

# a clear vision

FOR THE SOUTH EAST

## **THE SOUTH EAST PLAN** **Executive Summary**

**Draft for Public Consultation**  
**January 2005**



## Introduction

The South East Plan is a new type of Plan. It springs from the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. When eventually approved by the Government, it will provide a statutory regional framework for development to 2026, setting out scale, priorities and broad locations for change. It will integrate with other key regional strategies and with the new local planning system, operating through Local Development Documents. It will place considerable emphasis on measures to achieve implementation and delivery.

This Consultation Draft is the first stage in formulation of the Plan. It sets out the main elements for debate and seeks views on development options and other issues. It does not offer a complete picture of some aspects, for example implementation requirements. Some matters are also the subject of ongoing research. These dimensions will be included in the Plan submitted to Government, following consultation and further analysis.

This Consultation Draft also contains one significant and deliberate omission: district level housing targets. These will be an important component of the Plan submitted to Government but, in many ways, they need to be decided in the context of the focus and direction of the overall Plan. They will therefore form the basis of a second stage of consultation later in 2005. This Consultative Draft can therefore be termed Part One of the Plan, and the district targets, Part Two.

## Components

The elements of this Part One Consultative Draft comprise:

- i This Executive Summary
- ii The South East Plan document
  - Context
  - Vision and Core Strategy
  - Development Options
  - Regional Policies
  - Sub-regional Policies and Options
  - List of other relevant strategies
- iii Implementation Plan
- iv Monitoring Section
- v Initial Sustainability Assessment.

## The Vision

The Plan vision is derived from a series of discussions, most notably during the Spring Debates, a series of stakeholder workshops in April-May 2004. It is also closely related to the objectives in the Integrated Regional Framework 2004. The Framework, jointly produced by the Assembly and other regional partners, provides a regional base, which all organisations in the region should use to try and achieve more sustainable development throughout the region.

The draft Plan's vision takes as its theme 'A Healthy Region' and sets the challenge that there will be a sustained improvement in quality of life in the South East by 2026, measured in terms of social well-being, the economy, environment and the management of the region's natural resources.

## Core Strategy

The core strategy for the region is closely related to this overall vision but it also emphasises the region's key international and inter-regional role. Foremost among these are the region's strong links with London, although it is also envisaged that links with other adjoining regions will also become more intense over the Plan period. Within the region, the strategy emphasises the need to reduce economic and social disparities between the east and west of the region and the need to achieve regeneration in the Thames Gateway and a number of coastal towns and cities.

The strategy envisages strong and sustained economic growth over the period. The annual rate of growth however, at 3% per annum, would be rather less than the rate achieved since 1991. Increased use of new technology to assist productivity increases will be encouraged, but significant levels of new development will still be required. The precise scale of that development is for further debate.

## Infrastructure

The Assembly has placed considerable emphasis throughout the draft Plan on the importance of adequate infrastructure provision. It is concerned that too often in the past infrastructure investment has lagged behind development or, in some cases, has not happened at all. As a result it believes that, in some parts of the region, there is an existing infrastructure deficit which needs addressing. It acknowledges that a substantial programme of infrastructure investment by Government is now under way, but it now expects to see more specific commitment and assurance about infrastructure investment as part of the overall Plan.



This will require the establishment of a more positive and creative framework, and probably new mechanisms to capture and release development value.

The Assembly, in partnership with others, is undertaking further analysis of infrastructure needs and is developing a draft concordat, to submit to Government, to underpin the new arrangements. The overall scale of development in the Plan eventually submitted to Government will be conditional upon progress on this issue.

## Development Options

The Assembly is required, under the terms of the new Act, to consult on a range of development options, at both the regional and sub-regional levels. After considerable debate, the Assembly has decided that the consultation should focus on options for three levels of regional growth, and two options for distribution of that growth. The three growth options are:

- **25,500** additional homes per annum – a lower figure than the current planned rate
- **28,000** additional homes per annum – approximately the current planned rate
- **32,000** additional homes per annum – higher than the current planned rate.

