

## **8Ai Role and Economy**

### **8Ai.1 What is the rationale for and role of the sub-region? Does the sub-regional strategy strike an appropriate balance between economic and environmental objectives (Policy SCT1)?**

Though this may not be intended, the Plan seems to consider that the South Coast sub-region is a poor relation to the rest of Sussex and that it is cut off from, and needs to be integrated with, areas of high economic energy and activity to the south of London. Section 2.1 states that the “overall aim is to ... substantially reduce the social and economic disparities with the rest of the region”, thus “the sub-region will make an increased contribution to the wealth of the regional economy rather than depressing the overall performance”. Contrasting this with the statement in 1.3 that “its population and household growth arises *solely* as a result of continued net in-migration(our italics)”, we suggest further study is needed to examine why this should be the case if unemployment is high, transport facilities poor, and economic activity low. There seems to be little logic in separating it from Sussex as a whole other than because it contains pockets of low income and poor employment exacerbated by outdated facilities and under utilised industrial sites.

*Therefore, what is the role of the sub-region?*

The in-migration and the high number traveling elsewhere to work, i.e. commuting, indicate that many of those living there see the role of Sussex as a beautiful and desirable place to live, but not a place to work. As the older portion of the local population die, their properties are being taken over by those who can afford to renovate, restore and modernise them, thereby putting them out of the reach of local first-time buyers and so perpetuating the problem of the lack of affordable housing for the younger population and poorer families. The selling of large gardens for development as mini-estates, usually of “executive” style high value units, further exacerbates the situation.

Can the “role” that is thrust on Sussex by the in-migration be effectively changed by spatial planning policy “whilst protecting and enhancing the environment and the quality of life of residents”? This is the real question and one that we believe is not being effectively answered by SCT1, although there is recognition of the problem in the statement “there will always be those for whom such problems cannot be resolved by economic growth alone and who will require more direct assistance through the provision of increased affordable housing”.

We do not believe that the answer lies, as stated in SCT2i “that maintaining and/or improving key north-south communication links that will also help to knit the coastal towns better into the rest of the South-East and increase the sub-region’s attractions as a business location”. We consider that this would further stimulate in-migration and commuting as those in the London area move out into relatively cheaper properties in the “beautiful” AONB and proposed National Park areas and then commute back into London.

**8Ai.2 Is there sufficient provision for employment land throughout the sub-region, particularly in West Sussex (Policies SCT3, SCT4), and is the policy stance in Policy SCT4ii justified?**

The real economic problem in Sussex is highlighted by the two statements in 4.1: “the majority of the existing stock of industrial and office accommodation is over 30 years old and not well suited to the needs of new industries and the more dynamic growth sectors of the economy”, and that “it is vital that the region finds creative ways to utilise the opportunity provided by the existing sites allocated to industrial and commercial development“. We agree with both these statements, but the planning procedure must be more robust in defending business sites against developers seeking short term economic gain from mixed use which includes housing.

We agree with the provisions of Policy SCT3, providing that the words “previously developed” are included in the sentence “to deliver sufficient appropriate *previously developed* sites”, otherwise the “delivery” could be used to justify more Greenfield development..

With regard to SCT4ii - We cannot agree with any policy which puts economic factors much higher than damage to irreplaceable elements of the environment.

The policies seem to ignore the geographical and topographical constraints on substantial economic development across the sub-region. Most of the observations are accurate with regard to the needs and the limitations. However, it would appear that economic regeneration is being advocated to a degree that may be “normal” and required in other areas of the UK, but which is not feasible or practicable in the coastal region of Sussex. By analogy it is well accepted that such places as the North Yorkshire Moors and Dartmoor are economically less productive than other, more populated places, but no one would wish to see them damaged in the process of achieving economic renaissance in the areas around them. It should be recognised that the area for the proposed National Park must be protected from economic renaissance that would damage it. Whatever are the policies necessary for solving the economic, social and deprivation needs of local groups, this begs the real question. There needs to be a commitment to solving the problems of disadvantaged groups without the solutions causing irreversible environmental and quality of life damage for those whose presence currently supports the economy of the Sussex coast. There is a risk to tranquility, areas free of night blight, and from new roads schemes in the area which can easily have much greater environmental damage than the transport benefits they bring.

