

**Notes of the meeting of the Regional Planning Panel
12 December 2007
held at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge**

Present

Name	Organisation	Representing
Bill Archibald*	Essex County Council	Labour Group
Derrick Ashley (C)	Hertfordshire County Council	Hertfordshire County Council
Mark Collins	Peterborough City Council	Peterborough City Council
Alan Crystall	Southend-on-Sea Council	Liberal Democrat Group
Martin Curtis	Cambridgeshire County Council	Cambridgeshire County Council
Roy Davis	Luton Borough Council	Luton Borough Council
Michael Gage	Braintree Council	Independent Group
John Goodwin *	Suffolk County Council	Suffolk County Council
Murray Gray	South Norfolk District Council	Liberal Democrat Group
Peter Griffiths	East of England Environment Forum	Stakeholder Group
Nichola Harrison	Cambridgeshire County Council	Liberal Democrat Group
Christopher How	Norfolk County Council	Norfolk County Council
David Jones	South Bedfordshire District Council	Liberal Democrat Group
John Jowers *	Essex County Council	Essex County Council
George Kieffer	East of England Development Agency	EEDA
Dave King	AUEE (Higher Education)	Stakeholder Group
Corinne Meakins	East of England Environment Forum	Stakeholder Group
Tom Nicols	South Bedfordshire District Council	Conservative Group
John Scott	Bedfordshire County Council	Bedfordshire County Council
Michael Skeels	Tendring District Council	Conservative Group
Julian Swainson	Suffolk County Council	Labour Group
Richard Thake	North Hertfordshire District Council	Conservative Group
Anna Waite	Southend-on-Sea Council	Southend-on-Sea Council
John Williams	East of England Association of Parish and Town Councils	Stakeholder Group

(C) Chair

* indicates substitute member

Apologies

Name	Organisation	Representing/Position
Eddy Alcock	Suffolk County Council	Suffolk County Council
Colin Bradley	East of England Business Group	Stakeholder Group
John Bridge	East of England Business Group	Stakeholder Group
Celia Cameron	East of England Development Agency	EEDA
Anthony Hudson	Living East	Stakeholder Group
Roger Humber	East of England Business Group	Stakeholder Group
Peter Martin	Essex County Council	Essex County Council
John Metcalf	Essex County Council	Labour Group
Paul Sztumpf	Essex County Council	Labour Group
Stephen Veryard	Thurrock Council	Thurrock Council

1. **Apologies for absence**

- 1.1. The apologies received and substitutions are noted above.

2. **Declarations of interest**

- 2.1. There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

- 3.1. Matters of accuracy. The minutes of the meeting on 27 September 2007 were agreed as an accurate record.

3.2. Matters arising

- Item 8 – East of England Regional Investment Strategy. It was noted that the Regional Partnership Group is carrying out further work to align the draft Investment Strategy with the new mechanisms emerging from the Comprehensive Spending Review and to take account of the draft regional economic strategy action plan. The Panel's attention was drawn to the Government's recent announcement on funding for Growth Areas and Growth Points. £560m has been allocated nationally for 2008-2011 of which the East of England's allocation is £178m. It was noted that, while the Assembly has acknowledged this as a welcome start, there are concerns that it is insufficient to support the proposed scale of growth and the matter will be followed up with the Government Office and through the Regional Partnership Group.

- Item 12 – update on the draft South East Plan and the draft East Midlands Plan. It was noted that the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan are awaited. The Panel Report following the EiP of the draft East Midlands Plan has recently been published. Points of note are that:
 - the EiP Panel proposes to recast the Green Belt at Nottingham into an area of separation between Nottingham and Derby, which would be a significant shift in Green Belt policy if accepted by Government;
 - the Panel's concludes that the regional transport strategy is deficient but proposes that it be retained within the draft Plan for revision at the next review.

It was also noted that the timing of the consultation on London's draft Housing Strategy was dependent on the enactment of the GLA Bill. This has now happened and EERA will respond to the formal consultation when the draft strategy is issued.

