

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 21 MARCH 2007

Present:

Members

Cllr Matthew Balfour
Cllr Mrs Mary Ballin
Cllr Paul Clokie
Cllr Mrs Christine Field (Chairman)
Mr Warren Finney
Cllr Mrs Moira Gibson
Cllr Jonathan Glen
Mr Robert Hamlin
Mr Ian Hepburn
Mr Douglas Horner
Cllr Keith House
Cllr Tim Lockwood
Cllr Dr Royce Longton
Cllr Alan Lovell
Cllr Mrs Mary Myland
Rev Dr Derek Overfield
Cllr Jerry Patterson
Cllr Tony Reid
Cllr Martin Tett

Officers

Martin Tugwell
Paul Bevan
Heather Bolton
David Payne
Cath Rose
Louise Wilby
Alison Bailey
Nikki Nicholson

In Attendance

Lesley van Dijk
Patrick Feehily
Chris Cobbold
Chris Kenneford
Anthony Payne
S M Stuart
Chris Woolf
Tim Stansfeld

1. Apologies and Substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Ian Beardsmore, Howard Ewing, Roger House, Cllr Keith Mann, Cllr David Munro, Bob Newell, and Cllr Barry Norton. The following substitutions were declared: Cllr Matthew Balfour for Cllr Barry Norton, Cllr Mrs Mary Myland for Cllr David Munro and Cllr Mrs Gillian Ferguson for Cllr Ian Beardsmore,

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 January 2007

- 2.1 Agenda Item 8: Cllr Jonathan Glen sought clarification as to whether the project plan explicitly identified the need for the partial review to take account of the potential implication of the proposed South Downs National Park. The Planning Manager advised that the partial review would take full account of all statutory designations. He noted that the area for the proposed national park was already identified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and hence it would be taken into consideration as part of the review.
- 2.2 Robert Hamlin requested an update on casinos. The Planning Implementation Director indicated that the Casinos Panel had made its recommendations to Government. It was not anticipated that the Assembly needed to respond to the proposals. He undertook to provide a written update to the Committee.

- 2.3 Agenda Item 11: Cllr Jonathan Glen requested an update on recommendation 2 relating to London's higher self sufficiency targets for untreated waste. The Planning Manager advised that the targets were set out in the London Plan. He advised that the recommendation set out clearly the Assembly's position that London should do everything within its powers to reduce the amount of waste exported to the region.

The Minutes were AGREED subject to the above amendment to Agenda Item 8.

3. Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

There were none.

4. Presentation: Housing Type and Size in the South East

- 4.1 Robert Hamlin declared an interest in this item as a member of a housing association.
- 4.2 Chris Cobbold, from DTZ Consulting and Research, gave a presentation outlining the purpose of the report; this was to inform the debate about the most suitable housing size and type to meet current and future housing needs. It was noted that the recommendations arising from the report had implications for both this Committee and the Regional Housing Board.
- 4.3 The research had confirmed anecdotal evidence that the current policy framework is tending to create an imbalance in the nature of the housing market. The emphasis on delivering increased numbers of dwellings, combined with the focus on achieving higher densities has led to an increase in the number of 1 and 2 bedroom flats being built. The research also confirmed the difficulties that the lack of an adequate supply of affordable family sized housing is having in terms of how the housing market operates.
- 4.4 The research had identified a degree of consumer dissatisfaction with new dwellings. Responding to questions Chris Cobbold noted that this related to space standards and the quality of the finish product and after care provided by the developer.
- 4.5 Discussing the impact that modifications/extensions to existing housing stock might have, there was a concern amongst members that there was a danger of fundamentally changing the balance of houses and other types of accommodation in a way that took little account of the ancillary facilities required by young families. Concern was also expressed about the emerging issue of the changes in the character of land use in urban areas. It was suggested that a focus on density to the exclusion of other factors may perversely have a negative impact on the ability to deliver sustainable communities.

4.6 The Planning Implementation Director advised that the report had been jointly commissioned with SEEDA. The presentation had provided members with the opportunity to be briefed on the key messages emerging from the research. He noted that the research had attracted considerable interest from Government and would provide a valuable input into the work of the Assembly, SEEDA and the RHB. He noted that the next stage in the process would be for the Committee to consider at greater length the recommendations and agree a way forward.

