

Agenda item 9

Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) – Establishing a Hertfordshire Development Forum

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1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The work programme for 2021 identified the desire to explore the options and potential benefits from establishing a joint Development Forum for Hertfordshire.
- 1.2 At the present time, the Growth Board does not have a process of engagement with the development sector that is active in Hertfordshire. Previous arrangements operated by a number of our District and Borough Councils have reduced over time and are now more limited to ad hoc and periodic events in the main. The LEP has sector discussions through its Strategic Infrastructure Board (SIB) but also recognises that a combined approach with the Growth Board might be beneficial in future.
- 1.3 Achievement of the Board's work programme priorities and support for development and construction sector activities, including the delivery of the homes that Hertfordshire needs, and the type of sustainable growth wanted, will be assisted by introducing more regular and focussed engagement with key stakeholders and operators. It is also a recognised best practice approach to have on-going engagement with the sector in terms of any place-based intervention and funding support arrangements secured with HM Government.
- 1.4 The last Growth Board agreed that scoping and exploration of options for the engagement should continue, with clear feedback preference for a co-designed partnership model but where the sector leads the on-going delivery. Officers are currently engaging with four potential partners who bring experience in delivering similar arrangements elsewhere. An oral update will be given on progress at the board meeting.

2 Shaping a Development Forum for Hertfordshire

- 2.1 The Growth Board agreed that it wants a reference group which will provide a forum for more focussed engagement between the Growth Board partners with house builders (both private and RSL), Infrastructure providers, developers, investors and their consultants.

- 2.2 There are a number of different models across the UK. The links below provide details of a range of examples from the more standard planning agents type forum (from Hove BC, Cambridge City and Cornwall Councils) to the more industry focussed Essex and Kent Developers Groups.
- <https://www.housingessex.org/essex-developers-group/>
<https://www.locateinkent.com/khdg>
<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-agents-area/planning-agents-forums/>
<https://planningagentsforum.co.uk/>
<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/planning-agents-forum>
- 2.3 At the meeting in March 2021, the Board clarified a number of the principles that it is looking for from the arrangement:
- The Growth Board is looking for relevant, regular market intelligence, feedback and sector advice,
 - the ability to take soundings on growth board and partners work e.g. joint and local plans,
 - positive engagement and influence with the sector in the delivery of sustainable, good growth and placemaking (and growth board programmes),
 - feedback from the sector on barriers to delivery and closer working with the sector on joint advocacy with/to HM Government,
 - opportunity to co-design the arrangement for Hertfordshire, agree any relevant communications, terms of reference, meeting agendas and content, forward programmes, scope of participants and representative groups involved,
 - Frequency of meetings – depending upon the form that is chosen for Hertfordshire, meetings could start on a six-monthly basis and move to quarterly or a different frequency over time and if that was considered desirable,
 - attendance – board members and appropriate officers from across Hertfordshire depending upon the agenda, there is also an opportunity for the members of Hertfordshire Infrastructure Planning Partnership to play an appropriate leading role in this engagement as the representative planning leads from across the councils,
 - a partnering approach that provides a fully funded secretariat and support/administrative functions (potentially through a membership approach managed and administered by the providing partner).
- 2.4 In turn, but still to be clarified, the sector is likely to also want information about the work of the board and also better on-going access to senior officers and members of the board.
- 2.5 There has been sector feedback that this initiative would be welcomed and offers of support to help in getting it established have also been made. Meetings with potential delivery partners are taking place on 16 June 2021,

and further discussion are being held with the LEP to explore the benefits of merging SIB into the new arrangement.

3 Conclusion and next steps

- 3.1 Officers expect to conclude the discussions with potential partner organisations over coming weeks. With the Board's delegated approval, it is suggested that a simple memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Growth Board and the preferred organisation is drawn up to clarify expectations and commitments in the creation of a Hertfordshire Development Forum (or resulting name). The MOU could form the basis of the informal partnership arrangement. The first forum could then be planned take place in September 2021.

4 Implications

- 4.1 There are no adverse legal, financial, equalities, environmental, sustainability or other implications arising from this report and its recommendations which support the ongoing work and priorities of the Growth Board.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That the Board agrees:
- to the implementation of a Hertfordshire Development Forum (or alternative name if required) in accordance with the principles set out in this paper;
 - delegates to officers the selection of the preferred partner organisation and the completion of the partnership memorandum of understanding and any associated arrangements necessary to bring the Forum into being (in accordance with the principles set out in this report), and
 - That the first Forum meeting should be planned for September 2021.