



PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION STATEMENT

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I. Introduction

Duties and Background

- I.1** The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 gave regional assemblies, as regional planning bodies, the responsibility for producing a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). To fulfil the provisions of the 2004 Act, the South East England Regional Assembly has produced a draft South East Plan, which once approved by Government, will become the statutory planning document for the region, providing a framework for sustainable development to 2026.
- I.2** Planning Policy Statement II (PPSII) published in September 2004 provides advice on developing an RSS, with Annex D focusing on consultation requirements.
- I.3** In the South East, however, the Regional Assembly began work on developing the South East Plan before publication of PPSII. In anticipation of the RSS duties included in the 2004 Act, the Assembly began the process of stakeholder consultation in summer 2003. As a result the initial stages of consultation in the South East are based on the provisions of the earlier Planning Policy Guidance II (PPGII) rather than PPSII.
- I.4** On 2 April 2004 the Assembly Executive Committee approved a Communications and Engagement Strategy for the South East Plan. Publication of PPSII in September 2004 required the Assembly to produce a Statement of Public Participation (SPP).
- I.5** An initial draft SPP was discussed with the Assembly's Policy Advisory Group, Strategic Advisory Group, Cross-Cutting Group, South East Economic Partnerships and the South East County Associations Forum, representing town and parish councils. Government Office for the South East (GOSE) views were also sought.
- I.6** The draft SPP was debated by the

Assembly's Regional Planning Committee (RPC) on 29 September 2004 and subsequently approved by the Executive Committee on 22 October 2004. The SPP was updated in May 2005 to include an annex detailing response rates to the Assembly's public consultation from January to April 2005. Both versions of the SPP and the Communications and Engagement Strategy are available on the Assembly website www.southeast-ra.gov.uk

- I.7** While the Assembly's early start on consultation means that some information may not be presented in the exact format required by PPSII, it is felt that overall the Assembly has significantly exceeded pre-submission consultation requirements. Indeed, some of the Assembly's early consultation – such as MORI opinion polls – is highlighted as best practice in PPSII.

Maximising Opportunities for Involvement

- I.8** At the outset of the Regional Assembly's work on the RSS in 2003, it was agreed that maximising opportunities for input from Assembly members, stakeholders and the public was vital to ensure the South East Plan accurately reflected the region's needs and preferences.
- I.9** This approach is reflected in both the full programme of pre-submission consultation events planned by the Assembly and the range of extra curricular member workshops that enabled Assembly members to participate extensively in development of the Plan and its policies. Member workshops provided valuable time for debate and discussion of policy options and technical information, however all key decisions on the Plan were made in the Assembly's regular committee meetings or plenary meetings, all of which are open to press and public.
- I.10** In addition to wide-ranging stakeholder and member involvement, the Assembly also carried out opinion polls to gauge public views on key elements of the Plan and held 12 weeks' non-statutory public consultation.

- I.11** Key opportunities for stakeholder, member and public involvement are shown in Table I below.

- I.12** Work to raise the profile of the South East Plan has been assisted by early development of a distinct design and 'brand' for the Plan. This brand has been used on all relevant material (both print and web) since March 2004, aiding recognition of Plan information and consultation materials among all key target audiences.

- I.13** Another important factor was the launch of a dedicated South East Plan website linked to the Assembly main site <http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/index.html>. The dedicated site continues to provide wide access to policy papers tracking development of the Plan, provides feedback on events such as the Spring Debates and publicises meetings and consultation opportunities.

