

Report to the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Supervisory Board

7th December 2017

STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT SITES STUDY

Purpose of the report

To note and endorse the GBSLEP Board's decision to contribute up to £50,000 from the SEP Enabling Fund to the Strategic Employment Sites Study.

Recommendations

The Supervisory Board is recommended to:

1. Note the GBSLEP Board's decision to contribute up to £50,000 from the SEP Enabling Fund to the Strategic Employment Sites Study (pending equal funding contributions from Black Country and Coventry & Warwickshire LEPs);
2. Note that the LEP Board agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Manager for Place to approve the study brief, in consultation with the Board Director for Optimising Assets; and
3. Note that the LEP Board agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Manager for Place to approve the governance arrangements for the study, in consultation with the Board Director for Optimising Assets.

Background

4. In June 2017, the LEP Board agreed in principle that a Strategic Employment Sites Study should be commissioned, and agreed to progress the development and funding of a brief with colleagues from the Black Country and Coventry & Warwickshire LEPs.
5. The intention is that the study should build on the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study commissioned from Peter Brett Associates (PBA) and JLL (2015 – attached as Appendix A); providing a market view as to the definition of and demand for a strategic site and, in tandem with other existing and in-progress evidence, determine broadly where such sites could be located.
6. The product will be an evidence base that will provide local authorities in the West Midlands the opportunity to build a pipeline of strategic sites (to be allocated through the planning process). The allocation of such sites will be integral to achieving GBSLEP's (and WMCA's) KPIs in terms of jobs and economic growth, and the evidence will potentially guide the commissioning of further work around FDI lead generation, training opportunities and infrastructure investments.
7. Broad agreement to the scope of the study has been agreed for some time; however, given resource pressures, a formal study brief has yet to be drafted.

8. South Staffordshire District Council has agreed in principle to participate in the Study, and the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP have also been invited to participate.

Key issues

9. There are some time pressures surrounding the commissioning of the Study, most notably with the Black Country LEP, as the Black Country authorities are reviewing their Core Strategy and there is a window of opportunity in which the Study adds value.
10. Whilst a study brief and tender document are being drafted, the LEP Board agreed a maximum funding contribution to the study from the SEP Enabling Fund. Agreement to the total funding contribution will be pending equal contributions from both Black Country and Coventry & Warwickshire LEPs (and Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP, should they agree to participate).
11. It is anticipated that the cost of the study will not exceed £150,000 and should fall well below that value; however, given the scale and complexity of the task, the Board agree to contribute up to £50,000 as GBSLEP's contribution. Any underspend will be reallocated to the SEP Enabling Fund.
12. The Board also agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Manager for Place to approve the study brief and the governance arrangements of the study, in consultation with the Board Director for Optimising Assets. Wider stakeholders will also be consulted through the LEP's governance arrangements.
13. In terms of governance, the GBSLEP Executive has proposed to colleagues at Black Country and Coventry & Warwickshire LEPs that a small group is convened on a task & finish basis, consisting of two members of each LEP plus one from the West Midlands Combined Authority. The LEP representatives will consult with their members on the direction and conclusions of the study through local governance arrangements. This would include seeking explicit endorsement from the LEP before the Study is agreed or accepted. At GBSLEP, this preserves the role of the LEP Board (and/or Place Board by delegation) and the Supervisory Board.

Conclusion

14. This paper notes that the LEP Board agreed to allocate £50,000 from the SEP Enabling Fund to enable the commissioning of the Strategic Employment Sites Study, and agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Manager for Place to proceed with the particulars of the study brief and the governance arrangements (in consultation with the Board Director and key stakeholders).
15. The Supervisory Board is recommended to note those decisions.

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