The two distribution options are:

- **Continuation of Existing Policy** – essentially a roll forward of the pattern of development established in existing regional planning guidance
- **Sharper Focus** – a variation which places more emphasis on a combination of areas requiring regeneration and areas with notable economic potential.

Maps CI – 6 show the potential distribution patterns for the options.

Although these rates of growth are useful for debate and further testing, it should also be appreciated that the rates of growth could vary over the Plan period, perhaps rising in the middle period of the Plan and then falling away. The potential and appropriateness of such variations is a further aspect on which comment is invited.

The different scales of growth and distributions have their differing merits but, in essence, lower levels of growth bring relatively modest infrastructure requirements, and probably (although not certainly) have a lesser environmental impact. On the other hand, they would be unlikely to meet forecast housing demand and might inhibit growth in the labour supply and therefore the economy. Conversely, growth at the highest level would increase infrastructure and possibly environmental demands but would be more likely to respond to housing demand, supply and the economy. Comments are invited on these options.

## Policies

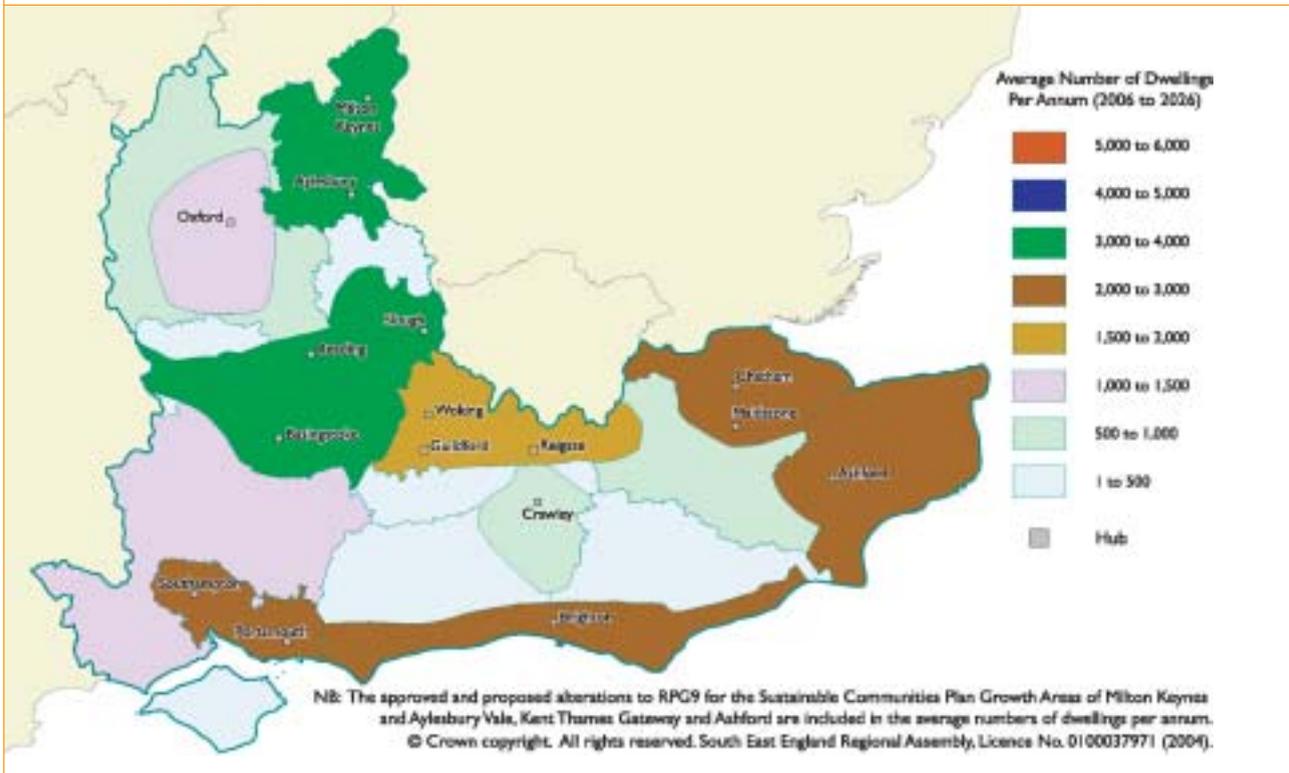
A set of regional policies, to set priorities and targets and guide action, forms a core component of the Plan. They are structured in three groups:

- A set of policies that apply to all aspects of the Plan, which are termed ‘cross-cutting’
- New regional policies on the economy, housing, natural resources, countryside and landscape, the built and historic environment, town centres and social, cultural and health considerations
- Existing regional policies, which have already been approved by the Assembly, following earlier consultation and debate. These relate to transport, waste management, minerals, energy, tourism and sport.

