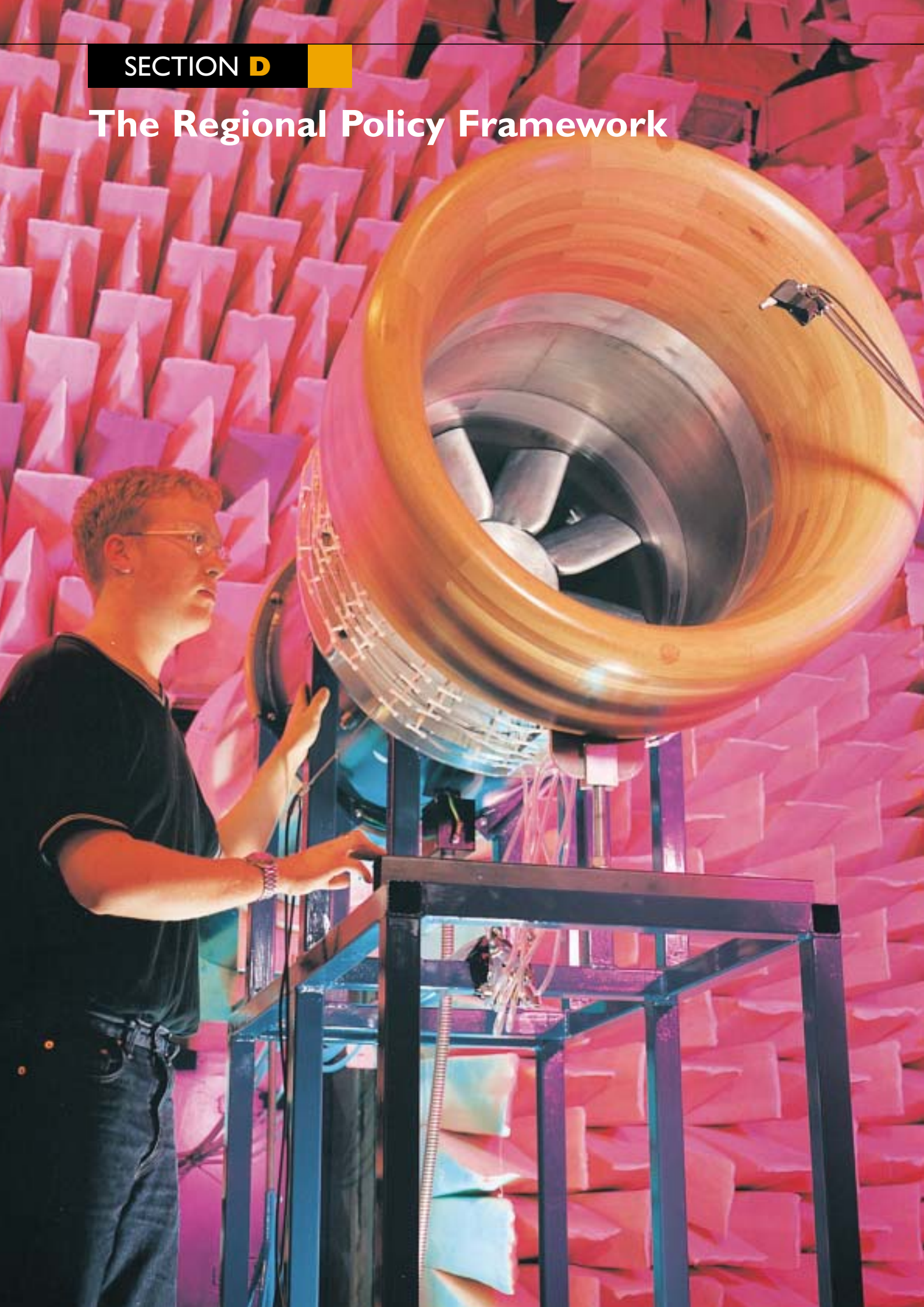


The Regional Policy Framework



SECTION D1	Cross-cutting Policies
SECTION D2	Economy
SECTION D3	Housing
SECTION D4	Communications and Transport
SECTION D5	Sustainable Natural Resource Management
SECTION D6	Waste and Minerals
SECTION D7	Countryside and Landscape Management
SECTION D8	Management of the Built and Historic Environment
SECTION D9	Town Centres
SECTION D10	Tourism and Related Sports and Recreation
SECTION D11	Social, Cultural and Health Dimensions

Cross-cutting Policies

I. The Regional Policy Framework

I.1 This section of the Plan is structured into two sections. The first part (DI) consists of those policies that cover themes that apply to all aspects of the Plan, within the framework of the overall vision and core strategy. They can therefore be described as ‘cross-cutting’.

