

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is currently preparing a 5 year strategy for the Coventry and Warwickshire economy which states

'By 2016, through, strong private-public sector collaboration, Coventry and Warwickshire will be regarded as one of the best and easiest places in the country to establish, run and grow strong and successful businesses, generating significant new employment and skills opportunities in the area.'

Planning authorities are vital in delivering this vision. This will require commitment to collaborative working, good project management and to achieving high quality sustainable developments with exemplar outcomes in terms of economic and other benefits. It is important for planning authorities to make development by valued investors in the area more cost effective and low risk. This will involve the presumption in favour of sustainable growth recognising the benefits that this brings for the economy.

The broad principles set out below are intended to be agreed by the LEP board and the constituent planning authorities. The protocol is intentionally not burdened with technical matters and does not include prescriptive detail.

Planning Protocol

Political support for sustainable growth is critical to how the planning system operates in any given Council. The Local Planning Authority team need to know that when they are making decisions that they have the support of the Senior Managers and the political leadership. Such leadership is fundamental and should be locally reflected through the LDF. The following broad principles constitute the draft Planning Protocol:

What the Local Planning Authority will commit to do:

1. Taking into account the differing characteristics and constraints of the District and Boroughs, prioritise the formulation of a coordinated Growth Statement across the LEP area to replace the outdated CSW Planning Strategy. This Statement would be formally adopted and would compliment the progression of LDF's across the area.
2. Commit to their LDF being advanced to ensure up to date policies are in place.
3. All LPA's should provide an accessible pre-application service with the most relevant officer in an endeavour to ensure that potential showstoppers and fundamental policy constraints are identified before it is submitted.
4. The pre-application service should include discussion with the Case Officer, and may include conversations with the relevant politicians and statutory consultees, and a realistic estimate of CIL or s.106 where this applies. This will require all internal and external partners to be involved. Officers will broker liaison and discussion with external bodies.
5. If applicants make an application against clear pre-application advice then that will be their risk. This is why the pre-application stage is critical

6. The Case Officer should be the same throughout the process with as little room for a change in approach later in the process. The Case Officer should be able to be contacted readily without delays and should always be the first point of contact.
7. Applications that increase the opportunity for employment or bring investment and jobs in appropriate and sustainable locations should be prioritised.
8. By the time the application comes in it should be able to be decided in the minimum of time. Government targets are not only achievable but in most cases they can be bettered and each authority should work towards achieving service delivery that is at the level of the top performing authority.
9. Councils with the most flexible delegation schemes will be able to achieve much quicker decisions than those who still have a high proportion of applications decided at Committee. Councils should ensure where possible that that their schemes of delegation are not significant out of step with other Councils in the LEP area.
10. All efforts should be made to get the application approved. This will include involvement with internal colleagues, flexibility around the application of policy, negotiation with key consultees by the Case Officer and the ability for the Case Officer to make decisions in a timely manner on all aspects of the application where the decision is delegated
11. Commitment to joint working by authorities on schemes that cross administrative boundaries.
12. Heads of Planning (or equivalent) need to meet quarterly or ahead of LEP meetings to address any issues arising or to suggest further improvements.

What the developer will commit to do:

1. Provide a high quality planning application, including all the necessary plans, illustrative and context material and supporting statements identified at the pre-application stage.
2. Undertake pre-submission consultation with local communities and stakeholders in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
3. Discuss proposals at the earliest stage before they become too 'fixed'.
4. Understand and take into account the key policy and strategic issues at the outset.
5. Identify a principal point of contact for communication.

The protocol relies on the principle of working together in good faith and mutual trust in the interests of achieving sustainable, accessible and viable development