

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 14 September 2006

Subject: **Sustainability Appraisal of the Implementation Plan**

Report of: Planning Implementation Director

Recommendation:

That the Committee note the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal of the revised version of the Implementation Plan and takes these into account in considering the content of the Implementation Plan.

Purpose of Report:

Undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal of the Implementation Plan was a key recommendation of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft South East Plan. This report sets out the key issues arising from the appraisal work.

Key Issues:

The Sustainability Appraisal report concludes that 'at this stage in its development the Implementation Plan has made significant steps towards addressing the key sustainability issues raised by the Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft South East Plan. In particular the policy and strategy sections of the Implementation Plan demonstrate a robust approach to sustainability issues'.

The Sustainability Appraisal report does however express caution over the actions in the Implementation Plan concluding that on the whole they will require further development and 'will require a more effective integration of policies and actions'

1. Context

- 1.1. One of the key recommendations arising from the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the South East Plan was the need to carry out an appraisal of the Implementation Plan.
- 1.2. Consultants ERM were commissioned to undertake an appraisal of the Implementation Plan in response to this recommendation. The appraisal process has involved a number of iterations wherein the content of the Implementation Plan has been informed by advice received from the appraisal team.
- 1.3. The process followed by the consultants began with an initial SA Report of the Draft Implementation Plan submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2006. This report took the form of an audit, or gap analysis, of the issues raised by the SA of the Draft South East. It highlighted both strengths and potential weaknesses within the Draft Implementation Plan. The findings of this initial appraisal were used to help shape the refinement of the Implementation Plan, which was then subject to a further appraisal. This paper is accompanied by the SA Report of the revised version of the Implementation Plan as the contents of the Plan stood in early-September.
- 1.4. The SA Report aims to answer the question of whether the Implementation Plan addresses the issues raised by the SA of the Draft South East Plan. In other words is there a clear relationship between the areas where the SA identified a need for action and the Implementation Plan? The SA of the Implementation Plan has focused on 5 key areas:
 - i) The philosophy and approach to implementation and delivery;
 - ii) The proposed actions;
 - iii) The Policy Implementation Framework;
 - iv) The Regional Scale Infrastructure Framework; and
 - v) The Sub-Regional Investment Framework.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1. The SA report concludes that 'at this stage in its development the Draft Implementation Plan has made significant steps towards addressing the key sustainability issues raised by the SA of the Draft South East Plan. In particular the policy and strategy sections of the Plan demonstrate a robust approach to sustainability issues'. The SA report does however express caution over the actions in the Implementation Plan concluding that on the whole they will require further development and 'will require a more effective integration of policies and actions'.
- 2.2. The SA report is generally supportive of the philosophy and approach adopted in the Implementation Plan. However it concludes that a greater degree of alignment between partners within the region will have to be achieved if the region is to prosper.

- 2.3. With regard to the actions proposed within the Implementation Plan the SA report agrees with the Assembly over the need to capture additional funding from the private sector (through mechanisms such as the proposed planning gain supplement), the need for strong leadership from Central Government and the need to align to the activities of Government Departments and Non departmental Public Bodies. The SA report emphasises that public sector investment should reflect regional priorities and support investment in soft measures such as behavioural change.
- 2.4 The SA report is particularly supportive of the work commissioned by the Assembly to review the role of economic regulatory frameworks in supporting the delivery of spatial planning, noting that the funding cycles for regulated utilities are often too short. The SA report agrees that increased funding should come from the private sector but that it should also be allocated for non-infrastructure measures such as demand management.
- 2.5 The appraisal of the policy implementation framework raises a number of concerns that reflect previous concerns identified in the SA of the core document. In particular concerns are flagged in respect of the potential impact on the historic environment, road congestion and the need to travel by car and resource consumption. The SA report recommends the following actions to address such gaps:
- i) Actions to engage with the government and regulators on the issue of behavioural change will have to be put in place particularly if a reduction of the ecological footprint is to be achieved.
 - ii) Changes to regulations and regulated industries will be required so that associated actions move in the direction required by the Plan.
 - iii) Consideration should be given to include clear performance criteria within the policy framework.
- 2.6 The appraisal of the Sub-Regional Investment Framework is broadly supportive of the revised version of the Implementation Plan. The SA report strongly supports the comments made within the Implementation Plan regarding the need to balance spending across different transport modes. The report does however conclude that the green infrastructure elements of the Implementation Plan need to be developed further.
- 2.7 The SA report concludes that in most cases that the Sub Regional Investment Framework relates directly to those key issues raised by the sub-regional strategy and the SA. A number of other issues are raised, of particular note are:
- South Hampshire – The rationale for further investment to protect new development from coastal flooding may require further analysis.
 - Sussex Coast – More detail is required on the timing and location of new reservoir and new treatment facilities.

- East Kent and Ashford – The spread of transport projects across the sub region is quite limited. The details regarding utilities are at present limited in terms of size, location and coast.
- Kent Thames Gateway – The large number of road schemes and rail schemes should be phased in a way that assists modal shift.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1. The SA report of the revised Implementation Plan shows that considerable progress has been made in addressing the issues associated with implementation that were highlighted in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft South East Plan. However it also serves to emphasis that there remains further work to be completed on the detailed content of the Implementation Plan.
- 3.2. As part of the iterative nature of the SA process the revised version of the Implementation Plan presented to this meeting already seeks to address some of the points made in the SA report. A supplementary note is being prepared by the consultants for circulation at the meeting that will comment on these changes.
- 3.3. In agreeing the content of the revised version of the Implementation Plan the Committee must be mindful of the results of the SA.

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14 September 2006

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