

## The South East Plan

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The South East Plan (SE Plan) sets out a strategic planning framework for the region up to 2026. It will set the strategic context for the District-level Local Development Framework. The SE Plan has been prepared in the first instance by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and has now been submitted to the Government. The final Plan will be issued by the Government after a Public Examination into the Regional Assembly's Plan. The Public Examination will be held from November 2006 to March 2007.
- 1.2 The Government has appointed a Panel to conduct the Examination in Public and the Panel has invited comments on the submitted SE Plan, to be submitted by 23 June. The Panel will then select issues for discussion at the Examination and invite selected participants. The EiP programme is attached to this report.
- 1.3 The submitted SE Plan (copy of all documents has been placed in Members' Room) comprises:
- A Core Document
  - An Executive Summary (**A copy is included with this report for Cabinet members only – copies are available for others on request**)
  - A Monitoring Framework
  - An Implementation Plan
  - A Sustainability Appraisal
  - A Consultation Statement
- 1.4 In addition, Hampshire County Council has produced a Guide to the policies which affect Hampshire ("What is our Future") and a copy of that document is also included with this report.
- 1.5 The SE Plan includes sub-regional strategies. These only cover selected parts of the region. The eastern part of New Forest District is in the South Hampshire sub-region. The sub-regional strategy for South Hampshire is based on that prepared by the PUSH group of local authorities, which includes this Council.
- 1.6 In leading up to the submitted Plan, there have been two rounds of consultation and this Council has responded at both opportunities.
- Consultation on a broad regional strategy, including sub-regional proposals and sub-regional housing targets. Cabinet agreed a response to SEERA on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2005.
  - Consultation on proposed District housing targets for 2006 – 2026. Cabinet agreed a response to SEERA on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2005.
- 1.7 In general, the comments made by this Council have been taken on board and consequently this report recommends general support for the submitted SE Plan, with some detailed comments.
- 1.8 This report focuses on the issues directly affecting New Forest District. A possible joint response from the PUSH group of authorities is to be considered at a PUSH Leaders/Chief Executives meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May; and a possible joint response from the Central Hampshire/New Forest group of authorities is to be considered at a meeting on 8th June.

## **2. THE SOUTH EAST PLAN – REGIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 2.1 As set out in the Executive Summary (included with this report), the submitted SE Plan provides a spatial framework for the region for the next 20 years up to 2026.
- 2.2 Key “cross-cutting” elements include:
- Core objectives that aim to balance continuing economic and housing growth with rising standards of environmental management and reduced levels of social exclusion and natural resource consumption.
  - A focus on development in the urban areas (settlements with a population of more than 10,000 people); and with at least 60% of development on previously developed land.
  - Sustainable development: Development which meets the social and economic needs of today in a manner which respects the environmental and resource needs of future generations.
  - Measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change
  - Recognising the implications of an ageing population
- 2.3 The Regional Assembly recognizes that infrastructure has not kept pace with new development. This is identified as the most critical issue that has emerged during the Plan’s preparation. The Implementation Plan sets out a framework for investment and also identifies measures to change behaviour in order to use resources more efficiently.
- 2.4 The Regional Policy Framework is summarized on pages 5 to 9 of the Executive Summary. Key elements include:
- Providing for an average of 28,900 dwellings a year (slightly higher than the past RPG 9 target of 28,000 dwellings a year)
  - Housing requirements for each District to provide this regional total of 28,900 dwellings a year. For New Forest District the annual requirement is 207 dwellings a year (4,128 dwellings 2006-2026)
  - Regional targets that at least 25% of all new housing should be social rented and a further 10% other forms of affordable housing
  - Keeping the Green Belt (around London, Oxford and in south-west Hampshire).
  - Concentrating the majority of development in 9 sub-regions – including South Hampshire
  - A set of “Regional Hubs” – including Southampton and Portsmouth – where priority will be given to higher density land uses, high quality transport interchanges and measures that increase the level of accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking.
  - “Regional Spokes” – corridors of movement connecting the Regional Hubs (see map in centre of Executive Summary).
  - Identifying “Regionally significant ports” and “Ro-Ro and Deep Sea Ports” – including Southampton – that policies should maintain and enhance (there is no reference to Dibden Bay)
  - Identifying “Regionally significant airports” – Including Southampton which should “sustain and enhance its role as an airport of regional significance”.
  - Regional Growth Areas at Milton Keynes/Aylesbury Vale (extending also into the neighbouring East Midlands and East of England regions), Thames Gateway (extending also into London and the East of England region) and Ashford in Kent.