4.7 In taking the work forward the Committee identified a number of key issues on which it wished to focus a future debate on the research:

- Monitoring the provision of affordable housing

The importance of establishing a mechanism that enables a comprehensive picture of completions to be gathered across the region. The Planning Strategy Director confirmed that there is work underway to address this issue.

- Density

In particular the need to give further consideration as to what constitutes an appropriate density of development (consistent with the regional policy framework); with particular emphasis given as to how the need to achieve higher average densities is balanced with the need to deliver sustainable communities.

- National monitoring of environmental issues relating to the standard of housing
- Definition of housing provision

In particular consideration of whether it is more helpful to move away from determining investment priorities purely on the basis of delivering higher numbers of dwellings to one that is a combination of dwellings and amount of space.

- The impact of proposals for a Planning Gain Supplement on the delivery of affordable housing.

4.8 It was **AGREED** that officers would provide a report to a future meeting of the Committee that enabled a detailed debate on the key recommendations.

4.9 Chris Cobbold drew the Committee's attention to the error on page 5 para 1.18 of the Final Summary Report. This should read: 'Figure 4 shows that the largest category of RSL completions in the South East is two bedroom flats (61% of total RSL completions).'

5. Annual Monitoring Report

5.1 The Regional Planner provided the context for the report and drew attention to the tabled Notes of the Meeting of the RPC Monitoring Working Group, on 12 March 2007 and the new Executive Summary.

- 5.2 She explained that the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) monitored Regional Planning Guidance 9 (RPG9) and the Integrated Regional Framework (IRF). She advised that it would continue to monitor policies included in RPG9 until the draft South East Plan is adopted.
- 5.3 The Regional Planner gave a presentation on the key findings relating to housing completions, socio-economic disparities, transport, the environment and infrastructure and the key messages relating to data availability.
- 5.4 The Planning Manager reported that work on developing a model of waste capacity across the region had recently been completed. This work had recently been considered by SERTAB who had advised that the information collected through this work should be used to update the relevant indicator (indicator 73) in the AMR. It had also recommended to the Assembly that local authorities should be strongly encouraged to use the model in reporting future information for inclusion in the AMR.
- 5.5 The Planning Manager also reported that the Assembly had received new data from the Environment Agency (EA), concerning the movement of waste from London (indicator 72). The new information showed a total of approximately one million tonnes of active, commercial and municipal waste had been exported from London into the region. He reported that patterns of movement remain broadly the same with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes receiving the greatest proportion (65%).
- 5.6 In addition the new information showed a significant increase in the amount of construction and demolition waste. The London Plan and related Monitoring Report had indicated that 300,000 tons of demolition waste was exported from London in 2006. The more recent EA data suggested a total of 1.1 million tonnes. The Planning Manager noted the difficulty of tracing the destination of such waste and he emphasised the importance of ensuring that the monitoring regime was sufficiently well developed to provide an appropriate level of information.
- 5.7 Members thanked the secretariat for their hard work in producing the AMR. It was evident that the AMR gets better and better with each year. In noting the contents of the report members were keen to ensure that the information set out AMR was being used to inform and influence the Assembly's work and the region's investment priorities. The Planning Implementation Director confirmed that the information from the AMR would be used by both the Regional Transport Board and Regional Housing Board as they developed their advice on investment priorities. He confirmed that the relevant linkages would be made more explicit in the AMR.
- 5.8 Members raised a query in respect of the accuracy of the employment figures in the Milton Keynes sub-region. The Regional Planner undertook to check the accuracy of the data with the relevant bodies.

The Committee approved the Annual Regional Monitoring Report subject to the amendment of indicator 73 to reflect newly available data, a statement from the Committee to ensure that authorities used the new waste data collection model to ensure consistency of annual updates and any subsequent revision of data relating to employment figures for the Milton Keynes Sub-region.

