

Strategic Spatial Planning Officer Liaison Group

Wider South East Engagement

Final Discussion Paper for Wider South East Summit

Recommendation:

That the Summit considers and decides how to take forward joint discussions between London, East and South East England, to explore mechanisms to:

- i. Understand common issues underpinning the economic future of London and the wider South East
- ii. Seek more effective engagement in the London Plan review
- iii. Seek more effective engagement on strategic infrastructure provision.

It is proposed a 2nd wider South East Summit in November 2015 will aim to agree a way forward on future dialogue and cooperation.

1 Background

- 1.1 The localism agenda rightly emphasises the need to address local issues at the local level and it is widely recognised that this agenda can address many of those which, individually, face authorities in London, the South East and East of England – the wider South East (SE).
- 1.2 However, although a highly diverse area, there are strong strategic interdependencies between London and the wider South East that underpin their collective economic success – geographically and economically this is much bigger than any other city region in the country.
- 1.3 Supported by a small joint officer group (the Strategic Spatial Planning Officers Liaison Group – SSPOLG), the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA), South East England Councils (SEEC) and the Mayor currently discuss on an informal basis common strategic issues facing the area. Wider SE responses to the Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) and the Mayor’s 2050 Infrastructure Plan suggest that there is potential for developing more effective arrangements over time to:
 - identify the broad strategic challenges and opportunities facing the area;
 - represent them to relevant agencies, including government and the Mayor; and
 - develop policy options to address them.
- 1.4 This paper is intended to inform discussion on potential arrangements including:
 - the objectives of wider SE dialogue and cooperation;
 - how to best develop options to take these objectives forward in terms of the structure of the arrangements in the short/medium and longer terms; and
 - initial ideas on the issues which might be considered through these arrangements.

- 1.5 As a discussion document this paper has gone through several iterations. To initiate political dialogue and cooperation a 'wider South East Summit' is taking place on 19 March 2015. At the Summit, views will be canvassed on options to improve political dialogue/cooperation and whether it would be useful to support one of the mechanisms proposed for taking wider soundings around the wider SE. The outcomes/recommendations emerging from this process would report to a second wider SE Summit in November 2015.
- 1.6 The work would complement that of the Mayor's established Outer London Commission (OLC)¹ which has been invited to explore, from a London perspective, more effective ways of coordinating approaches to common strategic planning issues facing London and the Wider South East. It is envisaged that both the next steps arising out of the Summit and the OLC will work collaboratively to enhance and strengthen future engagement between London and the Wider South East. The OLC will also report in late 2015.

2 Draft objectives: more effective arrangements for dialogue and cooperation across the wider South East

- 2.1 While not all stakeholders in the wider SE may agree with some of the detail of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), it does provide a common policy benchmark for the area and it is suggested that most would support its central objective – to foster sustainable development. Given the significance of the interdependencies between London and East and South East England, and growth challenges and opportunities facing the areas, closer dialogue/engagement will be vital.
- 2.2 The statutory Duty to Cooperate (DTC) applies to all local authorities and the GLA in terms of Local Plans. In terms of the preparation of the London Plan, the Mayor is bound by his own Duties to Inform and Consult which effectively if not legally are similar to the DTC. His London Plan also gives strong policy support to cooperative working to address issues of concern in the wider SE. Irrespective of legal differences between London and the wider SE, it is suggested that all can rally round the need to engage constructively on common strategic issues and collaborate in addressing some of them, even if it may not be possible always to agree on a universal way forward.²
- 2.3 Three key objectives for wider SE dialogue and cooperation are proposed for consideration:
- i. **To better understand common issues:** currently there is a strong 'localist' focus in identifying and addressing planning issues within the wider SE. Could

¹ Its role is to advise how Outer London can play its full part in the city's economic success. For further details see <http://www.london.gov.uk/olc/>

² See also:

- *National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) – Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 9-007-20140306: 'Cooperation between the Mayor, boroughs and local planning authorities bordering London will be vital to ensure that important strategic issues, such as housing delivery and economic growth are planned effectively'.*
- *FALP Inspector's Report (Nov 2014) – paragraph 57: 'In my view, the Mayor needs to explore options beyond the existing philosophy of the London Plan. That may, in the absence of a wider regional strategy to assess the options for growth and to plan and co-ordinate that growth, include engaging local planning authorities beyond the GLA's boundaries in discussions regarding the evolution of our capital city.'*

this usefully be complemented by developing consistent data collection/analytic capacity to identify strategic issues which affect the area more widely? An authoritative appreciation of the relationship between changing demographics and housing need is particularly important, backed by a similar understanding of the wider SE's changing economy and supporting infrastructure requirements under different future scenarios.

