

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

REGIONAL PLANING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2001 at 2.00 p.m. at the Institute of Materials, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1.

Present:

Members of the Committee

Cllr Nick Skellett (in the Chair)

Cllr Mrs Mary Ballin,

Cllr Bill Chapple

Cllr Harold Hall

Cllr Mrs Sarah Hohler

Mr Tim Lockwood

Cllr Dr Royce Longton

Cllr Leo Madden

Cllr Norman Miles

Mr Robert Page

Cllr Harry Rees

Cllr Gordon Seekings

Cllr Dr L Silverman

Cllr Mike Simpson

Cllr Mike Skinner

Ms Deirdre Wells

Officers

Mr Paul Bevan (Chief Executive)

Mr Michael Gwilliam (Director of Planning and Transport)

Mr Martin Tugwell

Ms Lindsay Gardner

Ms Tessa Bartholemew

Mr Jeff Hulbert

In attendance:

Ms Charlotte Dixon (GOSE)

1. **Apologies for absence and declaration of substitutes**

Apologies were received from: Mr John Barker, Cllr Dudley Keep, Mr David Wilson and Mr Clive Faine (alternate member).

2. **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 18th October 2000 and matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2000 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the chair.

3. **Pan-Regional Planning Progress**

3.1. The Committee considered a report from the Director of Planning and Transport about pan-regional arrangements. The Pan-Regional Agreement had been signed on 7th November 2000 and a tri-partite officer meeting had taken place to prepare and agree an agenda for the first full meeting of the Advisory Forum.

3.2. The Committee noted that the report identified particular issues that would need early attention, but accepted that other issues, such as other environmental and minerals matters, would receive attention as they emerged. In addition, monitoring issues were likely to be included in future meetings. The list set out in the report was not intended to be definitive.

4. Regional Planning Guidance

- 4.1. The Committee considered a report from the Director of Planning and Transport about publication of the Revised Draft Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) which had been published on 18th December 2000.
- 4.2. The revised draft contained some policies that would be helpful to the region and had taken account of matters set out in the Rural and Urban White Papers.
- 4.3. Reference was made to the distribution of housing in the South East and the expectation that SERPLAN would prepare a regional response. However, SERPLAN had decided on 19th December 2000 to advise its member local authorities to deal with this on an individual basis.
- 4.4. The Committee noted the following specific points about the revised draft RPG:
 - 4.4.1. It placed a new emphasis on urban renaissance;
 - 4.4.2. There was renewed emphasis on the need to re-cycle previously developed land for housing development.
 - 4.4.3. The establishment of targets to reinforce the requirement to support the building of affordable homes was to be welcomed;
 - 4.4.4. There was a clear shift in emphasis in what the revised draft said about the existing and desired future patterns of transport organisation in the region;
 - 4.4.5. Water resources and flooding issues, as well as waste and minerals matters, had been addressed in the revised draft;
 - 4.4.6. More detail was included in the revised draft about monitoring and following through the principles of 'plan, monitor and manage';
- 4.5. Implications for the work of the Committee were:
 - 4.5.1. There was a need for a strong information database to be held by the Regional Assembly which would support the work of the Committee, and which avoided duplication of data held by other partner organisations – such as the Government Office and SEEDA.
 - 4.5.2. There was a need to carry out early reviews of some issues, such as transport.
 - 4.5.3. The regional planning team needed to be established fast and to establish good working arrangements with the region's local authorities and other partner organisations.
 - 4.5.4. The Committee would receive regular progress reports over the coming months.
- 4.6. The following points were made in the discussion:
 - 4.6.1. The targets for the provision of affordable housing in the region could not be met. (The Committee was advised that the officers would be setting up a working group and would be monitoring the issue closely.)
 - 4.6.2. Flooding was a region-wide problem and needed to be addressed. (The Committee was advised that the officers would be giving this issue serious consideration and would also be investigating the related land management and run-off issues.)
 - 4.6.3. It was questionable whether, in terms of waste, the region could 'consume its own smoke'. In addition, there were circumstances where, on the periphery of the region, it may be more sustainable to export waste to an adjoining region rather

than to be expected to transport it long distances in order to ensure safe disposal within the region of origin. (The Committee was advised that the revised draft indicated that this should be achieved 'wherever possible' but that it did not imply that the region could not export some of its waste. Furthermore, London was expected to make every effort to keep its waste within its boundaries. There would be a review of the regional waste strategy conducted by the South East Region Technical Advisory Board – SERTAB. The Director was awaiting further clarification about the plan, monitor and manage aspects of this by DETR and would then take matters forward via officer working groups.)

