

CPRE SOUTH EAST

Date of meeting: 29 July 2010

South East Director's Report to Regional Group

Report covers representations, background and policy work of the Group May – July 2010

1. South East overview

Since the General Election, the new Coalition has faced the challenge of converting a political agreement between two rival parties into an effective programme for Government. The House of Commons has begun its own reform agenda, first by scrapping the Modernisation Select Committee. Secondly, the House is also disposing of the Regional Select Committees.

The process of dismantling regional bodies has begun, along with others, not so regional. The RSS now revoked may be followed by SEEDA and GOSE. It is clear the Government also wishes to move quickly on reforming the planning system. This will be based on the principles set out in *Open Source Planning*. The concept of a presumption in favour of sustainable development may appear in legislation, or in policy. There may be key tests that development proposals have to pass. The scope of the National Planning Framework could be quite extensive. Localism and Neighbourhood Planning will suggest future models for practical community involvement in local plans. The Government wants to introduce incentives sooner rather than later, as these will allow local authorities to secure the resources that they need. The proposals will not require primary legislation. The government has explained the scheme will be referred to in the Comprehensive Spending Review in October, and that they would consult fully on the proposals. They will press local authorities to get their plans in place quickly, as local plans are central. They do not see incentives overriding what is in local plans; rather they are a means of encouraging local authorities to grant permission for development that fits with the plan, though this is already a legal requirement.

2. Regional Strategy

Regional Strategies and the Leaders' Board teams that support this work are both being scrapped. The South East will turn off the lights and shut the door for the last time on 30 July. There has been concern regarding the 'intellectual property' and work done on the Regional Strategy. It will be possible to make use of this in developing an evidence base to support LDFs (or whatever they are replaced with) and any other needs. Regional Strategy evidence: the Partnership Board has prepared an index of work completed to date (attached). Most is on the website, but has not been 'published', as it is work in progress. A key document is the final report of the Housing Task Group which is the culmination of a year long study to test housing levels in the South East against a number of factors: www.se-partnershipboard.org.uk/pdf/rs/regional_evidence-housing_provision.pdf. Although this was aimed at testing 'regional' level numbers, the 'bottom up' evidence that has been gathered as part of this study will be very important to core strategies and local plans, as well any new LEPs. Affordable Housing Guide: a new LDF guide has been published and well praised by users. It is at: www.se-partnershipboard.org.uk/pdf/ldf/affordable_housing_ldfguide_forweb.pdf

Intellectual Property: The Partnership Board and Assembly websites will continue to exist but will not be updated. All the research material on these websites will, at least for the medium term, still be accessible. The intellectual property that is not publically available will be transferred to South East England Councils (SEEC) so that it is not lost. Discussions are ongoing about the future of the SEEC-in website (the regional data observatory). Contact: Heather Bolton, SEEC Head of Public Affairs: heatherbolton@secouncils.gov.uk.

Demography Information: The final briefing (July 2010) on the 2008-based sub-national population projections is on: www.se-partnershipboard.org.uk/pdf/monitoring/demog_briefing_27_2008_sub-national_pop_projections.pdf. **Economic Forecasts:** These are being made available to local authorities leading on Local Economic Assessments (LEAs) but are also available to other parties. Contact: Nick Woolfenden at SEEDA: NickWoolfenden@seeda.co.uk.

Housing Monitoring: there will be no monitoring surveys this year. Usually these cover housing completions (a joint exercise with CLG), affordable housing and housing supply. Discussions are currently ongoing with SEEC as to whether this work will continue in the future. The Board have told CLG that it is a matter for local government in the SE to decide whether it wishes to continue regional monitoring through joint work - it is not a decision for CLG. In the meantime, CLG have decided to collect data on housing flows and supply centrally. They have written to local authorities across the country to set out a process. CLG monitoring is no substitute for the work that has been done by local authorities in the SE for many years. **LDF Conformity and Major Applications:** the Board is still receiving consultations from local authorities. This function has been transferred to SEEDA. **Thames Basin Heaths:** Surrey Heath BC will be taking over TBH Joint Strategic Partnership Board secretariat. Contact: Jenny Rickard: tbh@surreyheath.gov.uk

3. Regional Growth Fund

The Government has written to local authorities and business leaders, inviting proposals to form a new South East Local Enterprise Partnership by September. Lord Heseltine will chair the Independent Approval Panel for the £1bn RGF. The Regional Growth Fund has been set up to provide support for projects that offer significant potential for sustainable economic growth and can create new private sector employment. It will help areas and communities currently reliant on public sector employment make the transition to private sector led growth.