- ii. **To seek more effective engagement in the London Plan review:** consultation on the draft Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) and the 2050 Infrastructure Plan elicited a wide range of responses from the wider SE, many with a common theme – the need for more effective political and technical engagement in preparation of the full review of the London Plan. Facilitating this could be a core objective for the new arrangements.
 - iii. **To seek more effective engagement on strategic infrastructure provision:** this has emerged from discussions with EELGA and SEEC as an area with particular potential, not just in terms in making common cause in bidding for investment but also in bringing forward sustainable development. It might apply to social and environmental as well as physical infrastructure.
- 2.4 To develop options for practical arrangements for cooperation and collaboration, different mechanisms are proposed below. Underlying principles are that options for future engagement should be transparent and open, and make best use of existing resources and structures.

3 Developing more effective arrangements for dialogue and cooperation across the wider South East

Key steps/timetable:

STEP 1. Discuss and test options for engagement

- Initial wider SE Summit to consider options for exploring future dialogue/cooperation arrangements (see grey box below) and agree a preferred way forward – 19 March 2015
- Establish small political steering group to oversee the process – May 2015 onwards
- Take forward preferred option to explore dialogue/cooperation arrangements – Spring-Winter 2015
- Second wider SE Summit, with the aim of agreeing a way forward on future dialogue/cooperation – November 2015

STEP 2. Implementation

- Implementing mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation – November 2015 onwards

- 3.1 The following includes different options as potential mechanisms to advise on these arrangements by late 2015. All options would be supported by a small political steering group comprising representatives from the South East, East of England and London and a second summit in November 2015 which will, based on emerging outcomes and draft recommendations, aim to agree next steps:

<p>Option 1 Wider South East Commission/Panel Establishment of formal Commission/Panel (e.g. with one unitary, one county and two district authority representatives, and perhaps independent advisors on planning and the economy and an independent chair). This could follow the already established Outer London Commission model (meetings in public; officer/invited presentations; background papers circulated beforehand; local publicity; followed by private meetings to finalise the recommendations) with four sub-regional roadshows/events spread around the wider South East to sound out views of future structures. It would offer the opportunity for councillors to set out local issues. This arrangement would operate collaboratively with the work by the Outer London Commission, which will be taking soundings on such structures from a London perspective.</p> <p>Option 2 Wider South East Roundtables Less formal roundtable meetings taking place in London with councillors from the wider South East and an independent 'facilitation panel'; structured/facilitated questions and discussions. This arrangement would operate collaboratively with the work by the Outer London Commission (see Option 1 above).</p> <p>Option 3 Wider South East Officer Group Building on councillor input at the 19 March summit, an already established officer group (SSPOLG) would work on developing and testing options iteratively which are then assessed by the small political steering group (see paragraphs 3.1). This arrangement would operate collaboratively with the work by the Outer London Commission (see Option 1 above).</p>

- 3.2 For all options the following issues will have to be considered:
- **membership** – size, geography, political and other representatives, chair?
 - **venues** – where would the required meetings take place?
 - **written contributions** – (how) should short written contributions for those not able to take part in person be considered?
 - **reporting** – who should be responsible for the administrative arrangements and ensure outcomes and draft recommendations are captured?
- 3.3 Effective political engagement of Council Leaders from outside London is a key issue, and therefore views on the role that councillors may wish to have in steering the process or getting involved are crucial.
- 3.4 For all options it may be useful to refine this Discussion Paper in the light of the Summit as the basis for the further discussions and to establish a small political steering group to oversee the process.
- 3.5 Any mechanism would consider options for future cooperation arrangements including building on current arrangements (EELGA/SEEC/Mayor + SSPOLG), with additional informal/sub-regional groupings focused on particular

challenging issues or opportunities eg early 'volunteers/partners for growth' which could carry out more detailed work.

- 3.6 It will also draw on the considerable body of thinking on how arrangements for wider SE cooperation/planning could be made more effective in the longer term (see Annex 1). Models range from loose voluntary associations to suggestions already made, eg a regional 'senate'; a regional equivalent to the London Planning Advisory Committee; lessons from other big city regions.
- 3.7 Would it be useful for these (see Annex 1) to be collated and summarised as a basis for discussion and to inform the meetings?

