

SOUTH EAST FIRST

Wider South East update

Summit & London Plan EIP Special



SEEC's occasional update on our work with London and the East of England

MARCH 2019

Wider South East Summit calls for joint voice on investment

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South East views heard at London Plan Examination

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March Political Steering Group

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Leaders highlight Permitted Development Rights concerns

Wider South East political leaders have written jointly to the Housing Minister to ask for changes to avoid unintended consequences from Government plans to extend Permitted Development Rights (PDR).

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Other News Roundup

What is Wider South East political collaboration?

SEEC has updated a [1-side summary](#) explaining how the Wider South East collaboration operates. It provides an overview of partnership working, the part played by SEEC, organisations involved and the role of the Wider South East Political Steering Group.

WSE Dates

Summer 2019 – WSE Political Steering Group

WSE Contacts

SEEC leads on Wider South East for our area and can be contacted at:

E: info@secouncils.gov.uk

Tel: 0208 541 7555

Wider South East Summit calls for joint voice on investment

SEEC members and other representatives of 100+ councils and partner bodies from South East, East of England and London have called for more joint work to secure essential investment across their areas.

A Wider South East (WSE) Summit heard that collaboration to support shared infrastructure investment needs would be important to underpin sustainable growth across all three areas, which form the dynamo of the UK economy. A brief [summary of the Summit](#) and [news release](#) are available on SEEC's website.

The Summit – held on 11 January 2019 at City Hall, London – brought together council leaders, elected mayors, senior officers and LEP representatives to discuss how they could collaborate more closely to address strategic growth challenges.

The Summit built on ongoing debate through the WSE Political Steering Group, which brings together councillors from SEEC, East of England LGA and London Councils with the London Mayor's office.

Delegates debated with a panel of WSE leaders, including SEEC Deputy Chairman Cllr Ralph Bagge, East of England LGA Chairman Cllr David Finch, the London Mayor Sadiq Khan and Newham Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz.

The session, chaired by SEEC Director Heather Bolton, discussed topics including housing, investment needs and economic prosperity.

Delegates also heard about opportunities for collaboration on barriers to housing delivery, long term transport priorities, sustainable growth and smart use of data in a second panel session. Speakers in this debate included London Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe and councillors from emerging Sub-national Transport Bodies: SEEC's Cllr Tony Page, Vice Chairman of Transport for the South East; Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of Transport East; and Mayor Dave Hodgson, Chairman of England's Economic Heartland's

Strategic Transport Forum.

During round table discussions that followed the panel debates, councillors contributed ideas on how they could work collectively to address shared problems. These common challenges include meeting increasing housing demand and securing essential infrastructure investment at a time when local authorities are facing severe funding pressures.

There was support for joint work to do more to articulate the case for the national economic benefits to be gained from investing in WSE growth. The need to speak with one strategic voice across the political spectrum of the WSE was one of the key messages taken away from the Summit.

Other key discussions included scope for pooling or jointly commissioning technical research to support development plans and potential for mapping collaboration opportunities.

Further suggestions put forward initiatives on planning, economic growth, infrastructure improvements and maintaining solid underpinning evidence.

Cllr Ralph Bagge, Deputy Chairman of South East England Councils said: "All our areas face similar challenges and we must all do everything we can to meet those needs sustainably – balancing homes, jobs, infrastructure and green space in a way that doesn't increase pressure on our neighbours. Working together we really need to stress the value that the Wider South East contributes to UK plc and the risk of losing that if Government focuses its investment only on regenerating other parts of the country."

This year's WSE Summit was held just before the opening of the London Plan Examination in Public (EiP). Summit discussion therefore focused on joint action around shared concerns, including those set out in the emerging London Plan. The outcomes of the EiP and implementation of the Plan will remain a key issue for the WSE political partnership.

South East views heard at London Plan Examination

SEEC has been giving evidence at the London Plan Examination in Public (EiP), where a panel of three inspectors is hearing views on the Plan from groups including councils, developers and the voluntary sector.