6. Thames Basin Heaths: Assessor's Report

- 6.1 The Planning Manager gave an overview of the Assessor's Report to the Panel at the EiP. The report would be discussed on 22 March 2007 at a joint session of the EiP with the Blackwater Valley, Western Corridor and London Fringe. The Committee's views would inform this meeting.
- 6.2 He advised that the Assessor had concluded that the Draft Delivery Plan (DPD) was unsound in its present form primarily because of the way it applies the precautionary principle. The Assessor concluded that a blanket approach to the whole zone, whereby 16 hectares of recreational space per thousand people is required, was disproportionate to the risk.
- 6.3 Responding to a concern that the Assessor's proposal to develop an Interim Strategic Delivery Plan (ISDP) for the short term would inadvertently create a hiatus in delivery for those local authorities that have developed mini-plans; the Planning Implementation Director advised that it was not the intention of the ISDP to have such an effect; indeed the presence of mini-plans should provide the basis for implementing the ISDP at the local level. It was agreed that the recommendations needed to include explicit reference to the fact that there was a requirement to phase development in the area affected by the SPA designation.
- 6.4 The Planning Manager advised that the Assessor's recommendation that residential development of over 50 houses between five to seven kilometres from a Special Protection Area (SPA) needed to be considered on an individual basis did little more than state what would needed to be done anyway in order to meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive (including the need for an Appropriate Assessment).
- 6.5 Concern was expressed by members with regard to the recommendation by the Assessor that development proposal of under 10 dwellings did not need to be subject of an Appropriate Assessment. The Planning Implementation Director indicated that the guiding principle should be that all development should contribute to the provision of mitigation measures. He confirmed that this was an issue on which the Assembly would suggest the EiP Panel needs to provide further clarity.
- 6.6 During discussion cautious welcome was expressed for the proposal for an ISDP and for the preparation of common Development Plan Documents (DPDs) although it was suggested that an approach that encourages clusters of authorities to work together, as opposed to pursuing a single DPD covering the entire area, would be the most practical way forward.

The Assessor's recommendation to reduce the scale of provision required in terms of Suitable Accessible Natural Green Spaces (SANGs) was also welcomed.

6.7 The Committee moved on to consider the proposed amendments set out in the report. The Planning Implementation Director emphasised that the proposed amendments had been put forward for consideration on the basis that if the EiP Panel accepted the recommendations from the Assessor it would be inevitable that the policies in the draft South East Plan would be revised. In putting forward its views to the Panel the Committee would thus be in the position of potentially influencing any revision of the policies the Panel might be minded to recommend.

6.8 Cllr Jonathan Glen put forward an amendment to recommendation 7 of the report (additional wording in italics):

'Agrees amended policy wording for draft South East Plan polices LF11, WCBV3 and WCBV9 for recommendation to the Panel, with the exception of the proposed deletion of clause iii in Policy LF11 and clause iii in Policy WCBV3.'

6.9 The amendment was subject to an extensive debate by the Committee during which a range of views were expressed as to the merits of recommending to the Panel that the clauses referred to in the amendment should be retained in the final version of the South East Plan. At the end of the debate the amendment was put to the vote.

Eight votes were cast in favour and eight votes against the amendment. The Chairman's casting vote was against the amendment which was, therefore, defeated.

6.10 Cllr Keith House put forward an alternative amendment. This proposed that clause iii in Policy LF11 and clause iii in Policy WCBV3 be retained but with revised wording (changed wording in italics):

'In the event that Habitats Regulations Assessments demonstrate that the level of housing provision cannot be delivered without adversely affecting Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas, the distribution of the housing allocation for this sub-region between the local authorities will be fundamentally reviewed from first principles.'

6.11 The amendment was debated by the Committee and then put to the vote.

The amendment was defeated.

6.12 Ian Hepburn put forward a series of wording changes to Policies LF11 and WCBV9 (Annex I to the minutes). He also proposed combining Policies WCBV3 and WCBV9 into a single policy that would be identical in substance to the amended Policy LF11. The amendments to clauses i, ii, and iv were debated and voted on separately.

- 6.13 Concern was expressed about the interpretation which might be attributed to the term 'adverse effect' in clause i. The Planning Manager assured the Committee this was the correct term and highlighted that there is a legal requirement to ensure that new developments do not have an adverse effect on the SPA.

The Committee AGREED the proposed amendment to clause i. The Committee DID NOT AGREE the proposed amendment to clauses ii and iv.

- 6.14 The Committee then considered the recommendations set out in the report presented to the meeting.