The Government is committed to replacing the Regional Development Agencies with Local Enterprise Partnerships of elected authorities and businesses who can provide the strategic leadership and economic vision for their areas. To be effective, it is essential that business works in equal partnership with civic leaders to drive change in public service delivery, and form a better business environment. It is expected that Local Enterprise Partnerships will provide the basic leadership and long-term vision for the private sector-led economic renewal of their areas. To be effective, it will be crucial for partnerships to achieve strong business engagement. LEPs are expected to have a private sector chair in most instances, although there may be variants, such as elected Mayors, if that is the wish of business and civic leaders in the partnership area. Partnerships will see business working in collaboration with civic leaders to drive change in local public service delivery, and to create a better business environment in their areas.

The consultation can be accessed at: www.bis.gov.uk/Consultations/regional-growth-fund-consultation?cat=open Responses should be sent to growthfund@bis.gsi.gov.uk by 6 September 2010. The forthcoming White Paper on sub-national economic growth will set out more details on the

Growth Fund as well as Local Enterprise Partnerships. The consultation proposes that a proportion of the fund will be allocated on an open bidding basis. Proposals have to demonstrate how they will create new private sector jobs and how areas vulnerable to sector cuts will benefit. They will also need to prove that the proposal has backing and that it fits with the overall priorities of the area.

4. Sub regions

The sub regions have long played a role as functional areas outside the major urban centres. These would continue playing a part in any strategic vision for the South East. The boundaries are being reviewed to conform to district areas, for monitoring purposes. The Sussex Coast has common strategic issues that are different from the regional average, and shows a need for bespoke policies. There are currently no political or technical groups operating for the sub region. Any rationalisation of the boundary above ward level (such as using districts) may not be appropriate for the original concept of the Sussex Coast sub region. Kent Thames Gateway is a distinctive area, with no permanent technical support for the sub region. The boundary is based on the Thames Gateway Growth Area, and splits each of the four local authorities it covers. For regional monitoring, it should be district based. In East Kent and Ashford, planning policies of the SEP are being implemented through LDFs. The rationale for the Central Oxfordshire sub region is about being the core part of a city region. The former members' steering group has been replaced by the Oxfordshire-wide spatial planning and infrastructure partnership. A county-wide sub regional boundary may be preferable and would reflect current working arrangements. The Gatwick Diamond is a business-led partnership that aims to take the sub-region's economic performance to a higher level. It is an economic area in its own right. The designation of a Gatwick Diamond sub region provides LDDs with a strategic policy context to help manage development pressures.

In South Hampshire, PUSH is already monitoring performance using the current boundaries. The London Fringe group currently collaborates across the London border through the elected member forum, which includes the South London Partnership. The Surrey-wide Planning Working Group is now well established. The need for a sub regional approach in Milton Keynes/ Aylesbury Vale was accepted when the wider Milton Keynes and South Midlands (MKSM) National Growth Area was created. The current sub regional boundary can be easily monitored. In the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley, there appears to be support for a sub regional approach to the Thames Valley, and for cross boundary collaboration within the Blackwater Valley, but the general view is that the current sub regional area is probably too widely defined.

5. Eco Town consultation

Local residents are being offered the chance to have a say on the latest version of Whitehill Bordon's evolving master plan. The plan, which shows how growth and change could occur in the town over the next 20-25 years, was published in late June and shows an overall vision for the town. A drop-in consultation event is being run at the Forest Community Centre on 11 August. Councillor Andrew Joy, portfolio holder for Whitehill Bordon, launched the plan. This is an important opportunity for the community to say what it thinks about the master plan. The document will continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of the town so it is vital that residents say what they prefer, and what they think is important and why, so the plan can be developed and improved. Copies of the master plan will be on show at this event and there will be members of the project team available to talk through different aspects of the plan. There will also be free executive summaries of the master plan. The master plan, which is a document with more than 230 pages, will also be available in the civic offices until 3 September: www.whitehillbordon.com CPRE has a watching brief over the proposals to ensure a strategic and sustainable model.

6. Aviation Inquiry

CPRE was a third party at the recent Farnborough Airport inquiry, and presented evidence with regard to the climate change implications of increased greenhouse gas emissions associated with a growth in Air Traffic Movements (ATMs) at the airport. Hugh Sheppard has provided a useful note on lessons to be learned. Rushmoor Borough Council had refused an application by TAG Farnborough Airport to expand business ATMs from 28,000 to 50,000 per annum. The council's case was made more difficult because planning officers had recommended approval but the members had voted against. Formal refusal grounds related to saved Local Plan policies concerning the number of ATMs, economic grounds and noise. The Residents Association, appearing as a Rule 6 party, with rights to cross-examine. Their concerns were of an airport 'Master Plan' which should be subservient to the approved Local Plan. CPRE was more restricted in raising objections on climate change grounds – which had been set aside as a material consideration by the council.

When considering the case made by the appellant, CPRE acknowledged the arguments that on economic grounds the business aviation industry punches above its weight. But from CPRE's evidence, it should also be acknowledged that the industry punches above its weight in the emission of greenhouse gases, which the government recognises as the main cause of climate change. While the Air Transport White Paper of 2003 is still an important foundation policy for the industry, the Judicial Review into the Heathrow third runway showed that subsequent policies must also be taken into account by government, particularly under the Climate Change Act 2008. The Act set up the Committee on Climate Change to advise government; its Report on Aviation (CD/183) says that UK ATMs should be held to an increase of 55% of the 2005 total by 2050. The Farnborough proposal was for 170% increase in ATMs between 2005 and 2020. The Inspector's report will take 6 months.