TABLE I

Key opportunities for involvement

Date	Event	Participants	Consultation	Policy Stage
July 2003	Rural conference	Stakeholders, Assembly members	Pre Assembly* consultation	Identify issues
July 2003	Workshop for advisory groups	Stakeholders	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
July 2003	Voluntary sector briefing	Stakeholders, Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
Sep 2003	Urban conference	Stakeholders, Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
Sep 2003	Member workshop on project plan	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
Sep 2003	Regional Planning Committee (RPC) agrees project plan	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
Dec 2003	South East Plan Cross-cutting advisory group established	Stakeholders, Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
Jan-Mar 2004	MORI wave 1 survey	Public	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
Jan-Feb 2004	Five 'futures' workshops	Assembly members, staff, stakeholders	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
Mar 2004	Member workshop on key plan topics	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
April 2004	Additional Plenary meeting to debate key issues for Plan	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
April 2004	Executive Committee agrees Communications and Engagement Strategy	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
April-May 2004	18 Spring Debates	Stakeholders, Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
May-Jun 2004	MORI wave 2 survey	Public	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
June 2004	Member workshop on Plan content and timing	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues

*Pre Assembly consultation refers to consultation activities carried out before the Assembly's 12-week public consultation from January to April 2005.

TABLE I – CONTINUED

Key opportunities for involvement				
Date	Event	Participants	Consultation	Policy Stage
July 2004	Workshop for Government departments	Key staff from Government departments	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
July 2004	Plenary meeting agrees issues and parameters for draft Plan	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Identify issues
Sep 2004	Member workshop on scale of change, spatial options, sustainability	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Develop policies and options
Oct 2004	Workshop for advisory groups	Stakeholders	Pre Assembly consultation	Develop policies and options
Oct 2004	Executive Committee agrees Statement of Public Participation	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Develop policies and options
Nov 2004	RPC debates consultation draft Plan, eg spatial options and housing growth	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Develop policies and options
Nov 2004	Inter-regional workshop	Assembly members and officers from other regions	Pre Assembly consultation	Develop policies and options
Nov 2004	Plenary meeting agrees draft Plan for public consultation, including key options	Assembly members	Pre Assembly consultation	Develop policies and options
Dec 2004-Jan 2005	Three briefings for MPs (by political party)	MPs	Pre Assembly consultation	Develop policies and options
Jan-April 2005	12-week public consultation period	Stakeholders, Assembly members, public	Assembly regional public consultation	Regional public consultation
Jan 2005	Briefing for Government departments	Government department key staff	Assembly regional public consultation	Regional public consultation
Jan-Mar 2005	MORI wave 3 survey	Public	Assembly regional public consultation	Regional public consultation
Jan-April 2005	Over 3 million household Your Shout! questionnaires distributed	Public	Assembly regional public consultation	Regional public consultation
Jan-April 2005	97 consultation meetings	Stakeholders, Assembly members, public	Assembly regional public consultation	Regional public consultation
Feb-Mar 2005	Workshops for hard-to-reach groups	Stakeholders	Assembly regional public consultation	Regional public consultation
Feb-Mar 2005	ICM opinion poll commissioned by South East Counties	Public	Assembly regional public consultation	Regional public consultation
Mar 2005	Workshop on inter-regional issues	South East and South West Assembly members	Assembly regional public consultation	Regional public consultation
May 2005	Member workshop on consultation responses	Assembly members	Post Assembly consultation	Refine Plan policies
May 2005	Inter-regional workshop	Assembly members and officers from other regions	Post Assembly consultation	Refine Plan policies
June 2005	Member workshop on sub-regions, sustainability	Assembly members	Post Assembly consultation	Refine Plan policies
July 2005	Plenary meeting agrees Plan regional policies	Assembly members	Post Assembly consultation	Refine Plan policies

TABLE I – CONTINUED

Key opportunities for involvement				
Date	Event	Participants	Consultation	Policy Stage
July 2005	South East Plan regional policies handed to Government			
Autumn 2005	Six weeks' sub-regional consultation by local authorities	Stakeholders, Assembly members, public	Local public consultation	Local public consultation
Jan 2006	Member workshop on sub-regional issues	Assembly members	Post consultation	Refine Plan policies
Feb 2006	RPC recommends sub-regional policies for approval	Assembly members	Post consultation	Refine Plan policies
Mar 2006	Plenary meeting agrees full plan for submission to Government	Assembly members	Post consultation	Refine Plan policies
Mar 2006	South East submits full draft Plan to Government			
Mar-Jun 2006	Formal public consultation		Consultation on behalf of an independent panel of inspectors	
Nov 2006	Examination in Public begins			

Target Audiences

1.14 Target audiences for the various stages of consultation are included briefly in Table 1 above. The Assembly's approach has been to involve stakeholders widely in discussions about the scope and scale of the South East Plan from the earliest stages. Public views were also incorporated into the early part of Plan development via two MORI opinion polls in 2004. This work ensured that information and advice presented to Assembly members for decision was representative of views within the region.

