

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 21 MAY 2008

Present:

Members

Cllr Mrs Mary Ballin
Cllr Jill Baston
Cllr Mrs Gillian Brown
Cllr John Burden
Cllr Paul Clokie, OBE
Cllr Janet Duncton
Mr Alan Durrant
Mr Warren Finney
Cllr Miss Moira Gibson
Cllr Jonathan Glen
Mr Robert Hamlin
Mr Ian Hepburn
Mr Douglas Horner
Cllr Keith House
Mr Tim Lockwood
Cllr Alan Lovell
Cllr Keith Mann
Cllr David Munro
Rev Dr Derek Overfield
Cllr Jerry Patterson
Cllr Peter Pragnell
Cllr Tony Reid
Cllr Martin Tett

Officers

Catriona Riddell
Martin Tugwell
Heather Bolton
David Payne
Alison Bailey
Louise Wilby
Sue Janota
Mark Williams
Lesley van Dijk
Jo Shockley
Andre Schmid

In Attendance

Tim Stansfeld (SEEDA)

1. Apologies and Substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Ms Judith Corcho and Cllr Mrs Claire Denman. The following substitution was declared: Cllr Mrs Gillian Brown for Cllr Mrs Claire Denman.

2. Minutes of the Meeting on 30 January 2008

- 2.1 The Minutes were **AGREED** subject to the following amendments:
- 2.2 Page3, paragraph 4.14
Ian Hepburn requested that the last word diversity be amended to biodiversity so that it reads, (new text in bold) "He offered to work with officers to correct two errors relating to **biodiversity** on page 8 of the Executive Summary."

- 2.3 Page 5, paragraph 5.7
Douglas Horner asked that the last sentence be amended so that it reads, “He emphasised the need for clarity about who **will ultimately bear the cost of CIL which will not necessarily simply be absorbed by developers.**”
- 2.4 Page 9, Agenda Item 10.5, para 5
Cllr Jerry Patterson requested that this be amended to read, “Responding to a question about three possible sites in **North** Oxfordshire Martin Tugwell referred to **Rolande** Anderson’s assurance to the Executive Committee that discussions will have taken place with local authorities affected by Eco-Towns.”
- 2.5 Page 10, Agenda Item 10.6, para 3
Cllr Jerry Patterson asked that the sentence be amended so that it reads, “Cllr Jerry Patterson reported that this procedure was now considered impractical due to the weight of water **and the energy required to move it.**”

3. Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.

4. Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Partial Review: Pitch Numbers and Distribution Options for Public Consultation

- 4.1 Mark Williams, Regional Planner, drew members’ attention to the salient points in the report and advised that the Assembly was confident that the data was robust. He confirmed that the Issues and Options public consultation will run from 1 September 2008 to 21 November 2008. He advised that consultation feedback will inform identification of a preferred option, to be agreed by the Plenary, on 4 March 2009 and that this will be discussed by the Regional Planning Committee (RPC), on 28 January 2009, prior to submission to GOSE in April 2009. He explained that the consultation would be conducted at district level.
- 4.2 Cllr David Munro, a member of the Steering Committee, expressed the hope that the RPC would support the robust recommendations. He believed that provision of suitable accommodation would reduce illegal encampments.
- 4.3 Cllr Jonathan Glen asked why the reduced figures for Surrey and Kent County Councils had not resulted in lower figures elsewhere. The Chairman explained that only Surrey and Kent had elected to update their advice, following the decision to permit this, taken at the Plenary on 5 March 2008.
- 4.4 Catriona Riddell, Director of Planning, further explained that all authorities had the opportunity to reconsider their advice and that other authorities confirmed their initial advice had been robust. Subsequently Kent had streamlined its approach whereas Surrey had provided advice in a similar to way to Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The Assembly believed both approaches had been robust.

The Regional Planning Committee **COMMENDED** to the Assembly the following for the purposes of public consultation:

1. Provision of an additional 1,064 residential pitches for Gypsies and Travellers between 2006 and 2016.
2. Provision of an additional 231-273 residential plots for Travelling Showpeople between 2006 and 2016.
3. Four distribution options A – D for both Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, as tabulated at Annexes A and B respectively.
4. The proposed approach to provision for transit purposes.

