

Chief Executives' Group – North Yorkshire and York

18 February 2016

York, North Yorkshire and East Riding (YNYER) Spatial Framework

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise the Chief Executives Group of the recommendations of the YNYER Directors of Development Group for the development and preparation of a forward looking YNYER Spatial Framework; and to seek approval for work on the YNYER Spatial Framework to commence.

2.0 Background and context

- 2.1 Work was successfully undertaken last year to develop and agree a Spatial Plan for the YNYER region. The Plan reflects policy as set-out within current and emerging Local Plans and partnership-led strategic policy documents across the area. It provides a foundation from which partners can begin to develop a consensus around how the area should develop into the future with a view to unlocking sustainable growth wherever possible. Indeed, the YNYER proposition for devolution submitted to the Government in September included an 'ask' for:

Devolved powers for the Combined Authority to undertake strategic planning for growth through the formal recognition of a combined Spatial Plan which would require a unanimous vote from all local authorities and an associated strategic infrastructure investment plan.

- 2.2 The Chief Executives Group expressed its support for such a forward-looking approach and requested that the Directors of Development undertake further work to scope out how it might best be taken forward in order to reflect, identify, agree and enable the realisation of future growth opportunities and ambitions. Whilst Chief Executives recognised the challenge of reconciling the different ambitions of partners, it was felt that the process of developing the Spatial Plan to date had already proved a good demonstration of fulfilling the duty to cooperate. It was felt that good progress had been made on the Spatial Plan and this should now be built upon.
- 2.3 The Directors of Development Group (DoD) has established a Task and Finish Group comprised principally of planning policy leads from each authority, together with the YNYER LEP and the Homes and Communities Agency to consider in detail how the Spatial Plan might best be developed. The Group has reflected on how similar strategic planning exercises are being approached elsewhere in the country. A range of approaches, both statutory and non-statutory in nature are being adopted dependent upon the needs and circumstances of localities and their history of joint planning work. There is no single model to follow. It is important however that whatever we do what is right and appropriate for our area.
- 2.4 This report reflects the thinking and recommendations of the DoD emerging from this exploratory work. Whilst it is recognised that there will be significant challenges in pulling a forward-looking spatial document together in a way that does not hinder or

undermine the process of preparing and implementing Local Plans, it is clear that there is an appetite amongst the officers and partners as referred to above to seek to move things forward and establish a framework to help inform and guide the future development of planning policy and infrastructure investment prioritisation, including within the context of a future Combined Authority arrangement.

- 2.5 This report will now outline the key issues considered, and the advice and recommendations of the Directors of Development Group for moving forwards.

3.0 Key issues

3.1 Focus

Chief Executives have previously been clear that the focus of the plan must be around unlocking economic growth and prosperity. This is reaffirmed in the YNYER proposition for devolution. Directors agree that the potential value of a spatial document in assisting this process is considerable. However notwithstanding that there is no current statutory requirement or tier of strategic planning, the process of voluntarily collaborating to prepare a statutory plan is lengthy, costly and onerous in terms of the process, and the body of evidence needed to underpin it. Directors also feel that it is important not to undermine the status or preparation of existing and emerging Local Plans.

As such Directors recommend that a non-statutory document would be an appropriate approach at this time focused upon enabling the creation and growth of sustainable and successful places in which our communities can live and work over the years to come. They feel that the document should maintain a core focus upon sustainable economic growth whilst having regard as it does so to wider environmental and social considerations. In doing so it was felt that the document could play a valuable role through establishing guidelines and consistent approaches for partner local planning authorities to use in setting the scale and distribution of development across the YNYER region through their future Local Plans. It would also demonstrate our shared vision, intent and potential to Government and potential investors, and could be used to influence their decision-making.

3.2 Purpose

Directors suggest that there are two key purposes of a YNYER Spatial Plan or Framework. The first is to support the delivery of existing Local Plans. The second is to look forward to begin to shape and influence how planning and economic growth policy should develop across the YNYER area into the future and be reflected within the next generation of Local Plans. In doing this it needs to demonstrate that we have a clear vision of how we wish the YNYER area to develop over time in a sustainable way that unlocks its full potential and maximises prosperity.

