

Matter 9A / South East England Regional Assembly



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Matter 9.A: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sub-Regional Strategy

9A.2 What is the rationale for and role of the Isle of Wight Special Policy Area? Does the proposed strategy provide a positive steer to achieve economic regeneration, while recognising the Island's environmental attributes and sensitivities?

1. The Isle of Wight was identified as a Special Policy Area by the Assembly's Regional Planning Committee on 29 June 2004. Originally the Island was included as part of a proposed wider sub-regional area including South Hampshire and Eastern Dorset. A members workshop held earlier in that month concluded that the extent of this should be reduced to the South Hampshire sub-region, with distinct and separate policies drawn up for the Isle of Wight to reflect its unique character and economic problems. The policies provide a regional context for the Island-wide LDF.
2. The policies in the Plan aim to support economic growth and regeneration, reflecting the sectors that have traditionally been important to the Island's economy and supporting ongoing diversification of these (for example, tourism and leisure) and of the wider economic base, including the rural economy. These also seek to address the relatively high unemployment and relatively low wage levels experienced on the Island.

9A.3 Are the housing provision figures set at the most appropriate level, bearing in mind the particular characteristics of the Island's housing market and economy, and infrastructure needs (Policy IW5)? Is the regional affordability target the most appropriate guidance for the Island (Policy H4)?

1. The housing provision of an average of 520 units per annum are the same as those in RPG9. The average rate of completions between 1999/00 and 2005/06 is 524.
2. A range of options were considered by the Isle of Wight in preparation of advice to the Assembly, including potentially increasing provision substantially. The option that was preferred was for rates of housing development to be linked to economic-led regeneration, of at least 520 additional homes per annum between 2006 and 2026. To be sustainable such growth would need to minimise resource demands and environmental impacts and ensure that development is of the right quality and quantity. There would be enhanced prospects for regeneration, more balanced local communities, a more self-contained labour market based on a strengthened local economy, and skills enhancement. Additional investment in infrastructure would be required.
3. Higher rates of housing development, that may help to address some of the shortfall in supply of affordable housing, were judged to be likely to require higher densities, use of additional previously developed and Greenfield land (including potential employment sites), and additional funding for affordable housing. There would also be increased pressure on infrastructure that would require additional investment to address.

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4. The Assembly received limited advice from the Council on affordability targets. Adopted SPG identifies a target of 30%. Advice on affordable housing need is reproduced in the Plan (paragraph 2.14) and demonstrates that this need is higher than the overall provision. In the absence of further advice it was therefore felt prudent to apply the regional affordable target to the Island (H4) although the mix of approaches may differ, for example between RSL and other forms such as shared ownership.