

**STRUCTURE PLAN AND  
REGIONAL PLANNING ISSUES PANEL  
Monday 8 March 2004**

Item No.

**4**

Members of Panel: M Bayes, R Clements (Sub), A Dodd, D Drake, J Metcalf (Sub), M Saunders, R J Smith, I Simpson, W Storey (Chairman), B A York.

**Regional Planning Update.**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update Members on the events since the last Structure Plan Panel, and in particular to outline the new programme for progression of RPG 14.

**2. Regional Planning Panels and the Regional Assembly**

- 2.1 Since the last Panel meeting, RPP has met twice and EERA has met to consider draft RPG 14.
- 2.2 The RPP on 23 January was dominated by the discussion of the implications of EERA's meeting with Lord Rooker on 19 January. At that meeting Lord Rooker had expressed the Government's concern about the housing figures emerging from the London-Stansted-Cambridge Growth area, in terms of the meeting the overall aspirations of the Sustainable Communities Plan. He asked EERA to consider delaying the submission of RPG 14 in order to carry out further work to identify additional housing numbers in an expanded Growth Area. He also asked for submissions on the infrastructure requirements for the growth proposals, to be made available for June, in order to be fed into the Medium Term Spending Review of the Government. EERA were subsequently informed that the housing shortfall was of the order of 18,000 houses over the period to 2021.
- 2.3 RPP considered alternative responses to this situation, but EERA officers recommendation was to "bank" the current RPG and its housing figures of 478,000 for the Region, and carry out further work to identify the additional housing growth locations, by the end of September 2004. There was a counter proposal by Essex and Hertfordshire which questioned whether this was an appropriate or

indeed procedurally correct way to respond to Lord Rooker's request. This view was not supported however, and the resolution, attached at Appendix 1, was passed.

- 2.4 The EERA meeting on 5 February was again dominated by the issue of how to progress RPG given these changed circumstances. The concerns of Lord Rooker were now set out in the form a letter which had been received by EERA. In addition, EERA officers had set out some preliminary proposals for how the issues raised by Lord Rooker might be addressed, and the implications for the RPG 14 timetable. Once again the proposed way forward as recommended by RPP, was challenged by the majority of Essex and Hertfordshire Authorities.
- 2.5 An amendment was tabled which proposed that a lower regional housing figure be "banked". This lower figure would reflect the agreed position on capacity in Essex and Hertfordshire. The amendment then proposed a more fundamental review of the development strategy for the Region, including whether new settlements were a more appropriate way forward for meeting these higher housing figures.
- 2.6 EERA voted to follow the principles of the RPP resolution and accept that further work would be carried out to see how to accommodate a new total housing figure for the Region of 496,000. The EERA resolution is attached as Appendix 2. EERA then went on to discuss the draft text of the RPG.
- 2.7 RPP met again on 27 February. The main issue for this meeting was to agree in more detail what work had to be carried out to implement the agreed EERA position. The EERA Secretariat were able to confirm that rather than commissioning a totally new Study to examine the potential of the expanded London-Stansted- Cambridge – Peterborough Growth Area, a study which had already been commissioned by ODPM and let to Buchanans, would be expanded to cover this work.
- 2.8 In addition, the Hertfordshire Study, to resolve the outstanding housing capacity and greenfield development issues in the County, would be undertaken in parallel, and potentially extended should any new strategic development issues be raised in the County by the Buchanan's work.
- 2.9 EERA also raised the possibility of further work around Harlow and in the A.120 corridor, and also potentially some additional employment and economic forecasting work, particularly focussed on Stansted.
- 2.10 Finally RPP were asked to agree that an initial infrastructure bid be prepared for early submission to Government, based on the best available information form RPG14 and the Regional Transport Strategy.