1.15 Once key consultation options were agreed, a full draft of the South East Plan was published for 12 weeks' public consultation. During this time responses were encouraged from stakeholders and public. This was backed up by a third MORI opinion poll during the consultation period and a separate ICM poll by the South East County Councils. Media have also been targeted throughout the Plan development process as a way of raising awareness and encouraging involvement among both stakeholders and public.

1.16 Stakeholders – The Assembly draws its definition of stakeholders broadly. Table 2 illustrates the types of organisations we have involved in the Plan development process as stakeholders. The target groups within these organisations include both elected representatives and officers. Typically these groups or organisations will have been invited to attend events such as the Urban and Rural Conferences in 2003 and the Spring Debates in 2004. They received consultation drafts of the South East Plan and many also received bulk copies of our public consultation leaflet for cascading. In targeting stakeholders, the Assembly also depends on those stakeholders to act as umbrella organisations and cascade information to their constituent members. Representatives of many stakeholder organisations are also involved in Assembly Advisory Groups. We have not provided a comprehensive list of each organisation contacted during Plan development as this runs to more than 5,000 organisations (see Table 2 overleaf).

TABLE 2

Examples of Assembly stakeholder groups involved in the Plan

<i>*indicates statutory consultee</i>	South East businesses
All Assembly members	Utilities providers * (eg gas, electricity, telecoms, sewerage and water)
South East MPs and MEPs	Health organisations (eg Strategic Health Authorities*, trusts)
All county, unitary and district councils in the South East*	Education organisations
All county district and unitary councils that share a border with the South East region*	Sports organisations
Town and parish councils in and adjoining the South East region*	Housing associations
Assembly advisory groups	Transport groups and organisations (eg Strategic Rail Authority*)
New Forest National Park	Urban regeneration groups and organisations
Regional planning bodies sharing a border with the South East region*	Rural interest groups and organisations
Regional development agencies sharing a border with the South East region*	Countryside and landowner groups
Local Strategic Partnerships in the South East region	Trade unions
South East regional organisations (eg SEEDA, GOSE, RAISE)	South East Forum for Sustainability
Central Government departments	Environmental groups and charities
Government agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies (eg Environment Agency*, Countryside Agency*, English Heritage*, English Nature*, Highways Agency, Housing Corporation, Commission for Racial Equality)	UK Youth Parliament South East
Fire and police authorities	Voluntary sector groups and organisations
Business groups and organisations (eg CBI, Federation of Small Businesses, economic partnerships, chambers of commerce)	Faith groups
	Black and minority ethnic groups
	Disability groups and charities
	Community groups and organisations

1.17 Public – The Assembly’s definition of ‘public’ covers individuals who have a connection with the South East, for example they may live or work in the South East or may visit/ travel through the region. In many cases they will not have had prior direct contact with the Assembly. In considering most effective use of resources, the majority of the Assembly’s public-facing work has been targeted at adults aged 15+.

1.18 Media – Throughout the Plan development process, the Assembly has worked proactively with national, regional, local and trade media to ensure stakeholders and public are kept informed of progress on the Plan, opportunities for involvement and key decisions made. Work in this area

has included extensive media liaison to encourage editorial coverage of consultation, supplemented by paid print and radio advertising.

Decision Making Process

1.19 Throughout the process of public and stakeholder involvement, it is Assembly members who have taken all key decisions. The stages of the process have been simplified (see Table 3) to illustrate the Assembly’s approach.

