

MINUTES of a meeting of the STRUCTURE PLAN AND REGIONAL ISSUES PANEL held on 13 NOVEMBER 2003

ATTENDANCE

- Members of the Panel: M Bayes, R Clements (Sub for A Dodd), D Drake, M Saunders, R J Smith, I Simpson, W Storey (Chairman), B York
- Additional Members: M Janes, B Lloyd
- Officers Attending: Anne Fisher, Jon Tiley, John Rumble, Paul Donovan, Anne Dansey, Ron Madell
- Members of the Public: Steven Kosky – Phillips Planning Services Ltd.
Adam Dodgshon – Stevenage Borough Council
Jenny Purchon – CPRE Hertfordshire
Iain Vellacott – West Stevenage Consortium
- Administrator: Joyce Brooks

MINUTES

1. **Apologies** were received from A Dodd and J Metcalf.
2. **Minutes** of the meeting held on 6 October 2003 were agreed as a true record.
3. **Proposed Amendments to Minutes of 28 January 2003**

At the last meeting there was concern amongst some Members that three points were incorrectly reported. It was agreed that the wording would be clarified with officers and brought back to this meeting for the Panel's consideration and agreement.

Some suggested amendments proposed by Councillor York were attached to the covering report together with a copy of a letter from Iain Vellacott, on behalf of West Stevenage Consortium, who had also raised concerns.

The Panel agreed that revised paragraph 7 on Sustainability Appraisal of the Pre Deposit Plan and two new additional paragraphs on Economy and Development for Employment Needs should be added to the Minutes of 28 January 2003.

4. **Refreshing the Regional Economic Development Strategy**

The Panel received a presentation from Dave Kellett setting out how EEDA are proposing to review the new Economic Development Strategy as a contribution to Regional Planning Guidance in

September 2004. It was suggested that the Structure Plan and Regional Issues Panel might need to work with the Regeneration Panel on responding to the exercise at some point in January. However, it was agreed that ideas from officers should be considered first. A copy of the slides is attached.

5. Regional Planning update

Jon Tiley updated the Panel on the progress of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) and the issue of housing figures. The last Regional Planning Panel (RPP) was held in October with another draft of RPG being tabled. The current timetable is that the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) will formally sign off RPG at the RPP on 23 January, although there are still many major issues that have not been resolved. Because of this there is a chance that additional meetings will be called before the full EERA meeting in February. He said that the assumptions about RES and how they are dealt with in RPG are still uncertain, although we know that it needs to be revised and looked at differently in time for the Examination in Public (EIP). There is some concern that there will be a number of items that will have to be parked for further work to be undertaken but need to inform the debate at the EIP.

There was some concern that the timetable was unrealistic and that the work would suffer as a result and that Government should revise the timetable to enable all the studies to be carried out competently.

Jon Tiley said that it was expected that there would be a first draft of district housing figures at the RPP meeting on 21 November with the final version being approved in January 2004.

6. District Housing Figures for RPG14

At the last meeting Jon Tiley reported that EERA had asked all planning authorities to work jointly on producing district level housing figures to 2021 so that the district figures could be included in the Regional Planning Guidance. This report set out the process in co-ordinating the work through HTCOA and attached the papers submitted to EERA. It also included the report considered by Cabinet on 10 November setting out a number of particular concerns, technical papers, the methodology followed to derive the figures and sets of tables with the figures.

Jon Tiley informed the Panel that following the RTAG meeting, County Groupings were asked to perform an exercise with the housing figures to try to ensure that there was a high degree of comparable methodology used across the region. Not all councils performed that exercise as they considered them inappropriate or unacceptable. The Hertfordshire submission was, however, signed up to by all eleven authorities.

After discussion the Panel commented that :

- It endorsed, with some reservations from some members, the submission to EERA and welcomed the fact that all Hertfordshire's local authorities made the submission jointly;
- It recognised that there are many uncertainties facing Hertfordshire and appreciate that this has led to the technical nature of the submission;
- RPG14 should reflect the particular characteristics of Hertfordshire;
- The timescale for RPG14 should be such that it enables EERA and the Hertfordshire local authorities to undertake a robust planning process, with a methodology that produces a useful and positive input into regional planning and which enables the development of a robust Regional Spatial Strategy;
- It wants to see that, within RPG14, Hertfordshire's housing needs are met, and that the County's infrastructure deficit is addressed;
- It wishes to see EERA undertake a proper regional appraisal of the need for a new settlement and the most appropriate locations for any growth.

The Panel thanked officers for the support they had given to districts and resolved that the report be submitted to County Council for discussion on 25 November 2003.

7. Housing Capacity Study Update

Paul Donovan introduced this report which was part of the background work for the Annual Monitoring Report on the Capacity Study to 2016, based on regular monitoring undertaken for the Structure Plan.

The report was accepted.

8. Living with Climate Change in the East of England – Implications for Hertfordshire

John Rumble gave a presentation to inform the Panel of the publication and launch of the Study, the issues it raises for Hertfordshire and to get a steer from Members on how to take it forward. A copy of the Executive Summary and slides were tabled at the meeting.

The Panel was advised that the Study was now being finalised and a Workshop arranged for March 2004.

It was suggested that the Environment Department take on the responsibility for analysing the Study and produce a County Strategy to deal with the changing climate. This could then be used to raise awareness at our Panels, appropriate Committees or for a wider audience in Community Strategies.

The Panel was advised that the Environment Agency were already developing a curriculum pack for the next school year and the County Council will assist/promote in-service training programmes.

The Panel asked for a report for the next meeting to look at the Hertfordshire issues and whether to proceed on the basis of scoping those issues.

The Panel thanked John Rumble for a well prepared paper.

9. A.O.B.

There was none.

Date of Next Meeting

Monday 12 January, 2003 at 2.00 p.m. in the Ashbourne Room.