5. Sub National Review: Consultation on the Proposals for a Single Regional Strategy

- 5.1 Catriona Riddell asked the Committee to consider technical aspects and the broader functions of regional planning bodies (RPBs). A recent workshop, with regional development agency (RDA) officials, confirmed a lack of understanding about the purpose of such bodies.
- 5.2 Catriona Riddell noted that the consultation failed to mention key functions associated with monitoring, conformity and local strategic delivery. Recognition needed to be given to the requirement to deal with the challenging issues of the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, the management of London's waste and ensuring that regional strategy was meaningful at a local level.
- 5.3 She advised that the key issues were being emphasised to CLG and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR). She noted that CLG's involvement in the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) had resulted in an understanding of the planning system which was not shared by BERR officials.
- 5.4 Catriona Riddell advised that the South East was progressing the delivery of the Single Regional Strategy (SRS) through work with SEEDA on the Single Delivery Plan. She believed that including the economic growth aspiration in the wider spatial context would ensure it was subject to the same testing process as the South East Plan.
- 5.5 The Regional Assembly was concerned that the SNR document focused on economic growth rather on the wider principles of sustainable development. She believed that local development frameworks (LDFs) must be based on principles of sustainable development and not economic growth. She acknowledged that for some areas economic activity was the key driver but that it was necessary to consider all the key issues related to sustainability and decide the priority for each area.
- 5.6 Catriona Riddell believed that the tone of the document was wrong and was erroneously based on a misunderstanding about the meaning of sustainability. She emphasised that application was crucial and recognised the tension between CLG's and the BERR's interpretation of sustainability. She highlighted the support for embedding the RES in the development plan recognising that this required stakeholder engagement, an independent testing process and buy in from elected

representatives. She noted that the latter issue will be debated at the Executive Committee on 13 June 2008.

- 5.7 She noted that the consultation made very little reference to the functions of the Regional Housing and Transport Boards (RHBs and RTBs), the future role of local authorities in relation to their economic duty and the workings of the constituent parts. She believed that the Government needed to consider the practical implications of its twin ambition to have a faster planning system and a more concise SRS. She cited the lack of Government guidance as a contributory factor in the length of RSSs and noted that RPBs had created the spatial context in order to assist local delivery bodies with implementation.
- 5.8 Tim Stansfeld said that he was encouraged by the positive support for the concept of the SRS expressed by Cllr Keith Mitchell at the recent Sub-National Review (SNR) meeting at Defra.
- 5.9 He shared the concerns about the difficulty of the proposed timetable and believed that three years was more realistic. However, he believed that the proposed completion time should be a shared objective.
- 5.10 Whilst understanding the concerns about the wording of the document, in relation to the primacy of economic development, he emphasised that the EiP Panel had identified the need to have a greater focus on economic development in the regional strategy. He believed that this had been lost in the report's focus on the concerns about SNR.
- 5.11 Cllr Jonathan Glenn believed that it was essential that references to the balance between economic development and sustainable growth, on page six of the report, were strengthened together with the need for certainty about how infrastructure will be funded.
- 5.12 Robert Hamlin suggested that page five should be strengthened. He believed that economic development was not in the remit of the Plan and noted that SEEDA had declined an invitation to bring the RES to the EiP.
- 5.13 He believed that the Government's view that stakeholders should be brought in at the Examination in Public (EiP) stage was unacceptable. The purpose of the EiP was to test the soundness of the Plan. He also believed that the EiP should sign off the Plan, rather than the RDA as the new RPB, to ensure accountability.
- 5.14 Cllr Martin Tett praised the report as excellent with respect to the key issues. He asked for feedback on the approach being taken by other regions and sought clarity about the term economic development. He was supportive of the economic agenda through investment in infrastructure, the development of employment sites and the skills agenda but did not support an increase in housing targets in areas where appraisals had deemed this to be unsustainable.
- 5.15 Cllr Jerry Patterson believed that the model was more appropriate for regions whose structure was based on a small number of unitary authorities and will not work in the South East with 74 councils.