## **3. SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR SOUTH HAMPSHIRE**

- 3.1 South Hampshire is defined as a sub-region stretching from the eastern boundary of the New Forest National Park across to the Hampshire/Sussex border. It includes Totton and the Waterside areas. The submitted SE Plan states that this sub-region “is planning for increased levels of development to realise potential, improve economic performance and address significant social deprivation problems in Portsmouth and Southampton.”

- 3.2 The strategy proposed for South Hampshire is based on the strategy prepared by the PUSH authorities, including New Forest District Council and includes the following key elements:
- An aim to increase South Hampshire's economic performance to at least match the regional average economic growth rate of 3.5% Gross Value Added per annum by 2026.
  - Increased investment in transport and other infrastructure (set out in the Sub-regional Investment Framework in the Implementation Plan).
  - Focusing growth on the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth and the main towns (Note: The strategy is unlikely to require major releases of greenfield sites in Totton and the Waterside).
  - Concentrating development up to 2016 on existing allocations and other sites in urban areas together with some urban extensions.
  - After around 2016 development will continue in urban areas but there will also be two new Strategic Development Areas:
    - within Fareham Borough to the north of the M27 (up to 10,000 new homes); and
    - to the north and north-east of Hedge End (up to 6,000 new homes).
  - 30-40% of housing on new residential developments should be affordable housing.
- 3.3 A list of sub-regional Strategic Gaps is identified, including Southampton – Totton. The currently identified Strategic Gaps between Totton/Eling and Marchwood, Marchwood and Hythe, and Hythe and Fawley are not kept as Strategic Gaps but are referred to as "...areas of predominantly open land that are important to preserve the identities of individual settlements, but which do not fulfil the regional criteria.....Local authorities should consider (them) for possible inclusion when identifying Local Gaps in their Local Development Documents" (page 240, para 2.9). The regional criteria for identification of Strategic Gaps (set out in Policy CC10b, page 52) include that there must be a settlement of at least 10,000 population on either side of the gap. This is not the case with the gaps down the Waterside.
- 3.4 Of the 4,138 new dwellings that the SE Plan proposes in New Forest District 2006 – 2026, 1,538 are proposed within the South Hampshire part of the District (Totton and the Waterside).

#### 4. OFFICER COMMENTS - IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW FOREST DISTRICT

- 4.1 This Council has been involved at officer and member level in the preparation of the South East Plan;
- at the regional level through meeting of the Regional Assembly and its constituent officer groups, and by responding to previous consultations;
  - through the PUSH work; and
  - through the "Central Hampshire and New Forest" member group and associated officer meetings.
- 4.2 In general, the submitted SE Plan - as it relates to New Forest District - sets out an acceptable basis for the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework. The recommended response to the Examination Panel is therefore one of general support for the strategy, with some detailed comments on particular policies as set out below.
- Green Belt – Policy Policy CC101a (page 51)**
- 4.3 The retention of the existing Green Belt (subject to any cases for small scale local review though the LDF process) is to be supported as it affects New Forest District.

#### **Strategic Gaps - Policy CC101b (page 52)**

- 4.4 The identification of the Totton – Southampton Strategic Gap as sub-regionally significant is to be supported. The loss of regional status of the other 3 strategic gaps between the Waterside settlements is to be regretted, although it has to be accepted that they do not meet the regional criteria. In this context the statement (paragraph 2.9, page 240) is to be very much welcomed that the 3 Waterside Gaps are important to preserve the identities of individual settlements and should be considered for identification as Local Gaps