It was AGREED that the Committee note the findings of the Assessor's Report and:

- 1. Welcomes the statement that the housing level in the draft South East Plan is deliverable subject to the provision of appropriate mitigation, and that the level of housing should not be increased.**
- 2. An Interim Strategic Delivery Plan will be developed to ensure that new development in the sub-region does not have an adverse effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.**
- 3. Encourages the Panel conducting the Examination in Public to give further consideration to the need for cross boundary sharing of SANGS and the role that existing areas of open space might form in providing for mitigation of development.**
- 4. Encourages the Panel conducting the Examination in Public to clarify how the proposed Interim Strategic Delivery Plan should be utilised in ensuring the legislative requirements of the Habitats Regulations are met with.**
- 5. Supports the proposal for a strategic partnership to co-ordinate policy for management and protection of the SPA, and offers to play a leadership role in establishing such a partnership.**
- 6. Supports the principle of all development making a financial contribution towards the cost of delivering mitigation measures, including but not limited to the provision of SANGS.**
- 7. Agrees amended policy wording for draft South East Plan policies LF11, WCBV3 and WCBV9 for recommendation to the Panel.**

7. LDD Conformity - Review of Arrangements

- 7.1 The Regional Planner introduced the report and advised that the approach to providing the appropriate checks and balances on delegation arrangements, which had been trialled by the RPC sub-group, had worked well.
- 7.2 She reported that the revised advice note had been prepared following consultation with local authorities, the Planning Officers Society, the Regional Assembly's legal advisors, GOSE and the Planning Inspectorate. The secretariat was confident that the guidance set out therein was both robust and comprehensive.
- 7.3 Responding to a question about what was considered regionally significant she advised that the Advice Note listed which DPDs and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) would be considered significant and on which it should, therefore, be consulted.

The Committee AGREED:

- 1. Amendments to the existing delegation arrangements on assessing the general conformity of Local Development Documents as follows:**
 - i. The delegation of powers to approve the Assembly's formal opinion of the general conformity of Core Strategies and other regionally significant Development Plan Documents, and any associated formal representations, to a sub-group of the Regional Planning Committee.**
 - ii. The delegation of powers to approve the Assembly's formal opinion of the general conformity of non-regionally significant Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, and any associated formal representations, to the Chief Executive of the Regional Assembly.**
- 2. The Advice Note to Local Authorities in Annex I, for circulation to local planning authorities.**

8. Extension of Saved Structure Plan Policies

- 8.1 The Regional Planner provided the context for the report by reminding the Committee that Structure Policies adopted before the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004 would expire in September 2007. She advised that there was provision within the Act for the Secretary of State to extend the life of some policies and for the Regional Assembly to recommend to the Secretary of State which policies should be saved. It is not anticipated that the policies will be saved indefinitely.
- 8.2 The secretariat has consulted with the Principle Authorities whose Structure Plans will expire at the end of 2007. The report outlined the outcomes of the consultation as to which policies should be saved.

- 8.3 The Regional Planner updated the Committee in respect of discussions that had taken place subsequent to the report being circulated. She advised that Wealden District Council does not currently have an adopted local plan and, therefore, is using East Sussex's Structure Plan as the basis for its development control decisions. She reported that discussions have taken place with officers at Wealden District Council during which they have identified a number of policies that the report did not recommend 'saving' but which are required for development control purposes; specifically East Sussex Structure Plans E2, T16 and S10. The secretariat would therefore recommend that the schedule be amended to reflect this fact.
- 8.4 She also advised that in respect of Hampshire Structure Policy T11 it was now accepted by the secretariat that the safeguarding provision within this policy needed to be 'saved' notwithstanding the cancellation of the South Hampshire Rapid Transit proposal; the safeguarding being required to enable alternative proposals to be brought forward.
- 8.5 It was noted that West Sussex County Council was considering its formal advice to the Assembly in respect of the proposed schedule. However it was understood that it was unlikely that the Council would be raising any additional issues at this stage.
- 8.6 Cllr Martin Tett requested clarification with respect to the wording of the section relating to housing numbers and to the wording of Buckinghamshire Structure Plan Policy TR14 and TR15. This was noted.
- 8.7 Cllr Mrs Mary Myland referred to Surrey Structure Plan Policy LO5, relating to rural settlements, which she proposed should remain. She reported that SCC disputed the Assembly's comments that there was adequate guidance in the current policy RPG9 in R7 and R8. She suggested that the comments needed to reflect that development was in the greenbelt and would, therefore, be small scale and address local need.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the response set out in the Annex by endorsed by the Executive Committee on behalf of the Assembly and that it is submitted to the Government Office and the EiP Panel, together with this covering report.