4. **Response to the Further Proposed Changes to the draft RSS**

- 4.1. A report was submitted, for decision, on the Government's Further Proposed Changes to the draft East of England Plan following a second Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA). It was noted that the Environment and Resources Panel has also considered the Further Proposed Changes and its advice is included in the report.

- 4.2. During discussion the points raised included:
- concerns about the wording of recommendation 6 relating to Rye Meads. Following discussion it was **agreed** that the vital linkage between improving sewage treatment capacity in the Rye Meads catchment area and delivering the housing targets in Stevenage, Harlow and Welwyn would be minuted;
 - concerns were raised about impacts arising from growth in Norfolk and that issues raised in the HDA related to policy ENG2 and the impact of off-shore wind farms, and to the impact of light and noise pollution on biodiversity have not been addressed. It was noted that Natural England is the competent body for assessing detailed impacts on individual sites and EERA agreed to draw its attention to these concerns.

4.3. **The Regional Planning Panel agreed to submit the following observations in its response to the Further Proposed Changes:**

That the Regional Assembly:

1. **welcomes the production of a second Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) of the Draft East of England Plan, which it considers sound in method and helpful in its conclusions;**
2. **subject to the amendments requested below, welcomes the Secretary of State's Further Proposed Changes to the East of England particularly as they:**
 - **modify policies so as to avoid any adverse impact on sites of European or international importance for wildlife;**
 - **clarify the approach to water resource and waste water infrastructure development;**
3. **requires that a specific reference to the requirements of the Habitats Directive is made in Policy SS1, rather than in the supporting text to the policy;**
4. **reiterates its objection to the Policy H1 description of housing figures as minima, as this only allows the HDA to fully assess impacts of a 'best case scenario';**
5. **seeks assurance from the Secretary of State that the conclusions of the HDA concerning the remaining potential for 'in combination' effects with other regional and sub-regional spatial strategies and infrastructure authorisation procedures will be fully addressed;**
6. **requires a reference to the Rye Meads catchment as an example of a priority location at the end of the first paragraph of Policy WAT2, with reference to further work required in other locations;**
7. **requires the reintroduction as supporting text in paragraph 6.5 the need for joint working between key Olympic stakeholders to ensure that the design and implementation of Olympic facilities will make a lasting contribution to the region's sports and tourism infrastructure;**
8. **notes that the HDA has not included screening potential impacts on the Nene Valley Gravel Pits proposed Special Protection Area in the East Midlands Region, which should be addressed; and**

9. emphasises that the above recommendations relate solely to the Assembly's position relating to the Habitats Directive Assessment and that its other objections, submitted in March 2007 to the Government's Proposed Changes to the draft East of England Plan, remain to be addressed in the final Plan.

5. RSS single issue revision: Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision

- 5.1. A report was submitted, for decision, on the content of the single issue revision on Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision for consideration at the full Assembly meeting on 25 January. It was noted that Panel members were asked to provide the Secretariat with any alternative distribution options they intended to move at the meeting by 11 December. A report was tabled setting out the one response to this request, from Cambridgeshire County Council, together with two representations opposing the proposed distribution, from East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire District Council.
- 5.2. A presentation was given on the process followed to arrive at the proposed distribution.
- 5.3. Questions were invited on the content of the papers and presentation and the points raised included:
- whether account has been taken of the different accommodation requirements of the different groups that constitute 'Gypsies and Travellers'? This was confirmed and attention drawn to the proposed amendment to para 5.17 of the supporting text in the tabled paper;
 - more information was sought on the rationale for the treatment of areas with Green Belt in Hertfordshire and Essex in comparison with South Bedfordshire. It was noted that Government guidance indicates that Green Belt is not an absolute constraint on development provided that its need can be demonstrated. In South Bedfordshire, the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessment (GTAA) has shown there is a need within the constrained Green Belt area and therefore this has not been redistributed elsewhere. In the Essex Green Belt there is a high need coupled with high constraints and low opportunities for delivery so an element of redistribution of pitches is proposed to adjacent authorities, reducing the overall level to be delivered in the Green Belt. In Hertfordshire, application of the minimum 10 pitch provision per authority has the affect of redistributing provision from non-Green Belt areas into the Green Belt. The revised approach for Hertfordshire, therefore, proposes that the most constrained areas only make provision for their own needs, rather than meeting the 10 pitch minimum; and
 - the process for consultation on the distribution. The Panel were reminded that the views of all local authorities, amongst others, were sought and provided on the Issues and Options consultation. The principle of a localised redistribution was raised in that consultation and at the member seminar in October. In addition, EERA's Regional Technical Advisors Group, which has representatives of all the section 4.4 authorities and representatives of county groupings of district councils, had considered the technical basis for any local distribution and had sight of the draft of the paper presented to the Panel. The Panel was also reminded that its recommendation on the single issue review will be considered by the full Assembly and the review

