

Context



1 Introduction

- 1.1 This section of the Plan summarises the context for its work and considerations. The statements are deliberately brief because they cover dimensions that are well understood and/or are expressed more fully elsewhere but they do provide essential reference points for the Plan.

2 Global and International

- 2.1 The South East, by reason of both its geography and economy, is above all an outward looking region. It relies not merely on its relationship with adjoining regions, but necessarily on its relationship with the rest of Europe and a wider world. It is a prime UK gateway in terms of both economic movement and physical travel. The Plan assumes that this relationship will increase in significance over the Plan period, with the economic, social and environmental influence of wider European connections and international trade and attitudes recognised as being of central importance to the region's future.

3 National

- 3.1 The draft Plan, in general, takes as its starting point stated Government policy on a wide range of issues, relating to development policy. They are therefore not re-stated. In a limited number of cases however the Plan does challenge that policy where it is not perceived to relate well to the particular needs of the region, or when the Government policy needs some adaptation and development to meet those needs. Two prime examples of these areas for challenge have already emerged: the first is aviation policy and the second is infrastructure. Both are commented on briefly here. Where other issues arise in the draft Plan, they are identified specifically.

- 3.2 **Aviation** – The Assembly has two fundamental concerns about the Aviation White Paper (The Future of Air Transport, December 2003): firstly that its assumption of very substantial increases in air traffic over the Plan period is inherently unsustainable and conflicts with other aspects of Government policy; secondly that the particular proposals for a third runway at Heathrow and possibly a second runway at Gatwick have not been adequately justified. In the case of Heathrow/Gatwick, the Government have accepted that substantial additional technical work is needed before formal decisions can be made. Although concerned about the blighting effect of this uncertainty, the Assembly accepts this position, but has concluded that it would be inappropriate to include in the South East Plan any provision for those possible major developments at Heathrow/Gatwick. If and when final decisions are made, the scale of the implications will be such as to merit a review of this Plan. The Assembly is commissioning further work to illustrate its concerns about both the proposals and its basic concerns about sustainability. It expects to draw on the conclusions of that work when it submits the Plan to Government.

- 3.3 **Infrastructure** – Throughout the initial debates and discussion about the Plan, concern about the inadequacy of infrastructure investment has emerged as a matter of prime, and almost universal, concern. The Assembly is therefore undertaking, in association with local authorities and others, further detailed work on both the nature of the problem and potential solutions. It recognises that a significant programme of infrastructure investment is under way in the region, but has nevertheless already identified a need for Government to develop a much more positive and coherent framework for the resolution of infrastructure problems at the national, regional and local level. This matter is therefore emphasised throughout the consultation draft as a fundamental issue, which the Assembly wishes to pursue with Government.

4 Other Adjoining Regions

- 4.1** The most important relationship is with London. It is different to relationships with the other regions, as London relies on the South East to accommodate some needs. The London Plan, recently approved and adopted, seeks to accommodate London's housing needs within its proposals, although it only runs to 2020. The London Plan's housing provision has been increased to 30,000 dwellings per annum, and although this represents a step change in provision, the Mayor has been making good progress in achieving increased housing construction in recent years. Provided, therefore, that levels of international migration do not significantly exceed current forecasts, London's physical demands on the South East until 2021 look reasonably stable. They are less clear beyond 2026. Both the pre- and post-2021 situations are however the subject of further research by the Assembly and discussions with London which will be drawn upon in later stages of Plan preparation.
- 4.2** In respect of other regions, the relationship with the East of England and East Midlands has been extensively explored in joint working for the Growth Areas of the Thames Gateway and Milton Keynes and South Midlands (MKSM). Current policy statements for these two areas reflect that position. In respect of the Gateway however the Interregional Planning Statement 2004 only covers the period to 2016 and, in the case of MKSM, the proposed Sub-regional Strategy runs to 2021. Some extension of these horizons will therefore be required, and are reflected in later elements of this Plan.
- 4.3** Links with the West Midlands are relatively modest and proposals in this consultative draft need to be consistent with plans for the regeneration and development of relevant areas of the West Midlands. In our early work we considered that linkages

with the South West region in the Bournemouth/Poole and Swindon areas would be of growing significance. Further analysis has cast doubt on that view and the Plan options have been framed in that context. This again however is a matter for further discussion and review. A similar initial conclusion has been drawn in respect of Nord-Pas de Calais over the longer-term; links with Kent in particular will certainly increase, but they do not appear at this stage to have regional significance in development terms.

