

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
PLENARY MEETING**

Date: 5 March 2008

Subject: **Regional Planning Committee**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee

**Recommendation:**

That the Assembly notes the contents of this report.

**Purpose of Report:**

To update the Regional Assembly on the meetings of the Regional Planning Committee held on 28 November 2007 and 30 January 2008 and the most recent meeting of the Inter-Regional Forum, held on 15 February 2008.

## **1. Meeting of the Regional Planning Committee - 28 November 2007**

- 1.1 Member Workshop: Partial Reviews on Gypsies, Travellers & Travelling Showpeople and Primary Aggregates Apportionment
  - 1.1.1 Members of the Regional Planning Committee and the Regional Housing Board were invited to a workshop before the committee proceeded. The steer given by Members was used to inform our decision on the options for consultation at our meeting on the 30 January 2008 (see paragraphs 2.2.1 to 2.2.3).
- 1.2 Sub-National Review: Proposals for a Single Regional Strategy
  - 1.2.1 A key plank of the SNR is the proposal to combine both the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies into one Regional Strategy. Government officials have been holding various workshops and meetings with Assembly, RDA and GO officials to help them formulate their proposals for the consultation. Assembly officers have been involved in these discussions on the agreement that they are there in a technical capacity and this must not prejudice any formal views by Members on the SNR, particularly around governance arrangements.
  - 1.2.2 We agreed to have a standing item on this aspect of the SNR at all future RPC meetings to ensure that Members are kept informed of progress and can provide advice to officers. This will in turn help RPC inform the Assembly's formal response to the SNR consultation when it emerges.
- 1.3 Partial Review on Gypsies, Travellers & Travelling Showpeople: Consultation Arrangements
  - 1.3.1 Members considered some initial proposals for the consultation which is due to start in May 2008 and run for 12 weeks. This included a proposal to ask the local authorities to help by arranging local meetings/ exhibitions (budget to be supplied by the Assembly). We agreed the proposals set out in the report and preparations are now underway with discussions between the Assembly Local Authority officers on what each area can contribute to the consultation at the local level.

## **2. Meeting of the Regional Planning Committee - 30 January 2008**

- 2.1 South East Plan Partial Review (Primary Aggregates Apportionment): Options for Consultation
  - 2.1.1 This is the first of two papers on Partial Reviews that Members considered. Both presented options for the consultation process and both are before you today for decision (agenda items 7 and 8).
  - 2.1.2 The Committee was content with the methodology used to generate options for the sub-regional (Minerals Planning Authority area) apportionment of primary land-won aggregates. We agreed that this provides a robust, rounded and forward looking apportionment.

We also agreed a small number of apportionment options for public consultation - options C 'Demand' led, D 'Environmental', and E 'Demand and Resource', with the current apportionment (Policy M3 of RPG9) presented for comparison. This forms the basis of the recommendation before you today in agenda item 8.

## 2.2 South East Plan Partial Review (Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople): Options for consultation

2.2.1 This was the second Partial Review paper we considered and covered the overall regional provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople as well as a district distribution. The Committee supported the need to provide more managed sites for social, environmental and humanitarian reasons. Although there was a difference of views on the options presented by officers, we acknowledged the need to have a sufficient range of options to meet the 'test of soundness' in the overall process.

2.2.2 There were three outstanding issues to be resolved; the regional provision for Travelling Showpeople; the regional provision for transit sites; and some unresolved issues around the advice given to the Assembly by Chichester, Oxfordshire and Bucks authorities. These are all addressed in agenda item 7.

2.2.3 The Committee agreed to support the overall provision of 1,347 new pitches between 2006 and 2016 and, for the purposes of public consultation, options A, B, Ci and Cii. This agreement was subject to further discussions with local authorities on the results of the auditing process which have now taken place. This is what is before you today for decision in agenda item 7.

## 2.3 Regional Sustainability Framework

2.3.1 Officers reported the successful completion of the consultation and presented the final version of the Regional Sustainability Framework to the Committee, prior to final endorsement by the Assembly at this meeting (see agenda item 4b). Our regional partners are also being asked to endorse the final version by the end of March 2008.

2.3.2 We collectively acknowledged the excellent work of the Sustainable Futures Group (and supporting Advisory Group) in preparing the RSF, with particular thanks to Patrick Feehily from the Assembly's Secretariat for all his efforts.

2.3.3 The Committee agreed to recommend that the Assembly endorses the final version of the RSF.

## 2.4 Thames Basin Heaths: Interim Strategic Delivery Plan

2.4.1 The Committee was asked to agree a response to the consultation on the Thames Basin Heaths Interim Delivery Plan. The Assembly had taken on the role of co-ordinator and had therefore been closely involved in the plan's preparation, working in partnership with the local authorities that form the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board. The Board endorsed the draft ISDP for consultation purposes and the Assembly secretariat co-ordinated the consultation process on their behalf.

