

MINUTES of a meeting of the STRUCTURE PLAN AND REGIONAL ISSUES PANEL held on 6 October 2003

ATTENDANCE

Members of the Panel:	M Bayes, R Clements (for M Saunders), A Dodd, D Drake, J Metcalf, I Simpson, W Storey (Chairman), B York.
Additional Member:	B Engel
Officers Attending:	Anne Fisher, Jonathan Tiley, Steve Bailes, Rachel Campbell, Michael Francis, Colin Haigh
Members of the Public:	Iain Vellacott – West of Stevenage Consortium
Administrator:	Joyce Brooks

- 1. Apologies** were received from Martin Saunders.
- 2. Minutes** of the meeting held on 28 January. There was still concern that there were three points incorrectly reported. It was agreed that these would be clarified with the officers and the minutes brought back to the next meeting of the Panel for consideration and agreement.

Minutes of the meeting held on the 18 July were agreed as a true record.

Cllr Metcalf asked how the consultation response to draft PPG3 was being progress. Jon Tiley advised the Panel that the Consultation response would be circulated to the Panel prior to them being sent to the Executive Member for agreement.

3. Regional Planning update

Web Pages

Michael Francis and Colin Haigh advised the Panel of the work they had been doing in setting up Connect pages that link to EERA and other regional bodies. The Panel was asked for feedback on any other information required, omissions or errors.

EERA have been reminded to publish all their papers on the web including any papers tabled at meetings.

Cllr York requested continued circulation of hard copies of RPP papers. Members' difficulty in electronic access to material was noted. It was agreed that this would be raised with the director of Community Information.

3. Regional Planning Update

Jon Tiley advised the Panel that the Regional Planning Panel (RPP) Seminar on 18 September had brought members up-to-date given the membership changes that had taken place on RPP and the Regional Assembly. The Seminar advised on the current position, the key issues, and what decisions need to be taken and when.

The RPP on 17 October will run through a first draft of the Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) and will highlight some of the key points where decisions will need to be taken.

The key meeting on 21 November will consider a full draft of RPG and will need to deal with some of the difficult issues, e.g. housing distribution to district level and the Spatial Strategy. Decisions will be taken in January 2004 to agree the final version and refer it to the Regional Assembly on 5 February 2004. Various matters appertaining to the sub-regional Strategies affecting Hertfordshire – Milton Keynes Sub-Regional Strategy and the M11 Corridor are dealt with elsewhere on the Panel's Agenda.

Officers had been working on the development of the district housing figures for some months and a suggested approach had been put forward. This methodology, agreed through HTCOA at the beginning of September, will test the different growth levels. A Joint Member meeting held on 23 September looked at the emerging work and agreed a protocol to enable housing figures to be submitted to EERA by the end of October. A meeting of the Member Group will be held on 14 October and a submission will be produced at the end of October. A briefing note was tabled to provide an overview of the Regional Planning process to Members. A Press Release will also be issued shortly.

In the absence of a draft Spatial Strategy for the Region, a number of different options will be tested and a number of figures will be produced for Hertfordshire. For the period 2001-2021 dwellings numbers would be from 66,000 up to 86,000. There will only be the opportunity for a short internal consultation process and the figures will have to be agreed by the Executive Member.

There would not be one agreed submission for Hertfordshire because of the different views of district housing capacity and different growth scenarios.

The Regional Assembly has asked to meet with representatives of each County grouping in the last week of November/December to try to sort out any difficulties or disagreements.

4. Stansted M11 Corridor Development Options Study – consultation draft

This draft report advised the Panel of the publication of the draft final report on the Stansted M11 Corridor Development Options Study and sought their views on the response to be made to the consultation. Steve Bailes took the Panel through the report highlighting the various issues.

The Panel supported the conclusions that had been drawn from the report and considered that they should form the basis of the HCC response to the Study.

In addition, they would seek for the response to also include the following:

- Welcome the fact that there are no proposals for new road development of the A120 west of the A10 as would form the basis for a new east-west link across Hertfordshire;

- Recognise that some improvements to the A120 between the A10 and the M11 may be necessary before 2021;
- Express concern that the proposed development within and around Bishops Stortford, such as at Stansted Mountfitchet, will together have serious impacts on the town, particularly on the retail centre, education facilities and traffic. The report's findings that there is spare capacity in Bishops Stortford, particularly of secondary education facilities, is rejected by HCC;
- Express concern that the scale of growth proposed for Bishops Stortford and Stansted will have deleterious impact on the character of the rural villages to the west of these towns;
- Express concern that the rail capacity issues raised by the report in relation to additional commuting to London and to additional airport passenger demand are not being addressed adequately by the SRA;
- Seek assurance that any proposed transport infrastructure will be shown to be viable and practical prior to being made a part of any development strategy so that investment can be assured;
- Regret that the wider issues of transport provision have not been fully considered in this report. HCC recognises that a further study on transport issues is being carried out but that will not report its findings until summer 2004 when the development strategy will already have been determined.

5. Milton Keynes Sub-Regional Strategy

Rachel Campbell introduced this draft report which advised the Panel of the publication of the draft Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy referring particularly to the growth of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis.

The Panel welcomed the report and recommended to Cabinet that the conclusions form the basis of the County Council's response to the Study. In addition, the Panel recommended that the Cabinet expresses:

- Concern that the Study has not demonstrated a sufficiently robust approach to testing the capacity for further renaissance upon Luton employment sites which would reduce the need for urban extensions;
- Concern that the issues of renaissance and sustainability are not addressed in the study in relation to the part of Hertfordshire that it identifies;
- Concern of the impact on the AONB of the visual impact of urbanisation.
- Hertfordshire requests a seat at the Public Inquiry and full involvement in any future consultation processes.

The Panel thanked Rachel for the clarity of the report.

6. A.O.B. - There was none.

7. Date of Next meeting

Thursday, 13 November 2003 at 10.00 a.m. in Committee Room C.