5 The Integrated Regional Framework

- 5.1** As its name suggests, the Integrated Regional Framework (IRF) provides an essential part of the context for the Plan. It establishes a shared regional vision and set of objectives which all organisations in the region should use to try and achieve more sustainable development. It reflects overall Government policy on sustainable development but sets the policy in a distinctive South East context.
- 5.2** The Framework was adopted by the Assembly and its partners in summer 2004, and formally launched in July. It has been drawn upon as a reference point in several dimensions of the evolution of this consultative draft. Most critically, it has been used as the basis for development of the Plan Vision and the Sustainability Appraisal of the Plan. The IRF is a family of documents but its key issues, objectives and indicators are set out in its Executive Summary. The core of that summary is therefore reproduced here.

TABLE B I**IRF Objectives and Indicators**

Objective	Indicator
Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone	
1. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Housing completions compared with regional guidance b. Additional provision of affordable housing c. Average property price compared against average earnings d. Households on the Housing Register e. Number of unfit homes per 1,000 dwellings
2. To reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public wellbeing, the economy and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Properties at risk from flooding b. New development with sustainable drainage installed
3. To improve the health and well-being of the population & reduce inequalities in health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Death rates from circulatory disease, cancer, accidents and suicide b. Infant mortality rates c. Conceptions among girls under 18 d. Life expectancy
4. To reduce poverty and social exclusion and close the gap between the most deprived areas in the South East and the rest of the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proportion of children under 16 who live in low-income households b. Percentage of population of working age who are claiming key benefits c. Percentage of households in fuel poverty d. Proportion of population who live in areas that rank within the most deprived 20% of areas in the country e. Household income in rural areas
5. To raise educational achievement levels across the region and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proportion of 19 year olds with Level 2 qualifications (5 GCSEs A*-C or NVQ equivalent) b. Percentage of population of working age qualified to NVQ Level 3 or equivalent c. Proportion of adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills
6. To reduce crime and the fear of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Level of domestic burglaries, violent offences and vehicle crimes b. Fear of crime
7. To create and sustain vibrant communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Percentage of people who say they are satisfied with their local area as a place to live b. Percentage of people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds and communities can live together harmoniously c. Percentage of people who have carried out any of a specified list of actions, unpaid, for someone who is not a relative d. Percentage of people who have received any of a specified list of actions, unpaid, by someone who is not a relative
8. To improve accessibility to all services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Percentage of rural households at set distances from key services. (The Department for Transport is currently working with relevant Government departments to agree sectoral indicators for access to health services, education services, employment opportunities and food shops. When these are agreed, they will be adopted as regional indicators for the South East)
9. To encourage increased engagement in cultural activity across all sections of the community in the South East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Engagement in cultural activity by target group, for example young people or geographic area

TABLE B I (continued)

IRF Objectives and Indicators

Objective	Indicator
Effective protection of the environment	
10. To improve efficiency in land use through the re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings, including re-use of materials from buildings, and encourage urban renaissance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Development on previously developed land b. Derelict land and empty properties
11. To reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Days when air pollution is moderate or high
12. To address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and ensure that the South East is prepared for its impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Emissions of greenhouse gases from energy consumption, transport and land use and waste management b. Capacity during 'critical periods' to supply water without the need for restrictions
13. To conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Population of wild birds b. Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) c. Extent and condition of key habitats for which Biodiversity Action Plans have been established d. Extent of ancient woodlands
14. To protect, enhance and make accessible for enjoyment, the region's countryside and historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Land covered by management schemes b. Access to and the use of the countryside c. Buildings of Grade I and II* at risk of decay
15. To reduce road congestion and pollution levels by improving travel choice, and reducing the need for travel by car/lorry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Average daily motor vehicle flows b. Proportion of travel by mode c. Monetary investment in public transport, walking and cycling
Prudent use of natural resources	
16. To reduce the global, social and environmental impact of consumption of resources by using sustainably produced and local products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Percentage of new build and retrofit homes meeting EcoHomes Very Good standard b. Percentage of commercial buildings meeting BREEAM Very Good standard c. Ecological footprint for the South East
17. To reduce waste generation and disposal, and achieve the sustainable management of waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Percentage of the total tonnage of all types of waste (municipal solid waste, construction and demolition and industrial) that has been recycled, composted, used to recover heat, power and other energy sources, and landfilled
18. To maintain and improve the water quality of the region's rivers and coasts, and to achieve sustainable water resources management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Rivers of Good or Fair chemical and biological water quality b. Compliance with EC Bathing Waters Directive c. Per capita consumption of water d. Incidents of major and significant water pollution
19. To increase energy efficiency, and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Energy use per capita b. Installed capacity for energy production from renewable sources
Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth	
20. To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proportion of people of working age in employment b. Proportion of people claiming unemployment benefits who have been out of work for more than a year c. Percentage increase or decrease in the total number of VAT registered businesses in the area d. Percentage change in workplace-based employment

