

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 20 November 2006

Subject: **Major Planning Applications – Review of Arrangements**

Report of: Planning Implementation Director

**Recommendations:**

That the Committee agree:

1. That Assembly officers undertake an annual review of performance relating to comments on regionally significant planning applications, through a survey of local planning authorities, as a quality control mechanism.
2. Revisions to the 'Schedule of Regionally Significant Planning Applications' in line with the proposals set out in Annex I, for circulation to local planning authorities.

**Purpose of Report:**

To explain the recent review of procedures for commenting on regionally significant planning applications and propose a number of amendments in the light of this review.

**Key Issues:**

The Assembly continues to respond to the vast majority of consultations within the statutory time periods. To ensure that the Assembly continues to add value with its comments, it is proposed that Assembly officers survey LPAs on an annual basis, to seek feedback on the quality, content and timeliness of Assembly responses.

In order to reflect the recent updates to the South East Plan Implementation Plan, and in the light of experience, the report suggests a number of amendments to the current 'Schedule of Regionally Significant Planning Applications', notably to the list of regionally significant transport schemes, and to the thresholds for mixed use developments.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Regional Assembly is a statutory consultee on planning applications of regional significance and Local Development Documents (LDDs). The Regional Planning Committee (RPC) has agreed the delegation of the Assembly's responses to these consultations to two sub-groups of the Committee.
- 1.2 In March 2006, a number of amendments to the procedures in place relating to this work were agreed by the Committee. It was also agreed that there should be a review of procedures in six months to re assess them. This paper presents the results of the six-month review of planning application procedures, and proposes a number of revisions to the process in the light of recent experiences. The proposed revisions have been informally endorsed by the Major Planning Applications Sub-group.
- 1.3 A review of the Assembly's procedures for assessing the conformity of LDDs is underway. The results of this review, and any subsequent revisions to procedures proposed will be presented to the next Regional Planning Committee.

## **2. Responding to major planning applications**

- 2.1 The Assembly continues to respond to the majority of planning application consultations within the statutory time period. A recent monitoring exercise has indicated that over the past 6 months over 90% of responses are returned within deadlines.
- 2.2 Feedback has been sought from local planning authorities (LPAs) on the quality of the Assembly's responses to planning application consultations. This has indicated that the Assembly's responses are generally considered to be comprehensive, informative and helpful to case officers, offering a useful regional perspective and guidance on the application of regional policy. Those consulted welcomed the speed at which the Assembly has responded to their consultations, and the fact that Assembly officers are willing to discuss the technical aspects of consultation responses.
- 2.3 In terms of improving our service to LPAs, a few case officers considered that the Assembly's responses could usefully be more focused and succinct. Assembly officers will therefore continue to endeavour to ensure that responses are appropriately targeted and fit for purpose, and will continue to welcome feedback from local authority officers.
- 2.4 To help facilitate this, it is proposed that Assembly officers undertake an annual survey of local planning authorities to gain feedback on the quality, content and timeliness of the Assembly's comments on major planning applications. This will allow case officers to raise questions or comments about the Assembly's responses, and will enable Assembly officers to monitor the quality of, and value added by, Assembly representations.

### **3. Definition of regionally significant planning applications**

- 3.1 The Committee agreed a revised definition of 'regionally significant' planning applications in March 2006. As a revised Implementation Plan has now been produced (setting out the important infrastructure investments required across the region), and in the light of recent experience in responding to planning application consultations, it is now proposed to introduce a number of further amendments to the agreed thresholds.
- 3.2 The detail of the proposed revisions is set out in Annex I. However, in summary, it is proposed to:
- i. update the list of regionally significant transport proposals to take account the revised Implementation Plan
  - ii. adjust the definition of regionally significant mixed use development in town centres, as the current thresholds have resulted in consultations on relatively small town centre mixed use developments which are not considered to have been regionally significant
  - iii. retain the definition of regionally significant mixed use development outside the network of strategic town centres, in line with policy TC2 of the draft South East Plan which promotes the strategic town centre network as the main location of major new (mixed use) development.

### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 Members are requested to agree the recommendations proposed as a result of the latest review of procedures for commenting on regionally significant planning applications, as set out at the top of this report.
- 4.2 It is suggested that a further review of planning application procedures be undertaken in autumn 2007.
- 4.3 A review of the Assembly's procedures for assessing the conformity of LDDs is currently underway. The results of this process will be reported to the Committee in January.

