

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

Date: 12 October 2001

Subject: **Regional and Sub-Regional Studies**

Report of: Head of Spatial Planning

Recommendation:

That the Committee note the progress on regional and sub-regional studies and the actions being taken to implement sub-regional strategies.

1. Introduction

1.1 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) identifies a number of studies and actions of regional/sub-regional importance which are required both to implement the strategy in RPG9 and to inform the next review and roll-forward of regional planning guidance. The study areas within our Region are listed below in two categories, namely those requiring studies and implementation programmes of regional/pan-regional importance and other areas where joint working is needed to implement proposals in RPG 9:

a) Areas requiring studies and programmes of regional/sub-regional importance

- (i) Thames Gateway
- (ii) Milton Keynes/ South Midlands
- (iii) Ashford area

b) Other sub-regional areas identified in RPG9

- (i) South Hampshire, Southampton and Portsmouth)
Priority Areas
- (ii) Isle of Wight)
for Economic
- (iii) Sussex Coast and Towns)
Generation or

	(iv) East Kent)	<i>Within</i>
	(v) Thames Valley)	
<i>Western</i>	(vi) Blackwater Valley)	<i>Policy</i>
<i>Area</i>	(vii) Crawley/Gatwick/M23 Area)	

- 1.2 This report summarises the current situation in respect of the studies and actions being undertaken in each area, together with an indication of the role being taken by the Assembly. In the case of the three study areas in category (a) above the Assembly, as the regional planning body, is playing a key role in commissioning studies and developing other initiatives. For the sub-regions in category (b), the initiative for further work lies primarily with the local authorities acting in partnership, but liaising with the Assembly in order to establish timescales, objectives and appropriate outputs for the work.

2. Current Progress - Regional Priority Areas

2.1 Thames Gateway

- 2.1.1 RPG 9 identifies the Thames Gateway as a regional and national priority for regeneration and growth with the potential to make a major contribution to the Region's economy. The area also has its own sub-regional planning guidance in RPG9a. Parts of the Gateway lie within the London and East of England Regions as well as the South East.

- 2.1.2 The Government has established a strategic partnership with public, private and voluntary sector interests, including the Assembly. The partnership is supported by the Thames Gateway Executive in its task of developing a range of mechanisms and initiatives for implementing the broad strategy in RPG9. Cllr Bruce-Lockhart represents the Assembly on the partnership and the Director of Planning and Transport is vice-chair of the officer strategic liaison group. The Assembly is also represented on the transport sub-group and on the recently constituted Thames Gateway Kent Partnership.

2.2 Milton Keynes/ South Midlands Study Area

- 2.2.1 RPG9 proposes that an inter-regional study should be undertaken to consider the future development potential of the Milton Keynes sub-region which extends into Bedfordshire (in East of England Region) and Northamptonshire (East Midlands).

2.2.2 A consultancy contract has been let for a study scheduled for completion in June 2002. The study will define the extent of the sub-region, investigate its potential for accommodating sustainable growth, inform the development of a long term vision of the area in 2030 and identify the organisational structures needed to manage and implement a growth strategy.

2.2.3 The Director of Planning and Transport chairs the steering group overseeing the study and a project group charged with supervising the consultants.

2.3 Ashford

2.3.4 RPG 9 requires that an early study be undertaken to assess the scope for growth at Ashford over the next 20-30 years and how this may be achieved.

2.3.5 The Ashford's Future Steering Group, which involves a number of local and central government bodies, recently appointed consultants to provide the technical input for the study. The Director of Planning and Transport is the vice-chair of the group. The study is programmed for completion in July 2002 and will consider how much growth can reasonably be accommodated in the area, under what conditions and constraints and what pattern of development might be created. The results of the study will then be developed in more detail through the next review of Regional Planning Guidance, the Kent Structure plan and the Ashford Borough Local plan.

3. Current Progress - Sub-Regional Study Areas

3.1 Southampton, South Hampshire and Portsmouth

3.1.1 RPG9 states that joint working is required to develop complementary strategies which maximise the area's economic potential and the scope for urban renaissance and enable social inclusion. Funding needs to be targeted to tackle deprivation and enhance skills. There is also the need to ensure genuine north-south multi-modal access to the port of Southampton.