4.6.4. Some recognition should be made within the RPG of the South East within a European context.

4.6.5. There was a need for MPG 6 to be revised since actual levels of extraction were proving different from those projected in the current guidance. (The Committee was advised that the time was now ripe for revision of MPG 6 and this would be handled by the South East Regional Aggregates Working Party, SERAWP.)

4.6.6. The Committee might need to consider proposals for Stansted Airport in order to identify any 'knock-on' effects for Heathrow and Gatwick.

4.6.7. Implementation and monitoring would be very important and there could be a need to review the strategy at an early date. (The Committee was advised that not all elements of the strategy required early review. Such a review should be handled in a phased way and it would be important that the Committee was seen to be monitoring the strategy and encouraging its implementation.)

4.7. At this stage the Committee was asked to consider a resolution about Regional Planning Guidance that was tabled by the Director. The resolution read as follows:

'The Planning Committee of the South East England Regional Assembly welcomes production of new Regional Planning Guidance for the South East and much of the content of the guidance, including its emphasis on a Plan, Monitoring and Management approach towards housing provision. The Committee is however, concerned about references in the guidance that suggest the rate to 2006 might need to be maintained or even increased in subsequent years. The Committee therefore seeks assurances from Ministers that no preconditions will be attached to the future review of regional planning guidance since this would be inappropriate in the context of the new Plan, Monitoring and Management approach.'

4.8. A brief debate ensued during which some points were made about the reference to the annual amount of additional new housing that would be required. The Committee was advised that it had been included in order to enable future options to be kept open, given the reality of planned urban capacity studies and the need to monitor actual performance. The Committee then moved to a vote. Voting, by a show of hands, was as follows:

For: 10 votes. Against: None.

The resolution was therefore adopted.

5. Regional Transport Strategy

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Planning and Transport about the Regional Transport Strategy and agreed to discuss it as a major item at the next meeting.

6. Transport 2010 – Identification of National Road Schemes

- 6.1. The Committee considered a report from the Head of Regional Transport Planning about central government's '10 Year Plan' which proposed a substantial increase in transport infrastructure. The assessment criteria did not override any statutory processes that were necessary before schemes were delivered. Opportunities for bringing forward new schemes were somewhat limited and the Highways Agency had indicated that some had not been considered because they did not meet the specified criteria – such as M20/Junction 10 and M1/Junction 13 – and they were already included within other studies and were likely to come forward first. The Transport Advisory group had considered the proposed additions and had expressed concern about the compressed timescale.
- 6.2. The following points were made in the discussion:
- 6.2.1. The Committee lacked the data on which to make informed decisions.
- 6.2.2. It was not clear why M40 Junction 4/A404 Handy Cross should be considered out of sequence. Another point was made with emphasis that this scheme needed to be taken forward. (The Committee was advised that the study had already been underway before the announcement and there had already been extensive consultations between the Highways Agency and the relevant local authorities. It was not part of the multi-modal programme but was a priority that needed to be addressed. In addition, route management issues – such as lighting standards, etc. – were not part of the studies.)
- 6.2.3. Reference was made to the need for improvements to be made to M20/Junction 10 and the linkages with the European mainland; to the need to improve the road network in order to support economic buoyancy for West Sussex; and to the fact that the rail link to Redhill was at full capacity and the impact this would be having on the associated road network.
- 6.3. The South East had been relatively well served by its share of the studies. The Committee therefore agreed that the South East of England Regional Assembly should advise the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions that the following improvement schemes should be added to the targeted list of improvements:
- M40 Junction 4/A404 – Handy Cross
A23 Handcross to Warninglid Improvement
A2 Lydden (B2060) to Dover Improvement
M20/Junction 10.

7. Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study

- 7.1. The Committee considered a report from the Director of Planning and Transport and Head of Regional Transport Planning about the Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study, following publication of the consultants' final report on 4th December 2000. The consultants had felt unable to make a clear recommendation on the bypasses and there were difficult priorities to be resolved. The report should be assessed within the context of the Regional Planning Guidance; and the study would serve as a model for considering future studies.

