

**Committee:** Environment and Transport  
**Date:** 26 November 2002  
**Agenda Item No:** 3  
**Title:** RPG 14 Options consultation  
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### **Summary**

- 1 This report recommends how the Council responds to the East of England Local Government Conference (EELGC) on its consultation on options leading to the first Regional Planning Guidance for the East of England.

### **Background**

- 2 This is part of the process leading to the preparation of draft regional planning guidance (RPG14). Responses will inform the draft guidance, which is due to be submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) in mid 2003. It will then be placed "on deposit". Following representations received at that stage, a Public Examination (PE) will be held, and the DPM will approve the new RPG, taking into account the report of the PE panel, with modifications as necessary.

### **Key features of the Consultation document**

- 3 The document suggests a "spatial planning vision" for the region, which is  
*"to develop a prosperous, outward looking and more sustainable region, respecting its diversity, maintaining and enhancing its assets, and sustaining and improving the quality of life for people who live in, work in or visit the region."*
- 4 The document throughout is relatively general and descriptive. It does not set out a draft strategy for the region, but suggests that existing RPGs provide an important legacy for development of future strategy. It poses a series of open questions aimed at sounding out consultees' views on whether it is appropriate to extend the existing policy framework into RPG14. It is important, however, to note that there will be no further opportunity to comment or contribute to the draft guidance. The next stage for the Council's formal involvement will be objecting to/ supporting the deposit version next summer.

5 The consultation document suggests that the following key principles should continue to underlie the strategy:

- The spatial strategy must continue to be based on the four dimensions of sustainable development.
- It must continue to tackle social exclusion and deprivation.
- The environmental assets of the region must be respected.
- The spatial strategy should continue to work towards more sustainable patterns of development.
- It should continue to be based on increasing prosperity in all parts of the region, building on their local strengths in ways that protect and enhance the environment.

### **The inter relationship of RPG14 and Airports Policy**

6 The timetable for preparation of RPG14 poses particular problems in addressing the implications of the Government's proposed new airports policy for the next 30 years, when separate parallel consultations are currently taking place leading to policy decisions by the Government about the time draft RPG14 is due for submission to the DPM. It is clear that the Government expects the EELGC to stick to the programme, not least because the RPG addresses many important issues beside airports and their employment, urbanisation and transport effects. The DPM also expects progress to be made by way of a positive response to his July 2002 statement on Sustainable Communities, Housing and Planning, in which he said he would work with regional and local partners in four areas in the south east, including the London Stansted Cambridge sub region and the Milton Keynes sub region, to establish where and at what scale significant housing growth could be achieved.

7 The response to the RPG options consultation and the preparation of the draft guidance is an opportunity to establish a framework against which the effects of the airports consultation options can be assessed.

8 The recommended response is set out in the Appendix to this report. It does not attempt to cover all the questions posed but is limited to the more important issues affecting Uttlesford.

### **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) The attached responses be submitted to East of England Local Government Conference
- 2) Representations be made to the EELGC that it should not assume any change to current Government airports policy or its specific implications for the East of England in preparing draft RPG 14.
- 3) The Council's response to the Department for Transport on the Future of Air Transport consultation be copied to the EELGC.

Background Papers:

EELGC consultation document on options leading to RPG 14 for the East of England.

## Response to RPG 14 Options consultation

Issue	Recommended response
<p>1. The Cambridge Sub Region Study's proposals as they affect Cambridgeshire are now being considered through the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan Review. It is important that the Cambridge Sub Region should not be disrupted by new or revised proposals in RPG14, therefore current proposals for the area should continue as presently embodied in existing RPG6.</p> <p>The Cambridge Sub Region should only be affected by any implications of the London Stansted Cambridge Study or suggestions for long term policies focused on the Cambridge Sub Region's economic linkages with other key centres, e.g. Ipswich, after 2016.</p>	<p>Agreed in principle, although subject to review, taking into account monitoring information and any other relevant factors.</p>
<p>2. How to respond to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the likely long term increase in regional population (the East of England has grown by about 6% since 1991 compared to the 3% growth of England and Wales);</li> <li>2) the apparent increase in the rate of population movement into the East of England from London; and</li> <li>3) the apparent change in the rate of household formation.</li> </ol> <p>A range of illustrative scenarios of growth in the number of dwellings is presented, which at this stage are not intended as either the minimum or maximum. The range is from 19,300 dwellings a year to 27,300. The lower level of annual housing provision would result in total dwelling stock in 2021 being 1.1% less than the result of maintaining current RPG annual dwelling provision; the higher level of provision would allow the stock to rise to a total 4.7% greater than the consequence of maintaining current RPG housebuilding rates.</p> <p>If the pattern of migration to 2021 reflects the higher rates experienced in the late</p>	<p>Although there is no certainty as to what will happen, RPG 14 should plan on the basis that demographic trends experienced over the past five years will continue. The planning process cannot stop these underlying pressures. It is more important to have a robust spatial strategy that can cope with various levels of growth within a reasonable range, rather than plan for a particular level of growth. If growth is slower than anticipated, the strategy will simply take longer to implement.</p>