- 5.16 Douglas Horner commented on a number of issues. He did not believe that the SNR focus on economic development was intended to compromise sustainability. He noted the references to stakeholder and public engagement in the document and emphasised that a distinction needed to be made between the two. He believed that it was inappropriate to only involve stakeholders at the EiP. He recommended building on the substantial expertise in the creation of the Plan and the need for greater ambition in accelerating the process.
- 5.17 Cllr Tony Reid believed that shortening the process would be detrimental to the planning process and might lead to a reversal of economic development. He thought that the report captured the mismatch between the Government's intention and the wording of the document.
- 5.18 Cllr Mary Ballin said that the essential consultation process slowed the process rather than council meeting schedules. Further delay was caused by the lack of clarity and consistency of GOSE's objectives.
- 5.19 Cllr David Munro observed that there did not seem to be disagreement about the meaning of sustainable development amongst the Committee and that this presented an opportunity for the RPC to restate the Committee's view and ask the SNR to accept this position. He emphasised the need to give the public the same opportunities to be consulted as stakeholders.
- 5.20 Ian Hepburn suggested making explicit links with the Regional Sustainability Framework (RSF) to provide a regional benchmark for sustainable development. He strongly supported the alternative objectives and referring to page 5 para 2, suggested amending the first bullet to read, "**A regional strategy to achieve sustainable development**"
- 5.21 He believed that it was important to retain the skills and experience of the Assembly.
- 5.22 Douglas Horner, whilst acknowledging the value of public consultation, asked whether the current consultation process was counter productive and whether this could be refined and made more effective.
- 5.23 Alan Durrant thought that the document should include specific reference to the involvement of stakeholders in the decision making process. He urged the transition process to be accelerated to minimise the loss of skilled personnel.
- 5.24 In response to the points made Catriona Riddell said that she would strengthen page 6, paras 4 and 5 and include references to the importance of the quality of life.
- 5.25 Referring to the implicit references to infrastructure she identified the lack of clarity about what is meant by long-term plans and suggested that this should be included as a key issue. She believed that the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced implementation to strategic planning. The current situation, requiring the review of the yet to be adopted Plan by 2011, and the creation of a SRS failed to provide certainty for investors. She acknowledged widespread concern about the affect of uncertainty combined with constant change and overly restrictive timescales which she would emphasise in her report.

- 5.26 Catriona Riddell noted that there had been a debate about whether the EiP Report should be binding and returned to RPBs. She referred to the problems created at both the local and regional level where the proper testing process had not been applied. She advised that a different assessment, from that of the Panel, made local implementation very difficult.
- 5.27 She advised that the Government has acknowledged that government offices are responsible for delays with RSSs and that future arrangements, where the process will be retained by RPBs, will minimise delays.
- 5.28 She reported that all regions were unanimous in their concerns about the flaws in the report. There were also concerns about the practical issues relating to timescales particularly in the South East with its large number of councils and planning bodies. In addition housing issues required considerable time to facilitate debate and the capture of evidence.
- 5.29 She believed that a long-term RSS combined with a long-term Implementation Plan and a shorter-term Delivery Plan would provide a better balance between long-term security and flexibility for investment.
- 5.30 Catriona Riddell referred to the report of Christine Whitehead on “Housing and Affordability in the South East” which reported that the planning system was not established to deal with market affordability. She also advised that it was not set up to deal with economic growth yet there was an expectation that it would do so. Notwithstanding these flaws in the Government’s thinking the RSS tried to provide a balanced approach to quality of life issues. To this end the RSF will be part of the regional strategy. She noted that the document referred to a future national sustainability framework but emphasised the Assembly’s view that sustainability frameworks should remain regional.
- 5.31 Robert Hamlin, referring to whether the EiP Report should be binding and be returned to regional planning bodies, said that he believed that where there was disagreement both the Panel Report and the Plan should be submitted to the Secretary of State. Catriona Riddell acknowledged that in future this was likely to happen.
- 5.32 Alan Durrant asked for the difference between stakeholder and public consultation to be defined in the document. Catriona Riddell noted that stakeholders provided welcomed expertise, often to a specific agenda, and public consultation provided valuable substance and quality and that each was essential. Alan Durrant expressed the view that stakeholders should have a role in the decision making process.
- 5.33 The Chairman advised that the Executive Committee would receive the report and had the remit to decide the matter at its meeting on 13 June 2008.
- 5.34 Ian Hepburn asked that the lack of clarity about the RSF be brought to the attention of the Executive Committee because it had implications for Sustainability Assessments.
- 5.35 Catriona Riddell confirmed that the response to SNR would be made by the Assembly via the Executive Committee.

