

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
PLENARY MEETING**

Date: 4 March 2009

Subject: **Regional Planning Committee**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee

**Recommendation:**

That the Assembly notes the contents of this report.

**Purpose of Report:**

To update the Regional Assembly on the meetings of the Regional Planning Committee held on 26 November 2008 and 28 January 2009.

## **1. Meeting of 26 November 2008**

### **1.1 Partial Review of Primary Aggregates Apportionment: Preferred Option**

- 1.1.1 The Assembly is currently reviewing the basis for the apportionment of primary aggregates (sand, gravel and crushed rock), set out in RPG9 and draft South East Plan Policy M3. At our meeting we considered both the overall regional amount to be apportioned to each Mineral Planning Authority (MPA) and the methodology for the apportionment.
- 1.1.2 On the regional total, the Committee felt very strongly that the overall amount being allocated to the South East was too high and reconfirmed its commitment to challenge the Government on this. We therefore agreed to recommend that the Assembly bases the MPA apportionment on a regional total of 9.01 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) and not the 12.18 mtpa currently proposed by Government or 13.25 mtpa in the current RPG9/draft South East Plan policy. 9.01 mtpa reflects actual demand and ability to supply and, in our view, is more sustainable in the longer term.
- 1.1.3 We have since heard that the Government is revisiting its figures as a result of the evidence we have presented as part of our challenge. We expect to receive the final advice from Government later this year. The Assembly has agreed to maintain our challenge on this through to Examination in Public (EiP), regardless of the outcome of the Government's review.
- 1.1.4 Although achieving consensus on the MPA apportionment was difficult, the Committee did agree a preferred option. This is based on a modified version of one of the options generated by the technical research and reflects the outcome of consultation and discussions with MPAs. This option was selected as it gives weighting to where demand for construction material is likely to be in future, and where relatively unconstrained sand and gravel resources are located. It also builds in some consideration of the past pattern of sales.
- 1.1.5 On 12 December the Executive Committee endorsed the recommendation from RPC on behalf of the Assembly (as agreed at the plenary meeting on 17 October). This will be submitted to the Government as the Assembly's formal advice at the end of February. Submission will be followed by a 12 week consultation (by GOSE), with an Examination in Public expected in the Autumn.

## **2. Meeting of 28 January 2009**

### **2.1 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Review: Preferred Option**

- 2.1.1 The main item for the Committee was the second of the Assembly's two partial reviews of the South East Plan, this time on Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (GTTS). As with the Aggregates Review, this has proved to be a difficult process and has also been very sensitive in terms of its handling. Despite all of this, we agreed a preferred option which we feel is a robust approach to the provision for GTTS and is therefore being presented to the Assembly today as the RPC's recommendation (see Agenda Item 2).

2.1.2 I am pleased to report that on 4 February the Assembly won a national award for its DVD, 'Somewhere to Live', on providing for the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The award, from the Royal Town Planning Institute, was considered a clear winner in its category of 'Equality and Diversity'. The RTPI said that the film had an original approach to involvement in planning and has the potential to play an important part in raising awareness for key issues concerning Gypsies and Travellers in a positive, engaging and educational way. The Assembly was jointly responsible for the DVD along with North West, East of England and West Midlands Assemblies.

## 2.2 Eco-Towns Draft Policy Statement: Consultation Response

2.2.1 The Assembly previously commented on an earlier consultation on eco-towns in May and June 2008. The most recent second round of consultation is on the proposed locations and standards of the eco-towns and the draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on eco-towns.

2.2.2 The current shortlist of 12 potential locations for eco-towns includes the following in the South East:

- Ford, West Sussex
- Bordon - Whitehill, Hampshire
- Weston Otmoor, Oxfordshire
- North West Bicester (Cherwell), Oxfordshire (alternative to Weston Otmoor)

2.2.3 The Committee acknowledged that the draft PPS sets out commendable principles and standards for new developments but the Assembly's main concerns about the whole process still remain. These are:

1. The standards being applied to eco-towns should be applied to all new developments.
2. The principle and location of eco-towns should be considered through normal development plan process, and the PPS and Eco-towns Programme should not supersede or over-ride local and regional plan-making.
3. The sustainability appraisal process is flawed, particularly as the alternative spatial options tested are too limited.
4. Housing associated with eco-towns should not be in addition to the levels set out in the South East Plan, an issue that relates to our concerns over 'minimum' housing allocations.
5. The deliverability of schemes, including essential supporting infrastructure, is questionable, particularly given the downturn in the economy and the housing market.

2.2.4 We also raised concerns over the individual proposals and these still remain, given the lack of consistency with the South East Plan and sub-regional strategies of the proposals at Weston Otmoor and Ford. The emergence through the SA process of an alternative site in Cherwell District does not

alter this view, as its merits need to be assessed against other options for delivery of the sub-regional strategy.

2.2.5 A robust response from the Assembly has been sent to the Government.

### **3. Thames Basin Heaths SPA: Update**

- 3.1 In a slightly different capacity - as chairman of the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) representing the Regional Planning Committee - I am pleased to report that the JSPB endorsed a Delivery Framework for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) at its meeting in February.
- 3.2 The issue of how to overcome the constraints to housing delivery in the areas of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire surrounding the Heaths, given the need to protect the SPA from recreational pressure, was debated at length as part of the South East Plan Examination in Public. The Regional Planning Committee has had input into, and has been following, the work of the JSPB since its inception in late 2007.
- 3.3 The Delivery Framework sets out the JSPB's recommendations to the local authorities around the Heaths about measures that can be provided alongside new development to protect the SPA from recreational pressures resulting from that development. The JSPB has encouraged local authorities to use the Framework to guide the production or revision of supplementary planning guidance or local avoidance strategies.
- 3.4 The JSPB also endorsed, in principle, the collection and pooling of developer contributions to fund strategic access management (wardening and education) and monitoring on the SPA. Work to finalise governance, financial and delivery arrangements is now underway and will be considered by the Board at their next meeting in June.

**Cllr Moira Gibson**  
**Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee**

16 February 2009