Responses

1.20 The Assembly would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who have taken an interest in the South East Plan

TABLE 3

Decision making process

STAGE 1: Initial inputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information from public opinion polls, consultation and stakeholder involvement Technical advice from Assembly officers and advisory groups and sub-regional partnerships
STAGE 2: Member review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debate at member workshops and RPC meetings Recommendations from RPC
STAGE 3: Member decisions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions made after debate at Executive Committees or Plenary meetings

since 2003, as broad engagement across the region is vital to ensure acceptance of the Plan.

1.21 With 78,345 respondents providing feedback on the South East Plan at regional level alone, the Assembly feels it has achieved the key PPS11 objective of ensuring the widest possible community involvement in developing the Plan. Table 4 sets out regional response rates.

1.22 Information from principal authorities, who led on local consultation, shows their combined figure for respondents is a further 16,856, bringing total consultation responses for the two levels of consultation to 95,201.

Analysis of Regional Respondents

1.23 The consultation programme provided feedback from across the region:

- i** Public opinion polling by MORI and ICM was structured to ensure responses from a representative sample of South East residents, matched to the demographic pattern in the region
- ii** Written responses came from stakeholder organisations throughout the South East. Written responses were also received from individuals but lack

TABLE 4

Regional consultation responses

2004	MORI wave 1 survey	1,839
2004	MORI wave 2 survey	1,873
2005	Public consultation – written responses	2,646
2005	Public consultation – Your Shout! questionnaires	61,746
2005	MORI wave 3 survey	2,003
2005	ICM poll by South East Counties	8,238
	Total	78,345

of personal details makes demographic analysis of these impossible

iii Your Shout! questionnaires showed a good geographic spread across the region (see Table 5 below) but a heavy bias towards older respondents. Some 65% of respondents were aged over 55, although this age group makes up only 34% of the South East population.

TABLE 5

Geographic spread of Your Shout! responses

	Responses received	% of responses received	% of households by county
<i>Base: All South East respondents providing identifiable postcodes</i>			
Berkshire unitaries	6,771	11	9
Buckinghamshire	3,333	6	8
East Sussex	7,498	13	9
Hampshire	9,765	17	19
Isle of Wight	848	1	4
Kent	15,032	25	20
Oxfordshire	5,074	9	8
Surrey	6,438	11	13
West Sussex	4,566	8	10
Total	59,325*	100	100

*A further 2,421 did not have full postcodes

Handling Regional Responses

- 1.24** At the early stages of Plan development, feedback from stakeholder events such as the Spring Debates was analysed in-house by the Assembly's planning team. For public consultation three external support contractors were engaged to help analyse responses in the short time available between close of consultation on 15 April and reporting findings to an Assembly member workshop on 26 May. The Assembly planning team focused its resources on responses from Assembly member organisations and regional bodies, while contractors Ubiquis and WS Atkins analysed remaining responses. MORI analysed the results of their own public opinion polls and the results of Your Shout! door-to-door questionnaires.
- 1.25** Summary tables in section 5 give an overview of consultation comments received on regional sections of the Plan and how the Assembly has responded. Individual comments received on regional issues are listed alphabetically by respondent on the Assembly's website. <http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/consultation/responses.html>

Handling Local Responses

- 1.26** Principal authorities developed their own approach to analysis of comments, according to local circumstances and resources. Summary tables in section 8 give an overview of key comments raised in local consultation and how these have been reflected in sub-regional strategies.

2. Partnership Working

- 2.1** Throughout development of the draft Plan, the Assembly has worked in partnership to ensure all information presented to Assembly members has a sound technical base and takes account of a wide range of stakeholder views.
- 2.2** In addition to involving stakeholders in events such as 2004's Spring Debates, the

Assembly has also made extensive use of its range of advisory groups and sub-regional partnerships.