The Committee **ENDORSED** the draft response to the Government's Sub-National Review (SNR) proposals for a Single Regional Strategy (Annex I) and **COMMENDED** this to the Assembly to be incorporated into the formal response to the consultation on SNR.

Douglas Horner abstained.

6. Eco-Towns

- 6.1 David Payne, Planning Manager outlined the features of the government consultation on eco-towns. He set out concerns about the concept, process, and the proposals for three eco-towns on the shortlist that are in the region at Bordon-Whitehill (East Hampshire District Council), Ford (Arun District Council) and Weston Otmoor (Cherwell District Council).
- 6.2 The concept of development to high standards of environmental sustainability is generally supported, but should increasingly be the norm rather than being limited to major developments with an eco-town label. However, there are major concerns over the process by which schemes have been identified as it has been outside of the normal planning process, including the development of the draft South East Plan. Of the three proposals in the region, only Bordon-Whitehill was properly considered at the South East Plan Examination in Public (EiP) with the Panel looking favourably on additional development in this location (as long as sustainability criteria are met).
- 6.3 A letter from Caroline Flint MP, Minister for Housing and Planning dated the 24 April 2008, to Cllr Keith Mitchell (annex to the Committee paper) indicated that reviews of RSS will be expected to test the ultimate size of eco-towns, but there was no reference to testing of the principle in given locations.
- 6.4 A new Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on eco-towns is proposed that could override local and regional planning policy. There was also concern that the number of houses contained in the three eco-town proposals for the region were likely to be in addition to the allocations in the draft South East Plan.
- 6.5 The Committee were advised that neither Ford nor Weston Otmoor fits with the RSS and both could undermine agreed spatial and economic priorities for sub-regions. The Assembly also had concerns about the sustainability appraisal process and the identification of and securing of funding for infrastructure in the given timeframes.
- 6.6 Several letters have been received on the matter and were tabled, and an email from Cllr Barry Wood, the Leader of Cherwell District Council (CDC) was referred to stating that CDC did not support the Weston Otmoor eco-town proposal and endorsed the view in the Regional Assembly report.
- 6.7 Tim Stansfeld, referring to Weston Otmoor and the continued development at Bicester, (page five, para 4.42) advised that local authorities and CLG had asked SEEDA to manage the study, to be carried out by consultants, to examine the social and economic implications of the proposal on adjoining settlements. It was anticipated that the study would be completed by September 2008.