I.2 The second section (D2-D11) sets out the policies for specific topic areas. In both cases, the policies will also be supported by statements on indicators and implementation.

Cross-cutting Policies

I.3 The cross-cutting policies all relate to the analysis, debate and evolution of the Plan parameters in the context of the Integrated Regional Framework (IRF). They are divided into two parts:
Part A – Cross-cutting Issue Policies
Part B – Cross-cutting Spatial Policies

Part A – Cross-cutting Issue Policies

Sustainable Development

I.4 As emphasised in Section B, the principles of sustainable development, as reflected in the Integrated Regional Framework, underpin the Plan. Although the achievement of overall sustainable development across the region, in an absolute sense, will not be achieved in the Plan period, it is essential that we achieve substantial progress in that direction. A cross-cutting policy (CCI) has therefore been incorporated in the Plan to emphasise the importance of the IRF. There

is always a danger with such high level policies that they will be observed in principle but not in practice. A clear obligation is therefore placed on all public authorities to demonstrate their commitment through specific and identifiable actions.

POLICY CCI: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The principal objective of the Plan shall be to achieve and to maintain sustainable development in the region. The strategy and policies of the Plan promote measures that contribute to:

- i** Achieving a sustainable economy
- ii** Promoting good governance
- iii** Using sound science responsibly
- iv** Living within environmental limits
- v** Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society.

All public authorities shall ensure that their actions contribute to meeting the objectives set out in the Integrated Regional Framework (IRF).

Climate Change

I.5 In recent years, the evidence that significant climate change is occurring on a global scale has become increasingly compelling. These changes will particularly affect England, and research suggests that the South East could be more affected by these changes than other regions. The precise impacts of climate change are not clear, although there will be some opportunities as well as problems. It is, however, already evident that climate change will particularly affect many facets of development and land use. The Plan is therefore put forward in this context, and on the basis that challenging measures for

mitigation and adaptation relating to climate change will increasingly need to be acted upon over the Plan period. Further research is being undertaken by the Assembly on this topic and it will continue to develop understanding and identify good practice through initiatives such as ESPACE and the Climate Change Partnership. In order to clarify and prioritise actions and identify mechanisms to achieve mitigation and adaptation to forecast climate change impacts, as set out in Policy CC2, the Assembly is developing and will maintain a specific implementation plan. An inventory of greenhouse gas emissions will be developed in association with the South East Climate Change Partnership and Government in order to monitor progress towards achieving the targets within Policy CC2.

POLICY CC2: CLIMATE CHANGE

The strategy and policies of the Plan will promote measures to mitigate and adapt to the forecast effects of climate change and should be implemented through application of local planning policy and other mechanisms. Behavioural change will be essential in implementing this policy and the measures identified.

Mitigation, through reducing greenhouse gas emissions, will primarily be addressed through greater resource efficiency including:

- i** improving energy efficiency performance of new and existing buildings and influencing behaviour of occupants
- ii** Reducing the need to travel and ensuring good accessibility to public and other sustainable modes of transport
- iii** Promoting land use that acts as carbon sinks
- iv** Encouraging development and use of renewable energy
- v** Reducing the amount of biodegradable waste landfilled.

In addition, and in respect of carbon dioxide emissions, regional and local authorities,

agencies and others shall include policies and proposals in their plans, strategies and investment programmes to help reduce the region’s carbon dioxide emissions by at least 20% below 1990 levels by 2010 and by at least 25% below 1990 levels by 2015. A target for 2026 will be developed and incorporated in the first review of the Plan (and no later than 2011).

Adaptation to risks and opportunities will be achieved through:

- i** Guiding strategic development to locations offering greater protection from impacts such as flooding, erosion, storms, water shortages and subsidence
- ii** Ensuring new and existing building stock is more resilient to climate change impacts
- iii** Incorporating sustainable drainage measures and high standards of water efficiency in new and existing building stock
- iv** Increasing flood storage capacity and developing sustainable new water resources
- v** Ensuring that opportunities and options for sustainable flood management and migration of habitats and species are not foreclosed.

