

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
ANNUAL MEETING**

Date: 13 July 2005

Subject: **South East Plan**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee

Recommendation:

That the Assembly agree the wording set out in paragraphs 3.1, 4.1 and 5.1, dealing with the preferred spatial strategy, addressing the housing backlog and the economic growth assumptions, for insertion into the South East Plan.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise the Assembly on the outstanding issues that need to be resolved following the debates at the Regional Planning Committee on 13 and 23 June and to propose additional text in respect of three aspects of the South East Plan identified by the Committee.

2. Context

- 2.1 During the debates at the Regional Planning Committee on 13 and 23 June a number of points of consensus emerged:
- i) A recognition that the 'sharper focus' option had become too sharp and risked under-emphasising the need to ensure sustainable development outside urban centres;
 - ii) Urban centres should nevertheless continue to be the location for the majority of development since the resulting pattern of development increases the potential to support growth by maximising the efficient use of existing and new infrastructure, for reasons of sustainability, regeneration and fostering 'urban renaissance';
 - iii) The key role of increasing productivity in securing sustainable economic growth particularly in economically buoyant areas where housing growth is constrained;
 - iv) The South East is a large and diverse region in which substantial variation in sub-regional policies and approaches is both desirable and inevitable.

- 2.2 There were, however, a number of outstanding issues relating to the Spatial Strategy which were not resolved. These include:
- i) The content and role of the spatial policy designations which were proposed in order more clearly to differentiate priority areas across the region;
 - ii) The proposed additional four hubs at Canterbury, Tonbridge/Royal Tunbridge Wells, High Wycombe and Aldershot/Farnborough/Camberley;
 - iii) The identification of the major pieces of infrastructure required to support delivery of preferred spatial strategy.

The Regional Planning Committee agreed that these issues will be resolved during the autumn following consideration by the sub-regional strategy steering groups.

- 2.3 It was agreed at the Regional Planning Committee on 23 June that the Plenary should consider proposed wording on three aspects of the South East Plan:
- i) The preferred spatial strategy;
 - ii) Addressing the housing backlog;
 - iii) The assumption made in respect of economic growth.

3. The preferred spatial strategy

- 3.1 The following wording is proposed to be inserted as a replacement paragraph 3.4.1 in Section C of the South East Plan.

The preferred spatial strategy is to:

- 1) *Promote the sustainable development of communities in all parts of the South East, urban and rural;*
- 2) *Ensure that development only takes place when necessary infrastructure is available or will be provided in time;*
- 3) *Provide an urban emphasis for development with support for the concept of 'urban renaissance';*
- 4) *Provide for appropriate rural development to support the maintenance of thriving, mixed communities;*
- 5) *Address intra-regional economic and social disparities;*
- 6) *Support agreed proposals for strategically significant housing and economic development in existing Growth Areas (Thames Gateway, Ashford, Milton Keynes/Aylesbury Vale) and in South Hampshire;*
- 7) *Facilitate the implementation of strategies for other defined sub-regional and special policy areas;*
- 8) *Support continued economic growth in ways that minimise additional pressures on limited land and labour resources, particularly in the most heavily constrained parts of the region;*

- 9) *Protect and enhance the region's key environmental, cultural and heritage assets, particularly those that are formally designated as being of international, national or regional importance, and continue to use existing Green Belt areas as key tools for managing growth at the regional level.*

4. Addressing the housing backlog

- 4.1 The following wording is proposed to replace the wording in paragraph 3.3.2 of Section C of the South East Plan:

Taking into account all the considerations of need, impacts and delivery, the Assembly has concluded that an annual average growth level of 28,900 per annum would be appropriate in the South East Plan. The Assembly acknowledges that there are pressing needs such as the housing backlog identified in the 2001 Census and wishes to see early progress being made in eliminating or reducing the backlog.¹ The Assembly will monitor progress and the development achieved annually against that required for the backlog to be eliminated over the first 10 years of the Plan.

Government will however, also need to ensure a sustained and sufficient public investment in affordable housing and associated infrastructure to support increased supply and address the backlog.

5. Assumption made in respect of economic growth

- 5.1 The following wording is proposed to be inserted as a new paragraph 7.4.2 in Section B of the South East Plan:

The South East Plan recognises the importance of planning positively for a reasonable level of economic growth, balanced with protection and improvement of environmental quality, improvement of social well-being and a high quality of life across all parts of the region. The preferred spatial strategy, including the level of housing provision and affordable housing, strikes a sustainable balance and should provide for an average level GVA growth of 3% per annum for the first ten years. However, in view of the uncertainties relating to long-term economic forecasting set out in paragraph 7.3.5 it is not possible at this stage to identify a figure for the 2016-2026 period. Trends in overall GVA, GVA per capita and influencing factors will be monitored. The growth rates to be planned for after 2016 will be considered as part of the Plan review process.

Keith R Mitchell
Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee

8 July 2005

¹ For a definition of the backlog of unmet housing need and an assessment of the backlog at 2001 see paragraph 1.5 in section D3.