- 6.8 Cllr Jonathan Glen sought assurance that local authorities would retain their existing planning powers and that the new PPS would not fast track Eco-Towns and suggested that a caveat be added to the recommendations to reflect this. The Chairman suggested strengthening Recommendation 2.
- 6.9 Cllr Gillian Brown reported the strong concern of Adur District Council (ADC) which had set up a Select Committee to consider the issue. The Committee will sit for six days starting on 26 May 2008 and will be open to the public. Both the Environment and Highways Agencies had been invited.
- 6.10 She advised that Ford had been rejected by the Local Development Framework (LDF) as unsustainable. Two meetings with CLG and GOSE had failed to satisfy requests for evidence in support of the short listing. The Challenge Panel had met for the first time on 20 May 2008 when ADC had expressed its concerns, to the proposer of the scheme, relating to viability and the impact on regeneration of two adjacent coastal towns,
- 6.11 Cllr Jerry Patterson, commenting on the unexpected proposal at Weston Otmoor, requested that page 5, para 4.4.1 should state, (new text in bold), “This proposal, **partially located in the Oxfordshire green belt**, is not supported by the local authority.” He advised that Didcot and Oxford had been identified, in addition to Bicester, as priorities (page 5, para 4.4.2) and that there was “a strong likelihood that the proposal would undermine our ability to deliver **one of** the agreed spatial and economic priorities for the sub-region.”
- 6.12 There was concern that eco-towns were a way of increasing housing numbers above those in the South East Plan and that much needed money for infrastructure and planned growth would be diverted. At a recent meeting with Buckinghamshire County Council GOSE confirmed that the housing numbers on two proposed sites would be in addition to those on the South East Plan.
- 6.13 Tim Lockwood noted that the proposed site for Ford was high grade agricultural land. He believed that the proposal would have a huge impact on commuter patterns and impact on the already congested A27.
- 6.14 Cllr Mary Ballin, referring to the first recommendation, believed that it was important not to endorse all of the key features of eco-towns, as described in the Prospectus, particularly as settlements of this size would not be self-sufficient and be large enough to be able to support some of the services suggested. She also expressed concern about the status and experience of the Challenge Panel of Experts.
- 6.15 Cllr David Munro drew attention to the proposed development at Dunsfold Aerodrome, which was not an Eco-Town, and was attracting considerable opposition.
- 6.16 Cllr Tony Reid reported that members of the Sussex Coast Sub-regional Strategy Group were unanimous in the view that regeneration of existing areas was needed, not additional housing in a new settlement.
- 6.17 Ian Hepburn drew members’ attention to his tabled email to the Regional Minister, Jonathan Shaw, MP which raised issues about sustainable transport. He offered to circulate electronically, an analysis of Eco-Towns’ failings with respect

to transport, carried out by sustainable transport stakeholders. He believed that the application of general sustainable principles should be applied more widely.

- 6.18 He suggested the following wording to be added between Recommendation 6 and 7. “The failure to develop the commendable reference to requiring biodiversity and landscape enhancement as part of the key criteria puts at risk existing environmental assets at the proposed eco-town sites.”
- 6.19 Ian Hepburn highlighted the concern outlined in the fourth paragraph of his letter relating to the importance of safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity and the CLG consultation document failing to develop this principle in the five key criteria and to the eco-towns under consideration. Martin Tugwell suggested that this be brought to the attention of the Executive Committee.
- 6.20 David Payne responded to the issues raised. He drew attention to the role of planning authorities referred to in paras 3 and 4 of Caroline Flint’s letter to Cllr Keith Mitchell. He noted that local authorities will receive planning applications but that the new PPS will change the policy context for decision making. He advised that the Committee will be able to submit its views on the PPS during the consultation.
- 6.21 He referred to page 4, para 3.1 which emphasised that the principles and criteria for Eco-Towns should increasingly be viewed as the norm, rather than the exception. He noted the need to strengthen Recommendation 1.
- 6.22 The Committee **AGREED** the recommendations with the following amendments so that that the Executive Committee is advised that (new text in bold):
1. **The RPC supports environmentally sensitive and sustainable development principles. However** the eco-town concept does little to add value to existing requirements of the statutory planning framework which should increasingly require such measures to be incorporated into all developments.
 2. Contrary to the assurances given by Ministers, it is clear that the principle of eco-towns is being taken forward outside of the planning system. **The PPS could effectively supersede and override local and regional plan-making to date.**
 3. The principle of specific eco-town proposals should be the subject of independent testing as part of the statutory planning system.
 4. The approach to Sustainability Appraisal appears flawed and unlikely to provide a truly independent assessment of the merits of the eco-towns policy or specific proposals.
 5. There is an urgent need for Government to clarify whether the growth associated with an eco-town proposal will be included in, or additional to, the overall housing provision figures in the South East Plan.
 6. The deliverability of some of the infrastructure associated with specific eco-town proposals is highly questionable, both in terms of timescale and affordability. **We believe that there is a very real danger that**

resources will be diverted from existing priorities (including Growth Areas) rather than added to.