In order to meet these two needs, Directors recommend that work is undertaken in parallel to:

- Add an infrastructure delivery element to the existing Spatial Plan. The focus of this would be to identify and set-out the infrastructure priorities necessary to deliver existing Local Plan and Strategic Growth Plan aspirations over, say, the coming five years (to align with the refreshed YNYER SEP).
- Develop a longer term Spatial Framework to then identify opportunities and infrastructure requirements to shape and guide future policy and investment decisions over the long term (30-40 years). Directors feel that it is particularly important to progress this element with urgency as key decisions on major

infrastructure investments will be made through structures such as Transport for the North over the coming months and which will shape the delivery of schemes in 15-30 years' time. It is therefore important that we have a clear vision of what we collectively want for our area in order to seek to best influence these decisions to our advantage.

3.3 Title

It may seem a trivial issue, but the name given to the plan will convey an immediate sense of its purpose and relationship to other documents including Local Plans and the LEP SEP. After considering a number of options, Directors recommend that the existing YNYER Spatial Plan, including with an infrastructure delivery element added, should retain its name. It is then recommended that the more forward element be known as the YNYER Spatial Framework - reflecting its role in shaping emerging policy rather than being a statutory plan in its own right.

3.4 Strategic Alignment

Partner local authorities have made clear the importance of the plan not undermining, or having primacy over, the current suite of Local Plans. Indeed it should help the Local Planning Authorities in demonstrating that their Local Plans are robust and well related to their neighbours within the context of a shared strategic vision across the YNYER area. The Spatial Framework will need to be in strategic alignment, or have regard to, current and emerging Local Plans as well as a range of documents including (not exhaustive):

- Local Transport Plans,
- NYY Housing Strategy
- YNYER and LCR LEP Strategic Economic Plans
- Spatial plans and priorities of neighbouring sub-regions including West Yorkshire, Teesside and the Humber in respect of cross-boundary issues.
 - Economic Development Strategies
 - Transport for the North – emerging policy and priorities.

3.5 Process and Capacity

Being non-statutory, the Spatial Framework will not require the robust evidence base required to underpin a Local Plan as it is not subject to Examination in Public. Nonetheless, to have credibility with Government, stakeholders and investors, it is important to make the best use of that which is already available to us through drawing upon a range of policy documents and data sources. There will also doubtless be a number of stages and iterations before a final document is developed which secures the support of all partners. This all requires a level of resource and technical capacity.

Some of the larger YNYER Authorities are able to provide some support and capacity to help develop the Framework. However Directors would advise that this is insufficient and a budget to support this work will be needed, including for the securing of independent external capacity to support the preparation of the document, particularly in respect of some of the more challenging issues likely to need to be addressed. This external capacity was particularly helpful last year in developing the existing version of the Spatial Plan, and the need will increase with the heightened challenges of shaping future policy and priorities. Chief Executives are therefore requested to accept this requirement. At this stage it is not possible to

quantify the likely additional costs involved with any accuracy, but it is clearly important to get a sense of the budget required as part of the next stage of developing a project plan to move the project forward should this be agreed. However as a provisional estimate, a budget of up to around £30,000 is anticipated to be sufficient to secure the external technical support necessary. Should it be decided that any specific technical evidence is required to support the preparation of the Framework then this would be an additional cost. Directors though would reiterate their intention to use existing information wherever possible and to keep the requirement for new technical work to an absolute minimum.

3.6 Production Timescale

The preparation of a sub-regional Spatial Framework cannot be a quick process if it is to be meaningful and ultimately capable of effecting change. It is taking partnerships in other parts of the Country typically around a year to develop equivalent non-statutory plans. Statutory plans take considerably longer. Directors are keen to develop the Spatial Framework as rapidly as possible in order to have the best chance of successfully influencing key funding decisions and opportunities capable of benefitting the YNYER area. However, whilst every effort will be made to expedite matters, Directors would advise Chief Executives that this is likely to be the realistic timescale that should be anticipated for this major piece of work.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 The ground has now been prepared for further detailed and technical work to commence to progress a YNYER Spatial Framework. There is an appetite amongst Directors of Development and planning policy leads to undertake this positively and as swiftly as practically possible.

4.2 Chief Executives are requested to support the approach and recommendations outlined above, and to empower the YNYER Directors of Development Group to prepare a draft YNYER Spatial Framework on their behalf and for their subsequent consideration.

5.0 Decisions requested

5.1 Chief Executives are requested to support the recommendation that work to further develop the YNYER Spatial Framework be progressed on a non-statutory basis as outlined at Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 above.

5.2 Chief Executives are requested to note and accept the need for additional resource and technical capacity, and related budgetary requirements to develop the YNYER Spatial Framework as outlined at section 3.5 above.

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