<p>1990s and the rate of household formation continues at the relatively high rates experienced over the last 5 years the dwelling stock of 2,313,000 homes in 2001 would need to increase to 2,859,000 by 2021, 4.7% higher than the stock number of 2,730,000 in 2021 resulting from the rate of annual increase currently provided for in existing RPG.</p>	
<p><b>3.</b> How to respond to the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) aspiration that. In terms of GVA per head, the region should reach 20<sup>th</sup> place in the ranking of EU regions by 2010.</p>	<p>GVA growth is only an aspiration. The RES has a number of other objectives that also need to be met, including reducing intra regional differences in economic performance and prosperity, and reducing social exclusion. It is difficult to see how the region as a whole would benefit from further development land for business uses in the most pressured parts of the region. The RES aspiration should only be accommodated to the extent that it can be achieved through regeneration of existing settlements on Previously Developed Land, for the most part. Otherwise, these other important RES objectives will not be achieved as far as the region's districts with low economic growth and high deprivation are concerned.</p>
<p><b>4.</b> The appropriate spatial scenario Options canvassed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue existing policies;</li> <li>• Regional centres (significant development agglomerations around major towns, particularly those at the intersections of radial and orbital multi modal transport routes, e.g. Colchester, Ipswich, Bedford, Peterborough, Norwich)</li> <li>• Building on Regional Strengths ( particular features are growth in the A12 corridor London to Chelmsford, and in the Hertfordshire towns, in response to their dynamic economies, and high levels of growth in the Cambridge sub region after 2016);</li> <li>• New Settlement as a prime location for growth.</li> </ul>	<p>The Council supports regional centres or the new town approach. Continuation of existing policies and allowing further tranches of development broadly on the existing pattern is not viable if higher levels of economic growth have to be accommodated, because the environment and character of many settlements would suffer, as the consultation document acknowledges.</p>
<p><b>5.</b> Issues arising from the London Stansted Cambridge Study</p>	<p>i. The Council acknowledges the potential of the wider area as being of importance for national as well as</p>