#### **Housing and Affordable Housing – Policy H1 (page 82), Policy H4 (page 86) and Policy SH13 (page 247)**

- 4.5 The proposed housing requirement for New Forest District (including the National Park) is 207 dwellings a year (4,138 dwellings 2006 to 2026). This is much lower than the average new-build rate over the past 10 to 15 years of some 500 dwellings per annum. The current assessment is that the 2006-2026 requirement can probably be met without needing any new green-field allocations beyond those already identified.
- 4.6 The submitted SE Plan (Policy H4) proposes regional targets that 25% of all new housing should be socially rented and a further 10% should be other forms of affordable housing. It will still be the duty of this Council to set its own local targets, having regard to the regional targets and to the needs of this area. Officers consider that the regional targets are acceptable. However, the PUSH affordable housing policy (Policy SH13) should refer to 30-40% of housing on **all** development sites being affordable, rather than **new** sites.
- 4.7 As Members are well aware, providing affordable housing is a very big issue in this District. A lower future housebuilding rate will mean that, if current local policy remains unchanged, there will be a reduced amount of affordable housing that can be provided as part of a residential development through negotiated contributions from developers ('PPG3 sites'). (The Council's policy is a 35% contribution on sites of 15 or more dwellings within the towns and larger villages). The Council has reduced its affordable housing target from 100 to 75 dwellings per annum in recognition of the difficulties that we will face, based on current policies, to achieve the previous target of 100 affordable dwellings per annum. The reduction in the target is likely to exasperate our ability to meet the housing needs of the District. However, the Government's proposed changes to PPG3 (in draft PPS3) will give scope for local planning policies to be reviewed to enable consideration of a lower site threshold for affordable housing contributions and, in addition to current 'rural exception sites', the possibility of allocating additional sites solely for affordable housing in the Local Development Framework. This report recommends that a Task Group comprising Members from the Housing and Economy & Planning Review Panels be set up to consider the way forward on the issue of providing for affordable housing in the context of a lower new-build rate.
- 4.8 Subject to agreement of the way forward set out in the above paragraph, officers consider that the proposed housing requirement for New Forest District in the submitted SE Plan is acceptable as a basis for LDF preparation, given the extent to which the District is constrained by national designations (including the National Park). However, the strategic housing requirement figure in the SE Plan should not be viewed as a constraint on the Council's ability to consider, through its LDF work, local proposals to provide for additional housing to meet the local affordable housing needs, even should this result in the strategic requirement being exceeded.
- 4.9 The proposed breakdown of the District's overall housing requirement of 4,138 dwellings into 1,538 dwellings in Totton/Waterside and the remaining 2,600 in the rest of the District, should be treated as an indicative distribution rather than as a separate regional policy requirement for each part of the District.

## **Transport**

- 4.10 The Implementation Plan accompanying the Core Document sets out strategic transport investments anticipated for the Plan period 2006 – 2026. The list now includes the reinstatement of passenger rail services on the Waterside (though with no cost or timescale) and the improvement of bus, ferry and park-and-ride services across South Hampshire generally. These items are to be welcomed. There is, however, no mention of the major transport and environmental improvement proposals set out in the Totton Town Centre Urban Design Framework of 2003. This £12 million package has the support of Hampshire County Council but, because of its cost, the package is classed by Government as a major scheme. Thus funding for the package (unless split into small elements and spread over many years) needs to be secured in competition with the other schemes already included in the Implementation Plan. The first element of the package has so far failed to attract an expenditure commitment in the Hampshire Local Transport Plan 2006-11 (LTP). If HCC receives some LTP related “reward funding” then some money may be allocated to the first element of the package. In view of its scale, the degree of support it has received locally and the long timescale required for its implementation (undoubtedly more than the 5 years of a single LTP), it would be appropriate for it to be referred to at least in the South East Plan Implementation Plan (Sub-regional investment framework for South Hampshire). This proposal supports not only Policy T5 (ii), (iv), (v) and (viii) (Mobility Management) but also TC1 (Development of Town Centres) and TC4 (ii) (Creating and Supporting Town Centres).
- 4.11 Policy T8 requires all major travel-generating developments to have an *implemented* travel plan by 2011. This needs further explanation, even if only to clarify what is expected of developments granted planning permission in the run-up to that date.

