
5. Following consideration of the report all authorities agreed a working assumption of 15,000 homes for Oxford City's unmet need. All authorities agree to work towards this in good faith, based on the previously agreed process which includes the review of the Oxford City's Local Plan.
6. The Board should note that the working assumption of 15,000 is a working figure to be used by the Programme as a benchmark for assessing the spatial options for growth and is not an agreed figure for the true amount of unmet need.

Confidentiality Agreement

7. All council partners on the Board have now signed a Memorandum of Understanding to respect the confidential nature of information and opinion shared within the Programme. The MOU includes agreement on a common and shared approach to FOI requests coordinated through the lead authority.

Communications protocol

8. All council partners on the Board have signed a communications protocol that sets out how the partners will collectively manage communication of the Programme as it progresses.

Green Belt Study

9. The partners appointed a consultant, Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake a study that will provides supporting information for future Local Plan reviews of the Green Belt if required.
10. The study does this by examining the performance of identified land parcels agreed by the districts against the five statutory tests of green belt suitability, a necessary precursor to any potential formal review.
11. At the Board meeting on 30th July the timetable for completion of this project was estimated to be the end of September. However delays have been experienced and the final report was not received until 13th November.
12. The next stage will be to publish the report and then examine whether the information in the study informs any potential spatial growth options as part of the testing of those options.

Strategic Options Development and Assessment

13. Following a check and challenge sessions on 30th October, a list of potential areas of search has now been drawn up by the partners. This is a long list of all possible areas of search that will be subject to a number of tests to examine their potential suitability for consideration as growth options.
14. The next stage of the project will be carried out by consultants appointed to carry out the spatial options testing. It is anticipated that they will present findings to the partners for check and challenge in the new year and completion of the project in March 2016.

Infrastructure Assessment

15. A draft brief for the appointment of consultants to carry out the infrastructure assessment has now been agreed by partners. The appointment process will follow with a timetable for a consultant to be in place by the end of the year and work to be completed by the end of April 2016.
16. Officers have also commenced detailed discussions with key stakeholders such and the Environment Agency and power suppliers about the need for assessment of the implications for the various growth options as they emerge

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and this consideration will form key components of the infrastructure assessment.

Conclusions

17. The revised Programme attached as an appendix to this report demonstrates the progress made to date but also recognises the slippage.
18. Officers believe however that the fact that the partnership now has a clear working position on the level of unmet need for Oxford, together with a realistic deadline for the assessment of the strategic options for growth and their infrastructure requirements and implications, means that significant progress has been made with the Programme since officers last reported to the Board.
19. Officers acknowledge that the Programme has experienced slippage but remind the Board that the original timetable was always considered highly ambitious. Officers now believe that the revised timetable is realistic, albeit continuing to be challenging and have committed to ensuring that any opportunity to foreshorten the Programme to reduce the slippage will be taken.

Recommendations

20. Officers ask the Board to note both progress of the Programme to date and the fact that it will not be achieved without the full continued commitment of all partners to the Programme, and to reaffirm that commitment.