### **3. The Timetable and Process**

- 3.1 The intervention by Lord Rooker and the subsequent decisions by EERA have had very significant impacts on the programme for the production of RPG 14.
- 3.2 Both the Buchanans Study of the Growth Corridor and the Roger Tym Study of Hertfordshire are currently programmed to be completed by June, with their results being reported to RPP in July.
- 3.3 It is then proposed that RPP and the Assembly would formally consider an amended version of RPG 14 in September, with a view to consultation on the RPG taking place from the end of October to the middle of January 2005 (a 14 week period).
- 3.4 It is anticipated at present that the RPG EIP would then take place in June/July, although there is recognition that the scale of the EIP could mean that it continues into September 2005. This timescale would lead to a finally approved regional strategy by mid 2006.
- 3.5 In terms of the two major studies so far let, the Hertfordshire Study has been structured on the basis of having both officer and Member reference groups. The first Member presentation will take place in early May, with a second one taking place towards the end of June. These presentations will be to the Joint Hertfordshire Authorities Member Group, which has been meeting on an informal basis to discuss regional matters for some time. It is proposed that the Panel will be kept informed of progress of this Study in line with these member presentations.
- 3.6 The Buchanan's Study obviously covers a much wider geographical area, and arrangements for the engagement of both officers and Members are still being worked through. However, it looks as if there will be an early member presentation on this Study in early April.

### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 The events of the last two months have had major implications for the content and preparation of RPG 14. The timetable has been slipped once again to take on further issues, and there will now be a very concentrated period of further technical work.
- 4.2 It is proposed that in order to assist the Executive member in responding to these emerging technical studies that the Panel programmes its meetings to coincide with key stages in the programme of technical work. In terms of the current programme, this would suggest meetings in early May and towards the end of June.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Motion (Based on Option 3) – As agreed by RPP on 23 January 2004**

#### **Regional Planning Panel Tabled Item 7 Supplementary Report**

1. That the Regional Planning Panel agrees to carry on with the RPG14 exercise according to the existing timetable agreed with Government.
2. That RPG14 be submitted on the basis of the strategy and assumptions underpinning the 23,900 dwellings per year target, and on the basis of the district level housing figures contained within the papers for the meeting, save that any further re-distribution of figures may be presented to the special EERA meeting on 5 February.
3. Additionally, the RPG14 text be amended to include a provision along the following lines (exact text to be agreed at special EERA meeting on 5 February).

The Assembly to give an undertaking as an explicit RPG14 policy that within a plan monitor and manage approach, and having regard to the outputs of ongoing and/or new further studies in the extended London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor, and a more detailed assessment of the impact of any airport development at Stansted within the RPG14 plan period that urban extensions/new settlements be subsequently identified, in time for the RPG14 EIP, to secure an additional 900 houses per year (18,000 houses total), in the extended London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor, over and above the 23,900 dwellings per annum target in the existing RPG14. This work to be completed for approval by the Assembly by 30 September 2004 with supplementary district level housing figures of 900 per year (18,000 total) within appropriate locations in the extended London-Stansted-Cambridge growth area.

4. That the Chair of the Panel reply to the Minister proposing that in order to achieve the Government's objectives in the London-Stansted-Cambridge growth area an alternative approach be followed. This to comprise (a) submission of RPG 14 on the original timetable and (b) submission of an amendment to RPG 14 detailing additional housing growth of 18,000 houses in the extended London-Stansted-Cambridge growth area, following robust studies of a satisfactory technical quality (including a sustainability appraisal) and to enable satisfactory consultation with the Assembly's stakeholders, subject to early decisions on infrastructure provision and funding in the Spending Review 2004.
5. That the scope and extent of any further new studies in the extended London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor be reported to the special EERA meeting on 5 February.
6. That the costed infrastructure requirements to support the current RPG14 strategy be assessed by County and Unitary Councils and reported to the RPP meeting on 23 April.

7. That the required adjustments to the RPG14 consultation programme as a result of this decision be reported to the special EERA meeting on 5 February, together with a programme of meetings to sign off the additional housing figures for the London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor, in accordance with the proposed undertaking in para 3 above.
8. That the Panel expresses its support within RPG14 for a limited and targeted use of Special Delivery Vehicles in appropriate but strictly limited circumstances to secure the necessary accelerated delivery of agreed housing numbers and the required infrastructure.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Regional Assembly Meeting: 5 February 2004**

