

SOUTH EAST FIRST

Wider South East update

Winter Summit Special



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

FEBRUARY 2018

London Mayor calls for South East views on 'good growth' plans

Speaking at the [Wider South East \(WSE\) Summit](#), Mayor Sadiq Khan outlined how his new draft London Plan would deliver sustainable and inclusive 'good growth'. The Mayor aims to accommodate the majority of London's housing need within its boundaries and support infrastructure that offers mutual benefits for London and the South East. He is also calling for 'willing partner' councils who might work with him to help accommodate some London growth outside the capital.

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SEEC and Mayor centre stage at Summit question time

SEEC Chairman Cllr Nicolas Heslop shared the stage with London Mayor Sadiq Khan at the 26 January Wider South East (WSE) Summit. The event gave SEEC members the opportunity to question the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe directly on the new draft London Plan.

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Tackling housing delivery barriers

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Strategic infrastructure priorities

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Other News Roundup

SEEC Member councils encouraged to respond to Mayor's consultation

[Consultation on the new draft London Plan](#) runs until 2 March 2018. The draft covers housing and economic growth, transport and other infrastructure and addresses London's relationship with the South East. SEEC's high level [1-page summary](#) for member councils gives an overview of key issues relevant to South East authorities. SEEC will formally respond to consultation and individual member councils are also encouraged to respond to the GLA.

Wider South East priorities for 2018

Round table debates gave Summit delegates the opportunity to highlight priorities for joint work over the coming year. The London Plan will continue to be a focus as it goes through its Examination in Public. Other priorities should include continuing to explore ways to address the large numbers of unimplemented housing planning permissions and further work to press for infrastructure investment. The Political Steering Group was also asked to consider whether there is capacity to address shared challenges around natural resources.

Next Political Steering Group

The next meeting of the Wider South East Political Steering Group is scheduled for 21 March 2018. Future dates are yet to be confirmed as they will need to be scheduled around the GLA's workload in the lead up to the London Plan's formal Examination in Public.

WSE Dates

21 Mar – WSE Political Steering Group

WSE Contacts

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London Mayor sets out his ambition for ‘good growth’

Speaking at the [Wider South East \(WSE\) Summit](#), Mayor Sadiq Khan outlined how his new draft London Plan would deliver sustainable and inclusive ‘good growth’. The Mayor aims to accommodate the majority of London’s housing need within its boundaries and support infrastructure that offers mutual benefits for London and South East. He is also calling for ‘willing partner’ councils who might work with him to help accommodate some London growth outside the capital.

There was an excellent turnout of over 100 councillors, officers and LEP representatives at the 26 January Summit and all delegates were encouraged to submit written responses to the GLA's [London Plan consultation](#) by 2 March.

The Mayor thanked SEEC members for their work on the WSE Political Steering Group and stressed the importance of using this partnership to help tackle shared growth challenges and jointly influence Government for solutions.

He acknowledged his ambitious plans would not be easy to deliver and would require partnership working with Government and others. Challenges include accommodating London’s expected population boom while ensuring space for businesses and delivering the infrastructure needed to maintain quality of life.

He said that while London is a leading global city, it is not an island. Much of what London has achieved has been enabled by its connections with the WSE, whose communities, economies and housing markets are intrinsically linked. It would be important to sustain and improve these alongside London’s.

Key proposals in the new draft London Plan relevant to SEEC members include:

- The Mayor’s aim to meet the vast majority of London’s housing need in the capital’s boundaries without infringing on London’s Green Belt.
- Ambitious 10 year targets for London boroughs to double the current rate of homebuilding, with 50% of all new homes to be ‘truly affordable’.
- As a longer-term contingency, seeking ‘willing partners’ outside London who could consider

accommodating some of London's housing growth and jobs where there are mutual benefits.

- Support for the [13 initial WSE Strategic Infrastructure Priorities](#), agreed by the last Summit.
- Recognition of the need to sustain the interconnected and nationally-important WSE economy.
- Support for additional aviation capacity but opposition to expansion of Heathrow Airport unless no additional noise or air quality harm would result.

SEEC and Mayor centre stage at Summit question time

SEEC Chairman Cllr Nicolas Heslop shared the stage with London Mayor Sadiq Khan at the 26 January Wider South East (WSE) Summit. The event gave SEEC members the opportunity to question the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe directly on the new draft London Plan.

SEEC Director Heather Bolton opened the Summit and led a question time debate with the Mayor, Cllr Heslop, East of England LGA's Cllr David Finch and questioners from the floor.