Resource Use

I.6 The Plan places a considerable emphasis on increasing the efficiency of resource use, especially natural resources such as water, energy and minerals. Consumption per head needs to stabilise and begin to reduce over the Plan period. New development needs to adopt increasingly rigorous standards to reflect a movement towards sustainable construction, using more recycled materials, producing less waste and consuming less water and energy per unit. But the focus must not be simply on new development. Existing development must also heed and follow the same themes, taking particular advantage of opportunities afforded by renewal or upgrading of property and equipment.

- 1.7** Adaptations of lifestyle and business practices will also need to accompany these development changes. Attitudes towards consumption of energy and the production of waste, for example, are probably more important drivers of change than physical development. Over the Plan period, we will need a gradual but sustained 'step change' in public and business attitudes and behaviour.

POLICY CC3: RESOURCE USE

In order to reflect the Plan's emphasis on more sustainable resource use the Regional Assembly will promote measures that seek to stabilise the South East's ecological footprint by 2016, and to reduce the ecological footprint during the second half of the Plan period. Implementation will require a sustained new programme of action incorporating:

- i** Increased efficiency of resource use in new development
- ii** Adaptation of existing development to reduce its use of energy, water and other resources
- iii** Complementary legislation and fiscal measures by Government
- iv** Changes in behaviour by organisations and by individuals.

Sustainable Construction

- 1.8** Sustainable construction can be defined as creating or renewing buildings so that they reduce or avoid adverse impacts on the built and natural environment, in terms of the buildings themselves, their immediate surroundings and the broader regional and global setting. Sustainable construction therefore encompasses the following principles:
- i** Constructing development to reduce non-renewable resource consumption including building materials
 - ii** Ensuring development, through its construction and use, reduces the use of energy and water
 - iii** Eliminating or minimising the use of toxins and the production of waste associated with the construction and use of development.

- 1.9** Sustainable construction implies that minimum standards, such as those set by current Building Regulations, are exceeded in order to deliver the step-change we need in energy and water efficiency, reduction in waste generation and increased recycling. The use of sustainably produced and local products can also reduce the impact of our consumption of resources. Best practice standards such as the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) are well established and should be used throughout the region.

POLICY CC4: SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

The construction of all new buildings, and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be expected to adopt and incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques. This will include:

- i** High standards of energy and water efficiency that exceed current standards required by the Building Regulations and reflect best practice
- ii** Designing to increase the use of natural lighting, heat and ventilation, and the provision of a proportion of energy demand from renewable sources
- iii** Reduction and increased recycling of construction and demolition waste and procurement of low-impact materials
- iv** Designing for flexible use and adaptation to reflect changing lifestyles and needs and the principle of 'whole life costing'.

Infrastructure and Implementation

- 1.10** As the vision and core strategy make clear, the timely provision of infrastructure is a fundamental tenet of the Plan. This will require improved delivery arrangements compared with the past, the creative assembly of public and private resources and a sustained effort. While much can be achieved through regional and local action, the support and encouragement of central Government will also be crucial and essential. Under the new legislation, the Plan also needs to include an Implementation Plan (included as a separate document in this submission to Government).



- 1.11** The Assembly, the county councils and the Government Office have undertaken a considerable amount of research to improve understanding of the issues and needs. As a result of this work and careful consideration of the conclusions, the Assembly has adopted a package of proposals which it believes could substantially improve infrastructure delivery and restore confidence. These proposals include a suggested Concordat with Government to provide a basis for constructive joint working.¹

POLICY CC5: INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION

The scale and pace of development will be dependent on there being sufficient capacity in existing infrastructure to meet the area's current needs and the provision of new infrastructure to meet the needs of new development. The funding for this infrastructure will require substantial contributions from central Government. In addition, partnerships between central Government, local government and the private sector have the capacity to lever in additional funding.

To help achieve this:

- i** The Assembly expects all the relevant infrastructure agencies and providers to align their investment programmes to help deliver the proposals in the Plan
- ii** Local Development Documents should identify the necessary additional infrastructure and services required to serve the area and the development they propose together with the means, broad cast and timing of their provision related to the timing of development

- iii** Development shall not proceed until the relevant planning authorities are satisfied that the necessary infrastructure required to serve the development is available or will be provided in time
- iv** Contributions from development will also be required to help deliver the necessary infrastructure. To provide clarity for landowners and prospective developers, local authorities should include policies and prepare clear guidance in their Local Development Documents, in conjunction with other key agencies, on the role of development contributions towards infrastructure.