- 7.2. The following points were made in a short presentation by the Head of Regional Transport Planning:
- 7.2.1. Hastings was a regional priority and must be a focus for investment. Some additional infrastructure must be provided. There was insufficient potential to meet this and some additional development would be needed.
- 7.2.2. There was a need for a comprehensive regeneration package, which SEEDA would need to progress. In terms of the transport issues there was concern about deliverability and a balance should be sought between what measures were identified as necessary and what were deliverable.
- 7.2.3. There was, in the officers' view, a case for reviewing the design capacity of the bypasses. The consultants advised that the bypasses were a necessary condition for economic regeneration. However, if they were to be constructed as dual carriageways they would serve to undermine the case for public investment in the public transport and rail infrastructure. There was also an issue about whether part of the eastern bypass should be tunnelled.
- 7.2.4. There was uncertainty about proposals to manage travel demand within the area.
- 7.2.5. There was concern about the potential to create additional pressure for further road building along the south coast – including attracting traffic from the M25.
- 7.3. The Committee was reminded that an additional recommendation had been tabled. These were as follows:
- It is recommended that:
1. In order to secure the best chance of economic and social regeneration the construction of an A259 Bexhill-Hastings western bypass and an A259 eastern Bypass on their present alignments be supported.
 2. That construction should not proceed until:
 - a. The design capacity of the proposed bypasses has been reviewed to determine if a lesser capacity would now be appropriate in the context of current national and regional transport policies for traffic restraint;
 - b. The need for further measures to reduce the environmental impacts of the proposed bypasses has been reassessed;
 - c. A full regeneration package for the Hastings area has been adopted;
 - d. Further urban renaissance studies have been undertaken to reflect the latest guidance in RPG and PPG3 and to ensure that urban capacity is being fully utilised;
 - e. There is a clear commitment to public transport improvements by the relevant authorities;
 - f. Any strategic implications of the South Coast Corridor Multi-modal Study for the proposed bypasses can be taken into account.
- 7.4. The following points were made in the discussion:
- 7.4.1. A majority of the Steering Group had been in favour of the bypasses. They were essential for business confidence. Organisations would have to learn to plan and manage at the same time.

- 7.4.2. The urban environment needed equal protection to the rural environment.
- 7.4.3. The consultants had indicated that a number of environmental issues should be considered before decisions were made.
- 7.4.4. There appeared to be reliance on one Business Park.
- 7.4.5. A demand management strategy should be added to the items listed in paragraph 2 of the proposed recommendations.
- 7.4.6. Recommendation 2a. appeared to contradict recommendation 1. (The Committee was advised that some design work was needed in any case and undertaking a south coast multi-modal study would impede this. Not all design aspects needed to be re-examined just capacity)
- 7.4.7. The Committee were also advised that the Access to Hastings study was unlike any other multi-modal study as the bypasses had already completed public inquiries and the orders had been drafted. If they were to be significantly reviewed the whole process would need to be recommenced. Recommendation 2 had arisen out of doubts raised in the consultants' report and the views of the Shadow Strategic Rail Authority, which had informally expressed doubts about the public transport package in full as a result of its concern about the impact of the bypasses. The officers therefore believed that the whole package, including Recommendation 2 was essential.
- 7.5. At this stage the Committee moved to a vote on the proposed recommendations. They firstly considered all the recommendations in section 9 of the report except for the bypasses. The committee agreed with all those recommendations. The Committee expressed strong support for the principle of a direct connection at Ashford into the CTRL. They then considered the recommendations on the bypasses and the results were as follows:

Recommendation 1

'In order to secure the best chance of economic and social regeneration the construction of an A259 Bexhill-Hastings western bypass and an A259 eastern Bypass on their present alignments be supported.' For: 11 Against: 1.
Recommendation adopted.

Recommendation 2 That construction should not proceed until:

'a. The design capacity of the proposed bypasses has been reviewed to determine if a lesser capacity would now be appropriate in the context of current national and regional transport policies for traffic restraint.' For: 3 Against: 8.
Recommendation not adopted.

'b. The need for further measures to reduce the environmental impacts of the proposed bypasses has been reassessed.' For: 3 Against: 6. **Recommendation not adopted.**

'c. A full regeneration package for the Hastings area has been adopted.' For: 2 Against: 6. **Recommendation not adopted.**

'd. Further urban renaissance studies have been undertaken to reflect the latest guidance in RPG and PPG3 and to ensure that urban capacity is being fully utilised.' For: 2 Against: 8. **Recommendation not adopted.**

'e. There is a clear commitment to public transport improvements by the relevant authorities.' For: 2 Against: 9. **Recommendation not adopted.**

'f. Any strategic implications of the South Coast Corridor Multi-modal Study for the proposed bypasses can be taken into account.' For: 2 Against: 9. **Recommendation not adopted.**

8. M27 South Hampshire Integrated Transport Study

8.1. The Committee considered a report from the Head of Regional Transport Planning about the outputs and recommendations arising from the M27 South Hampshire Integrated Transport Study and was asked to agree a draft recommendation to the Secretary of State for consideration at the Assembly plenary.

