

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS  
PLENARY**

Date: 25 March 2010

Subject: **Planning Panel Update**

Report of: **Chairman of the Planning Panel**

**Recommendation**

That the South East England Councils note the issues considered at the last meeting of the Panel and its proposed work programme for the rest of the year.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper summarizes the issues considered by the Planning Panel when we last met on the 12 January and our forward programme for the rest of the year (which is subject to agreement with the Strategy Board on the 30 March).
- 1.2 To remind Members, the Planning Panel was established to support the Strategy Board's role in preparing the regional strategy and to manage ongoing work related to the South East Plan. Our remit is to provide advice on:
- the relationship between the Regional Strategy, Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and other local/sub-regional planning matters, ensuring that the local evidence base informs the development and implementation of the Regional Strategy and vice-versa;
  - the statutory planning process related to the Regional Strategy, particularly in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal/Sustainable Environmental Assessments;
  - national and inter-regional planning policy which have implications for the South East Region and the Regional Strategy

## 2. Planning Panel, 12 January 2010

### (i) South East England Strategy

- 2.1 The Planning Panel has played an important role in the development of the project plan for the strategy, particularly in relation to the evidence base and the sustainability appraisal, both of which were considered at the meeting. On the evidence base, we considered and advised the Partnership Board team on the approach to gathering 'bottom-up' evidence. On the sustainability appraisal, we considered some of the emerging key sustainability issues which informed the sustainability appraisal scoping report, which is currently the subject of a consultation with statutory Consultees.

### (ii) Aggregates (Policy M3) Partial Review: Panel Report

- 2.2 The Examination in Public (EiP) Panel's report on the Aggregates review was published in early December 2009. The Planning Panel was asked to note the EiP Panel's recommendations and consider any actions required before the government published its Proposed Changes (which is not expected until after the May elections).
- 2.3 We expressed disappointment that, whilst the EiP Panel seemed to accept that the Government's model for determining regional targets was a 'black box', they still recommend an overall increase in the amount of aggregates the region has to make provision for. Although there is a need to finish this review as soon as possible to help the Minerals Planning Authorities with their LDFs, we agreed that we should urge CLG to re-run their model before the Proposed Changes and have since written to them with that request.

(iii) Consultation on Draft Replacement London Plan

- 2.4 The Planning Panel was asked to consider a response to the Mayor's London Plan which was published alongside draft transport and economic development strategies. Our views were then used to inform the Partnership Board's formal response to the Mayor on all three strategies.
- 2.5 The main concern highlighted by the Panel was the fact that the Mayor seems to be relying very heavily on existing mechanisms (i.e. the Inter-Regional Forum) for working with the South East and East. Our view is that this is no longer fit for purpose. Since this meeting, the Leaders' Board has initiated a review of current inter-regional working arrangements and should be in a position to provide an update on this at the next SEEC Executive meeting.
- 2.6 Other concerns included the unrealistic way in which the Mayor is planning to deal with waste and the knock-on impact his policy on affordable housing provision will have on the South East. The Examination in Public into the London Plan is due to be held this summer and it is very likely that the Partnership Board will be asked to participate.

(iv) Regional Monitoring Report 2010

- 2.7 This year's monitoring report for the South East Plan was presented to the Panel for comment in advance of the official 'sign-off' from the Partnership Board in February. We considered a number of issues arising from this at the meeting but one of the key issues was around housing delivery. This showed that there were 32,300 housing completions in 2008/09, which is 8.7% less than previous year (35,400). The figures confirm that 2007/08 marked the highest level of delivery in the South East since the 1980s. The average over the last 5 years is 33,500.
- 2.9 We noted that this would be the last 'South East Plan' monitoring report as there is an ambition to bring both the RMR and the RES monitoring report together and provide a 'state of the region' type report, focusing on some of the key measures of success.

(v) LDF Surgery

- 2.10 The Partnership Board team will be hosting an event on the 25 March on LDFs. The (free) surgery will provide local authority planners with an opportunity to hear from a range of experts on aspects of LDFs (as well as from GOSE and the Planning Inspectorate) and will have a simultaneous, separate, 'drop-in centre' where delegates could discuss aspects of the LDF guides with Partnership Board officers.

**3. Planning Panel Work Programme (June to Dec 2010)**

- 3.1 The Panel's work programme will be presented to the Strategy Board for agreement on the 30 March. Key points for SEEC to note are set out below:

(i) South East England Strategy

3.2 The Planning Panel will have a key role in developing the regional strategy through the next stage - the Strategic Choices. We will be making sure that these are fully integrated with the sustainability appraisal process and that they have been informed by local evidence and priorities. This in turn will help ensure that the choices agreed for consultation purposes by the Strategy Board in October, are robust. A workshop for the Panel is planned for June to help this process.

3.3 In December we will start to focus on the spatial implications of the Strategic Choices, particularly issues around overall levels of housing and options around distribution.

(ii) South East Plan

3.4 The two South East Plan partial reviews on Aggregates Apportionment and Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (GTTS) have been following an identical process up until now. However, because the Panel's report on the GTTS Examination in Public will be published after the 2009 Act<sup>1</sup> comes into force, responsibility for determining the Proposed Changes (changes proposed as a result of the Panel's recommendations) will now rest with the Partnership Board and not with GOSE, as with the Aggregates review. However, the Secretary of State retains responsibility for final 'sign-off' on both policies.

3.5 Both the timetables set out for the partial reviews are based on the assumption that the current planned timetables are maintained; the GTTS Panel report is expected to be published in April and the Government's Proposed Changes to the aggregates policy are expected to be published soon after the elections in May. As there is a (12 week) statutory requirement for consulting on the Proposed Changes, the final policy on GTTAs will not be considered by the Planning Panel until our December meeting.

(iii) National Policy

3.6 There are a number of national Planning Policy Statements (PPS) published for consultation which will have implications for the strategy. The Planning Panel will be responding to these on behalf of the Partnership Board, to ensure that South East issues are fully reflected.

3.7 At the last Partnership Board meeting, Members felt that we should be more engaged in the very important National Policy Statements (NPS) that are being prepared by Government to guide future major infrastructure. A full list of existing drafts and planned NPS is attached as Annex B. Some of these sit comfortably within the remit of the Delivery Boards, particularly the Transport Board (e.g. the National Networks NPS) but many have wider implications.

3.8 We are therefore proposing to the Strategy Board that the Planning Panel considers any relevant draft NPS that have planning/spatial implications and make recommendations (alongside relevant Delivery Board recommendations) on these to the Strategy/Partnership Board. Currently included in the work programme for the Planning Panel is consideration of the draft NPS on Waste Water and Hazardous Waste, both of which are due to be

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<sup>1</sup> Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act will come in to affect on 1 April 2010



**National Policy Statements – Timetable for publication of drafts for consultation** (as at March 2010)

**Published November 2009**

Overarching National Energy Infrastructure  
Renewable Energy Generation  
Fossil Fuel Power Stations  
Gas Supply Infrastructure  
Electricity Networks  
Nuclear Power Stations  
Ports

**Due to be published 2010**

National Networks (rail and major roads) – expected March 2010  
Waste Water – expected summer 2010  
Hazardous Waste – expected summer 2010  
Water Supply – expected late 2010

**Due to be published 2011**

Airports