7. South East population growth

The population of the South East is projected to have the most growth of any region in the period 2008 to 2033: 1.678 million. The South East is now projected to grow faster than England (20.1% compared to 18.0%), but at a slower rate than the fastest growing region; the East. The South East is projected to grow slightly faster than London but much faster than the West Midlands, the North East and the North West. Looking at the period 2006 to 2026, the projections imply growth of 1.376 million, some 90 thousand more than in the 2006 projections. The South East is projected to increase its proportion of the England population from 16.26% in 2008 to 16.55% in 2033. The main growth between 2008 and 2031 is projected at ages over 60, with the fastest growth (210%) seen at ages 90 and over. While migration plays a part in these age group changes, the main cause of differential change is the aging of cohorts from 2008 that start out at different sizes due to past birth fluctuations. This is coupled with the impact of net migration. In 2008 the 40 to 49-year-old population had been born in the high fertility years 1958-68, whereas 23 years later in 2031 the 40 to 49-year-olds would have been born in 1981-91, a period of lower annual numbers of births.

8. Affordable Housing delivery

The most recent South East data shows that 9,400 affordable homes were completed in 2009, equivalent to 29% of total housing completions. Although the delivery of affordable housing is higher than for at least 20 years (reflecting an increase in investment through the Homes and Communities Agency), the figure still compares poorly with the overall target set out in the SEP. The shortfall was some 18%, or over 2,000 homes. The Housing and Regeneration Board has consistently highlighted the inconsistency between the targets for affordable housing set out in the SEP and the (lower) targets set by the Homes and Communities Agency. Of the affordable homes completed,

62% were for social rent and 38% were in intermediate. In 2008, the proportions were 56% and 44% respectively. The proportion of social rented housing is 18%, and compares poorly with the SEP target (25%). At 11% of new completions, intermediate housing was in line with the target of 10%.

9. SEFS arrangements

SEFS has been the environmental umbrella body for the South East since 1999. It is administered by the Environment Centre in Southampton, and has its own management group. SEFS has been looking to take in statutory bodies as members. SEFS wishes to consider its future position in the light of recent government changes to strategies. The P&EC is consulting the members regarding its position and activities. CPRE South East continues in membership of SEFS, and branches are able to attend two general meetings a year. SEFS will retain its activities while government policy becomes clearer, and will consider issues, such as health and eco-system services, as well as the Big Society.

10. RAISE event

The next RAISE annual conference will be held on 21 October in Woking, under the theme of *Shaping the Future*. It is intended to showcase influencing through leadership. The Big Society poses both challenges and opportunities for the voluntary and community sector. RAISE has existed for many years to champion the contribution of the voluntary sector to making the South East socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. The aim is to make the voice of the sector heard and its contribution recognised. CPRE has long been involved with the voluntary partnerships in the South East, and looks forward to working with RAISE and SEFS in an effective manner.

11. Minerals Review of Aggregates

Sue Morgan, Regional Strategy Team Leader at GOSE has written to all participants to update them on progress with the review of Policy M3 (Primary Aggregates) of the South East Plan. On 6 July, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government revoked the South East Plan under powers in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. This means that the South East Plan no longer forms part of the development plan and consequently no further work will now be undertaken on the review of Policy M3. Because the distribution of the CLG National and Regional Aggregates Guidelines for 2005-2020 had reached an advanced stage of preparation, GOSE suggests that minerals planning authorities should work from the apportionment set out in the Proposed Changes to the revision of Policy M3, published on 19 March 2010. However, planning authorities can choose to use alternative figures for their planning purposes if they have new or different information and a robust evidence base. The Government will discuss with the industry and local government how minerals planning arrangements should operate in the longer term.

CPRE responded to the current GOSE consultation. The South East had challenged the government target of 12m tonnes per year. Minerals authorities concluded that the evidence supported no more than 9mtpa in the region. The level of sales from the South East has been declining for some years, and is about 7mtpa. The Panel Report backed a higher figure unfortunately, of 11.12. The distribution has also been altered, so that some counties, notably Hampshire and Oxfordshire, as well as Berkshire, have been worst affected. There was a 38% fall in primary aggregate consumption in the South East between 2001 and 2005. The forecast total demand for the region from 2005-2020 is a decline of over 20% from the 2003 figure. The revision proposed that the region should provide 12.2 mtpa from sand and gravel to 2020, compared with the current figure of 13.25 mtpa (a decrease of 8%), and 1.6 mtpa of crushed rock compared with the current 2.2 mtpa, a decrease of 28%.

Edward Dawson