The Assembly therefore proposes to Government the need for a package of initiatives designed to improve infrastructure delivery and create greater confidence and assurance. This package is underpinned by a proposed Concordat between Government and the Assembly.

In order to further secure effective delivery of the Plan, and particularly the timely delivery of the necessary supporting infrastructure, an Implementation Plan will be prepared, monitored and reviewed, which will set out the requirements and obligations for public and private sector bodies at the national, regional and local levels. The Implementation Plan will include a regional and sub-regional investment framework identifying the strategic infrastructure schemes needed to deliver the Plan.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Infrastructure - A Way Forward, May 2005

Use of Public Land

I.12 In the context of this emphasis on effective implementation and infrastructure provision, coupled with better resource use, it makes sense to look for opportunities to facilitate delivery through sympathetic land ownership and potential funding. The South East region has a substantial portfolio of Government land, particularly land held by the defence, and to a lesser extent, health sectors. The region's geography and history means that the scale and distribution of defence land and property is of particular significance. Reviews of health sector lands have been undertaken and strategic land releases are under way, with land transfers to English Partnerships.

I.13 The Ministry of Defence has also embarked on a fundamental, long-term review of its operational requirements and landholdings. It is already evident that this review will lead to the release of significant land and property holdings across the region. Some of the sites are of little or no potential relevance for development, because of their location and character. Others, however, offer considerable potential, and the scale of likely release over the Plan period makes the issue of strategic importance. Where such sites have potential, their public land ownership could assist both implementation and the forward-funding of necessary infrastructure, in order to achieve high standards of development. It is important that the overall release of land is conducted and managed effectively, working with the Assembly and local authorities, so that long-term management arrangements are put in hand for both the non-development and development sites.

POLICY CC6: USE OF PUBLIC LAND

In order to identify potential development and land management opportunities, Government departments and public landowners should undertake strategic reviews of their land holdings. They should agree

disposal and implementation strategy at the regional level with the Regional Assembly and other partners, covering both development and non-development land paying particular attention to the potential to increase the land available for affordable housing and the generation of cross subsidy to deliver it. This strategy should be implemented at the local level, and local authorities should facilitate appropriate proposals through provision in the Local Development Framework.

Part B – Cross-cutting Spatial Policies

Inter-regional Connectivity

I.14 The South East region is large and diverse, but it also cannot be viewed in isolation. In some parts of the region the relationship, in both spatial planning and other terms, to the adjoining areas of neighbouring regions is crucial and it is likely to evolve and grow in significance over the period of the Plan.

I.15 The foremost inter-relationship is with London. The economic, travel and housing connections between the two regions are of fundamental importance to the South East. London creates demands on the South East for services such as water and waste facilities, as well as housing. London, in turn, provides substantial economic opportunities and wealth creation for this region, notably in central London. Business and other relationships between the two regions are dynamic and already showing elements of change, with journey to work routes growing more complex and, in areas such as the Western Corridor, increasingly multi-directional. Research into potential changes in these patterns has been undertaken.

I.16 The research comprises three major components:

- i** A joint study of commuting patterns with London and the East of England regions²
- ii** A joint study of evolving business patterns across the wider South East

for the European Union. It incorporates a comparative assessment of the major North European city regions³

iii A study for the Assembly of current and potential economic relationship between the London and South East regions.⁴

I.17 Further details of the results of this research are available on the Assembly's website and in the Plan. They naturally vary in their detailed implications and recommendations. But what is striking is the degree of common ground. They confirm that much of the South East is part of a unique world-class region centred on London and operating on a different scale to any other such region in northern Europe. They confirm that inter-dependency is growing in parts of the region, and that indeed areas such as West Kent are particularly dependent on their relationship with London. Equally significantly, the relationship in the west of the region shows greater mutual dependence rather than London domination, and a broad commuting balance. Indeed some parts of the west are showing increasing economic independence and diversity, creating a relatively high degree of polycentricity. This developing and diverse pattern is fostered by the Plan, in the context of close and strengthening working relations with London.