Comments on the first two categories are now invited. All the policies can be viewed on the Assembly website or in the full draft Plan but, in view of the significance of the cross-cutting policies, they are also summarised on page 7.

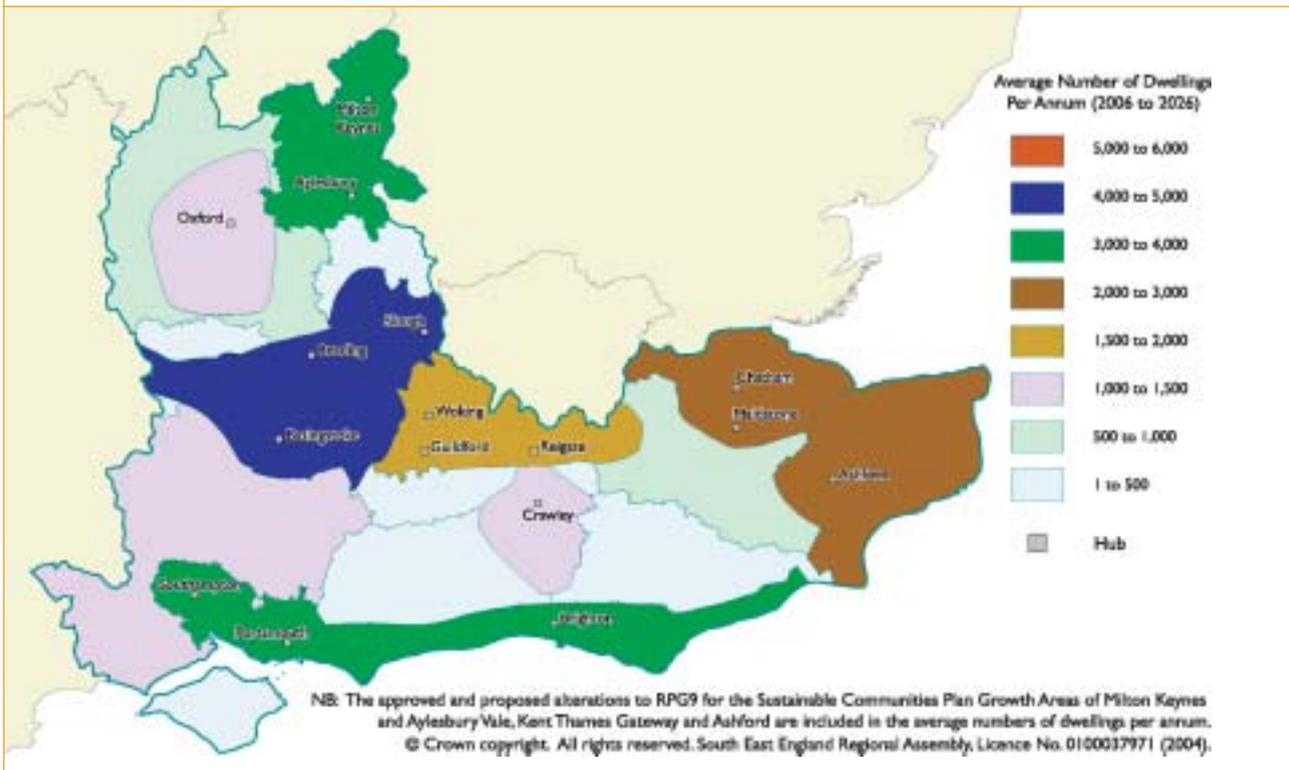
## MAP C1

Option ia. Continuation of Existing Policy – 25,500 dwellings per annum (annual average)  
Indicative scale of development for consultation and debate