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3 November 2006

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**REGIONALLY  
SIGNIFICANT PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**Schedule of Planning Applications on which the  
South East England Regional Assembly should be consulted  
REVISED MARCH NOVEMBER 2006**

1. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) makes the regional planning body (RPB) a statutory consultee on planning applications that are deemed to be of major importance for the implementation of the regional spatial strategy (RSS).
2. The Act gives the Regional Assembly considerable flexibility about which applications it can choose to be consulted on. The criteria in this Schedule concentrate on applications of regional or sub-regional importance. They were compiled with reference to:
  - the Act, Secondary Legislation, Regulations, Orders and Planning Policy Statements;
  - criteria set out by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) in its role as statutory consultee;
  - criteria set out by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and those under consideration by other RPBs; and
  - consultation with local planning authorities (LPA).
3. The Schedule was originally approved by the Regional Planning Committee on 23 March 2005 and revised in March 2006. Further rRevisions to the Schedule were approved by the Committee on 22 March 20 November 2006.
4. Consultations on planning applications that fall within these thresholds, or other applications of regional significance should be sent to:

Planning Applications  
South East England Regional Assembly  
Berkeley House  
Cross Lanes  
Guildford  
Surrey GU1 1UN

Or emailed to: [planningapps@southeast-ra.gov.uk](mailto:planningapps@southeast-ra.gov.uk)

5. An advice note is available that sets out in more detail the procedure for local planning authorities. If you would like a copy or have any queries about this schedule, please contact Sue Janota, Regional Planner, at the above address, by email, at [suejanota@southeast-ra.gov.uk](mailto:suejanota@southeast-ra.gov.uk), or by phone on 01483 555238.

Full and outline applications which meet one or more of the following criteria set out below should be referred to the Regional Assembly for comment.

#### Reserved Matters applications and Amendments to permissions

Where the LPA receives an application for reserved matters, amendments to earlier development proposals or minor development on larger sites that fall within these criteria, the LPA will need to exercise its discretion over whether to consult the Assembly. *The Assembly does not wish to be consulted on applications for minor developments/amendments. In cases of uncertainty, the LPA should contact the Assembly to ascertain if it wishes to be consulted.*

*The levels of development specified below should be treated as a guide, rather than as strict thresholds. There may be cases when proposals for development fall below these levels but on which the Assembly should be consulted at the discretion of the local planning authority. Examples may include developments on sites less than 10 hectares where floor space is not indicated but is likely to be in excess of 10,000 sq m and where the LPA receives an application for planning permission for development which forms part of a more substantial proposal on the same land or adjoining land. The latter would include applications for the partial development of sites identified in Local Plans or Local Development Frameworks.*

- I. Developments of regional or sub-regional significance due to the scale of the proposal, that is, applications for:
  - a) **Residential development** on sites of 10ha+ or comprising 500 units or more;
  - b) **Retail development** on sites of 10ha+ or comprising 10,000sqm or more (gross new floor space);
  - c) **Employment development** (generally use classes B1, B2 and B8) on sites of 10ha+ or comprising 10,000sqm or more (gross new floor space);
  - d) **Tourism/leisure development** on sites of 10ha+ or comprising 10,000sqm or more (gross new floor space); or any other proposals likely to attract over 250,000 visitors per annum<sup>1</sup>;

Additionally, applications for **regional casinos** with a gross floor space of 5,000sqm or more<sup>2</sup>.

- e) **Mixed use development** containing a component that meets the thresholds for residential, retail, employment or leisure development as set out in (a) – (d) above, or Mixed use development outside the identified network of town centres on sites of 10ha+ or comprising 10,000sqm or more (gross new floor space);
- f) **Health facilities** (including hospitals) on sites of 10ha+ or comprising 10,000sqm or more (gross new floor space);

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<sup>1</sup> As set out in the Regional Spatial Planning Strategy for Tourism (Proposed Alterations to Regional Planning Guidance - Tourism and Related Sport and Recreation), Policy TSR5.