8.2. The study had identified the long term and strategic issues and, in particular, low cost measures and the framework and partner agencies for delivering the measures set out in the report.

8.3. The following points were made in the discussion:

8.3.1. There was some concern about the public transport implications. There was reference to one bus operator who had withdrawn a service as a result of an inability to recruit drivers locally.

8.3.2. There was a need for the longer-term issues to be considered.

8.3.3. The committee was asked to note that the Director of Regional Planning and Transport and the Head of Transport Planning would shortly be meeting Mr Chris Austin of the Shadow Strategic Rail Authority to discuss south coast traffic issues.

8.4. In the light of its discussion, the Committee agreed:

8.4.1. The draft recommendations to be considered by the Assembly Plenary which shall be the formal advice to be placed before the Secretary of State as follows:

8.4.2. **Rail proposals:** recommendations supported. The Local Highway Authorities, Railtrack and SSRA are encouraged to complete further study work required to clarify feasibility and funding issues as soon as possible.

8.4.3. **Bus proposals:** recommendations supported. The Local Highway Authorities are encouraged to implement quality bus corridors and telematics as soon as possible and to continue to explore opportunities to develop their bus strategies in light of the recommendations of this study.

8.4.4. **Highway proposals:** the recommendations for proposed junction improvements are supported. Recommendations for selective widening between junctions to reduce weaving and proving climbing lanes are also supported. The proposed re-designation of the A27(T) to motorway should be referred to the South Coast Corridor Multi-Modal Study for consideration, on the grounds that this may have a strategic implication. In the interim, the recommendation that a solution should be sought for an alternative to the existing cycle route along the A27(T) is supported.

8.4.5. **Other proposals:** recommendations supported. Local Authorities are encouraged to implement the initiatives identified as part of their LTPS.

9. A3 Hindhead Study

- 9.1. The Committee considered a verbal report from Ms Charlotte Dixon of the Government Office for the South East about the A3 Hindhead study. She apologised for presenting an oral report but explained that the report's executive summary was to be published on 11th January. This section was the last remaining single carriageway of the A3. The study's remit was to consider whether the environmental and economic benefits could be delivered on time. The study was carried out in the spirit of the multi-modal studies and the consultants had prepared a complex technical model to demonstrate who would be attracted and diverted by toll charges. The data would not be available until 22 January. It was expected that the conclusions would be 'relatively straightforward'.
- 9.2. It was proposed that the report, when received, should be prepared for the Assembly Plenary by the officers in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. This was agreed.
- 9.3. The following point was made that:
 - 9.3.1. There was a need for a bypass at Hindhead but little time available for consideration of the issues between the report's publication date and the Assembly's Plenary meeting. However, it was recognised that the issues could be debated fully at the Plenary.

10. Ashford Area Planning Study – Progress Report

- 10.1. The Committee considered a report from the Director of Planning and Transport about the Ashford Area Planning Study. The Committee noted the preparation for a brief for the study and that the Government Office for the South East had offered to fund half the cost of the project with the balance being made by the other partner organisations, including the Regional Assembly. The report identified three issues of principle concerning the contribution to be made, namely: (i) that the Regional Planning Body ought, as of right, to have a place as a member of the Steering Group; (ii) that the contribution seemed to be reasonable in view of the study's importance, but that it might reasonable be expected to be made in 'cash or kind or a combination of the two'; and (iii) that a contribution would demonstrate good faith and assist with the overall costs of the exercise. It was agreed that the study should be carried out properly and the Committee agreed that the Assembly should make a financial contribution to the cost of the study of £10,000.

11. Additional Meeting of the Planning Committee

The Committee agreed that it should hold an additional meeting on Tuesday 6th March at 2.00 p.m.

12. Other Business

Flooding. The Committee agreed that a future meeting should have the opportunity to consider the issues relating to flooding. In addition, it might be an issue that could be explored in a seminar or workshop.