- 2.3** Advisory groups comprise individuals with specific technical expertise drawn from local authorities, GOSE, SEEDA, other public sector bodies such as the Environment Agency, professional associations and interest groups across the South East. Some stakeholder Assembly members are also members of advisory groups. They exist to support the Assembly staff in developing technical advice to underpin decisions by Assembly members. The advisory groups have been instrumental in assisting the Assembly to develop policies that are included in the Plan, and in preparing the Monitoring Framework and Implementation Plan. In a number of cases, time-limited task groups have also been established to undertake more detailed research and provide advice on specific topics. Notes of advisory groups are published on the Assembly's website.
- 2.4** Two dedicated workshops for advisory groups were organised to encourage full engagement in the Plan.
- 2.5** The Assembly's full range of advisory groups has been involved in partnership working on different elements of South East Plan, including:
- i Strategy advisory group
 - ii Policy advisory group
 - iii Housing advisory group
 - iv Transport advisory group
 - v Economy advisory group
 - vi Rural advisory group
 - vii Natural resources and climate change advisory group
 - viii South East technical advisory body for waste
 - ix South East England aggregates working party.
- 2.6** Two new advisory groups were set up specifically for the Plan process:
- i Cross cutting group
 - ii Sustainability Appraisal sounding board.



- 2.7** A time limited working group – the Housing Distribution Task Group – was also convened in summer 2005 to provide advice to sub-regional partnerships on technical approaches to distributing housing growth to district level and to agree a common approach to local consultation.
- 2.8** The Assembly's website includes a list of current advisory groups and their members www.southeast-ra.gov.uk. (NB: membership and lifespan of advisory groups is dynamic, so some will have changed over the Plan development period).
- 2.9** Sub-regional partnerships, led by local authorities but also including stakeholder representatives, have worked with the Assembly to develop sub-regional strategies.
- 2.10** Regular meetings of the Advisory Committee on Planning for the South East, East of England and London have also been used to keep abreast of best practice in Plan development across the regions. A number of inter-regional workshops have also been held bringing together Assembly members and officers from the South East England Regional Assembly with colleagues from neighbouring regional assemblies.
- 2.11** In line with the requirements of PPSI I, the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) has had a particularly close involvement in developing the South East Plan. GOSE senior staff have been involved in all Assembly member workshops, committees and Plenary meetings, providing input to help guide member decisions. GOSE representatives have also been invited to all general stakeholder events organised by the Assembly.

3. Stakeholder Involvement

- 3.1** As outlined in the introduction, the Assembly has a broad definition of 'stakeholder' and has made significant efforts to ensure involvement in development of the South East Plan prior to its submission to Government. Details of stakeholder involvement (excluding formal Assembly meetings and regular advisory groups) are set out below.

Pre Assembly Public Consultation

- 3.2** Stakeholders were involved in scoping work for the draft Plan as early as July 2003. They helped shape the key issues and parameters for the Plan approved by the full Assembly in July 2004. They also played a significant role in guiding work on a full consultation draft of the Plan approved by the Assembly in November 2004.
- 3.3** Major milestones in pre Assembly public consultation were:
- i Two regional events to launch the Plan preparation process and identify key issues: Rural Conference in July 2003 and Urban Conference in September 2003
 - ii A series of five 'futures' workshops for Assembly members, staff and stakeholders in January and February 2004. Jointly organised with charity Forum for the Future, they considered social, economic and technical changes possible over the 20-year Plan period

- iii An intense series of 18 sub-regional events - the Spring Debates - in April and May 2004. These debates involved more than 1,000 people, principally from member and stakeholder organisations, in discussing the issues and parameters for the Plan. Feedback on each event was provided via the South East Plan website
- iv Presentations on the Plan at events organised by stakeholder groups to engage their constituents and members. Via a dedicated South East Plan website, the Assembly also provided a 'Hold your own debate' pack of materials for groups wanting to discuss the issues
- v Work with sub-regional partnerships, led by local authorities but including local stakeholders, on studies leading to sub-regional policies for the Plan
- vi Creation of a regular newsletter, South East Plan Update, to keep stakeholders informed about the Plan preparation process, and regular coverage of Plan progress in the Assembly's quarterly stakeholder magazine VOICE.