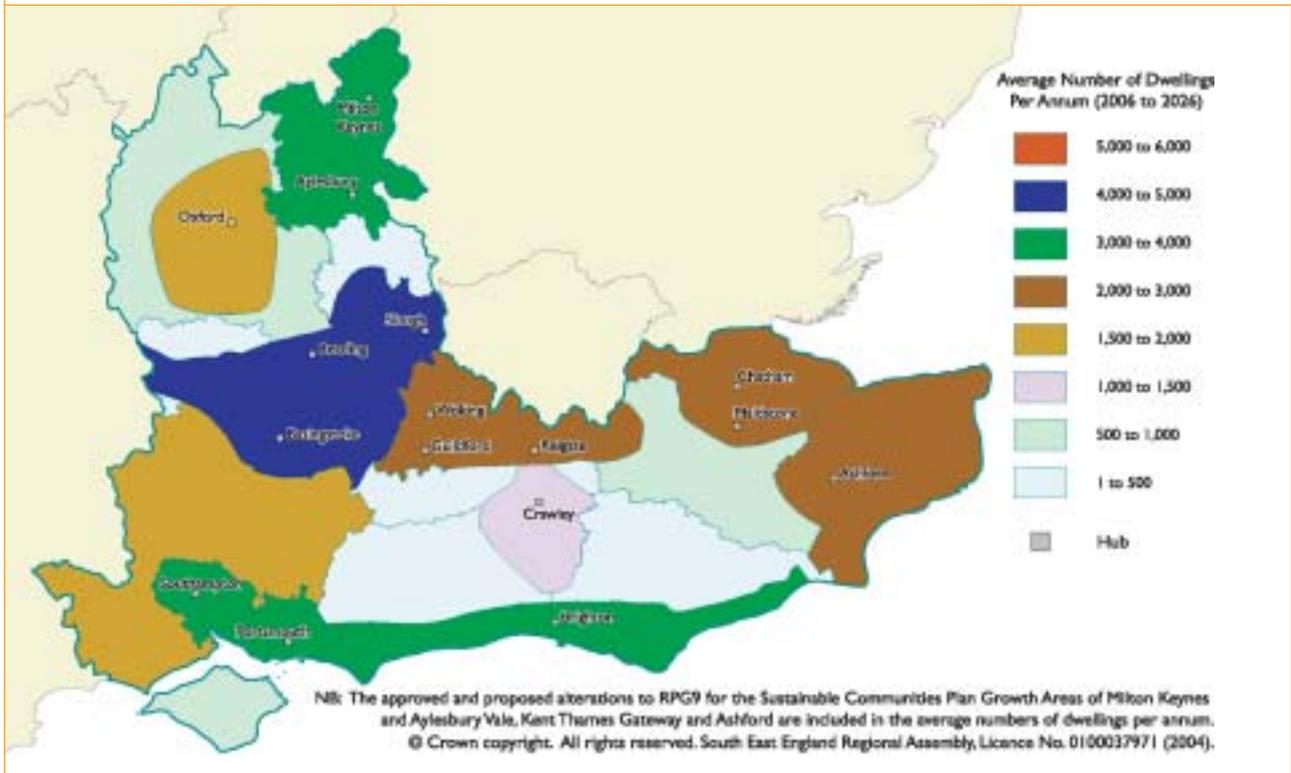
## MAP C2

Option ib. Continuation of Existing Policy – 28,000 dwellings per annum (annual average)  
Indicative scale of development for consultation and debate