I.18 The relationship with other regions is less powerful, but will be of growing significance in respect of the two major Growth Areas that straddle the regional boundary – Thames Gateway and Milton Keynes/South Midlands. These Growth Areas need to be planned and developed in a co-ordinated and integrated manner and, to varying degrees, mechanisms have been established. They involve London and East of England regions in respect of the Thames Gateway, and East of England and East Midlands regions for Milton Keynes/South Midlands. Joint arrangements to monitor progress and

undertake common research have therefore been established.

I.19 Links with the Swindon area of the South West are likely to grow in the Plan period, but the relationship with the Bournemouth area seems of less significance. Research for this Plan has indicated that existing links with the West Midlands and Nord-Pas de Calais regions are less significant than was originally envisaged. They nevertheless need to be taken into account, especially as they may grow in significance over the Plan period. Appropriate monitoring and joint working arrangements will therefore be put in place.

POLICY CC7: INTER-REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

The Assembly will engage in joint research programmes and partnerships with neighbouring regions in order to address issues of common interest. These will especially relate to the economy, housing, transport, natural resources and water. The relationship with London will be of special significance but, over the Plan period, linkages with the East of England and East Midlands regions will grow in economic, social and environmental terms. The scope for further links with the South West, West Midlands and Nord-Pas de Calais regions will be kept under review.

Urban Focus and Urban Renaissance

I.20 Previous Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9) emphasised the twin themes of an urban focus and the achievement of an urban renaissance. This Plan reinforces these themes. Future development should be focused in and around urban areas, in order to make best use of the region's valuable and finite land resource and develop more sustainable patterns of development and lifestyles. Our analysis has shown that intensifying the use of urban areas offers

FOOTNOTES

² Cambridge Econometrics, WSP and LSE (2005) 'Commuter Flows in London and the Wider South East 2001 to 2016/21'

³ Sir Peter Hall (2005) 'Trends and messages from POLYNET'

⁴ Centre for Economics and Business Research (2005) 'Symbiosis or sibling rivalry? The future links between London and the South East'

many benefits in terms of maximising the viability of existing infrastructure and service provision at the same time as protecting the countryside of the South East. It can help to enhance the viability of public transport infrastructure through the increase of populations within catchments served by rail and bus services. Potential benefits in terms of sustaining established service provision range from community services such as education, health, social and cultural facilities, to water and energy supply.

POLICY CC8a: URBAN FOCUS AND URBAN RENAISSANCE

The prime focus for development in the South East should be urban areas, in order to foster accessibility to employment, housing, retail and other services, and avoid unnecessary travel.

Local planning authorities should formulate policies to:

- i Concentrate development within the region's urban areas**
- ii Seek to achieve at least 60% of all new development in the South East on previously developed land and through conversions of existing buildings**
- iii Ensure that developments in and around urban areas, including urban infill/intensification and new urban extensions are well designed and consistent with the principles of urban renaissance and sustainable development**
- iv Use urban potential studies to identify the scope for redevelopment and intensification of urban areas, seeking opportunities for intensification around transport hubs and interchanges.**

- I.21** The Regional Transport Strategy established the principle of regional hubs as settlements where the provision of (or potential to provide) a range of multimodal transport services supports the concentration of land uses and economic activity in a suitable manner. As accessible settlements of regional significance they should be the focus for development and investment in the transport system that

leads to an increase in the overall level of accessibility, thereby supporting the urban focus of the spatial strategy. Regional Hubs should aspire to accommodate higher density development, meet the economic and social needs of the settlement, and develop enhanced links to the local economic area in order to provide a highly accessible focus for employment, community, retail, leisure and cultural services. The Plan identifies 21 Regional Hubs. These are listed in Box CCI.

- I.22** The concept of hubs as centres of economic activity and transport services is one that is applicable at all levels of the planning framework. Settlements that provide lower order functions could be identified as sub-regional hubs, while the application of the hub concept to rural communities reinforces the importance of local service provision. The balance between service provision, development density and the transport requirements will vary according to the level at which this is applied.

BOX CCI

Regional Hubs

Ashford	Medway Town
Aylesbury	Milton Keynes
Brighton	Oxford
Basingstoke	Portsmouth
Canterbury	Reading
Crawley/Gatwick	Reigate/Redhill
Ebbsfleet	Slough
Guildford	Southampton
Hastings	Tonbridge-Tunbridge Wells
High Wycombe	
Maidstone	Woking

Guidance on the strategic role of individual hubs is, where appropriate, provided in the individual sub-regional strategies (Section E).

