



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

FURTHER CONSULTATION ON SOUTH EAST VISION

A consultation on the South East's vision to tackle climate change and flooding, address housing shortages and affordability, secure and strengthen the region's economy, provide essential infrastructure and enhance the environment, was launched by the Government today (17 July 2008).

Following a thorough independent public examination Proposed Changes to the South East Plan have been published today for public consultation until 24 October 2008. Views are welcomed.

Key elements of the draft Regional Spatial Strategy are:

- A modest 4% increase above the regional housing provision recommended by the Panel to address long term housing shortages and affordability issues people face in the region brings the total to 33,125 houses a year. In the South East the average age of a first time buyer in the region has risen to 33; the latest regional household projections forecast that 35,850 new households will form a year up to 2026 – over 70% of those will be single person households; and almost two thirds of the projected population growth will be people over 60.
- Affordable housing will make up 35% of the total housing provision - already there are over 200,000 households on council waiting lists and over 7,500 homeless households living in temporary accommodation in the region.
- 22 regional hubs have been identified as the focus for housing, economic growth and transport investment. New Growth Areas funding has already been allocated in Milton Keynes (£24m); Ashford, Kent

(£22m) and New Growth Points in – Basingstoke (£5m), Didcot (£2.3m), Reading (£5.5m), Oxford (£5.5m), Maidstone (£5m), South Hampshire (£21m), Reigate and Banstead (£5.3m). Dover and Shoreham have also just been identified as New Growth Points and will now be eligible to bid for further growth funding.

- Plans to help tackle climate change and contribute to delivering our national renewable energy targets.
- Strategic flood risk assessments will ensure new development is delivered in a way that mitigates the threat of flooding. The proposed strategic development area south west of Reading has been removed because of concern about flood risks.
- Rebalancing the transport system to promote sustainable travel with a greater emphasis on management measures, together with upgrading international and inter-regional corridors, supporting regional hubs and urban renaissance, and improving accessibility.
- Strategies to maintain adequate water supply and quality, reduce waste and increase recovery and recycling.
- A co-ordinated approach to protect the Thames Basin Heaths and other key habitats from future development pressures including policies to conserve and enhance the National Park and areas of natural beauty. 80% of South East is still classified as rural.

Announcing the consultation, Communities Minister Parmjit Dhanda said:

“The South East needs a long term development vision that addresses housing shortages, tackles the threat of climate change and strengthens the region’s economy.

“Despite the short term challenges of the credit crunch our population is still ageing and with more people are choosing to live alone the number of new households are growing faster than new homes being built. If more homes are not built now for the long term the housing ladder will

get even further out of reach leaving the next generation with nowhere to live.”

“The proposals in this plan set out the vision for the South East’s future. It is important that local views and all who are interested in the future development of the area take this opportunity to comment on the proposed plan.”

After considering views received during this consultation a final revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy will then be published.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Copies of the Strategy and companion documents will be widely distributed and made available to all MPs, MEPs, Local Authorities, Parish councils, statutory consultees, those who participated in the examination-in-public or commented on earlier drafts, and other interested parties and organisations. They are available from today on the Government Office South East website at www.go-se.gov.uk. When they have been distributed the documents will also be available for public inspection at local authority offices and libraries across the region during normal working hours.

2. The consultation documents published to-day form the Secretary of State’s proposed changes to draft Regional Spatial Strategy produced by the Regional Assembly. When finalised, later this year, the published Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East will form part of the statutory Development Plan, providing the regional framework for local development frameworks, local transport plans and day to day planning decisions. It also provides guidance for investment by commercial developers and public and private infrastructure providers.

3. A Sustainability Appraisal of the Strategy and an Assessment under the Habitats Regulations are also being published. A non technical summary will also be available.

4. All the consultation and other documents can be viewed and downloaded from the Government Office for the South East's website – [www.gov-se.gov.uk](http://www.gov.se.gov.uk). Further information for those wishing to comment is available from the Regional Strategy Team at Government Office for the South East on 01483 882532 or toni.wootton@gose.gsi.gov.uk. The Government Office website provides an online form which can be used to comment on the Proposed Changes. Alternatively, a response form can be downloaded from the website, or requested from the Government Office, and can then be returned by email or post.

5. The South East Regional Assembly published the draft RSS in March 2006. This was considered by an independent Panel of Inspectors at an Examination in Public between November 2006 and March 2007. The Panel published its Report in August 2007. These documents can also be viewed and downloaded from the Government Office for the South East's website.

6. There are several eco-town proposals currently under consideration within the region. As these are still at an early stage they have not been included in the current review of the Regional Plan. Shortlisted eco-towns in the region have only reached the first stage and locations have to go through public consultation and a detailed Sustainability Appraisal to test the merits of each one. If approved through the planning system they would be included in any future RSS review.

7. The timing of future reviews of the South East RSS will be discussed with the Regional Assembly. However it is important that the Plan allows for rapid recovery of housing supply to meet long term demand. The National Housing and Planning Advice Unit recently published advice on the long term levels of housing needed to meet the growing needs across English regions. Yesterday, Government published guidance on how this advice should be used by Regional Assemblies in any future reviews.