#### **RPG14 Resolution agreed by the Regional Assembly**

1. That the emerging conclusions drawn by the consultants carrying out the sustainability appraisal of the emerging draft RPG14 be noted.
2. That the Assembly approves the final draft text of the RPG14 document on the basis of the text submitted to the meeting, subject to such further amendments as the Assembly may agree.
3. To remit to the Regional Planning Panel, with powers, any further incidental changes (including issues arising from the Sustainability Appraisal) to the text of the draft RPG14 document, as agreed by the Assembly and thereafter to authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Management Committee of the Regional Planning Panel to send the agreed draft version finally approved of the RPG14 document to Go-East by 27 February 2004.
4. That the Assembly specifically approve the undertaking given in Policy H1A of the draft RPG14 text to submit separate later proposals by 30 September 2004 with amended district level housing figures to provide a new regional total of 24,800 dwellings per year, which will include an additional 900 extra dwellings per year in the extended London-Stansted-Cambridge growth area, subject to the Assembly considering that it has achieved a satisfactory regional result on the region's physical and social infrastructure needs in the 2004 spending review.
5. That the terms of the additional studies required to inform 4 above be approved on the basis detailed in the report to the meeting. Such studies to include taking a view on the boundaries of the extended London – Stansted – Cambridge growth area and full consultation with appropriate partner authorities on the studies' specification.
6. That the costed infrastructure requirements to support the RPG14 priorities and strategy be assessed by regional bodies in partnership with County and Unitary Councils, and the Secretariat and reported to the Regional Planning Panel meeting on 23 April 2004.
7. That the adjustments to the RPG14 consultation programme as a result of the Assembly's foregoing decisions be approved on the basis detailed in the report to the meeting.
8. That the Assembly expresses its support within RPG14 for a limited and targeted use of local, democratically accountable special delivery vehicles, in appropriate but strictly limited circumstances, to secure the necessary accelerated delivery of agreed housing numbers and the required infrastructure.

9. That the terms of the Assembly's foregoing decisions be conveyed by the Chair of the Regional Planning Panel to the Government outlining the reasoning behind the Assembly's approach and pointing out the difficulties which the Government's late intervention in this matter have meant for the Assembly and its stakeholders.
10. That the Regional Assembly restates its commitment to the following overriding principles:
  - a) a commitment to the fullest possible public consultation with local communities and other key local and regional stakeholders;
  - b) the guiding principle of all regional policies and strategies should be to improve the quality of life in a sustainable way for the region's residents and stakeholders, rather than merely its public and private corporate bodies;
  - c) there remains significant concerns from some stakeholders about whether there are sufficient natural resources, including suitable land and water supplies, to manage the step change in growth envisaged by the RPG14 strategy;
  - d) that the coalescence of existing communities is generally undesirable and should be avoided whilst maintaining the viability and integrity of rural settlements;
  - e) the step change increases in housing numbers contained within RPG14 will be unsustainable and unachievable without improved central Government funding to deal with the region's acknowledged infrastructure deficit and to allow for future infrastructure needs such as transport networks, health facilities, education facilities and revenue support for local authorities providing services to an enhanced regional population;
  - f) there must be an increase in Government funding to ensure that adequate quantities of affordable housing are included within the new housing targets set out in RPG14;
  - g) it will be vital to make sure that new housing and new communities are of the highest possible design quality according to the principles of sustainable development and that they will enhance rather than impact negatively on the region's natural and historic environment;
  - h) that all planning documents should take into account the region's Integrated Regional Strategy.
11. That it be noted that an additional meeting of the Regional Planning Panel, and a further special meeting of the Assembly will be required in September 2004, for the purposes of receiving the outcomes of the additional studies referred to

in 6 above and the approval of supplementary housing proposals for the extended London-Stansted-Cambridge growth area and that Assembly Group Leaders will be consulted on dates for the special Assembly meeting as soon as possible and the Assembly advised accordingly.

During discussion of paragraph 5 above, the Assembly also agreed that the studies referred to should include a detailed study of Harlow and immediately surrounding areas, to determine the relationship between housing numbers, spatial patterning, infrastructure investment and the resulting regeneration potential of the various options for its future development, and officers were asked to ensure that the specification for such studies explicitly covered this point.