## **Infrastructure**

- 4.12 The submitted SE Plan says the right things about providing the necessary infrastructure to accompany new development and to redress the issues created by this not happening in the past. If the South East region, and more specifically the South Hampshire sub-region, are to continue to provide for high levels of development then it is essential that the required infrastructure actually is provided and that the Government commits itself to ensuring that this happens.

## **National Park – Policy C1a (page 175)**

- 4.13 For the first time the Regional Plan includes a policy on the New Forest National Park. This policy states:
- “High priority should be given to conserving and enhancing land within the New Forest National Park. The local planning authority and other partners should also develop supportive sustainable land management policies both inside the National Park and within the zone of “New Forest commoning activity”, including protection of grazing land outside the National Park which is needed to support National Park purposes.”*
- 4.14 The SE Plan also states (para. 1.7 on page 175) that: “Further work needs to be undertaken (perhaps by the New Forest National Park Authority) to provide advice to local planning authorities with regard to protecting the setting of the Park and safeguarding land with a functional relationship to it.”
- 4.15 Policy C1a and the related text are to be supported. There are implications for the future joint working on Local Development Documents of this Council with the National Park Authority and other neighbouring authorities.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None arising from this report.

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The SE Plan is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal which assesses the environmental implications as well as the social and economic implications. Whether this assessment has been carried out adequately will be a matter for consideration by the Examination Panel and the Secretary of State.

## **7. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 As set out above, the Regional Assembly has carried out 2 rounds of consultation in preparing the submitted SE Plan. This report is a response to the consultation on the submitted SE Plan. The issues arising from SE Plan have been discussed with the National Park Authority and with other Hampshire authorities that comprise the PUSH group and the Central Hampshire/New Forest Group. It will be for other organisations and individuals within the District to respond directly to the Examination Panel as they think fit.

## **9. ECONOMY AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

- 9.1 Together with other members and officers of the Council, I have been engaged in the preparation of the draft South East Plan and its sub-regional proposals. This Council has also formally responded to the 2 main rounds of public consultation. While serious issues have arisen during the course of the Plan's preparation, the main views expressed by this Council have been taken on board at the regional and sub-regional levels. I am therefore happy to endorse the recommendations in this report of general support for the draft South East Plan together with the detailed comments set out in Section 4 of this report.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 That in response to the consultation on the submitted South East Plan, New Forest District Council submits to the Examination Panel responses based on the points set out in Section 4 of this report and any further matters agreed by Cabinet.
- 10.2 That, based on the response to the submitted SE Plan agreed by Cabinet, the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder be authorised to agree appropriate joint responses from the PUSH group of authorities and from the Central Hampshire/New Forest group of authorities.
- 10.3 That a joint Member Task Group be set up comprising a small number of Members from each of the Housing, Health & Social Inclusion Review Panel and the Economy and Planning Review Panel to consider, and to report back to Cabinet, on the issue of how the Council can best meet its affordable housing targets in the context of a reduced future new-build rate.

### **Further Information:**

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### **Background Papers:**

The South East Plan – Draft Plan for  
submission to Government,  
SEERA, March 2006.  
What is our Future, HCC, May 2006

## The South East Plan EiP programme

1. The EiP of the draft South East Plan is currently planned to occupy 11 weeks during 27 November 2006 to 30 March 2007. The first three weeks at Woking will deal with region-wide matters, before the EiP moves around three other locations at which sub-regional issues will be discussed:-

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Issues for debate</i>
28 November – 15 December 2006	Woking	Region-wide issues
16 – 26 January 2007	Chichester	South Hampshire, Sussex Coast, Isle of Wight
6 – 15 February 2007	Maidstone	East Kent and Ashford, Thames Gateway,
27 February – 9 March & 20 March – 30 March 2007	Reading	London Fringe, Gatwick area, Western Corridor & Blackwater Valley, Oxford, Milton Keynes

2. On the above timetable, 2 – 3 days can be expected to be allocated to discussion of the South Hampshire strategy.
3. The participants will vary according to the issue under discussion. The number of seats will be limited and it is unlikely that every Council will be invited to take part. There is a greater likelihood that a representative of groups of authorities such as PUSH will be invited.