- 6.23 The failure to develop the commendable reference to requiring biodiversity and landscape enhancement as part of the key criteria puts at risk existing environmental assets at the proposed eco-town sites.
- 6.24 The Committee **AGREED** that Martin Tugwell would provide suitable wording for Recommendation 7 to reflect the wording of the Panel.
7. In terms of the specific proposals identified in the region:
- a. Bordon-Whitehill has the potential to offer a good fit with the spatial strategy, reflecting the EiP Panel recommendation that there should not be an impediment to increase in housing at this location (above the 2,500 dwellings they recommend) as long as this is shown to be sustainable.
 - b. Ford is likely to be inconsistent with the spatial strategy and would probably undermine the ability to deliver agreed spatial and economic priorities in the sub regional area.
 - c. Weston Otmoor is likely to be inconsistent with the spatial strategy and would probably undermine the ability to deliver agreed spatial and economic priorities in the sub regional area.

7. Housing and Affordability in the South East

- 7.1 Alison Bailey, Planning Manager, advised the Committee that the report was a follow up to the Joint Workshop held by the Regional Planning Committee and Regional Housing Board on 19 March 2008.
- 7.2 She noted that the Assembly had published Professor Christine Whitehead's report and summarised the key messages highlighting that:
- The National Housing and Planning Advice Unit's (NHPAU's) model had strengths and weaknesses.
 - The model was one of a number of factors to be taken into account.
 - The weight attached to the model was for the planning process to decide.
 - The NHPAU's figures, in response to the Housing Green Paper, would not impact in the long-term even, in a time of significant housing growth, and did nothing to diminish the need for affordable housing in the short, medium and long-term.
- 7.3 Professor Whitehead was unequivocal about the need for higher than planned levels of house building to improve conditions and choice. She concluded that the range of housing proposed for the South East by NHPAU would have little impact on affordability. Investment in current stock could have a similar effect. Professor Whitehead stressed the importance of achieving the correct mix of housing size and type particularly the provision of more large, family homes.
- 7.4 Alison Bailey reported that the NHPAU's advice to Government was yet to be published. CLG's most recent announcement, on 21 May 2008, on the supply of

private rented and social rented housing had emphasised the need for an increase of 50,000 social rented housing a year.

- 7.5 Cllr Jonathan Glen believed that affordable housing had to be subsidised by the Government and noted that the Barker Review had been wrong in suggesting that affordability could be addressed by flooding the market.
- 7.6 Douglas Horner, whilst believing that the Assembly's report was overly optimistic, referred to the emphasis in both reports to improving affordability by both increasing housing supply and investing in existing stock.
- 7.7 Warren Finney, whilst supporting Professor Whitehead's report, cautioned that achieving the necessary outcomes would be difficult due to the way that Government grant is currently allocated.
- 7.8 Martin Tugwell advised that the RHB had recently considered Professor Whitehead's report. He highlighted the Board's current work programme which:
- Emphasised the urgent need to deliver more large; family sized homes.
 - Recommended addressing the shortfall of investment in affordable housing for both new build and the retrofitting of existing stock.
 - Sought to tackle the barriers to delivering affordable homes.
- 7.9 The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report by Professor Whitehead on housing supply and affordability in the South East, and **AGREED** to draw on the analysis when considering the Proposed Changes to the South East Plan and in any review of the housing element of the Plan.