3.4 This wide ranging stakeholder engagement was significantly complemented by two pieces of public opinion research commissioned from MORI, involving face-to-face interviews and focus groups, in early and mid-2004. Results from the polls are published on the Assembly's website. This work has been enormously important in ensuring the Plan's early stages were based upon a solid, representative range of individual public opinion. It is this approach that has been cited in PPSI I as best practice.

3.5 In the final stages of preparation for the Assembly's public consultation, a leaflet was produced to raise awareness of the forthcoming consultation period. This was distributed to stakeholders for them to cascade to their constituent groups. It was also made available in many libraries and local authority offices.

Assembly Public Consultation

- 3.6** An initial draft South East Plan was published for consultation on 24 January 2005. Consultation ran for 12 weeks (24 January-15 April) inviting feedback on a clear set of options and policies set out in the draft Plan. Responses were invited on a number of key regional choices as well as general comments on content, structure and overall approach. Key choices presented included two proposed regional spatial options and three proposals on regional housing growth.
- 3.7** Consultation was targeted primarily at South East residents aged 15+ (some 6.4 million people). The principal aims of consultation were to:
- i Raise awareness of the South East Plan
 - ii Inform citizens about the key topics in the Plan
 - iii Make residents aware of the opportunities available to give their views on the Plan
 - iv Channel input to the Plan preparation as much as possible through local authorities, umbrella bodies and other stakeholders
 - v Complement these responses with a further wave of public opinion research.

3.8 Assembly member organisations have played a critical role in the consultation process. In particular, the county and unitary councils as principal authorities have a duty under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to work with us on the regional agenda, liaising with their constituent district and local councils, and their Local Strategic Partnerships, to reach local communities and individuals.

3.9 In addition, many district councils and town and parish councils have contributed to cascading the consultation process effectively, as have voluntary sector groups and economic partnerships. As the Assembly's relationships are often with

umbrella organisations rather than with individuals, member and stakeholder help in extending the reach of consultation has been invaluable.

- 3.10** With a recognised role in supporting the regional agenda, county and unitary councils were asked to support the consultation by committing to:
- i Editorial and, if possible, an advertisement in their residents' magazine
 - ii Web editorial and a link to the South East Plan site
 - iii Widely displaying South East Plan leaflets in libraries and public buildings under their control
 - iv Providing access to public deposit copies of the consultation draft of the Plan
 - v Holding a public consultation meeting in every district and unitary council area
 - vi Engaging with LSPs, and with town and parish councils to consult local communities on the regional and sub-regional policy proposals of the Plan
 - vii Circulating South East Plan public information leaflets to all secondary schools in their areas
 - viii Encouraging youth cabinets to debate the South East Plan and respond to consultation.

- 3.11** Stakeholders played an important role in helping to cascade information. This work was supported by Assembly consultation initiatives including:
- i A stakeholder event to launch consultation on 24 January 2005
 - ii Newspaper and radio advertising to raise awareness of the consultation. Targeted primarily at members of the public, this included five weeks of advertising on the eight most popular commercial radio stations in the region targeted at the 15-35 age group. The 35+ age group was targeted by adverts in 38 regional and local newspaper groups

- iii Production of Your Shout! a public leaflet including a simple complete-and-return questionnaire on Plan options. The leaflet was distributed door-to-door across the region (some 3.2 million households) and over 500,000 more leaflets were made available via stakeholders, libraries, local authority offices, town and parish councils, LSPs, business groups, and through the voluntary and community sectors. The questionnaire could also be completed online
- iv Inspection copies of the consultation Plan were sent to all public libraries in the region
- v Proactive media relations to attract editorial coverage of the consultation in national, regional, local and trade media. Targeting of newspapers, TV and broadcast media was primarily aimed at the public, while coverage in trade/specialist press aimed to reach stakeholders. Assembly members and stakeholders were also encouraged to provide coverage in their own newsletters
- vi Consultation information/ materials and copies of the draft Plan were made available free of charge via the Assembly's South East Plan website
- vii A resource pack was created to help stakeholders cascade consultation information. Available online and on CD, the resource pack included articles, logos, adverts, consultation timetable, presentations and fact sheets. This was targeted primarily at LSPs, town and parish councils and voluntary/community organisations without the resources to produce their own materials
- viii Stakeholders were encouraged to hold public meetings as part of the consultation process. Assembly staff were invited to attend 97 such meetings
- ix A series of 10 workshops targeted at hard-to-reach groups to encourage consultation responses

- x A dedicated email address and phone line for people requesting more information on consultation
- xi An in-house briefing for all Assembly staff to ensure full understanding of the consultation process.