	<p>regional economic growth. But it is important to stress that this potential is not solely focused on Cambridge, Stansted and the eastwards extension of the city into Thames Gateway Docklands.</p> <p>ii. There will be development consequences of this potential. The Council's response to spatial options above supports a strategy of more "polycentric" development, with a number of centres accommodating development, each centre playing to its particular strengths.</p> <p>iii. The spatial options must recognise the deficiencies in the communications network for orbital movements. It should not assume that these deficiencies can necessarily be addressed by 2020. Doubts are already emerging about the realism of implementing the long shopping lists emerging from the Multi Modal Studies, particularly the cost of major new rail routes. The track record of achieving step changes in infrastructure provision should lead to a cautious assessment of what may be possible.</p> <p>iv. The spatial pattern of development proposed in the RPG 14 strategy should seek to support regeneration of Harlow and the Lower Lee Valley, but it is not clear that simply releasing sites for business uses would achieve that. Harlow already has high levels of economic growth but relatively high levels of deprivation persist.</p> <p>v. If EELGC concludes that new town approach would be appropriate the location should be considered in a broader context than London to Cambridge "sub region", noting in particular its lack of coherence and</p>
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	self-containment.
<b>6. Stansted Airport</b>	The Council's position on Stansted is that there should be no new runways. Any development needs that may arise from the existing facilities should be accommodated in settlements accessible to Stansted. Provision for airport workers and employment attracted by the airport should be done in ways that support regeneration and modal shift from the private car to public transport for work journeys. Such development should form an integral element in the broader regional strategy approach and not be the driver around which the regional strategy is built.
<b>7. The role of Stansted as "a gateway to the East of England" in the regional spatial strategy.</b>	Stansted can perform this gateway role effectively without any additional runway capacity. Acting as a gateway does not require Stansted to be a focus for development. It does not need to be the location for business parks. Provision for any attracted catalytic employment should be made in the Priority Areas for Economic Regeneration
<b>8. Identification of Sub Regions</b>  The EELGC is looking at the possible application of an economic sub region approach to RPG policy, taking into account, for example, the geography of economic activity clusters and economic futures. Uttlesford falls across two possible sub regions, the Cambridge Sub Region and an M11/A1M corridor sub region.  The Options document also raises the issue of defining sub regions for the purposes of planning housing supply. It refers to those suggested in the Regional Housing Statement. In the RHS, Uttlesford is grouped with most of the Cambridgeshire authorities, St Edmundsbury and East Hertfordshire, whilst other authorities in the M11/A1M corridor are grouped in an "arc around London" sub region.	Since RPG will need to take an integrated approach to economic and housing strategy this mismatch of different sub regions for topics is unhelpful.
<b>9. Transport</b> The key issue is whether, in addition to a balanced programme, there should be	The emphasis should be on urban areas and persuading people to walk, cycle and to use public transport rather than drive.

<p>greater emphasis on major strategic investment, or a greater emphasis on reducing road traffic growth with resources focused on those areas (largely urban) where the potential for significant shifts in the mode of travel to walking, public transport, and cycling is greatest.</p> <p>This is a particular issues for Uttlesford as major strategic investment is envisaged as including additional high standard transport links to airports and inter urban orbital links across the region (as opposed to radial routes out of/ into London).</p>	
<p><b>10.</b> Should key regional transport nodes, including Stansted, become the focus for improved network and interchange possibilities?</p> <p>The consultation document suggests that development of some of these nodes to their full potential will require further investment in the network e.g. rail connections to Cambridge and Stansted, as well as improvements to services.</p>	<p>This seems to be sensible as market demand will inevitably lead to the development of services.</p>
<p><b>11</b> Road user charging</p>	<p>The Council only supports road user charging in urban areas over 100,000 population.</p>
<p><b>12.</b> Lower Thames Crossing</p>	<p>The Council would view a Lower Thames Crossing with concern if it was justified or conceived as part of an outer orbital route linking Kent to the Midlands as an alternative to the M25 and M11, A1M or M1.</p>
<p><b>13.</b> Economic development needs in rural areas, villages or smaller towns.</p> <p>Existing RPG provides for employment sites in key market towns, and encourages new, start up, small and medium size enterprises, in recognition of their importance to the national and regional economy and to rural areas.</p>	<p>No change is required to the existing RPG framework.</p>
<p><b>14.</b> Increasing the proportion of residential development coming forward on previously developed land.</p> <p>Experience suggests that new sub regional targets of 70% for Luton, Essex/</p>	<p>The suggested targets be supported.</p>



<p>Southend/ Thurrock, Hertfordshire, Peterborough; and 55% for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk could be set.</p> <p>This would be consistent with concentrating development in the larger urban areas where previously developed land capacity is greatest.</p>	
<p><b>15.</b> Target for affordable housing.</p> <p>It suggested that RPG should set a target of at least 20% of new homes being affordable, either accommodation provided by RSLs or low cost market housing, over the whole region. There should be provision for higher targets where justified by local housing needs studies.</p>	<p>There are concerns that a regional minimum requirement could become the standard offer. Local housing needs studies provide a firm basis for achieving an element of affordable housing on a scale appropriate to the local context at a district/ sub district level. There are signs that recent DPM decisions on particular applications will have the desired outcome.</p>
<p><b>16.</b> All elements of the built and archaeological heritage are important, but which are particularly significant to the region and how can RPG ensure they are conserved and enhanced?</p> <p>The consultation document suggests that RPG needs to identify those elements which are distinctive to the East of England need to be identified.</p>	<p>Vernacular architecture, which underpins the character of so much of the East Of England, should be cherished and valued as much as the historic urban environments of Cambridge and Norwich.</p>