

The Deputy Prime Minister
26 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2WH

27 March 2006

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

DRAFT SOUTH EAST PLAN

On behalf of the Regional Assembly I am pleased to submit to you today our draft South East Plan. This Regional Spatial Strategy sets out the proposed planning framework for South East England for the period 2006 to 2026.

We have prepared the Plan in our role as Regional Planning Body under the terms of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, in accordance with the guidance set out in PPS11: Regional Planning. The draft Plan is underpinned by levels of research and consultation that we believe to be the most extensive undertaken at the regional level.

The draft Plan comprises:

- Executive Summary
- Core Document (regional and sub-regional policies)
- Implementation Plan
- Monitoring Framework
- Sustainability Appraisal Summary
- Pre-submission Consultation Statement

One of the challenges facing the South East if it is to continue to grow and prosper - and do so sustainably - is the need for people and companies in the region to make significant changes in behaviour; for example, in the way they use resources, and in their approach to transport and waste. We wish to emphasise that such ambitions require clear support at the national as well as the regional level.

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As well as behavioural change, there is an urgent need for substantial investment in the capacity of the region's infrastructure. The Plan is adamant that this is an essential pre-condition to delivering planned levels of growth. This extends to finding new ways to deliver investment, such as the proposal we made in our Regional Funding Allocations advice to establish a Regional Infrastructure Fund.

The Implementation Plan is an integral part of the draft South East Plan. Drawing on advice received from local authorities and other stakeholders, it sets out how the policies and proposals will be delivered across the region. It is, however, work in progress; we are still refining the details and priorities and will submit an updated version of the Implementation Plan as part of our evidence to the Examination in Public.

The Partial Reviews

The draft South East Plan builds upon the partial reviews of the current Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9) that have been completed over the course of the past three years. In the majority of cases, the alterations resulting from the partial reviews have been taken forward into the draft South East Plan.

In respect of transport, you published alterations to RPG9 in July 2004. Those policies have formed the basis for the communications and transport chapter of the draft Plan. Where appropriate they have been updated to reflect more recent Government guidance and changes in the structure of the rail sector. However, the Assembly has concluded from its own research that the level of planned growth in aviation identified by the Government's Aviation White Paper is unsustainable. We have therefore prepared this draft Plan on the basis that activity at Heathrow and Gatwick Airports does not go beyond the current planning limits – i.e. two runways and five terminals at Heathrow, and one runway and two terminals at Gatwick.

In respect of tourism, you published alterations to RPG9 in November 2004. We have rolled forward these policies into the draft Plan with only minor amendments, which clarify the application of policies to regional casinos and to amend the locational criteria applying to regionally significant tourist attractions.

In respect of energy, you published alterations to RPG9 in November 2004. The majority of these policies have been taken forward unchanged into the draft South East Plan. However, Policy EN1 has been amended to reflect issues raised during consultation, new information and practice, as well as updated guidance set out in PPS22. Policy EN1 now contains a clause encouraging developers to provide at least 10% of the development's energy demand from renewable sources for housing schemes of over ten dwellings and commercial schemes of over 1,000m².

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In respect of minerals, we are expecting you to publish alterations to RPG9 in spring 2006. The majority of these policies have been taken forward unchanged into the draft Plan, with apportionments rolled forward to 2026 on the same basis as set out in the partial review. In response to the recommendation by the Panel, the content of Policy M2 has been updated and now includes apportionment by Minerals Planning Authority of the overall 2016 target for recycled aggregates.

In respect of waste, we are expecting you to publish alterations to RPG9 in spring 2006. The majority of these policies have been taken forward unchanged into the draft South East Plan. However, a number of amendments have been made to take account of new information and in response to the recommendations of the Panel. The main changes are as follows:

- Policy W3 Regional Self-Sufficiency: changes to the amount of waste exported to the region from London and sub-regional apportionment of this waste;
- Policy W10 Regionally Significant Facilities: specification of the need for resource recovery parks and a network of collection and bulking facilities;
- Policy W15 Hazardous Waste: identification of priority needs for new infrastructure.

Sub-regional Strategies

The draft South East Plan also builds upon the agreed strategies for the two growth areas of Ashford and Milton Keynes/South Midlands.

You published the policy framework for Ashford as an alteration to RPG9 in July 2004. This framework covers the period to 2016. It has been included unchanged in the draft Plan within the sub-regional strategy for East Kent and Ashford.

You published a sub-regional strategy for Milton Keynes and South Midlands in March 2005 as a partial revision to the Regional Spatial Strategies for the East of England, East Midlands and South East England. This strategy covers the period to 2021, and the Part B statement for Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale forms the basis for this sub-regional aspect of the draft South East Plan. The proposed level of growth for the sub-region has been rolled forward five years from 2021 to 2026 in accordance with the provisional planning assumptions (to 2031) contained in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Part A statement. Further work is underway to develop the detail of the policy framework for the Milton Keynes urban area for the period to 2031. The outcome of this work will be made available to the Panel prior to the Examination in Public.

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Structure Plans

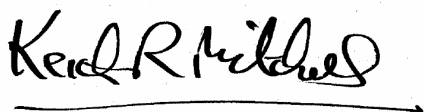
The Assembly does not recommend making special provision for the “saving” of policies in existing Structure Plans over and above the arrangements already in existence.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

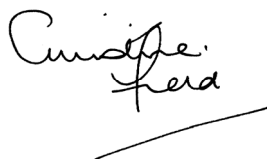
Circular 01/2006 Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites was published on 2 February 2006. The Circular requires Regional Spatial Strategies to take a strategic view of Gypsy and Traveller needs across the region and identify the number of pitches required for each local planning authority, in the light of local authority Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs). The Circular acknowledges, however, that a full consideration of need cannot be undertaken in advance of local authority led GTAAs. The draft Plan commits us to an immediate partial review of the South East Plan in relation to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. We have liaised with the Government Office South East on the arrangements for this review, which we expect to complete in early 2008.

Now we have submitted our draft Plan to you, under the terms of PPS11 a period of formal consultation commences. As our consultation statement attests, in order to reach this stage the Assembly, with our local authorities and stakeholders, achieved an exceptional scale of community engagement. We are accordingly taking steps to ensure that there is strong public awareness now of the opportunity to make further comments on the Plan in its current form to the independent panel conducting the Examination in Public. Our hope is that Government for its part will take similar steps.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Keith Mitchell
Chairman of the Assembly



Cllr Christine Field
Chairman
Regional Planning
Committee



Paul Bevan
Chief Executive