

## **SUMMARY - LEEDS AND ENVIRONS SPATIAL SCOPING STUDY**

### **The Leeds Phenomenon (Chapter 2)**

The Study confirms the existence of a trend of recent economic growth in Leeds that is extraordinary in terms of the rest of the sub region, and also significant in comparison with other major British cities. In trying to explain the reasons for the "Leeds phenomenon", the study has identified further research that would assist in drawing firm conclusions.

The Leeds phenomenon is connected to the growth of the financial services "cluster", but at least as strongly associated with successful exploitation of agglomeration economies. Other factors may include a pro-active attitude towards development prospects, the size and diversity of the city (compared to neighbouring towns and cities), and the growth or at least maintenance of a reasonable balance of other sectors in the Leeds economy.

The growth phenomenon has had impacts that are less welcome, including considerable stresses in the housing market and the transport system sub-regionally. In addition, the growth has not benefited the less well off and deprived areas of the city.

### **'Do Nothing Different' (Chapter 3)**

The study has given consideration to what will happen in future if current trends and policies are continued:

Benefits are not easy to spread, and it may be unreasonable to expect that this will happen without specific interventions. Consequently, while the present growth trends in Leeds may continue in future, this is no more likely to confer benefits on deprived areas and communities than it has done to date.

The effects of continued growth focused in Leeds has a number of difficulties. There may be land use constraints within the city, increased stress in housing markets, labour shortages and problems in terms of regional equity with increasingly uneven development spatially.

The sub-region could run into transport constraints in terms of continuing growth trends. The growth within Leeds is likely to be heavily reliant on commuting, and much of this will be relatively long distance travel from outside Leeds. This could place further strains on both roads and public transport. At the moment, much of the traffic using the region's motorways

can be attributed to commuters travelling to dispersed locations with little potential to be served by public transport. There are potential advantages to Leeds-focused growth in that radial peak hour commuting is much more susceptible to being catered for by non-car travel modes than would be an increasingly dispersed and diverse pattern of employment growth, unless this was particularly focused around an improved public transport network.

### **Spreading the Benefits** (Chapter 4)

In order to spread the benefits and lessen the negative impacts of continued growth in Leeds, new or modified mechanisms are envisaged. These will include an integrated package of the following:

- Planning mechanisms, e.g. public transport orientated development, investment in town centre renaissance packages and support for likely town niche markets.
- Housing mechanisms, e.g. mixed income housing projects and strategies for tackling dwellings at risk.
- Employment mechanisms, e.g. re-training initiatives, labour market linkage schemes and joint working between providers.
- Transport mechanisms, e.g. agreed regional priorities for investment, public transport accessibility criteria, area-wide parking strategies and traffic demand management measures.
- Financial and institutional mechanisms, e.g. housing regeneration companies, urban priority areas, joint-venture working, lower business rates or holidays and business planning zones.
- Different kinds of intervention can be identified at the regional and local level, and the appropriateness of any particular intervention must be determined with reference to the specific problem or objective being addressed. This can be taken forward in the second stage of the study.
- An initial assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of different interventions suggests that their impact is likely to be considerably greater if they are coordinated and applied across the region. In some cases coordination between different regions would also be needed, for example with regard to mobility demand management.
- If mechanisms are applied only by local authorities acting independently, then investors and businesses will continue to focus

their attention on the “safer bets”, and the disparity between Leeds and other parts of the sub region will continue. It is also suggested that greater success could be achieved if local authorities pursue a particular “niche” rather than if all authorities try to achieve everything. Apart from being wasteful, certain aspects of economic growth (such as the growth of financial services in Leeds) cannot be repeated across the sub region.

## **Brief for Stage 2 (Chapter 5)**

- Stage 2 of the Study must ultimately provide an agreed spatial strategy for the Leeds sub-region, which can be incorporated into the review of RPG. This final section develops an initial brief for this more detailed second study. It covers two broad areas:
- Firstly, an indication of further research that would assist in the development of appropriate regional frameworks and strategies. This includes a number of broad research topics – covering the economy, housing, transport and planning and policy integration - which would assist in devising and refining appropriate interventions for the future.
- Secondly, an outline of the proposed method for Stage 2, including developing and assessing a range of alternative spatial options for the sub-region against a series of scenarios, producing an agreed package of interventions and forming a preferred sub-regional strategy.