POLICY CC8b: REGIONAL HUBS

Relevant regional strategies, local development documents and Local Transport Plans will include policies and proposals that support and develop the role of regional hubs by:

- i Giving priority to measures that increase the level of accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling**
- ii Encouraging higher density land uses and/or mixed land uses that require a high level of accessibility so as to create 'living centres'**
- iii Giving priority to the development of high quality interchange facilities between all modes of transport.**

- I.23** Two Regional Hubs – Maidstone and Tonbridge-Tunbridge Wells – are not located within one of the nine sub-regional areas. Both are identified as accessible settlements of regional significance with Maidstone identified as having the potential to accommodate significantly higher levels of development during the Plan period than other urban settlements located outside the sub-regional strategy areas. The Maidstone LDF is exploring options for development in the form of urban extensions and/or a new community that would provide for up to an additional 1,000 dwellings above the level set out in Policy HI. The results of this work will feed into the South East Plan at a subsequent stage in the process.

- I.24** The spatial strategy promotes urban renaissance by making provision for development at the major urban areas of Maidstone-Medway Gap and at Tonbridge-Tunbridge Wells. The Maidstone and Medway Gap⁵ urban areas are located outside the Metropolitan Green Belt and AONB and accordingly they will provide the majority of the housing provision for the area of Kent not covered by the Kent

Thames Gateway and East Kent and Ashford sub-regions. A strategic gap has been defined separating Maidstone from the Medway Towns and the Medway Gap urban areas, and a North Downs Special Landscape Area has been defined. The Maidstone LDF should ensure that land releases at Maidstone do not prejudice these areas. Full and effective use of development capacity should be pursued within the urban areas of Tonbridge-Tunbridge Wells that are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

- I.25** The role of the two hubs is regionally significant and a specific policy on the role of these hubs is provided below.

POLICY CC8c: REGIONAL HUBS: MAIDSTONE AND TONBRIDGE-TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Local Development Frameworks will make provision for development at the Regional Hubs of Maidstone and at Tonbridge-Tunbridge Wells as follows:

- i At Maidstone there will be new provision for housing, and employment of sub regional significance, with an emphasis on higher quality jobs to enhance its role as the county town and a centre for business. The concentration of retail, leisure and service uses at the centre will allow close integration between employment, housing and public transport**
- ii Full and effective use of development capacity will be pursued within the Regional Hub of Tonbridge-Tunbridge Wells. This should provide for a balance of business, commercial and residential development with particular attention paid to meeting locally based needs for housing and business premises, and improving the links between the two urban areas. The prime consideration at the urban area of Tunbridge Wells will be the conservation of the built and**

FOOTNOTES

⁵ The Medway Gap urban area is in the eastern part of Tonbridge and Malling Borough outside the Green Belt

natural environment, the setting of the town and its location within the Green Belt and High Weald AONB. At Tonbridge development will be concentrated on substantial regeneration sites in and near to the town centre

- iii Confirm the broad scale of new business and related development already identified and give priority to completion of the major employment sites in Maidstone
- iv Maidstone and Tonbridge should be the focus for expansion and investment in new further or higher education facilities
- v High quality proposals for intensifying or expanding the technology and knowledge sectors will be supported at established and suitable new locations.

Intra-regional Disparities

- 1.26** The South East region contains significant variations in socio-economic performance, and tackling these intra-regional disparities is a key objective for both the South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy. Policy CC9 identifies these spatial disparities in economic performance and deprivation, and advocates coordinated and consistent intervention by a range of partners to address these. The intention, in conjunction with the Plan's sub-regional strategies, is to achieve a step change in socio-economic performance through collective action. Securing the objectives of Policy CC9 will be dependent on the successful delivery of a wide range of policies in the Plan that address these objectives, as well as other regional and local strategies including the Regional Economic Strategy.
- 1.27** Indicators including the Indices of Multiple Deprivation show that the deepest and most extensive levels of deprivation are in the economically-underperforming coastal parts of the region, across an area broadly corresponding with the sub-regions of Kent Thames Gateway, East Kent and Ashford, Sussex Coast, South Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight Special Policy Area. This contrasts

with the scattered pockets of intense deprivation that can be found within the economically strong sub-regions. Examples are found within the urban areas of Oxford, Milton Keynes, Reading and Slough. Other, predominantly rural, parts of the South East outside the sub-regions are characterised by relatively strong socio-economic performance but with small scattered pockets of localised deprivation.