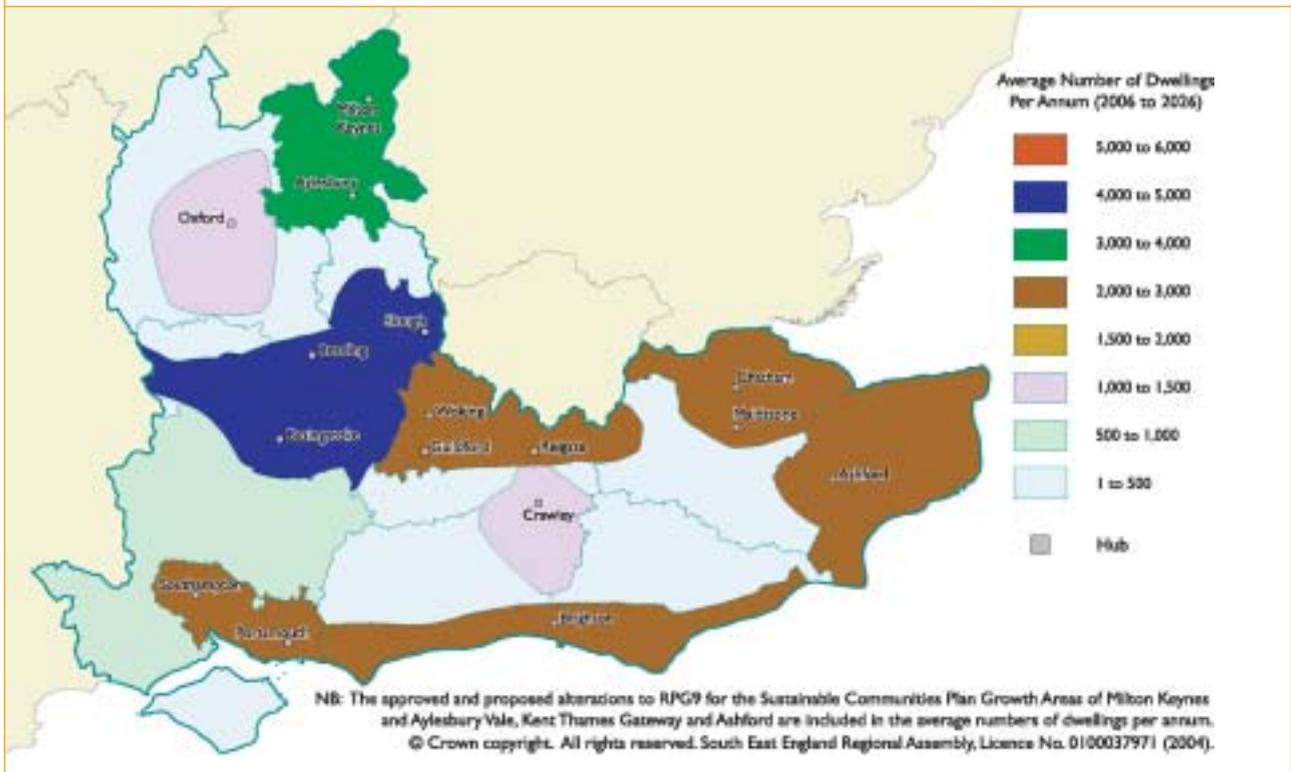
MAP C3

Option ic. Continuation of Existing Policy – 32,000 dwellings per annum (annual average)  
 Indicative scale of development for consultation and debate



MAP C4

Option iia. Sharper Focus – 25,500 dwellings per annum (annual average)  
 Indicative scale of development for consultation and debate







## Cross-Cutting Policies

### • Active Management

There is a particular emphasis throughout the draft Plan on active resource and land management to foster a more positive and dynamic approach to planning and land use across the region, increasing efficiency and raising standards.

### • Climate Change

Although there is disagreement about the impacts of climate change, it is acknowledged as an issue of regional significance. Climate change can bring opportunities as well as threats. The draft Plan's focus is therefore on developing a combination of mitigation and adaptive measures that seek to protect future options and choices.

### • Resource Use

Linked with the active management and climate change policies is a drive to make more efficient use of natural resources, in relation to both new and existing development. The aim will be to stabilise, and eventually reduce, the per capita consumption of natural resources in the region and reduce its 'ecological footprint'. The Assembly has set out a very ambitious target of stabilising that footprint by 2010.

