

SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report of: Joint Policy Unit Manager

To: Joint Committee – 13 July 2012

(Author: Chris Holliday, Deputy Manager of Joint Policy Unit)

Subject: Draft Vision Statement and Objectives

Purpose: To allow the Committee to consider and amend the draft Vision and Objectives of the Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document

Recommendation:

That the draft Vision Statement and Objectives be approved.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Members will recall participating in Steering Group workshops to consider shaping a vision statement for the Local Plan. This involved three stages:

- the Steering Group discussing and listing those issues within South East Lincolnshire that were considered to be Likes, Hopes, Dislikes and Fears;
- a visioning exercise whereby we asked our communities and plan making partners what they considered to be important and what outcomes they would like for 2031; and
- the Steering Group considering these outcomes and providing guidance on the scale, level of detail and priority messages that the vision statement should embody.

2.0 REPORT

2.1 The draft Vision Statement and Objectives can be found in Appendix 1 and the report on the visioning exercise in Appendix 2.

2.2 The primary purpose of a vision for a Local Plan is to express the broad aims and outcomes the Plan hopes to achieve by the end of the Plan period. The National Planning Policy Framework also expects that Local Plans should express the vision of the local community. It is also the expectation of the Framework that the Plan is based upon principles of sustainable development that are also supported by the local community.

2.3 The outcomes of the various visioning exercises provide strong indications of the key issues the community feel are important and also provide explicit views on the role expected of the planning functions and how sustainable outcomes should be sought within the context of South East Lincolnshire.

- 2.4 The Vision Statement is set out as a narrative which tries to capture the qualities and issues which make South East Lincolnshire unique as a Plan area. It therefore starts out with identifying what is perceived to be the overall distinctive function of the whole area. It continues by specifying what issues, needs and opportunities relate to the future outcomes and what these might mean for strategic geographical areas and communities in the Plan area.
- 2.5. It should be noted that the visioning exercises produced a vast number of equally valid, interesting and detailed views on the Plan area. Many of these views will have been captured in the vision statement either explicitly or in more generic terms for the purpose of this Local Plan Document which is focused at the strategic level. There will also be a substantial number of views that are too detailed for the focus of Local Plan document in preparation but will help the Joint Planning Unit in taking forward the Site Allocations document and work with individual organisations and settlements.
- 2.6 As it currently stands the Vision Statement and Objectives is the first piece of text presented on the Local Plan. It will be preceded by text on the statutory context of the plan making process and also factual and descriptive text on South East Lincolnshire and its settlements. Therefore there will be more extensive information preceding the Vision Statement to set the context for it. Similarly, the Vision Statement and Objectives will lead into the Policy sections of the Local Plan which will be supported by the details of specific proposals that help bring about the Vision. It is the policies and evidence base for the Local Plan that will bring about the Vision and not the actual wording currently proposed in the Vision. It should therefore be borne in mind that the text and scope of the draft Vision Statement has been expressed very purposefully with the possible policy framework very much in mind with regard to deliverability and realism (e.g. what elements might be achieved by Planning Committee decisions and what elements will require broader proactive partnership working).
- 2.7 At this stage the Vision Statement and Objectives should be viewed as a working draft. We have pieces of the evidence base yet to be completed, integration of this work with the Sustainability Appraisal to undertake and, in the full spirit of plan making, to share the outcomes of the draft Vision Statement with our Plan community.

3.0 VIEWS OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND STRATEGY, BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL AND THE PLANNING MANAGER, BRECKLAND COUNCIL AND SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

- 3.1 The Planning Manager, Breckland and South Holland District Councils has commented:

‘It is key that a Vision is established early in the Plan preparation process and that the Vision is drawn from a combination of the available evidence, the comprehensive Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and feedback from the visioning work undertaken in the last few months. The Vision provided at Appendix 1 is broadly welcomed and needs to be seen in the context of what

are the specific priorities facing the area. Importantly, a Spatial Vision needs to be positively worded and aspirational about what the area will be like in 2031. On this basis the aspiration should be to consolidate the existing recognition that South East Lincolnshire is already one of the most important food growing and processing areas in the country. However, aspiration needs to be tempered by realism and the Vision needs to reflect how key infrastructure will be delivered. Therefore it must include sufficient detail to enable anyone reading the document to readily identify what is important to the area and how the Local Plan will contribute to its delivery. The Vision needs to contain the key strands of the settlement hierarchy and where possible, from the available evidence, provide suitable specifics. For example, it would be appropriate in the Vision to identify the broad location of the rail freight interchange and to express whether certain market towns, for example Holbeach, have more of a defined role in the settlement hierarchy. The inclusion of a specific reference to the Spalding relief road is welcomed and the broad content of the Vision reflects the work and discussions which have preceded it. Consideration of the Vision at this Committee is part of its iterative preparation process and Members are encouraged to consider whether further detail in the Vision would provide useful clarity or whether the balance lies in having a more flexible and accommodating Vision. It is important that this Committee provides feedback on the attached Vision to enable the strategies and policies to deliver that Vision to be formulated and the timetable presented separately on the agenda to be achieved.'

3.2 The Head of Planning and Strategy for Boston Borough Council has commented:

'The reference to Boston's Distributor Road is carefully and well worded. I wonder if there is lack of reference to the retail significance and/or changing roles of the town centre and how planning needs to take a pro-active role in ensuring new roles for such centres are supported and encouraged - making more use of the opportunities of the waterways (higher levels through Boston) for example. There is also the significant challenge of the changing demography, both in the ageing population but also in the migrant influx - in the news virtually everyday, but not so apparent in our vision for the future - provision of housing to meet needs etc?'

4.0 **OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Members can accept the contents of the Draft Vision Statement and Objectives or request amendments to them.

5.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The Vision Statement is an important starting point upon which to build consensus and public understanding of the scope and intents of the Local Plan.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 **Risk** – Not having a Vision Statement for the Local Plan that is broadly supported and accepted as being deliverable can undermine the validity of the following plan policies and cause the plan to be found unsound.
- 6.2 **Financial** – There are no direct financial implications in considering this report
- 6.3 **Legal** – There are no direct legal implications with regard to this report.
- 6.4 **Equality and Diversity** – The Vision Statement and Objectives supports the Policies of the Local Plan which will be expected to be of benefit to communities within the whole plan area.

7.0 Wards/Communities Affected

- 7.1 The Vision Statement and Objectives apply to all wards/communities within South East Lincolnshire.

Background papers: None

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Appendices attached to this report:

- Appendix 1 – SEL Local Plan Strategy and Policies Document: Vision Statement and Objectives
Appendix 2 – Your Vision for the Local Plan area in 2031 – Synopsis of Responses.