submission will then be subject to a 12 week period of consultation prior to testing at an examination in public.

- 5.4. The Panel agreed to address points (a) to (h) in the covering note in turn. On points (a) and (b) it was agreed that:
 - it is appropriate to seek a wider distribution of pitch provision than that which arises from seeking to meet needs solely where they are calculated to arise; and
 - a minimum level of pitch provision should be applied to local planning authorities across the region.
- 5.5. The Panel then considered point (c), the appropriate minimum level of pitch provision. In the debate that followed it was suggested that a 10 pitch minimum with exemptions in some districts, as proposed in the report, undermines the principle of redistribution, departs significantly from the options included in the consultation, and is based on a redistribution methodology that is insufficiently robust. In addition, it was suggested that the exemptions proposed for some districts in Hertfordshire are unjustified, particularly as other areas are equally constrained.
- 5.6. Cllr Harrison moved that the submission be based on option two with a minimum 15 pitch provision in each local planning authority with no localised distribution and no exemption from the minimum for Hertfordshire authorities (as shown in annex 1, column E of the tabled paper, amended to take account of an increase sought by South Norfolk to its requirement. The effect of the latter is to increase South Norfolk's provision by 10 pitches and reduce Basildon's, Fenland's and South Cambridgeshire's by three, four and three pitches respectively). This was seconded by Cllr Davis and voted upon. The motion was carried by 15 votes (for) and two votes (against).
- 5.7. It was noted that an error in Forest Heath's 2006 baseline for existing authorised pitches, which has no impact on the 2011 provision targets, will need to be corrected in the table included in the policy.
- 5.8. With regard to points (d) and (e), the Panel agreed that there should be no exemptions to the minimum pitch provision figures and no further localised distribution.
- 5.9. The Panel then considered point (f), the proposed approach to provision beyond 2011. It was noted that the inclusion of a post 2011 approach was supported, especially by local authorities, in the consultation process, in particular because of the requirements of the local development document process. As the evidence for the post-2011 period is not robust, the policy proposes a regional guideline but provides for the use of more robust information from GTAAs if this is available. The Panel agreed to support the proposed approach. It was suggested that, at an appropriate stage, there should be a thorough review of the policy that is agreed, including its approach to distribution and its deliverability.
- 5.10. With regard to point (g) and (h) the Panel agreed that the issues of transit site provision and provision for travelling showpeople are appropriately addressed in the proposed policy.
- 5.11. Concerns were raised about the difficulty of delivering the proposed targets in the period to 2011. It was noted that an implementation plan is being prepared

to accompany the submission and EERA's Housing and Sustainable Communities Panel will be considering delivery issues. An announcement is expected soon from Government on the funding allocation that the region will receive to deliver new and refurbished sites in the next three years.