- 2.4.2 Although the Committee agreed that it is more appropriate for individual local authorities and other stakeholders to comment on the detail of the ISDP in that they are directly affected by the proposals, we also felt that it is appropriate for the Regional Assembly respond by providing advice on the strategic planning context.
- 2.4.3 The Committee agreed to recommend a review of membership of the Steering Group to ensure that the two counties (Surrey and Hampshire) and Bracknell Forest were represented. We also agreed that in our response to the Board, the following points should be made:
- The need for joint working is identified as a requirement within the draft South East Plan and that this was supported by the independent Panel of Inspectors that conducted the Examination in Public.
  - The need for a document, such as the ISDP, that encourages and supports cross boundary working between local authorities on a consistent basis was recommended by the independent Panel of Inspectors and that such a requirement is likely to be included with the proposed modifications to be published by the Secretary of State.
- 2.5 Planning Bill and related amendments to PPS12
- 2.5.1 The Planning Bill 2008 brings forward legislation to enact the proposals originally set out by Government in the Planning White Paper. The Bill makes provision for the establishment of National Planning Statements (NPS) that will form the basis within which infrastructure of national significance will be brought forward. It also makes provision for the establishment of the Infrastructure Planning Commission that will determine individual proposals within the framework set out by the NPS.
- 2.5.2 The Assembly previously set out its views in respect of the Planning White Paper, giving qualified support for the proposals to streamline the planning system and rationalise the consents regime but raising significant concerns about the proposals for handling major infrastructure projects. A number of concerns remain about the provisions of the Bill where these relate to major infrastructure projects and the proposed response from the Assembly reiterates these.
- 2.5.3 A key provision of the Bill not previously included in the White Paper is the proposal for enabling legislation in respect of the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The levy is put forward as an alternative to the Planning Gain Supplement. It would offer local authorities the opportunity to establish a means of securing a larger contribution from third parties towards the cost of infrastructure in support of new development. The Committee will return to this when the regulations defining the operation of the levy are published at a later date.
- 2.5.4 In terms of the changes proposed to Local Development Frameworks in amendments to PPS12, of particular interest to the Assembly is the proposal to allow local planning authorities to produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) based directly on RSS or national policy.

The preparation of the Interim Strategic Delivery Plan for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (see paragraphs 2.4.1 to 2.4.3 of this report) is a practical example of where the proposals in draft PPS12 have the potential to add value to the planning process.

2.5.5 The Committee agreed the proposed representations on both the Planning Bill 2008 and the consultation on PPS12. We also agreed that the Assembly's response to the Bill would be sent to Government, to the Planning Bill Select Committee and to all South East MPs and the Regional Minister.

## 2.6 Draft Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4)

2.6.1 The Government has published updated policy guidance covering 'planning for economic development' (draft PPS4). Whilst the Committee noted that this update was long overdue (the existing guidance is dated 1992) we felt very strongly that the guidance was aimed at 'failing economies' and did not provide any guidance or help to areas that were managing the impact of successful economies. We felt that this was another opportunity to emphasise to Government the importance of supporting infrastructure and affordable housing provision in the more buoyant parts of the country to support continued economic growth.

2.6.2 We also took the opportunity to raise the issue of windfalls within the context of increasing pressures on employment land. There has been conflicting information given to local authorities and the Assembly about the Government's position on this. It was therefore agreed that the Planning & Development Directors would pull together all the information and advice in relation to windfalls for the next RPC meeting.

## 2.7 Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport: consultation response

2.7.1 Government policy on aviation is set out in the Future of Air Transport White Paper (November 2003). It is matter of fact that the policy framework set out by Government has never been the subject of an independent examination as to its compatibility with the Government's policy on sustainable development.

2.7.2 Following further work on the potential implications of further expansion at Heathrow Airport the Government has published a consultation document seeking views on three options. All three would see the level of air traffic movements increase by 50%. The proposal to construct a third, full-length, runway marks a change in policy from that set out in the White Paper and increases the impact over and above that originally identified within the document.

2.7.3 In agreeing a response to the consultation, the Committee acknowledged the Regional Assembly's agreed policy position in respect of the further expansion of Heathrow Airport and focused on understanding the extent to which the newly published technical work addresses the concerns previously identified. On the evidence currently available the indication is that the Government's proposals remain inherently unsustainable.

- 2.7.4 The Committee agreed some additional points to be added to the proposed response which will be signed-off by the Leadership Group at the end of February (due to consultation end-date of 28 February).

### **3. Inter-Regional Forum - 15 February 2008**

- 3.1 At the Inter-Regional Forum in February, members received a presentation of interim findings from the consultants carrying out the IRF-commissioned study looking at inter-regional linkages and approaches to growth in and around London. The presentation highlighted particular topic areas where consistency between the three regions was felt to be important - such as transport and the Green Belt, as well as particular geographic areas where proposals most need to be aligned - of particular interest to this region the 'Western Wedge' incorporating the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley sub-region, and the London-Gatwick corridor (taking in parts of the London Fringe and Gatwick sub-regions). A number of options for securing better consistency and alignment were proposed, which will have implications for the first review of the RSS. The consultants' final report is expected by the end of March, and their final recommendations will be considered at a future meeting of the IRF.
- 3.2 Members also discussed the consultation document 'Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport', and it was agreed that a joint IRF press release would be published setting out the three regions' views that the Government's 'predict and provide' approach to further airport development in the Greater South East is inappropriate and unsustainable.

**Cllr Moira Gibson**  
**Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee**

18 February 2008