### • Infrastructure and Implementation

The Assembly attaches great importance to the provision of infrastructure (transport, schools, health facilities, green space, etc) taking place in a manner that meets the needs of new and existing development. A substantial investment contribution will be needed from central Government, local and regional agencies and the private sector to attract additional funding. The policies in the Plan eventually submitted to Government will set out proposals to create the necessary framework for phasing infrastructure and land release.

### • Use of Public Land

There are extensive areas of property and land in public ownership in the region. The land holdings of the Ministry of Defence are particularly substantial. In some cases, the current use of the land is under review and may provide opportunities for development/re-development. Where such sites are of regional

significance, a programme of action should be agreed with the Assembly.

### • Inter-regional Connectivity

Active co-operation and co-ordination with neighbouring regions will be fostered. Links with London, East of England and the East Midlands are of particular importance.

### • Urban Focus

Development in the region will be focused on and around the urban areas. Urban areas are defined by the Government as settlements with a population of 10,000 or more. Infrastructure and other investment will also be concentrated in those areas.

### • Spatial Patterns

To reflect the overall strategy, a set of sub-regions has been defined, where specific policies and proposals will apply, within the overall regional framework. They are shown on map CCI and are:

- i South Hampshire
- ii Sussex Coast
- iii East Kent and Ashford
- iv Kent Thames Gateway
- v London Fringe
- vi Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley
- vii Central Oxfordshire
- viii Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale
- ix Gatwick

The Isle of Wight is designated a Special Policy Area. The other designations are:

- i Growth Areas – Milton Keynes and Aylesbury; Kent Thames Gateway; Ashford – where major growth has been agreed
- ii Regeneration Areas – Kent Thames Gateway, Milton Keynes, East Kent, the Sussex Coast (from Shoreham to Rye, including Brighton and Hove and Hastings), South Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Slough, Reading and Oxford – where a particular focus is needed on regeneration
- iii Areas of Economic Opportunity – the sub-regions of Western Corridor and Blackwater