9. Regional Planning Assessments

- 9.1 The Planning Implementation Director reminded the Committee that the two Regional Planning Assessments (RPAs) had been undertaken by Government and published by the Secretary of State. He reported that whilst the assessments are not for consultation the Committee may wish to debate a number of issues, included in the report's recommendations. This would ensure that the Assembly's views on the recommendations set out in the RPAs are publicly available.
- 9.2 Cllr Jonathan Glen expressed a concern that the documents were too London centric. He proposed an additional recommendation addressing this specific issue. This was incorporated into the main recommendations of the report.

- 9.3 Responding to a question about the Assembly's position with respect to Crossrail the Planning Implementation Director confirmed that the Assembly supports Crossrail from Reading to Ebbsfleet. The current proposal (from Maidenhead to Abbey Wood) was viewed as being an initial step on the way forward to achieving this objective.

The Committee AGREED to:

1. **Support the overall framework set out in the Southern and South Eastern Regional Planning Assessments;**
2. **Highlight to Government the importance of securing adequate funding to deliver both Crossrail and the Thameslink upgrade at the earliest opportunity;**
3. **Urge Government to ensure that its long term strategy for the rail system actively supports the development of proposals to address strategic bottlenecks at Reading Station, Gatwick Airport Station, Clapham Junction and Woking;**
4. **Support the need to develop detailed proposals to improve Coastway services in support of the spatial strategy set out in the draft South East Plan;**
5. **Welcome the opportunity to work jointly with Transport for London on developing a joint case in support of further investment in the rail system serving the Greater South East.**
6. **Register its concern that the Assessments are too focused on facilitating journeys to and from London and consequently give too little consideration to providing adequate rail infrastructure and capacity to meet sub-regional transport planning requirements.**

10. Consultation on Water Metering in Areas of Water Stress

- 10.1 The Planning Manager introduced the report and advised that the consultation related to a proposal to require water companies in 'areas of water stress' to consider the introduction of compulsory water metering in preparing their Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs). Such an approach would be consistent with the twin track approach advocated by the draft South East Plan. Under the proposal the entire South East England region would be defined as an area of water stress.
- 10.2 The meeting stressed the importance of ensuring that measures were put in place prior to the installation of water meters to ensure that the welfare of vulnerable and low income families was protected. In particular there was concern expressed as to the potential impact on such groups of both the cost of meter installation and subsequent changes in water charges.

- 10.3 It was noted that water metering was not a panacea and that water companies should address the issues of leaks. The Planning Manager reported that a recent presentation by Southern Water indicated that a third of its water bills was used to reduce the company's debts. Disappointment was expressed that the consultations failed to present a comprehensive picture of the situation.

The Committee AGREED to:

1. **Support the proposal to require water companies identified as being in areas of serious water stress to consider a programme of compulsory metering as part of their statutory Water Resource Management Plans.**
2. **Note the identification of the entire South East England region as an area of serious water stress.**
3. **Stress the need to give priority to exploring the use of variable tariffs to mitigate the potential impact of metering on vulnerable customers.**

11. Items for Information

a) Major Planning Applications - Statistics

This was **NOTED**.

b) LDD Conformity - Statistics

This was **NOTED**.

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 The Chairman announced that this will be her last meeting as Chairman as she was not standing for election in May. She thanked the Committee for their work during her tenure; she expressed her sadness that she would no longer be able to participate in their lively and interesting debates. Robert Hamlin proposed a vote of thanks on behalf of the entire Committee to the Chairman for her hard work on their collective behalf.

13. Date of Next Meeting

- 13.1 Wednesday 23 May 2007 commencing at 10.30 a.m. at the Institute of Materials, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London.

The meeting closed at 13.30 hrs.