

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 13 June 2005

Subject: **Key Issues**

Report of: Director of Planning and Transport

**Recommendation:**

That the Committee consider the key issues and determine how they should be addressed in the revised Draft South East Plan.

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**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 Although the responses arising from the consultation are many and varied, a limited number of common themes and key issues can be identified and this report highlights these.

**2. Role of the Region**

2.1 The relative role and scale of development that is appropriate for the region in a national and international context and, in particular, the degree to which the region should continue over the longer term to act as the 'economic dynamo' of the nation. Many written respondents wanted to see more development in the 'north' rather than this region.

**3. Economic Growth**

3.1 The appropriate level of economic growth to use to underpin the Plan, taking into account social and environmental considerations, an increasingly competitive international economic picture and the region's relationship with London are matters of both major concern and dispute. A 3% GVA level is challenged by many respondents, but on the other hand a sustained level of economic growth is strongly supported by the results of the MORI poll, and by a majority of written respondents.

#### **4. Spatial Emphasis**

- 4.1 Very few alternative spatial patterns have been suggested, and there is support for the concept of 'Sharper Focus' and the emphasis on key urban hubs. There is however widespread concern that the east-west imbalance and tension in the region were insufficiently addressed and resolved in the Draft Plan.

#### **5. Scale of Development**

- 5.1 Although the focus on scales of housing development as a proxy for change is much criticised, there is nevertheless a sharp difference in attitudes towards the three scales of housing development tested in the Consultation Draft. Substantial groups from the surveys and written responses favour each of the options, although numerically there is an overall preference for the two lower options. Significant minorities also favour lower levels than any of the options and conversely a smaller number favour options higher than 32,000 per annum. The need for affordably housing is universally accepted, but its relative contribution viz-a-viz overall housing numbers is a matter for dispute and there are doubts about effective delivery.

#### **6. Sub-Regions**

- 6.1 In overall terms, both the sub-regional approach and the proposed pattern of sub-regions is accepted. The relationship of the sub-regions, and their respective individual roles to both the overall strategy and to each other was not however considered sufficiently clear and some of the detailed sub-regional boundaries were challenged.

#### **7. Infrastructure and Implementation**

- 7.1 The Draft Plan's emphasis on these aspects is generally acknowledged, but there is also a widespread cynicism and doubt that delivery can be achieved and an expectation that the scale of the problem and a package of specific pragmatic measures for resolution must be identified in respect of infrastructure. The wider Implementation Plan also needs to be fleshed out.

#### **8. Sustainability**

- 8.1 The Draft Plan is also generally acknowledged to have incorporated a considerable emphasis on this core concept and make positive use of the Integrated Regional Framework in that context, although some written respondents thought the Plan too tentative on the issue. Considerable differences of emphasis and interpretation are nevertheless evident among respondents, with some focusing almost exclusively on the environmental dimension, whereas others stress the need to give greater emphasis to social and economic aspects.

## **9. Resource Management**

- 9.1 Agreement with the Plan's emphasis, but also calls for much sharper targets for natural resource management and a tougher policy on climate change. Even more protective policies for designated areas such as AONBs and National Parks were suggested in the surveys and written responses.

## **10. Social Deprivation**

- 10.1 The social chapter of the Plan was generally welcomed, but was considered to lack 'teeth'. Some also questioned its appropriateness in a 'Plan'. There is a need to clarify the relative weight to be given to this aspect in the Plan and its consequences for spatial and expenditure priorities in the context of extensive disparities between both areas and individuals across the region.

## **11. Rural Areas**

- 11.1 Some respondents have argued that the 'rural' aspects of the region need more emphasis and a minority have suggested that there should be a separate rural chapter, with a distinct and separate set of rural policies.

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