SEEC is working jointly with SESL to make verbal and [written](#) representations on 12 matters. SEEC's Deputy Chairman Cllr Ralph Bagge has been lead representative at the majority of EiP sessions, which started in January 2019 and run until May.

Cllr Bagge has reiterated to the inspectors that SEEC and SESL member authorities have concerns about the Plan's possible implications for the South East if London cannot meet its needs within its own boundaries. He also called for clarification on key issues, such as the Mayor's 'willing partners for growth' policy.

Early EiP sessions covered London's housing growth and implications for the Wider South East. This is of particular concern to SEEC and SESL members, as existing high levels of South East housing growth, large amounts of protected land and other constraints – such as our infrastructure deficit – all reduce capacity to accept further growth from London.

EiP hearings continue through to mid-May 2019, with later sessions covering economy, Green Belt and transport. The panel of inspectors is expected to report over the summer. Once the Mayor has considered their report, he is currently anticipated to publish the final Plan in early 2020.

March Political Steering Group

SEEC members met with London Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe and leaders from the East of England in March to discuss next steps on political engagement across the Wider South East.

The Wider South East Political Steering Group (PSG) on 8 March was the first since January's well-attended Summit with the Mayor of London. The PSG confirmed members' commitment to speak with one voice on some of the big shared issues facing the South East, London and East. Members are keen to make progress on this and will consider options and priorities at their next meeting, being planned for summer 2019.

The meeting was also a chance to hear about progress on the London Plan Examination in Public, and for SEEC members to highlight the importance of ongoing South East engagement. SEEC members want ongoing dialogue with the Mayor's office between the inspectors' report and the final version of the Plan to ensure any proposed changes do not adversely affect the South East.

Updates on other work included reports from three emerging Sub-national Transport Bodies who are leading on developing strategic transport priorities. Other ongoing priorities include joint work to highlight how Government could help tackle housing and infrastructure delivery barriers. Recent work includes a joint letter to the Housing Minister setting out shared concerns about proposals to extend Permitted Development Rights. The next joint piece of work will be to draft joint input to Ministers on the potential for land value capture opportunities to contribute funding for essential infrastructure investments.

Leaders highlight Permitted Development Rights concerns

Wider South East political leaders have written jointly to the Housing Minister to ask for changes to avoid unintended consequences from Government plans to extend Permitted Development Rights (PDR).

The [joint letter](#) to Kit Malthouse MP emphasises that while the leaders support Government's ambition to drive forward delivery of housing, this must not be at the cost of much-needed infrastructure, affordable homes, employment sites, or quality of development. This reiterates points included in SEEC's own [response](#) to the Government's recent PDR consultation.

The Wider South East (WSE) group is concerned that Government proposals to further extend the PDR regime could have unintended consequences for local economies and environments across their areas. If MHCLG's proposals go ahead as suggested, they risk:

- Encouraging residential development that is below acceptable space and design standards.
- Further PDR sites coming forward without contributing to addressing the need for genuinely affordable housing, given PDR exemptions from these contributions.
- Undermining councils' ability to ensure that a suitable mix of uses is provided, helping to make town centres vibrant places.
- Worsening the WSE's existing infrastructure deficit through lack of financial contributions from PDR sites.
- Undermining councils' role in supporting and developing key sectors of the local economy. Councils are committed to a positive plan-led approach and PDR can bypass this and potentially result in loss of employment spaces and sites.

The letter asks Government to rethink the PDR proposals to avoid:

- Making permanent the current time-limited PDR for change of use from storage and distribution to

residential.

- Allowing the demolition of commercial buildings for redevelopment as residential.
- Allowing upwards extension of homes (additional storeys) on residential buildings, without necessary planning control on space and design standards.

South East England Councils | Room 215, County Hall, Penrhyn Road, Kingston upon Thames KT1 2DN

Tel: 0208 541 7555 | info@secouncils.gov.uk | www.secouncils.gov.uk

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