4 What are the issues to address via new arrangements for political and technical dialogue and cooperation across the wider South East

- 4.1 The abolished Regional Spatial Strategies identified what at the time were considered to be the strategic issues facing the East and South East, but that was under different administrative arrangements for addressing them and prior to the recent recession and substantial growth in London's population and employment. It is anticipated that authoritative identification of strategic issues currently facing the wider SE will require further analysis, developing understanding of the issues and mechanisms for political and technical dialogue and cooperation where appropriate. The headlines set out in the following paragraph are intended to inform initial discussions.
- 4.2 Key issues³ where London and the wider SE have strong inter-dependencies or face significant challenges:
- **Sustaining and growing economic success** – what are key economic links and dependencies across/beyond the wider SE? what's needed to underpin ongoing success?
 - **Tackling economic under-performance and regeneration** – how can all areas benefit from the wider SE's economic potential?
 - **Housing the growing population** – what demographic changes are expected and where will people live?
 - **Balancing growth and environmental priorities, including open space and addressing climate change** – how will constraints and opportunities influence future development?
 - **Delivering strategic transport infrastructure** – what are the priorities for investment to support economic success?
 - **Providing services for communities, including education/skills, health, care, power, water, waste** – how to ensure all partners play their part meeting the needs of the growing population?

³ Also informed by FALP and London Infrastructure Plan consultation and discussions since then.

Annex 1 - Strategic Planning – Recent Publications⁴

English Regional Planning 2000 – 2010 Lessons for the Future (2013) – edited by Corinne Swain et al: Study contributes to understanding of how strategic planning can – based on past experience - provide a framework for guiding spatial change and allocating resources, looking to a long-term sustainable future.
<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415526081/>

Lyons Housing Review (Oct 2014): Housing funding streams should be consolidated as part of an economic development fund and devolved to city and county region authorities working across functional economic areas.
http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/The_Lyons_Housing_Review_2.pdf

Royal Town Planning Institute: Strategic Planning –

- Beyond ‘Co-operation’ (Sept 2014): Proposals draw on existing arrangements but require much stronger incentives to cooperation and making plans for the future.
<http://rtpi.org.uk/media/1110489/Strategic%20Planning%20Beyond%20Cooperation.pdf>
- Effective Cooperation for Planning Across Boundaries (Jan 2015): Includes a range of case studies. For England the focus should be on incentives where the duty to cooperate has not been effective, and to build on the momentum to harness the potential of the city regions. <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1230885/RTPi-Strategic%20Planning-Brochure%20FINAL%20web%20PDF.pdf>

Highbury Group on Housing Delivery: In response to the above RTPi paper, it calls for a new strategic planning for the London metropolitan preparing a Metropolitan regional plan.
http://www.westminster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/338118/HIGHBURY-GROUP.-Response-to-RTPi-strategic-planning-paper.-FINAL.-3.10.14.pdf

Future of London: Working Beyond Boundaries (Oct 2014): Calls for the Mayor to take a broader perspective and relieve planning pressure on local elected officials.
<http://www.futureoflondon.org.uk/futureoflondon/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/10/Working-Beyond-Boundaries-briefing-paper-web.pdf>

Andrew Boff GLA Conservatives: Southern Power House (Jan 2015): Promotes a comprehensive reform of London’s governance and tax powers and the establishment of a Thames City-Region to give the South East a say in London’s growth and prosperity.
<http://glaconservatives.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/southern-powerhouse.pdf>

Also relevant in this context:

Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners: London’s Unmet Housing Needs – Meeting London’s overspill across the wider South East (Apr 2014): Study shows how London’s unmet housing needs could be distributed using a ‘Gravity Model’ approach and calls for the GLA and the authorities within the wider London Housing Market Area to work together to address this unmet need effectively.
<http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/285GladmanDevelopmentsLtdResponse.pdf>

Foresight, Government Office for Science: Investing in city regions – How does London interact with UK system of cities and what are the implications of this relationship? (Oct 2014): Study discusses whether stronger UK supply chains would enable faster growth for a number of cities and the UK as a whole. It concludes that a strong counterweight to London’s global role should not be its restriction and that local rivalries should be made a positive force for innovation.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/365099/london-and-UK-system-of-cities.pdf

DCLG: National Planning Policy Guidance: Duty to Cooperate, paragraph 7: Cooperation between the Mayor, boroughs and local planning authorities bordering London will be vital to ensure that important strategic issues, such as housing delivery and economic growth, are planned effectively.
<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/duty-to-cooperate/what-is-the-duty-to-cooperate-and-what-does-it-require/>

Planning Advisory Service has developed a suite of practical guidance tools to facilitate compliance with the Duty to Cooperate. This includes a ‘Duty Statement template’, which addresses Governance and working arrangements and suggests for example memorandums of understanding to evidence agreements.
http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas1/events-and-support2/-/journal_content/56/332612/6387362/ARTICLE

⁴ Only selection – not comprehensive.