3.1.2 A study of the economic potential of the area has been commissioned by SEEDA. This will inform the review of the Regional Economic Strategy. The economic study will then need to be followed up with a spatial

development analysis co-ordinated by the appropriate local authorities, in liaison with the Assembly.

3.2 Isle of Wight

3.2.1 Joint working is required to develop tailored regeneration strategies which tackle the problems of unemployment and deprivation experienced on the island. SEEDA are working closely with the Isle of Wight Council and other local organisations.

3.3 Sussex Coast and Towns

3.3.1 The focus here is on:

- the development of an area investment framework seeking to address regeneration issues and identify funding gaps;
- an exploration of how the coastal towns may benefit from economic growth in the Crawley/ Gatwick area. A wider study which will address this issue is referred to below under the Crawley/ Gatwick/M23 area.

3.4 East Kent

3.4.1 An area investment framework is also being developed for East Kent. A number of recent studies of the sub-region's potential have been undertaken to support the designated Objective 2 areas in Thanet and Dover (under European Regional Policy) and to achieve appropriate co-ordination. Further work in this context is to be undertaken for the review of the Regional Economic Strategy, but it is not yet clear whether additional sub-regional spatial studies will be required. This situation will be kept under review.

3.5 Thames Valley

3.5.1 The Thames Valley is one of the most prosperous sub-regions in the UK, being close to Heathrow and London. In many parts of the sub-region (as in other parts of the Western Policy Area) congestion or labour or land shortages are constraining growth. RPG9 proposes that positive

strategies are needed to tackle these issues taking into account environmental considerations.

3.5.2 However, the policy framework in RPG 9 requires a much better understanding of the relationships between housing, labour supply and demand, the provision of infrastructure and services and environmental quality. In addition, the links between the sub-region and adjoining parts of West London require further urgent consideration, especially in the light of the imminent Government decision on the proposed fifth terminal at Heathrow.

3.5.3 The following staged programme of further studies is envisaged:

- An economic analysis of the area to be undertaken by the Thames Valley Economic Partnership on behalf of SEEDA. This will be completed in time to inform the review of the Regional Economic Strategy;
- Concurrently, a study of cross-regional issues is being undertaken jointly with the Greater London Authority, SEEDA and the London Development Agency. This will initially focus on economic issues and will take account of the Terminal 5 decision. It will provide technical input to the consultation draft of the Spatial Development Strategy for London;
- A further phase to consider in more detail sub-regional spatial issues including cross boundary relationships with London, which will inform development plans and the next review of RPG.

3.6 Blackwater Valley

3.6.1 RPG9 states that a joint study should be undertaken to clarify the extent of the sub-region and to assist in identifying constraints to sustainable economic growth in the area and the best locations for future growth.

3.6.2 The Blackwater Valley Network of Local Authorities is currently drafting a study brief. The Network will be responsible for co-ordinating and managing the study once the Assembly has agreed its terms of reference and timetable. It is envisaged that a reference group of key partners will be established, including the Assembly.

3.7 Crawley/ Gatwick/M23 Area

- 3.7.1 The sub-region is centred on Crawley, Gatwick and Horley but its influence extends over a much wider area, including parts of the south coast and to a lesser extent, south London.
- 3.7.2 Regional Planning Guidance identifies a need to understand better the economic dynamics of the area and their implications for spatial development. In particular, joint working is required to explore the extent to which the economic buoyancy apparent in the Crawley/ Gatwick area can be spread to the coastal areas requiring regeneration. Links with south London also need to be clarified, to assist our discussions with London about the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy.
- 3.7.3 A two-stage study process is being established. The first phase, which is underway, is analysing the economic potential of the area and will provide an input to the review of the Regional Economic Strategy The Assembly is represented on both the steering and working groups set up by SEERA to manage the study, which is due for completion in early 2002. As a second stage the local authorities envisage undertaking a wider spatial development study taking into account the findings of the first stage. It is anticipated that this will start in Spring 2002.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Appropriate activity is now underway in all of the sub-Regions identified separately in RPG9, although the nature of the work being undertaken and the degree of Assembly involvement varies according to local circumstances. The Committee will be kept informed of progress on the Regional/sub-Regional Studies, and the major actions being taken to implement sub-Regional strategies.

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