## MAP CCI

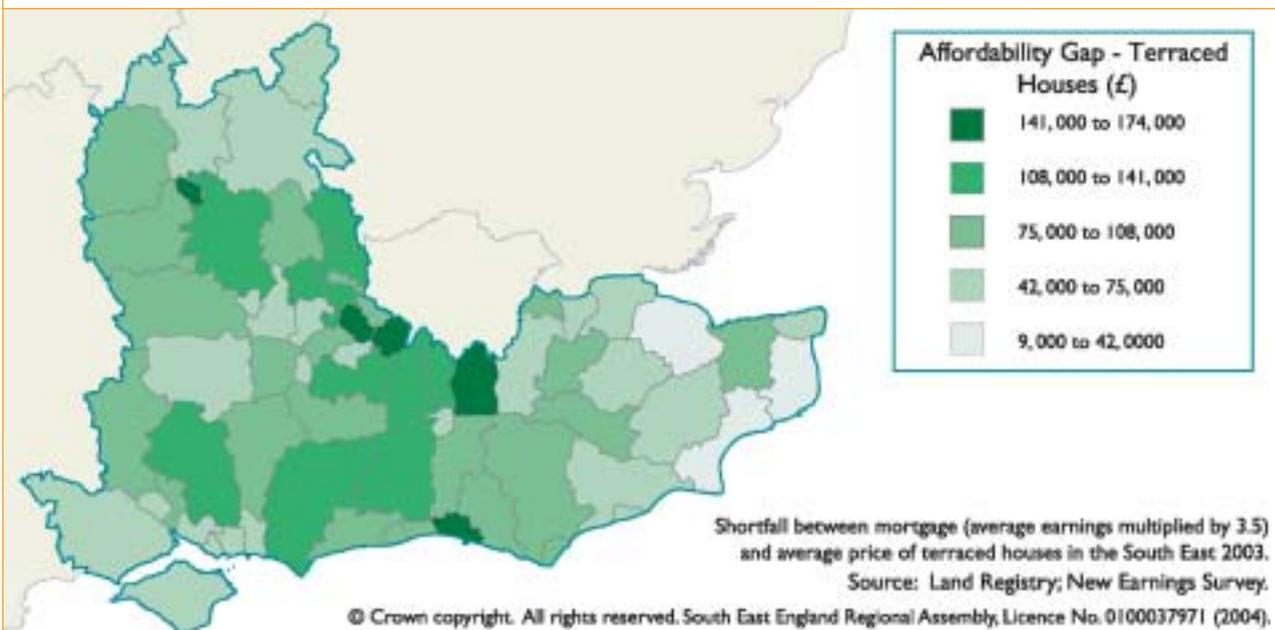
### Sub-regional Strategy Areas

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## MAP H3

### Affordability Gap 2003



Valley, South Hampshire, Central Oxfordshire and the London Fringe – where planned provision needs to reflect potential and the development needs arising from economic expansion.

#### • Green Belts and Strategic Gaps

The existing Green Belts will be retained, and the opportunity will be taken to improve their management and access. Elsewhere in the region, the Assembly proposes to identify a limited number of regionally significant gaps and corridors for protection and active management.

### Housing Affordability and Deprivation

The Assembly places special emphasis on the provision of a significantly increased supply of affordable housing in the region and the gradual but substantial reduction in deprivation. Affordability of housing is a widespread problem throughout the region as [map H3 shows](#).

Serious concentrations of multiple deprivation occur in some parts of the region, notably in a number of coastal areas as [map S1 shows](#).

## Sub-regions

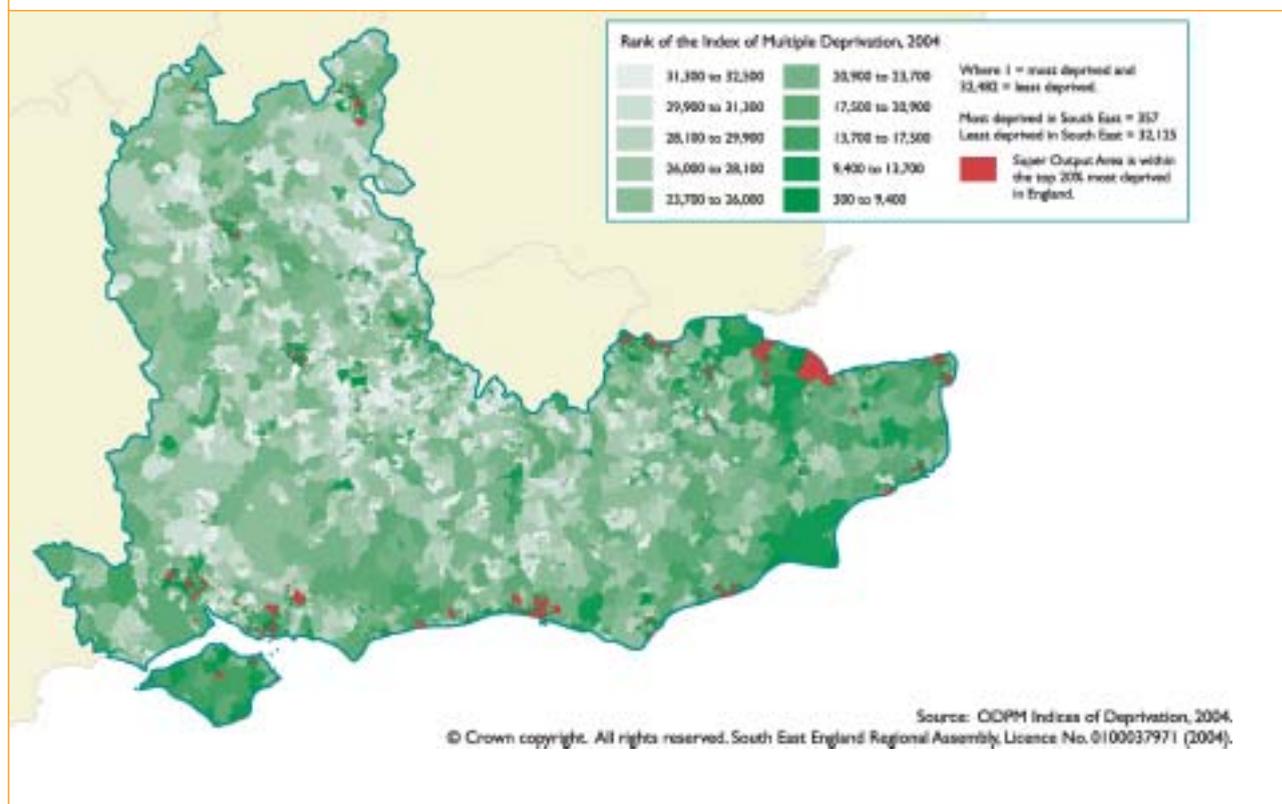
In preparing the draft Plan, the Assembly is required to consider whether specific sub-regional strategies, policies and proposals are also required. These are required where cross-boundary issues are significant and cannot be dealt with adequately by either regional policies or local actions. After careful study, the Assembly has identified nine sub-regions that require such treatment and they are set out in [map CCI](#).

