

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND PARTNERSHIP BOARD  
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

Date: 24 July 2009

Subject: **South East Plan**

Report of: Regional Planner

**Recommendations:**

This report is for information only.

**Purpose of Report:**

To inform the Board of the publication of the South East Plan and the likely implications of this for planning future transport investment.

**Key Issues:**

The South East Plan has now been published, detailing a clear set of spatial priorities for the region where transport investment is likely to be directed. There is a need to take forward the messages of the South East Plan to deliver transport improvements, whilst considering the need to reduce carbon emissions and the likely availability of funds to ensure that schemes are effective and deliverable.

## **1. The South East Plan**

- 1.1 The South East Plan was published on 6th May 2009, setting the planning framework for the next 20 years. The published Plan now:
- Sets a housing target of 32,700 homes a year. Milton Keynes, Reigate and Banstead, Brighton and Hove, and Winchester face slight reductions on targets proposed last year, but this is an overall increase on the 32,000 recommended by inspectors.
  - Confirms Green Belt reviews at Oxford and Guildford
  - Has all references to 'minimum' housing numbers removed
  - Calls for infrastructure delivery programmes to be agreed before major new developments begin.
- 1.2 The South East Plan, along with the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), sets the framework for investment in the region over the next 20 years. It identifies clear spatial priorities in the region that will be the focus of transport investment.
- 1.3 It also recognises the need to rebalance the transport system in favour of sustainable modes, accepting that it is unrealistic to achieve an absolute reduction in traffic within the life of the Plan.
- 1.4 The spatial priorities of the South East are focused around the regional hubs and within them, eight major concentrations of economic growth potential – the 'Diamonds for Investment and Growth'. These Diamonds account for over 50% of the region's population and a similar proportion of our GVA. They are (in alphabetical order):
- Basingstoke
  - Brighton and Hove
  - Gatwick Diamond
  - Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale
  - Oxford/Central Oxfordshire
  - Reading
  - Thames Gateway (including Medway and Ebbsfleet)
  - Urban South Hampshire (PUSH)
- 1.5 The Plan also highlights the regeneration projects of Ashford, Bexhill-Hastings, Dover and Margate and Government designated Growth Points and Strategic Development Areas as priorities.
- 1.6 These spatial priorities for investment in the region have been reflected in the refresh of the Regional Funding Advice (RFA2) submitted in February 2009. This sets out our transport investment priorities up to 2013/14 and shows how our investment is targeted to infrastructure to support growth in our Growth Areas, Growth Points and Diamonds for Investment and Growth.
- 1.7 We must now take these priorities forward, ensuring that they are delivered on time and to budget, and develop priorities for investment post 2014 through the DaSTS process.

## **2. Key Challenges**

- 2.1 The South East Plan identifies the following key transport challenges for the region:
- i. To provide consistently good access between the United Kingdom and the world through gateway ports and airports;

- ii. To maintain high quality radial connectivity to London, and develop orbital routes around London;
  - iii. To deliver transport measures which address severe deprivation;
  - iv. To address unpredictable journeys in buoyant areas;
  - v. To reduce the impact of the transport system on the environment.
- 2.2 In addition to these specific transport challenges, the overarching need to maintain economic growth and competitiveness whilst reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change represents the biggest challenge in the South East over the next 20 years.
- 2.3 The South East has the highest ecological footprint of all UK regions; 16.7% above the UK average. Our regional policy framework, shaped by the Regional Sustainability Framework, sets ambitious targets to stabilise, and then reduce, our ecological footprint.
- 2.4 The targets adopted by the 'Diamonds' are even more challenging, with a commitment to stabilise their ecological footprint two years earlier than the overall regional target. In order to meet these targets, significant investment is required in schemes that will help reduce emissions from transport, particularly carbon.
- 2.5 What makes this even more challenging is that the need to reduce our ecological footprint is set in the context of the South East as the powerhouse of the UK economy. In 2006/07 our residents made an estimated net contribution of £17.7bn to Government finances; approximately 50% of the total net contribution. An efficient transport system is critical to ensuring the region realises its economic potential and this can only be achieved by promoting affordable and deliverable schemes.

### **3. Addressing the Challenges**

- 3.1 Whilst our spatial priorities provide a clear focus for targeting investment, we are in a period of transition in which some investment programmes contain schemes that are legacies from outdated policy frameworks. Through the DaSTS initiative we have the opportunity to accelerate the process of reviewing solutions put forward to address the region's transport challenges.
- 3.2 The current transport priorities in the RFA provide a starting point for this, however personal transport accounts for a significant proportion of our ecological footprint (currently 18%) and with carbon budgets and targets likely to become more challenging over time, these need to be revised to take account of:
- The implications of our investment choices on carbon emissions through a refinement of our prioritisation methodology
  - The identification of additional Growth Points and Strategic Development Areas in the South East Plan, the investment requirements for which have not previously been identified
  - The flexibility to recommend transfers between funding programmes and the potential this creates to give greater encouragement to delivery of smarter choice measures
- 3.3 The focus now needs to be on 'locking in' the benefits of transport improvements. We have the opportunity for a change in emphasis and a real focus on a smarter choices agenda which managed and invests in the existing network and maximises the efficiency of existing capacity. We also need to look to other policy areas, such as housing, which have the ability to reduce the need to travel. It is clear that a 'business as usual' approach

to the identification of solutions to the challenges of delivery growth is not going to be possible.

- 3.4 Given the likely limit to the level of investment that will be available in the future and the limited opportunity for the addition of new capacity, there will not be the major road building schemes in the South East as we have seen in the past. National and regional policy emphasis is moving towards management of the strategic network and future investment in transport will have to be much more targeted and aimed at getting the most out of the existing network, providing local improvements to support the overall network through a smarter choices approach and a focus on communications technology as an alternative to travel. There is also an urgent need to make better use of lower carbon technologies and to drive the agenda to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change. This reinforces the need to encourage greater investment in smarter choices, which promote low-carbon modes of transport and reduce the need to travel.

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