**8Ai.3 Is there the right balance of emphasis between the coastal towns and does the Plan give enough recognition to their different regeneration needs? If not, what more could be done (Policies SCT2, SCT6)?**

We do not concur with the view in 3.2 that “the identification of the whole of the Sussex Coast as an area in need of extensive regeneration recognises the importance of taking action over a broader area (our emphasis)”. Taking a “broader area” view to its logical conclusion could destroy the very important nature and character of the whole of Sussex. The need is for sympathetic regeneration activities for individual local communities that are deprived or have under-utilised facilities, so that they develop their own individual nature, character and culture, rather than becoming just another urban development of only nationally branded stores and industrial estates.

Each of the towns along the coast has different needs/problems and there is no common solution.

CPRE Sussex cannot concur with the proposals in 3.3 to turn the A27/A259 into strategic through-routes to other key sub-regions. Such through-routes just bring about increased heavy vehicle movements, facilitate more commuting and by-pass the areas in need of regeneration. This was the reason for CPRE’s resistance to the Hastings By-pass. We do not accept that the Sussex Coast sub-region is “peripheral to the rest of Sussex”. The fact that there are substantial numbers of commuters (see 1.2 vi- numbers living in the sub-region but traveling to work elsewhere increased to 71,000 in 2001) indicates that the sub-region is actually well-connected and this is evidenced by the congestion on these roads at peak commuting times! The contention in 3.4 is that the workforce is likely to grow by 42,700 persons between 2001 and 2016. It is unlikely that this population growth would occur naturally if there were insufficient workplaces for them to go to unless they intend to commute away from them.

We are in favour of extensive improvements to the East/West rail links as this will facilitate movement between areas of economic under development and areas of employment opportunity.

SCT6 indicates the diverse nature of the region and correctly sets out the need for local approaches to what are a series of different local problems.

However we are against providing strategically accessible locations along the A22 corridor (SCT6(ii)) as this could produce ribbon development of the worst possible kind. Increasing North-South transport links to enable greater movement to and from the area cannot be done without jeopardising these corridors north and south of the Downs, thus creating more bottlenecks, whether it be road or rail, in other areas, outside the Coastal Sub-Region.

**8Ai.4 Are economic development opportunities identified with sufficient clarity, for example at Shoreham Harbour (Policy SCT3)?**

The simple answer is NO.

Paragraph 4 identifies the problem of outdated offices, but links this to land availability rather than the redevelopment of them. Most prosperous towns have modern office blocks in their centers where transport and infrastructure are also centered. Incentives are essential to achieve this in the sub region as has happened in Horsham. The need for Political and Business Sector accommodation to meet demand for venues outside London should be considered. The importance of the Leisure and Tourism industry on the area and the implications that either or both have on the transport requirements and other infrastructure has not been considered.

Development ideas for Shoreham should include outwardly focused large scale integrated housing and business centers of international significance such as at Portsmouth. Shoreham is a strategically important location, which with appropriate development could become the focus of a South Coast renaissance in the future part benefiting from global warming that brings warmer weather conditions for an English Riviera to the South Coast.

The Core Strategy, on which these questions are based, has been an excellent bureaucratic exercise that has carefully, faithfully and accurately identified the many and varied problems of the South Coast sub-region. It has also satisfactorily recognised the special natural and environmental characteristics that make the county of Sussex such an ideal place in which to live.

Whilst the problems have been identified, and relevant strategies promulgated, the authors have signally failed to propose a "grand design" in the implementation of them. The results are piecemeal strategies that fail to provide an over-arching plan to revitalise the very different problems in each of the coastal townships.