In addition, distinctive policies are proposed for the Isle of Wight, to deal with the particular issues resulting from its separation and deprivation.

To inform the development of proposals from each sub-region, the Assembly commissioned the preparation of strategies from the principal planning authorities (unitary authorities and county councils) in each sub-region. The resulting sub-regional strategies set out policies and a number of options for development, together with a preferred option. In general, the sub-regional proposals reflect a cautious approach to growth and an acute concern about the inadequacies of physical and community infrastructure, and a wish to link further growth to specific assurances and programmes for infrastructure provision. The full range of sub-regional proposals is set out on the Assembly website and in the draft Plan for comment.

## MAP S1

### Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2004



## Implementation Plan

The South East Plan differs from previous planning documents in the emphasis that it places on achieving implementation of the Plan proposals.

A key element of the new approach is the Government's formal requirement that an Implementation Plan forms an integral part of the overall Plan. The aim of the Implementation Plan is to identify the agencies and mechanisms that are required to engage with and help deliver the policies and proposals set out in the South East Plan. To be successful, the right organisations and partnerships will need to be engaged at the right time and the Implementation Plan will set the context for achieving the required level of co-ordination and engagement.

In the draft Plan, the Implementation section is only outlined, together with some illustrations of the range of delivery mechanisms and arrangements that need to be considered. Until the scale and form of development has been defined, the detailed implementation requirements cannot be established. Further work on this definition is underway and, in the light of the responses to this consultation, it is intended to develop a full Implementation Plan to accompany final submission of the South East Plan to Government.

## Monitoring

As part of the implementation provisions, regular monitoring of progress will be required. A draft set of indicators has already been developed to assist this process and the Assembly publishes an annual Monitoring Report which assesses progress against these indicators. The content of the Monitoring Report will gradually be extended and enhanced as the next stages of the Plan develop.

## Other Strategies

The Plan seeks to make positive links with a range of other regional and sub-regional strategies, particularly the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy. These strategies fulfil distinct purposes, so that not every impact is relevant to the South East Plan, but an appropriate connectivity is sought and further comments on the adequacy of this aspect of the Plan are invited.

## Sustainability Appraisal

It is important that the South East Plan is set within a sustainable development context and the relationship with the Integrated Regional Framework has already been emphasised.

In order to assess and test the Plan's sustainability, the Assembly has therefore commissioned a programme of appraisal, assessment and proofing. The Plan is being comprehensively assessed using the techniques of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA). It is also subject to three further forms of testing or 'proofing': Health Impact Assessment, rural proofing and futures proofing. Independent consultants have been commissioned to undertake the appraisals and they report to a Sounding Board with an independent Chair.

An appraisal framework has been established and an initial Appraisal Report on this Consultation Draft is being published to accompany the consultation. It is available, either in hard copy from the Assembly, or on the Assembly's website.

## Comments

Comments on any aspect of the Consultation Draft Plan are welcome. A questionnaire to assist responses is available on request. Comments on the draft Plan should be sent by email to [plan@southeast-ra.gov.uk](mailto:plan@southeast-ra.gov.uk) or by post to Secretariat, South East England Regional Assembly, Berkeley House, Cross Lanes, Guildford GU1 1UN by 15 April 2005.



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Published January 2005  
by South East England  
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