- 1.28** The causes of deprivation and wider socio-economic exclusion vary significantly across the region. In the coastal belt they are more often associated with limited employment opportunities, poor strategic accessibility and constraints arising from transport infrastructure, and a narrow skills-base. The extensive nature of economic underperformance and socio-economic deprivation in these sub-regions is of regional significance and past experience illustrates that this will not be adequately addressed solely through local area based interventions, but will require structural economic change and diversification to provide new employment opportunities as part of a package of measures to reduce deprivation.
- 1.29** In the higher performing sub-regional economies and other parts of the region (and in contrast to the coastal sub regions) the incidence of multiple deprivation is not as strongly related to general economic performance or employment opportunities but rather more localised social and economic exclusion, which requires tailored interventions to address specific groups or localities.
- 1.30** The Plan as a whole provides a suite of regional policies that together seek to address these issues, in particular:
- i CC5, to bring forward necessary infrastructure
 - ii RE2, to bring forward appropriate sites and premises
 - iii RE3, S5 and S6 addressing educational and skills issues
 - iv RE5, tackling underlying weaknesses in the economic structure



- v H3, H4 and H7, regarding the location of housing, seeking renewal where necessary, and addressing affordability
- vi T1, enabling improvements to strategic accessibility
- vii BE1 and BE3, enabling urban renaissance and renewal
- viii TC3 and TC4, encouraging management and regeneration of town centres
- ix S1 and S8, promoting social inclusion and increased provision of community infrastructure
- x S3 and S4, tackling public health issues and health service provision
- xi TSRI, TSR4 and TSR7, facilitating and managing tourism-based regeneration, and diversifying the coastal economies.

- 1.31** The sub-regional strategies provide further detailed guidance on the interventions required in specific parts of region. Individual pockets of deprivation in the rest of the region should be the focus for concerted local action by a range of partners.

POLICY CC9: ADDRESSING INTRA-REGIONAL DISPARITIES

Local authorities and other national, regional and local partners in the public, private and voluntary sector should align policies and programmes to reduce the overall extent of, and as a result the significant spatial disparities in, socio-economic deprivation across the region. Specifically they should focus funding and initiatives to:

- i Address the extensive regeneration needs

of the following sub-regions – East Kent and Ashford; Kent Thames Gateway; South Hampshire; Sussex Coast; and the Isle of Wight Special Policy Area

ii Implement appropriate actions to address the pockets of deprivation and broader exclusion issues facing other parts of the region both inside and outside sub-regional strategy areas.

Green Belts

- 1.32** The Government has confirmed its continuing commitment to the Green Belt as an instrument of planning policy, and consultation has confirmed very strong public support for the concept. Green Belts fulfil five main functions: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; to preserve the special character and setting of historic towns; and to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. All of these functions are consistent with the Assembly's vision for the South East, and the Assembly considers that there is no case for any strategic review of Green Belt within the region.

POLICY CCI0a: GREEN BELTS

The existing Green Belts in the region will be retained and supported and the opportunity should be taken to improve their land-use management and access as part of initiatives to improve the urban rural fringe.



If there are any cases for small scale local review, these can be pursued through the Local Development Framework process.

Strategic Gaps

- I.33** For most of the South East, Green Belt policy does not apply. In some parts of the region Structure Plans and Local Plans have included policies to identify and protect gaps between settlements, to avoid coalescence of specific urban areas and maintain their identity. However there is no national guidance on the issue of strategic gaps and definition of these gaps has varied considerably.
- I.34** Therefore it is appropriate and necessary for the South East Plan to include a policy on this subject, identifying criteria to ensure a more consistent approach is taken by those authorities who wish to identify gaps, and to ensure these gaps are strategic, rather than what may be more correctly regarded as 'local', in function.
- I.35** Where necessary, local authorities should identify strategic gaps in their Local Development Documents that fulfil the criteria set out in Policy CCI0b. The primary purpose of these gaps must be to prevent coalescence of settlements and maintain their identity. Where a gap crosses local authority boundaries, the local authorities should prepare a joint LDD for the gap.
- I.36** Limited small-scale development in accordance with other policies within the South East Plan, principally Countryside and Landscape Management Policies C1-C3, should be permitted within strategic gaps as long as such development would not compromise the fundamental integrity and purpose of the gap.
- I.37** Strategic gaps also have the potential to increase biodiversity and provide other environmental and health benefits, in the way that other areas of countryside or urban rural fringe do (see section D7 policies C1-C4, and section D8 policy

BE4), and full opportunity should be taken to maximise these benefits where gaps are adopted. However, these benefits are coincidental to the primary purpose of strategic gaps, and decisions about whether gaps should or should not be adopted must be solely based on the criteria set out in Policy CCI0b.