TABLE B I (continued)

IRF Objectives and Indicators

Objective	Indicator
Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth (continued)	
21. To sustain economic growth and competitiveness across the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. GVA per capita b. Labour productivity performance of the South East against other high performing regions in Europe and the world
22. To stimulate economic revival in priority regeneration areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proportion of people, in the most deprived areas, of working age in employment b. Proportion of people, in the most deprived areas, claiming unemployment benefit who have been out of work for more than a year c. Proportion of young people (18-24 year olds), in the most deprived areas, in full-time education or employment d. Percentage increase or decrease in workplace based employment in the most deprived areas
23. To develop a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy that excels in innovation with higher value, lower impact activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Average annual increase in GVA per worker for manufacturing and the knowledge sectors b. Value of manufacturing exports per head
24. To encourage the development of a buoyant, sustainable tourism sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Percentage of jobs in the tourism sector b. Number of visitors staying overnight and overnight spend
25. To develop and maintain a skilled workforce to support long-term competitiveness of the region	[See indicators (b) and (c) under objective 5 on population qualified to NVQ level 3 and literacy and numeracy skills]

6 Policy Documents

6.1 The Plan draws on a number of other strategies and policy documents at the regional level. A full list of relevant regional strategies and statements is set out in Annex I, but the key documents are briefly referred to here.

6.2 Regional Planning Guidance: RPG9/9A – RPG9 was approved by the Secretary of State in 2001. Although the South East Plan will supercede these earlier statements about the region, they nevertheless represent an important starting point for the Plan and it is highly likely that important components will be part of the Plan. In essence, RPG9 places an emphasis on urban renaissance, regeneration, strategic growth areas, concern for the environment and the principles of sustainability, but much more detail can be found in the full document. RPG9A deals with growth in the Thames Gateway.

6.3 Regional Economic Strategy (RES) – The RES was approved by Government in 2002. It sets out a 10-year framework for economic development and also proposes that ‘by 2012 the South East will be recognised by all as one of the world’s 15 top performing regional economies, as measured against a broad range of economic, social and environmental indicators. The RES and its proposals have been an important element in development of this consultative draft.

6.4 Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) – The first housing strategy for the region was approved by Government in Spring 2004. It runs for two years to 2006, but also gives a steer on longer-term issues relating to housing supply. It provides a set of pointers for public expenditure on the provision of social and affordable housing in the region. It therefore has an important relationship to the implementation aspects of the South East Plan, and particularly the delivery of the Plan’s housing policies. A new version of the RHS, covering 2006-09, is in



preparation and will be the subject of a consultation period that will largely coincide with consultation on this Plan.

6.5 Topic Alterations/Reviews – When RPG9 was approved the Government drew attention to the need for early selective reviews of specific topics. The Assembly has devoted considerable time and effort to the pursuit of these reviews and all have now reached an advanced stage. Because of their currency, they form important building blocks for the South East Plan and have been incorporated into the Plan on that basis. They are referred to more fully in the appropriate sections of the Plan, but in summary they cover the following topics:

- Transport Approved by Secretary of State July 2004
- Renewable Energy Proposed Alterations published June 2004
- Tourism and Sport Proposed Alterations published June 2004
- Waste Management Public Examination October 2004
- Minerals Public Examination October 2004

6.6 Growth Areas – The Assembly has also taken forward proposals for the three Growth Areas approved in principle in RPG9. Again, that work is now well advanced and forms an important component of the Plan. Their current position is as follows:

- Ashford Approved by Secretary of State July 2004
- Milton Keynes and South Midlands Proposed Alterations published October 2004
- Thames Gateway Inter-regional Planning Statement July 2004

7 Public Attitudes

7.1 As part of the preparatory process, and particularly to assist discussions in the Spring Debates – a series of stakeholder workshops in April-May 2004 – and thereafter, the Assembly commissioned two stages of public opinion testing from the well-respected polling company MORI. Full details of the polling arrangements and the public attitudes they reveal have been published and can be studied on the Assembly’s South East Plan website. These public attitudes have been taken into account in the development of the Plan and are of continuing relevance in the debate on the Consultation Draft. A study of public attitudes to housing development in three case study areas of the region for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation ‘Housing Futures’ (Platt, Fawcett and Carteret, June 2004) is also relevant, and shows a balanced public attitude towards further housing development. A third stage of opinion polling by MORI will be an integral element of the consultation process for this draft Plan.