

Growth Board 31st March 2016

Agenda item

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## **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**

2. To note progress with the Programme.

### **Background**

3. The Board will recall that it approved the Programme on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2015. Since that date the Board have received regular reports updating progress against the Programme. The latest Programme timeline is attached as an Appendix.

### **Assessment of the unmet need of Oxford City**

4. EOG will recall that the first key project within the Programme was to agree the figure for unmet need in Oxford City. To achieve this a critical friend was appointed and asked to critique the Oxford SHLAA, the Cundall report commissioned by South, Vale and Cherwell, the Oxford response to this and any other relevant information and provide a report to the partners
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. Accordingly, the report from the critical friend has been finalised and published on the web site of the lead authority.

### **Green Belt Study**

7. When the Board met in November officers were able to report that the Green Belt study had been completed and published.
8. The findings of the study have now been fed into the criteria used for the assessment of the areas of search in the Spatial Options Assessment Project.

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## **Strategic Options Assessment Project**

9. The Board will be aware that, following a check and challenge session on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015, a long list of potential strategic areas of search for growth was agreed by the partners that would be taken forward for assessment in the Spatial Options Assessment Project.
10. After a delay caused by the withdrawal of the chosen consultants, new consultants Land Use consultants (LUC) were appointed.
11. The first major task of the project was agreement to a set of criteria to test the spatial options. This has been completed and LUC are now engaged with examining each of the options. They have a deadline of 11<sup>th</sup> April to provide a first draft report to officers ahead of a workshop on the 15<sup>th</sup> April. A final draft is then timetabled for mid- May.

## **Infrastructure Assessment Project (IAP)**

12. In my last report to the Board, I anticipated that we hoped we would be in a position to appoint consultants to the IAP in late February 2016. However when the Project was tendered we received no responses and accordingly had to look again at how to progress the Project.
13. The options considered by the Project Team were firstly to retender, this would have meant at least a month delay assuming that on this occasion contractors came forward. The Project Team rejected this approach.
14. Instead, the Team decided to seek to “directly appoint” a consultant to the Project and to keep the costs of the Project below the tender threshold by accepting an offer from County colleagues to bolster the Project’s resources with in-house expertise.
15. At the time of writing this report, a contractor has submitted a proposal that the Project Team have approved that comprises;
  - Firstly, an Initial assessment of transport/accessibility of options, which will commence on 15<sup>th</sup> March and complete in time to feed into the 15<sup>th</sup> April Spatial Options Workshop, which this consultant will also attend.
  - Secondly, a more detailed piece of work assessing the transport infrastructure needs of the shortlisted options that merge from the workshop. The proposal from the project team is that this reports in draft in time for a check and challenge with the Project Team and EOG on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

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16. This complete, there would then be a subsequent stage or stages refining this work alongside the finalisation of the spatial options. It is at this stage that strategic transport modelling would take place.

### **Programme Completion**

17. Once the individual projects are complex 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. The Project Team have begun the task of scoping this final element of the Programme.
18. Notwithstanding this, officers now estimate that the Programme will ask the Growth Board to approve a Memorandum of Understanding containing the agreed apportionment of the unmet need for Oxford between the rural districts in early September 2016.

### **Conclusions**

19. The revised Programme, attached as an appendix to this report, demonstrates that since I last reported to you the Programme continues to make progress, but slippage against agreed timescales has still occurred.
20. Given the history of the Programme and the fact that we are in many ways pioneering a collective approach to addressing an area's unmet need, slippage could probably have been anticipated, particularly given the fact that the Programme is now getting to the heart of the issue with the examination of areas of search
21. Notwithstanding this, officers acknowledge that the history of the Programme is one of slippage and acknowledge that it is now essential that, as far as possible, the Programme keeps to the revised timetable shown at appendix one to ensure that it does not affect upon the progress of partner's Local Plans.
22. Officers consider that this revised timetable is realistic but as we approach the nub of the Programme, is continuing to be challenging and will continue to report to the Board on progress