

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).

Recommendation

To note the progress of the Programme, the anticipated timeline and to reaffirm their commitment to the timely completion of the Programme

Background

2. The Board will recall that it approved the Programme on 30th July 2015 and since that date has received regular reports updating progress against the Programme. The latest Programme is attached as an Appendix.

Programme Update

3. As we near the end of the Programme there are three projects either underway or to be finalised, these are
 - Spatial Options Assessment project
 - Infrastructure Assessment project
 - Final conclusions report for the Board

Spatial Options Assessment Project

4. The Board will recall that the partners agreed a long list of potential strategic areas of search for growth that would be taken forward for assessment. Land Use Consultants (LUC) were appointed to complete this project.
5. All Partners recognised that this assessment is be a crucial element of the Programme and accordingly the Post SHMA Work programme Project Team (the Project Team) have ensured that they have spent sufficient time debating the project to ensure that there is a common agreed understanding and approach. This has led to an extension of the project, both in terms of time and costs that Growth Board Executive Officers Group (EOG) members have approved.
6. Whilst the additional costs and timeline for the project are regrettable, the extra time spent has meant that the Project Team have been able to coalesce around an agreed methodology for site assessment and an agreed project timeline that LUC have applied. Accordingly the project has proceeded without material delay

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7. LUC presented their draft findings to EOG and the Project Team on the 12th May. This is a delay of approximately one month on the original timeline for the project. A draft report and further discussions are planned, leading to a final report in late June/early July.

Infrastructure Assessment Project (IAP)

8. In my last report to the Board, I advised of the necessity to first “directly appoint” a consultant to this Project and secondly to accept an offer from County colleagues to bolster the Project’s resources with in-house expertise to keep to the agreed Programme.
9. Accordingly the contractor ITP submitted a proposal that the Project Team approved that comprised;
 - Firstly, an Initial assessment of transport/accessibility of options, together with some initial thinking about how spatial growth options might be grouped, based on different themes or criteria.
 - Secondly, a more detailed piece of work assessing in more detail the transport infrastructure needs of the shortlisted options that emerge from the workshop.
10. The first stage of the project is nearing completion and interim findings will be available by the end of May in time for a special meeting of EOG on the 6th June.
11. Once this first stage is complete, we will commence the subsequent stage refining this work. It is at this stage that strategic transport modelling would take place, work that is intended to assess combinations of options rather than individual sites..
12. This project is anticipated to be completed by the end of July.

Final report

13. Once the individual projects are complete there will be a final project to pull the threads of the Programme together, this will include considering other strategic infrastructure implications apart from transport and will conclude with the appropriate apportionment of the unmet need for Oxford.
14. The Board will recall that it was originally intended that a “critical friend”, appointed for the purpose would complete this final piece of work. This is still possible but officers’ are also exploring alternative options and commissions to ensure that the final conclusions are of the highest quality and robustness..
15. Although the fact that this final project is still to be commissioned leaves this element of the Programme still to be finalised, officers still estimate that the Programme will ask the Growth Board to approve a Memorandum of

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Understanding containing the agreed apportionment of the unmet need for Oxford between the rural districts by the end of September 2016. A special meeting of the Board is likely to need convening for this purpose.

Conclusions

16. The revised Programme attached as an appendix to this report demonstrates that since I last reported to you the Programme continues to make progress as we move through its most difficult and challenging projects. It is to the credit of the Project Team and EOG that, through this dense and complex partnership process the Programme has not experienced any material slippage.
17. Officers continue to acknowledge however that the history of the Programme is one of slippage and are aware that, although the original timetable was always considered highly ambitious, it is now essential that the Programme keep to the revised timetable so that it does not affect upon the progress of partners Local Plans. Recent commitment from the partners to the Programme demonstrates this.