3.12 Finally, building on the two phases of research already undertaken, a third wave of MORI public opinion work was carried out to gather views on the key options presented in the Plan.

After Regional Public Consultation

- 3.13** Following close of public consultation on 15 April 2005, stakeholders continued to be involved in the Plan process:
- i Assembly advisory groups, such as the cross-cutting group, have provided technical advice on consultation responses and helped refine Plan policies to reflect comments received
 - ii A one-day workshop for the Assembly's Executive Committee and RPC was organised to discuss consultation responses in detail and consider how they could be addressed in the Plan
 - iii Advisory groups have continued to be involved in regional policies, particularly helping develop proposals in response to member requests – for example proposals to create additional hubs in the region and to develop a policy on strategic gaps
 - iv Work with sub-regional partnerships, has continued to be led by local authorities but also including local stakeholders. Following close of regional public consultation, principal authorities prepared options for local consultation – for example options for distributing agreed regional housing growth to district level.

Local Consultation

3.14 The sub-regional strategies for the South East Plan (both the January 2005 consultation draft and the March 2006

final draft) were agreed through officer working groups and member steering groups that included county, district and unitary authorities alongside voluntary and business sector representatives.

3.15 After submission of initial sub-regional strategies for the consultation draft Plan, the Assembly asked the region's principal authorities to consult locally and provide district-level housing distributions and refine sub-regional strategy policies, particularly on employment and infrastructure.

3.16 This local consultation in autumn 2005 was organised by the principal authorities. Information from each of the principal authorities on their approach to consultation and stakeholder involvement is provided in section 7 of this document.

After Local Consultation

- 3.17** Following close of local consultation, each sub-regional partnership met to agree its revised sub-regional strategy, submitted to the Assembly by 9 December 2005.
- 3.18** A one-day workshop for the Assembly's Executive Committee and RPC was organised to review the revised sub-regional strategies. This was followed by discussions at RPC and final agreement of sub-regional strategies by the Assembly Plenary in March 2006.

4. Regional Consultation: Overview

Regional Consultation Responses

4.1 Regional consultation has taken place over a period of some two years, but a number of events can be considered major milestones in gathering public and stakeholder views on the development of the Plan. These are:



- i Assembly 18 Spring Debates 2004
- ii Assembly's three MORI polls 2004-5
- iii Assembly's 12-week public consultation 2005
- iv South East Counties' ICM poll 2005.

4.2 In total these consultation methods gathered 78,345 responses that have been fed into development of the draft Plan now submitted to Government. The 1,000 participants who took part in the Spring Debates have not been included in the response total as comments were collated collectively rather than individually.

4.3 The vast majority of comments were received in response to the 12 weeks' public consultation. An overview of comments received is included in section 5 of this report.

4.4 Analyses of responses to MORI polls, the Your Shout! public questionnaire and the ICM poll are published on the Assembly's website.

Regional Consultees

4.5 In carrying out regional consultation, the Assembly aimed for the widest possible engagement with stakeholders and public.

4.6 A summary of stakeholder groups involved in regional consultation appears as Table 2. In addition to these groups, the Assembly also targeted the public direct during consultation, through MORI and via editorial coverage in a range of media, newspaper and radio advertising and door-to-door delivery of Your Shout! questionnaires.

4.7 The quantity of responses received shows considerable success in targeting both stakeholders and the public. Examples include the 1,000 stakeholders who attended the Spring Debates and the 61,746 individuals who completed Your Shout! public consultation questionnaires.

