

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

Date: 19 March 2008

Subject: **Items for Information**

1. **LDD Conformity - Statistics**
2. **Major Planning Applications - Statistics**
3. **Heathrow Airport - Response from Leadership Group**
4. **Towards a Sustainable Transport System**
5. **Eco Towns**
6. **Future Water - the Government's Water Strategy for England**
7. **Windfall Provision Update**

Report of: See individual items

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report.

1. LDD Conformity - Statistics

- 1.1 Between 1 January and 29 February 2008, Assembly officers provided comments on the submission draft of the Tandridge Core Strategy DPD and informal comments on the Preferred Options for the Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy DPD and the Future Regeneration of Herne Bay Area Action Plan DPD. Officers also provided informal advice at the Issues and Options stage on the Shepway, Winchester and South Oxfordshire Core Strategy DPDs and further Issues and Options for the Mole Valley Core Strategy DPD and commented on twelve SPDs.
- 1.2 As of 1 March 2008, there were outstanding requests for informal comments on the Preferred Options for the Dartford and Test Valley Core Strategy DPDs and on the Issues and Options for the Basingstoke and Deane, Fareham, East Hampshire, Isle of Wight and East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Minerals and Waste Core Strategy DPDs.

Catriona Riddell
Director of Planning

3 March 2008

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2. Major Planning Applications - Statistics

- 2.1 In the period from 1 January to 29 February 2008, 15 consultation requests were received from local planning authorities on applications of regional significance. As of the end of February, eight of these plus five applications received before 1 January were responded to within 21 days or an alternative deadline agreed in writing between the Assembly and the relevant local planning authority. The four consultations outstanding as of 1 January 2008 have either now been dealt with or are still within the statutory period for response.
- 2.2 All of the responses were considered and agreed by the member sub-group. Observations were raised in relation to two applications received in the period from 1 January and 29 February concerning park and ride facilities in the Green Belt, where the need for good landscaping was highlighted, and minerals extraction where impact on water quality and biodiversity were highlighted.

Martin Tugwell
Director of Development

3 March 2008

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3. Heathrow Airport - Response from Leadership Group

- 3.1 A copy of the response that was agreed by the Leadership Group is attached for information.

Martin Tugwell
Director of Development

7 March 2008

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4. Towards a Sustainable Transport System

- 4.1 This document was published in October 2007. It represents the DfT's response to the Eddington and Stern reviews and is being used as the catalyst for a discussion about future transport priorities.

- 4.2 DfT is currently engaged in discussions with stakeholders across the country with a view to preparing a Green Paper in May. This will in turn lead to a White Paper at the end of the year. The White Paper will form the overarching framework within the transport focused National Planning Statements will sit.
- 4.3 The focus of the debate at present is about identifying the challenges and priorities for future investment. Why this is necessary is unclear given that each region has a clear set of regional priorities set out in their RSS/RTS.
- 4.4 The 'challenges' identified by the document are pretty broad and ones that the majority of individuals will support without much debate. However an initial analysis of the document suggests that there is a 'missing' dimension to the debate; namely consideration of the issues that influence delivery. Issues such as:
- i) the need to ensure that funding streams are in themselves 'mode-neutral' (reflecting a concern that the different approaches to capital and revenue expenditure serves to influence investment choices);
 - ii) the need to simplify the funding streams available to support investment (if the focus is on delivering outcomes then individually targeted funding streams serve little added value if the policy framework is properly defined);
 - iii) the need to take into account the 'politics' of the decision making process; and
 - iv) in that context the need to reflect on what constitutes the appropriate level of information required to make a robust decision.
- 4.5 The issues raised by the document will have implications both the formulation of policy at the regional level and the delivery of regional priorities. In that respect it is important that both the Regional Planning Committee and the Regional Transport Board have the opportunity to feed into the region's contribution to the Green Paper, and ultimately our response to the White Paper.
- 4.6 The Regional Transport Board will discuss the context for the document at a workshop held on 12 March. The outcome of that debate will guide the secretariat in producing an initial view for consideration by subsequent meetings of the RTB and this committee. That will then form the basis for the region engaging with the DfT during the ensuing discussion over the rest of the year.