- I.38** If a local authority wishes to identify a gap that does not fulfil the strategic gap policy criteria, for example to protect an area of important open space or to help ensure local settlement identity is protected, they should assess whether it is appropriate to seek to designate it as a local gap in a Local Development Document (or joint LDDs where the gap crosses local authority boundaries). The local authority/authorities should provide justification for such a designation, with due consideration to the guidance provided in Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, which states that local landscape designations should only be maintained or exceptionally extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based planning policies, utilising tools such as landscape character assessment, cannot provide the necessary protection.

POLICY CCI0b: STRATEGIC GAPS

Where there is a need to prevent the coalescence of settlements in order to retain their separate identity, local authorities may identify the location and boundaries of strategic gaps in a Local Development Document (or joint LDD where the gap crosses more than one local authority) if the following criteria are met:

- i** The gap will prevent the coalescence of settlements each with a resident population greater than 10,000 persons
- ii** The gap must be no greater in size than is necessary, and in all cases no greater than five miles at its widest point.

Development should only be permitted in a strategic gap where it would not

compromise, individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development, the fundamental integrity and purpose of the gap.

Supporting an Ageing Population

- I.39** Demographic changes highlight the need to take account of the ageing population. Available projections for the UK suggest that the South East will have the third largest number of people over 65 of all the English regions. The South East already has some of the greatest concentrations of those aged over 75 in the country, particularly along the South Coast. More older people will be living in the southern part of England in the next 20 years due to migration at retirement and higher life expectancies.
- I.40** Although to date the elderly are tending to live longer and be healthier this major rise in the very elderly will present a demand for more health and social support. At present 25% of pensioners live alone and this may increase as more people chose to remain single. There will be a need for ongoing policies that support older people living alone at home, enable them to maintain active lives physically and socially and provide social and hospital support when required.
- I.41** There will need to be careful consideration within transport plans to ensure continued mobility of the elderly. Housing policies should specifically consider how to enable people to stay at home, and urban and rural planning should consider the needs of the very elderly. There is a shortage of residential

and nursing home places in the region as that sector finds it hard to exist in the market. The continued increase in growth in the region, high land prices and difficulty in employing people in the low pay sector will exacerbate this. The increase in the elderly will continue to put pressure on those still economically active, a group falling in size, and the young elderly as carers and supporters. All policies should consider this.

POLICY CCI I: SUPPORTING AN AGEING POPULATION

In order to reflect a significant increase in the proportion of older people in the region over the Plan period, local authorities and public agencies should pay particular regard in Local Development Frameworks and other programmes to assessing and planning for the social needs that will arise. Policies and programmes should particularly address the following issues:

- i** The need to adapt the existing housing stock and make provision in new housing developments to support older people living independent lives in their own homes (Lifetime Homes)
- ii** The provision of reasonable access to services, through the provision of public transport and the extension of communications and information technology
- iii** The provision of leisure, recreational and community facilities that help older people maintain healthy lifestyles
- iv** Facilitating access to training and development opportunities that support available employment for the workforce beyond the existing retirement age.

Character of the environment and quality of life

I.42 The South East has a high quality environment with a rich heritage of historic buildings, landscapes and habitats. This is reflected in the coverage of protective designations and contributes to the region's identity and the quality of life residents and visitors enjoy. Development to meet social and economic needs must be undertaken in a way so as to protect and, wherever possible, enhance these valuable assets and contribute to the sustainable development of the region in the long term.

POLICY CCI 2: CHARACTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Actions and decisions associated with development and the use of land should actively encourage the conservation, and where appropriate the enhancement of the character, distinctiveness, and sense of place of settlements and landscapes throughout the region. Opportunities for creating a high quality environment should be sought, based on a shared vision that places emphasis on good design, innovation, sustainability and achieving a high quality of life.