Regional Public Consultation: Main Materials and Dissemination

4.8 Opportunities for stakeholders and public to influence the South East Plan in advance of the 2005 public consultation included two MORI public opinion polls and the 18 Spring Debates (see also para 3.3).

- 4.9** Key elements of the consultation process between January-April 2005 were:
- i Over 5,000 copies of the full draft Plan were sent to stakeholder organisations in the region, including local authorities, town and parish councils, voluntary and economic groups (see Table 2). Inspection copies of the full Plan were also sent to libraries in the region
 - ii A series of 10 information workshops was held targeting hard-to-reach groups – one in each sub-region plus the Isle of Wight
 - iii Continuing technical work with sub-regional partnerships and the Assembly's range of stakeholder advisory groups
 - iv Assembly staff were invited to attend 97 public and stakeholder meetings on the Plan organised by member local authorities, economic partnerships and voluntary organisations
 - v A consultation resource pack was created to help organisations cascade the consultation (eg adverts, editorial,

presentations etc). This was available online and as a CD. Copies were sent to organisations including town and parish councils, district councils, voluntary groups and economic partnerships

- vi A third wave of MORI face-to-face opinion polling questioned a representative sample of 2,003 people in the region, testing their views on the options in the draft Plan
- vii Some 3.8 million copies of the Your Shout! questionnaire and leaflet were distributed by methods including door-to-door delivery and bulk delivery to local authorities, town and parish councils and many libraries
- viii Email and phone line contacts were set up for queries on the consultation process
- ix Copies of the South East Plan and supporting technical notes were all available on the Plan's dedicated website free of charge
- x The Your Shout! questionnaire could be filled in online on the Plan website
- xi A series of radio and newspaper adverts throughout the region raised the profile of the consultation process
- xii Publication of South East Plan Update

newsletters and coverage in both the January and March editions of VOICE. Proactive work also continued with national, regional, local and trade media to encourage coverage of the consultation

- xiii The county councils separately commissioned ICM to undertake telephone opinion research of a sample of 8,000 people across the county administrative areas of the region, plus Berkshire and the Isle of Wight.

Media/Public Interest in Regional Public Consultation

4.10 The following statistics show the level of interest in the Plan and response rates achieved across different methods of engagement from January to April 2005:

- i 2,646 written responses
- ii Over 200 people attended 10 workshops organised by the Assembly for hard-to-reach groups
- iii MORI conducted 2,003 face-to-face interviews plus two full day community workshops attended by 55 people
- iv 61,746 Your Shout! questionnaires

returned. This is a response rate of 1.64% (measured against 3,760,000 questionnaires distributed). Of these responses, 0.82% from outside the region and 1.85% with non-identifiable postcodes have been included in the analysis. 1.25% had to be excluded from the analysis as they were illegible or not completed

- v Assembly staff attended 67 public/ stakeholder meetings on the South East Plan held by local authorities and other bodies. In total 97 invitations to speak were received. The Assembly representation was shared among six senior staff, who were able to attend 70% of these meetings. Unfortunately no aggregate figures are available for attendance at these meetings
- vi The ICM poll showed 56% awareness of the South East Plan only four weeks into the consultation period
- vii Media coverage on the South East Plan totalled 904 items between 17 January-15 April. This included 26 items in national press and 31 items on TV or radio. Independent evaluation reports 73% of these items were positive (see Figures 1 and 2 below)

- viii Additional editorial coverage appeared in newsletters produced by organisations such as local authorities, parish councils and economic partnerships
- ix More than 5,000 copies of the full Plan were distributed
- x 1,158 copies of the Plan Core Document were downloaded from the web
- xi 11,131 copies of the Plan Executive Summary were sent out
- xii 2,996 copies of the Plan Executive Summary were downloaded from the web
- xiii 1,600 copies of the CD consultation resource pack were distributed
- xiv 1,175 calls were made to the Your Shout! dedicated phone line
- xv 734 inquiries were made by email and letter (412 emails and 322 letters)
- xvi 288 information packs were sent out.