Martin Tugwell
Director of Development

21 January 2008

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5. Eco Towns

- 5.1 Officers of the Assembly and SEEDA met with GOSE and CLG (Henry Cleary) on 22 January 2008 to discuss informally the Eco Towns process.
- 5.2 It is understood that eight proposals in South East England have been received by CLG and are being considered further (either as Eco Towns or New Growth Points). A number of other bids were also received but were ruled out from further consideration as they fail one or more Eco Towns criteria, were poorly developed, or have clear issues that are “showstoppers”. Some others that were anticipated didn’t materialise but may be progressed through normal planning routes.
- 5.3 There has been an initial screening exercise (for showstoppers) involving Government agencies including the Environment Agency (water, flooding) and the Highways Agency. There has also been a dialogue with the local authorities directly affected by the proposals.
- 5.4 An announcement on the “10-15 broad locations” in England with “potential to host” an Eco Town is anticipated shortly, along with announcement of additional New Growth Points (no further consultation as led by local authorities). Eco Town proposals with local authority support are more likely to be progressed, but in some cases ministers may judge the need for additional housing as justification for supporting an Eco Town proposal that does not have the support of the local authorities.
- 5.5 There is likely to be a “bias” towards South East and Eastern England - i.e. not an even distribution between the regions. CLG will provide resources for selected Eco Town proposals to be worked up and appraised further, including addressing issues raised in the screening - e.g. infrastructure requirements / constraints. An issue of growing concern is the extent to which the proposals for Eco Towns may have implications for the existing infrastructure priorities identified at the regional level. More worryingly is the danger that promoters of the proposals have over estimated their ability to secure the infrastructure required to support their proposal.
- 5.6 There will then be consultation on potential Eco Towns to July, when the announcement of successful proposals (10) will be made. Bids will then be expected to come forward as planning applications, or New Towns legislation may be used but this is expected to be exceptional.
- 5.7 Selected locations will be encouraged to progress rapidly after confirmation. Phasing of development may be possible with projects commencing but higher housing numbers and means of addressing issues - e.g. infrastructure and constraints, being tested through RSS.
- 5.8 Most reference by officials and the Minister to consideration of proposals through the planning process seems to be limited to considering applications as they come forward rather than ensuring policy support in the development plan.

- 5.9 The process therefore remains unclear. Cllr Keith Mitchell CBE has written to Caroline Flint MP on behalf of the Assembly and the ERN seeking clarification with regards to the process for testing the Eco Town proposals. The letter makes a particular point regarding the regions concern about schemes that have been tested and dismissed previously which have reappeared as Eco Towns. Such proposals are clearly inconsistent with development plan policies and would therefore tend to undermine the Government's commitment to testing eco-town proposals through the planning process.

David Payne
Planning Manager

3 March 2008

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6. Future Water - the Government's Water Strategy for England

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 This water strategy replaces the previous strategy 'Directing the Flow' (November 2002) and sets out Government's new vision for sustainable delivery of secure water supplies and an improved and protected water environment over the next 30 years. It also includes a wide range of actions that are necessary to deliver the vision. The water strategy was published in February 2008 and can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/strategy/pdf/future-water.pdf> Chapter 10 (pages 91-96) provides a summary of the vision and actions.

6.2 The Vision and Relevant Actions

- 6.2.1 The following is a summary of aspects of the vision and actions that are most relevant to the work of the Assembly.

Water Demand

- 6.2.2 The vision is to reduce the per capita consumption of water to an average of at least 130 litres per person and to achieve high standards of water efficiency in new and existing homes.
- 6.2.3 The Government will amend the Building Regulations to include minimum standard for water efficiency in new homes. Local planning authorities can set higher standards (based on the Code for Sustainable Homes), but they are expected to demonstrate clearly the local circumstances that warrant such higher standards. This is set out in the PPSI Supplement on climate change. With regard to existing homes, Government, the Environment Agency and others will work together to promote efficient products and technologies. Moreover, coordinated efforts are necessary to raise customer awareness of the need to save water.

Water Supply

- 6.2.4 The vision is that there will be no interruptions to essential water supply during droughts and that abstraction management is consistent with habitats conservation.
- 6.2.5 The Government aims to develop a National Policy Statement on water supply and treatment infrastructure to help speeding up the planning process, and water companies should consider sharing resources in their water resource plans.

Surface Water Drainage

- 6.2.6 The vision is to a more adaptable drainage system that helps to reduce flood risk and improve water quality.
- 6.2.7 The Government is currently consulting on potential roles for Surface Water Management Plans helping to increase the uptake of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. The Government will also introduce legislation to require planning permission for impermeable surfaces in front gardens

River and Coastal Flooding

- 6.2.8 The vision is to embed the future risks of flooding fully into the spatial planning of new developments and to improve the resilience of buildings, services and utilities.
- 6.2.9 The Government aims to refine the Practice Guide Companion to Planning Policy Statement 25 on Flood Risk and to publish further guidance on flood and erosion risk management.

6.3 The Water Strategy and Regional Planning in the South East

- 6.3.1 Regional Assembly officers welcome Government's new water strategy. It addresses a range of demand management and water supply issues supporting the twin-track approach set out in the draft South East Plan.
- 6.3.2 We agree with the need for close co-operation between water companies, the Environment Agency and planning authorities to address water management in particular in areas of significant housing growth. We are aiming to facilitate this cooperation through our Implementation Plan, which is currently being updated.
- 6.3.3 The water consumption target of at least 130 litres per person per day by 2030 is moderate - the Regional Sustainability Framework has a target of 135 litres per person per day by 2016. However, it has to be acknowledged that considerable reductions in consumption require significant changes in behaviour.
- 6.3.4 The Water Resources South East group has undertaken ground-breaking work on water resource modelling which explores the sharing of water resources between the many water companies in the South East. Strategic new water resource options have already been identified in the draft South East Plan.

- 6.3.5 We have also commissioned ground-breaking work on how to overcome barriers to climate change adaptation. The study looks at a wide range of adaptation measures including increased water efficiency, better drainage and flood risk management.
- 6.3.6 Specifically with regard to flood risk management, we are working closely with the Environment Agency updating our Regional Flood Risk Appraisal in line with the latest Government guidance.

Jörn Peters
Regional Planner

3 March 2008

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7 Windfall Provision: Update

7.1 Report attached for information.

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Regional Planner

6 March 2008

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