<sup>2</sup> As defined in the Gambling Bill 2004

- g) **Other development** (including educational establishments) on sites of 10ha+ or comprising 10,000sqm or more (gross new floor space).
2. Applications for the provision of strategic transport infrastructure or the improvement of the Region's existing strategic infrastructure which meet the following criteria:
- a) Applications relating to **regionally significant highway improvements** with a total cost in excess of £5m<sup>3</sup> on the following corridors (including junction improvements) within the South East England regional boundary, namely:
- i) Schemes of national significance, relating to:
- the M1, M3, M4, M20, M23, M25 and M40
- ii) Schemes of regional significance, relating to:
- the M2, M27, M271, and M275
  - the A2, A20, A21, A23, A26, A27, A3, A31, A34, A36, A249, A259, A303, A308(M), A43, A404, A404(M), A5, and A2070
- iii) Any other road scheme identified in Annex 2 of the South East Plan Implementation Plan<sup>4</sup>.
- the M20 ... ..
  - ... ..Hastings).
- b) Applications relating to ~~any other~~ highway improvements of sub- regionally significant ~~at highway improvements~~ with a total cost in excess of £5m, as identified in Annex 3 of the South East Plan Implementation Plan<sup>5</sup>, including, but not limited to, the following schemes identified in the Regional Transport Strategy:
- South Thameside ... ..
  - ... ..Junction 13.
- c) Applications relating to **improvements in the network of public transport services** that are of regional significance<sup>6</sup>, including those identified in Annex 2 of the South East Plan Implementation Plan, , but not limited to, the following schemes identified in the Regional Transport Strategy:
- the introduction of ... ..
  - ... ..of Wight.
- d) Applications for the provision of **other transport infrastructure projects** of the types listed below:

<sup>3</sup> LTP definition of a major transport scheme. If project cost is unknown, the LPA will need to use its discretion in consulting the RA, however in cases of uncertainty they may wish to contact the RA to ascertain if it wishes to be consulted.

<sup>4</sup> Delivering the South East Plan: The South East Plan Implementation Plan October 2006 – Annex 2: National, Inter-regional and regionally significant infrastructure.

<sup>5</sup> The South East Plan Implementation Plan October 2006 – Annex 3: Sub-regional Investment Frameworks

<sup>6</sup> Where a proposal does not appear in Annex 2 of the South East Plan Implementation Plan, LPAs should use their discretion in consulting the Regional Assembly. In cases of uncertainty, the LPA should contact the Assembly to ascertain if it wishes to be consulted.

- i) Airports
  - Construction of airports with a basic runway length in excess of 1,000m;
  - Construction of a new runway at existing airports in excess of 1,000m;
  - Construction of an extension to an existing runway by more than 100m;
  - Construction of a new airport terminal, or the expansions of an existing terminal, which provides additional capacity.
- ii) Ports
  - Construction of facilities that increase the capacity of the ports identified as gateways in the Regional Transport Strategy, specifically the ports of Southampton, Portsmouth, Dover, the Channel Tunnel, Thamesport and Sheerness;
  - Construction of facilities that increase the capacity of regionally significant ports identified in the Regional Transport Strategy, specifically Shoreham, Newhaven and Ramsgate;
  - Construction of a new port.
- iii) Inter-modal Interchanges
  - Terminals of over 10ha for the transfer of freight from road to rail.
- iv) Wharves and Depots
  - Any proposals for new wharves and depots;
  - Any proposals that threaten the loss of wharves and depots.
- v) Parking
  - Proposals for Major Park and Ride schemes, or substantial expansion of existing schemes;

3. Applications for developments in the following policy areas:

- a) **Minerals**
  - New sites, or expansion of facilities, relating to the extraction or throughput of 200,000 tonnes per annum;
  - Any proposals for new wharves or depots;
  - Any proposals that threaten loss of wharves and depots.
  - Applications for significant non-minerals development in minerals safeguarding areas
- b) **Waste**
  - New sites, or expansion of waste management/disposal facilities processing more than 100,000 tonnes of waste per annum, or 50,000 tonnes per annum of waste from London or elsewhere outside the boundaries of the waste planning authority;
  - New sites, or expansion of facilities for hazardous waste management facilities processing more than 10,000 tonnes of waste per annum.
- c) **Energy, including renewable energy developments**

- Schemes of over 1MW installed capacity.
- d) **Water Supply and Treatment**
- Major new reservoirs, wastewater treatment plants, desalination plants or other water supply and treatment infrastructure serving at least 100,000 population equivalent, or major expansions to existing facilities which are of strategic importance.
- e) **Nature Conservation**
- Development that strongly prejudices the protection, conservation or management of nationally or internationally designated sites of nature conservation.
4. **Other major applications** that, whilst they do not fall within the criteria set out above, the local planning authority considers may significantly conflict with or prejudice the implementation of existing or emerging RSS policies. The LPA should exercise its discretion in determining whether a scheme is of major importance for the implementation of existing or emerging RSS policies. In cases of uncertainty, LPAs should contact the Assembly to ascertain whether it wishes to be consulted on an application.