Responding to the Mayor of London's housing and growth proposals, Cllr Heslop welcomed the constructive political dialogue built with the Mayor's office through the Political Steering Group (PSG) and the ambition for London to meet the vast majority of its housing need within its own boundaries.

The Mayor answered questions on South East concerns including:

- **How would the Mayor ensure he delivers on the Plan's aims for accommodating London's housing need in its boundaries?**

The Mayor explained that he intends to deliver 65,000 of the 66,000 homes needed in London each year by encouraging higher densities and better use of land, including small sites. The GLA is only proposing 10 year housing targets as it believes the longer-term picture is currently unclear. He admitted it may be tough to make sure the 33 London boroughs all play their part in meeting housing need but he would be talking to them about this. He also highlighted that delivering 50% affordable homes would require a change in the rules – for example, further relaxation of the HRA cap.

- **How the 'willing partners for growth' approach could operate?**

The Mayor said his aim is to have conversations between willing councils outside London and GLA about mutually beneficial needs and opportunities. For example, he said, there may be businesses that want to relocate in order to expand and areas keen to attract these employers. There may also be opportunities to lobby government together for infrastructure investment that would make greater housing and economic growth attractive to areas outside London. He acknowledged concerns that London could just export its problems and challenges, but he wants to see partnerships based on mutual benefits.

After question time, [round table discussions](#) gave all delegates the opportunity to discuss the draft London Plan in more detail. Key issues raised included housing delivery, infrastructure needs and the role of Green Belt.

Tackling housing delivery barriers

SEEC Chairman Cllr Nicolas Heslop highlighted important Wider South East (WSE) work on tackling housing delivery barriers during the past year, and opportunities to influence Government on speeding up delivery in 2018.

Slow use of approved housing permissions by developers is holding up delivery of local growth plans in the South East and London, and puts more pressure on councils to release extra development land unnecessarily. Recent figures show over a third of a million unused housing permissions across the Wider South East, including at least 274,000 in London, more than 60,000 in the South East and 40,000 in East of England.

Cllr Heslop explained that over the past year the Political Steering Group met Housing Minister Gavin Barwell and followed up with his successor Alok Sharma and it is now important to engage the new Minister, Dominic Raab. He added that the current review of unimplemented permissions by Sir Oliver Letwin represents a further opportunity to call for action to tackle these issues.

He welcomed the fact that the Treasury Select Committee has backed the WSE call for councils' housing borrowing limits to be lifted. This creates an opportunity to build on growing consensus to try and secure the ability for councils to borrow to build homes directly at scale.

He outlined other ongoing priorities to address delivery barriers, as highlighted in the [joint WSE response](#) to consultation on the Housing White Paper:

- the need for further tools and new ways to tackle unused planning permissions
- more funding opportunities and flexibilities for supporting infrastructure and affordable homes
- greater influence for councils to steer skills funding to increase construction sector capacity.

Cllr Heslop also highlighted a new challenge posed by Government's proposed housing need baseline figures, set out in 'Planning for the right homes in the right places'. In the South East these have produced some unexpected results including reduced need figures in growing urban areas and unachievable increases in areas with large amounts of protected land. SEEC has already [written to Dominic Raab](#) calling for a sense check of the figures. The Summit endorsed continued focus on tackling housing barriers as a shared priority for 2018's joint WSE work.

Strategic infrastructure priorities

The Summit stressed the critical importance of joint lobbying for infrastructure investment to support growth plans and address public and business concerns about a funding deficit across the Wider South East (WSE).

London Mayor Sadiq Khan told the Summit that by working together, the collective power of WSE partners could be harnessed to help progress infrastructure projects that are vital to future growth ambitions, for example Crossrail 2. Better digital infrastructure is also needed to support different patterns of work.

Cllr James Jamieson from East of England LGA outlined [13 Wider South East strategic transport priorities](#), as agreed by the last Summit.

Political Steering Group members met Transport Secretary Chris Grayling to highlight the importance of the 13 WSE priorities and now need to consider the Minister's request to refine priorities further.

SEEC Chairman Cllr Nicolas Heslop highlighted that the South East alone faces a £15.4bn infrastructure funding gap by 2030, and that additional growth will exacerbate this. He said the WSE needs to emphasise to Ministers that without funding to support our planned growth we risk damaging the economy – and at least some of this funding needs to come from national Government. He said Government should also look at allowing councils access to more funding opportunities – for example a share of stamp duty collected locally and greater retention of locally-raised business rates.

The Summit endorsed continued focus on infrastructure investment and agreed that the PSG should work on refining the list of 13 priorities. Talks with the emerging Sub National Transport Bodies (such as Transport for the South East) are also planned to explore alignment of priorities.

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