

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

Date: 8 December 2004

Subject: **Regional Monitoring Report 2004**

Report of: Head of Spatial Planning

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked to note the report.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To outline the timetable for publishing the Regional Monitoring Report 2004 and to highlight the key headline figures for housing development.

2. Background

- 2.1 Monitoring is recognised as being an increasingly important component of the planning agenda. PPS11 and the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2004 place considerable emphasis on monitoring, while forthcoming Good Practice Guidance from Government will set out a number of national core indicators to be included in both regional and local annual monitoring reports. Where data exists, the Assembly will include these national core indicators in the Regional Monitoring Report 2004.
- 2.2 This year the Regional Monitoring Report monitors current RPG9 and the new Integrated Regional Framework. Due to a change in the timetable set by Government, the 2004 report will now be published at the end of February 2005.
- 2.3 Regulations require a monitoring report to be produced by the end of February each year with as much as possible of the data applying to the financial year ending in the preceding March. PPS12 also sets out a timetable for monitoring local development documents; local authorities are required to submit an annual report by 31 December each year. The importance of read across between local and regional monitoring is stressed in both documents and the timetable is designed to allow co-ordination of monitoring frameworks at the regional and local level.

3. Data availability and gaps

- 3.1 Apart from the surveys of housing supply and major industrial, commercial, retail and hotel development, which draw on local authority data, much of the data used in the Monitoring Report has been collected from secondary sources.
- 3.2 There remain a number of important data gaps. For instance, data on greenhouse gas emissions is still only available at the national level and transport data is only available at national and regional levels. This makes the detailed analysis of transport issues within the South East very difficult.
- 3.3 The geographic level of detail is a particular problem for social indicators relating to deprivation. New Indices of Deprivation measure areas on a much larger scale (Super Output Areas), requiring more detailed levels of data to monitor effectively. Data relating to, for example, claimant counts and work place based employment are not available at this detailed level at present, making annual monitoring impossible.
- 3.3 There has, however, been some improvement in the availability of affordable housing provision data, with only one county unable to provide this data compared with three counties last year. Returns for the survey of major industrial, commercial, retail and hotel development have also improved.
- 3.4 We will continue to work with partners and local authorities to address the data gaps and to improve the quality of data and the timescale for its provision.

4. Key Findings on Housing

4.1 Housing Completions

- 4.1.1 The number of homes completed in the region during 2003/04 was over 28,000. This represents a significant increase on the previous year, when less than 25,000 homes were completed. Although the region as a whole is now achieving the annual average rate of provision planned for in RPG 9 (28,050), this follows a period of successive shortfalls against planned provision. Since 2001 (the start of the RPG 9 period) there has been a total shortfall of around 6,000 homes. This shortfall could have serious implications for the economy, regeneration, meeting housing needs and increasing the supply of affordable housing, including housing for key workers.
- 4.1.2 The reasons behind the shortfall are complex. They include uncertainties about the release of greenfield sites, infrastructure provision, local plan progress, landownership issues and delays in the decision making process. In October 2002 the Assembly agreed a number of actions to improve the delivery of housing which it commended to the Government, local authorities and infrastructure providers. Subsequently GOSE has been working closely with the local authorities with the more significant shortfalls.

4.1.3 Policy H2 in the consultation draft South East Plan states that local authorities will prepare housing allocation strategies, phasing the development of large sites and the provision of infrastructure to ensure that overall housing allocations can be met. The strategies will identify potential and existing barriers to new housing delivery and set out those actions that need to be taken to overcome these barriers.

4.2 Supply of Land for Housing

4.2.1 In the region as a whole the formally identified land supply is sufficient to accommodate some 201,000 homes. This includes land with outstanding planning permissions (87,800 homes) and sites allocated in local plans (113,200 homes). There are also additional substantial contributions anticipated from small, unidentified sites within urban areas. The formally identified supply could potentially maintain building rates at the RPG9 level for some 7 years assuming that the land is available and likely to be developed during the period. However, recent levels of completions suggest that until very recently sites have not been coming forward at an acceptable rate. Further work is needed to investigate in more detail when sites are likely to come on stream and to identify what actions are required to overcome barriers to their development.

4.3 Affordable Housing

4.3.1 RPG 9 provisionally estimated the need for affordable housing to be around 11,500 to 12,000 homes each year, or not less than 40 per cent of the additional homes provided. Determining precisely how well the region is performing in terms of the provision of affordable housing is difficult. There are various sources of information, each of which counts affordable housing provision in a different way.

4.3.2 For the year 2002/03 the Housing Corporation estimates that 6,200 affordable homes were provided. However, this figure includes grant funded new build, conversions and changes of use, as well as refurbishments and incentive-based schemes involving purchases from the existing housing stock. It therefore includes a number of elements that do not add to the existing stock of homes, but excludes non-grant funded affordable housing.

4.3.3 ODPM sources suggest that new affordable housing completions by the social sector may be as low as 13 per cent in the South East.

4.3.4 The Regional Assembly also collects information relating to the provision of affordable homes in terms of net additions to the overall housing stock (ie. excluding refurbishments and incentive-based programmes involving the purchase of existing stock). This is because there is no other source of data for this information which is compatible with our monitoring of the overall number of completions. The Assembly collects the data direct from local authorities via the housing supply survey.

4.3.5 However, figures collected by the Assembly are incomplete. A number of local authorities are unable to provide data on affordable homes and so the survey currently underestimates the overall number of affordable housing completions. The Assembly is working with the Housing Corporation and local authorities to improve data on affordable housing.

4.4 Density

4.4.1 In those areas for which data is available for both 2001/02 and 2002/03, densities are unchanged since last year at just over 30 dwellings per hectare. This is within the range contained in PPG3, albeit at the lower end. However, reliance on gross rather than net densities in some parts of the region understates to some extent what is being achieved. There remains significant scope for increasing densities in most parts of the region. It is important that the local authorities concerned monitor net rather than gross density given the importance that density assumptions now assume in both Government policy and calculations of land supply for housing.

5. **Future monitoring**

5.1 The current monitoring framework and associated indicators is being reviewed as the South East Plan develops. The Plan sets out a list of draft indicators to monitor emerging policy, relying where it can on the IRF. The Regional Monitoring Report will continue to monitor RPG9 and the IRF until the South East Plan is approved.

5.2 It is proposed that in 2005 the housing supply survey timetable is brought in line with national requirements. In 2005 the Assembly will endeavour to collect data for 2003/04 and 2004/05 to allow up to date reporting on all housing indicators.

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