8. Homes and Communities Agency

- 8.1 Martin Tugwell provided the legislative context for the formation of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).
- 8.2 He reported that a national budget of £16b will be available for investment over three years and that it was important that investment reflected the RPC's priorities. He noted the Housing Corporation's (HC's) emphasis, to the EiP, that there needed to be a stronger relationship between its investments and the work of the South East Plan.
- 8.3 Martin Tugwell reported that the RHB had encouraged bids to come forward, for the first round of funding allocations, to deliver affordable housing. He advised that the Housing and Regeneration Bill will consolidate the existing powers of the Secretary of State to designate land required for development. He also noted that the Bill contained a caveat relating to the consultation on Eco-Towns which recognised that there was still an option to designate an Eco-Town as a new town and utilise new town powers.
- 8.4 He reported the Bill created a new regulator The Office for Tenants and Social Landlords to be called Optenant. Although some concerns had been expressed about the scope of its power, he believed that its focus on standards offered the potential to address barriers to affordable housing provision.

- 8.5 He reported that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), whereby regional money was re-distributed to other regions and existing tenants were taxed, had recently been discussed by the RHB. The Board was concerned that this practice was a barrier to delivering affordable housing and was currently working with Waverley District Council to convey its concern to the review of the HRA process.
- 8.6 Robert Hamlin expressed concern that the Bill will be used as a mechanism for approving Eco-Towns in local authorities where they had not been agreed. He declared his interest as an employee of a housing association and expressed concern that the Bill provided the mechanism for the nationalisation of housing associations.

The Committee:

1. **NOTED** the progress with the Housing and Regeneration Bill;
 2. **SUPPORTED** the commitment by Government to ensure that the policies, plans and investment decisions of the Homes and Communities Agency reflect regional priorities as identified in the statutory regional planning framework;
 3. **SUPPORTED** the commitment by Government to expand the scope of the Regional Funding Allocation process to include:
 - Housing and regeneration delivery in the 'growth areas' and the Thames Gateway; and
 - Other regeneration programmes to be transferred to the Homes and Community Agency
 4. **STRESSED** the importance of early engagement by the Set-up Team with the Regional Assembly in its role as Regional Planning Body.
- 9. Draft Revised National and Regional Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England 2005-20**
- 9.1 David Payne, Planning Manager, explained that following the consultation, the factors taken into account in determining the proportion of aggregates required of the region had been broadened. The new model reflected data on past sales and demands and indicated a dramatic regional decrease in recent years. He confirmed that the model considered the level of imports and exports and the economic forecast for the next ten years. It did not take account of environmental constraints and he indicated that this might distort the figures in unforeseen ways.
- 9.2 He advised that the figures for 2001-16 had been 212m tonnes of sand and gravel and 35m tonnes of crushed rock. The revised figures for the new period from 2005-20 were 195m tonnes of sand and gravel and 25m tonnes of crushed rock. Whilst this appears to be encouraging the Assembly was concerned that the regional figures still remain relatively high and do not fully reflect aggregate consumption and sales.

The Committee:

1. **NOTED** the issues arising out of the draft revised aggregates guidelines consultation document and the potential implications for aggregates provision in the South East region.
2. Urged Government to **AMEND** the draft revised guidelines to ensure that the final guidelines apply a further reduction in the amount of land-won sand and gravel that the region is expected to provide for reflecting recent aggregate consumption patterns and past sales trends in the region.

10. Statutory Consultations on Planning Applications – Annual Report on Performance

- 10.1 Sue Janota, Regional Planner, thanked the consultees for their hard work which had resulted in 100% of planning application consultation requests receiving a response in the statutory time period from April 2007 to March 2008.
- 10.2 Ian Hepburn acknowledged the success and requested that progress against outcomes be incorporated into the report for 2008-9.

The Committee **AGREED** the Annual Report on Performance in responding to statutory consultations for submission to the Secretary of State.

11. Items for Information

11.1. LDD Conformity - Statistics

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

11.2 Major Planning Applications - Statistics

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

11.3 Defra Consultation on River Basin Planning Guidance Volume 2

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 Robert Hamlyn asked whether the conference for the Regional Forum will take place and whether the new Mayor and Deputy of Mayor of London had been invited. Catriona Riddell confirmed that the conference will be held and suggested that the matter be raised at the next meeting.

13. Date of Next Meeting

- 13.1 Wednesday, 23 July 2008 commencing at 10.30am at the Institute of Materials, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5DB.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 13.12 hours.