- 5.12. Michael Hargreaves, from the Government Office, indicated that Government ministers would be pleased to meet representatives of EERA to discuss finance and delivery matters.
- 5.13. **The Regional Planning Panel agreed to recommend that, at its meeting on 25 January, EERA endorse the content of the proposed revision to the RSS as set out in paragraph 6.3 of the report, subject to the amendments agreed above.**

6. Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) – monitoring of transport priorities

- 6.1. A report was submitted, for decision, on the region's transport priorities.
- 6.2. Concerns were raised about the availability of funding from RFA funds for the Priority 1A scheme for Southend. In response, the Secretariat clarified that a view could not be given until summer 2008 on whether funding would be available before 2011/12, not that the funding would not be available until then.
- 6.3. **The Regional Planning Panel agreed:**
- 1 to note the report;**
 - 2 to support the intention to appoint consultants to undertake further work in relation to the RFA; and**
 - 3 that EERA write a letter of support for the submission of the major scheme business case for the Priority 1A Scheme for Southend (Cuckoo Corner and Priory Crescent Improvement) welcoming the revised costs for the scheme, but noting there can be no guarantee of the region being able to recommend that RFA funds be released for this scheme in advance of 2011/12.**

7. Trans European Network bids

- 7.1. A report was submitted, for decision, on the development of schemes for possible bids in 2008 under the annual call for the Trans-European Network (TEN) transport programme.
- 7.2. It was noted that the Government Office gave an update on progress on the Felixstowe-Nuneaton rail scheme at the Regional Transport Forum meeting on 30 November. The meeting was advised that the scheme would not be sufficiently mature to submit under the 2008 annual call. Members of RPP expressed concern about the insufficient progress of this scheme. It was noted that the regional development agencies for the East of England, East Midlands and West Midlands are jointly funding work to enable Network Rail to reach the technical stage required for a bid to be made.
- 7.3. **The Regional Planning Panel agreed to:**
- 1 note the report;**
 - 2 support the possibility of Trans European Network funding for feasibility studies in relation to a third crossing of the River Yare**

- and improvement of the A120 Braintree to Marks Tey, provided matched funding for these studies can be found; and
- 3 register its extreme disappointment about the lack of progress made regarding obtaining Trans European Network funding for further improvement of the Felixstowe-Nuneaton rail line and request that an urgent meeting be held with Network Rail and the Government Office for the East of England to fully understand the reasons for this.

8. **RSS review**

- 8.1. A report was submitted, for consideration, to update the Panel on issues affecting the proposed Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 8.2. **The Regional Planning Panel agreed to note the position on the future review of Regional Spatial Strategy.**

9. **Hazardous waste study**

- 9.1. A report was submitted, for consideration, to draw attention to the actions needed to respond to the need for a policy on hazardous waste in the East of England Plan.
- 9.2. **The Regional Planning Panel agreed to:**
- 1 **note the position with the availability of information regarding hazardous waste;**
 - 2 **note that the Hazardous Waste Study indicates the need for some additional facilities for the management of hazardous waste in the East of England, in particular the need for landfill capacity of approximately 200,000 tonnes per annum; and**
 - 3 **receive a further report on this issue outlining the scope of a hazardous waste policy including possible criteria for locations for hazardous waste facilities, together with the process for developing these policies.**

10. **Regional Planning Panel Standing Committees – regular monitoring report**

- 10.1. A report was submitted, for consideration, to provide the Regional Planning Panel with its regular monitoring report on consultations considered by the Regional Planning Panel Standing Committees between September and November 2007.
- 10.2. **The Regional Planning Panel agreed to note the report.**

11. **Regular update on progress with studies**

- 11.1. A report was submitted, for consideration, to report on studies recently completed, and report progress on those planned or underway
- 11.2. **The Regional Planning Panel agreed to note the report.**

12. Any other business

- 12.1. The Chair drew attention to the fact that it was Graham Nelson's last attendance at Regional Planning Panel on behalf of EERA, prior to his taking up the post of Head of Planning and Regeneration at Norwich City Council. On behalf of the Panel, he expressed thanks to Graham for all the work he had carried out for RPP and wished him well in his new post.

13. Date of next meeting

- 13.1. It was noted that the Panel meetings in 2008 are on: 27 February, 8 July, 30 September and 9 December. All meetings are at 10.00 a.m. in Cambridge.