

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

THE EXECUTIVE – 9 MARCH 2005

JOINT REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND (RSS 14) – RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – DECEMBER 2004

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

RECOMMENDATION - that (A) the content of Appendix D to this report be agreed as the basis of East Herts Council's formal response to the East of England Plan – Consultation Draft Document – December 2004; and

(B) the Assistant Director (Policy and Performance), in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Economic and Regional Development, be given delegated authority to agree any further amendments/additions to the Council's response, arising from the Executive and Council meetings on 9 March 2005.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 This report sets out for consideration by the Executive and the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council, on 9 March 2005, an East Herts Council response to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England. The Council's agreed response will then be submitted to the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) by the end of the consultation period on 16 March 2005.

1.2 Further amendments/additions to the Council's draft RSS response have been prepared for consideration by the Executive and Council Meeting. These are attached and relate to Transport, Environmental Resources, Culture and Implementation and form additional parts to Appendix D to this report.

1.3 In addition, a preliminary report is attached at Appendix E, from SPA Ltd, economic and planning consultants, engaged by the Council, to

advise on the Harlow regeneration and growth proposals in the draft RSS.

- 1.4 The preliminary findings of the SPA report have already been incorporated into the Council's draft response on Harlow, contained in Appendix D to this report.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Objectives

- 2.1 The report seeks to contribute to Corporate Priority 6 by preserving the unique mix of rural and urban communities.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) launched a three-month consultation period on the draft RSS, known as the East of England Plan, in December 2004. This consultation period will run until 16 March 2005.
- 3.2 Following this an Examination in Public (EiP) will be held (currently scheduled for September 2005) chaired by an independent Panel appointed by the Government. That Panel will examine the key issues identified through the consultation process and will report and make recommendations to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will then issue any necessary 'Proposed Changes' to the RSS in light of those recommendations and representations made to the draft RSS. The RSS is anticipated to be finally approved by the Government in late 2006.
- 3.3 Under the recent Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the RSS will comprise part of the statutory Development Plan. Local Development Documents (the replacement for Local Plans) will have to be in general conformity with the RSS.
- 3.4 Shortly after the Plan's formal publication in December 2004, EERA voted to suspend its endorsement of the Plan, because of a lack of Government funding for essential infrastructure for the region. The Assembly based its view on the disappointing outcome of the region's bid under the recent Comprehensive Spending Review (2005-2008). The Government agreed to fund only about 25% of the £1.5 billion requested by the region.

4.0 Report

- 4.1 The East of England draft Plan aims to provide regional spatial strategy (RSS) to guide land-use development and infrastructure provision for the East of England Region for the 20 year period 2001-2021.
- 4.2 Chapters 1-3 of the draft RSS set out the introduction, background context, vision and objectives for the Region. Chapter 4 sets out strategic policies and proposals (the core spatial strategy) for the future of the region and Chapter 5 develops the strategic context into policies for sub-regions/sub-areas. Chapters 6-10 deal with policies for specific topics (Chapter 6 – economic development, retail and tourism, Chapter 7 – housing, Chapter 8 – regional transport strategy, Chapter 9 – environmental resources, Chapter 10 – culture). Chapter 11 seeks to provide guidance on how the draft RSS would be implemented, delivered and monitored.
- 4.3 The draft RSS has already been subject to scrutiny and a critique to an extent by two separate processes:
- legal audit – commissioned by EERA prior to public consultation to assess the draft RSS in terms of its compliance with key aspects of legislation and Government Guidance.
 - Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment. A sustainability appraisal and strategic environmental assessment process is a key aspect of the preparation of RSSs – to, amongst other matters, inform on the sustainability credentials of the policies and proposals and to ensure alternative options and mitigation measures have been properly considered.
- 4.4 The Appendices accompanying this report set out further details on the RSS, focusing on Key Strategic Issues for East Herts, along with the proposed East Herts Council response to the RSS Consultation Draft document – December 2004.
- 4.5 In order to accommodate any further amendments/additions to the Council's response, arising from the Executive and Council meetings on 9 March 2005, it is proposed that the Assistant Director (Policy and Performance), in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Economic and Regional Development, be given delegated authority to agree any such amendments.
- 5.0 Consultation

5.1 East Herts Council has run a public awareness campaign, drawing attention to the East of England Plan and its potential implications for the District. A key element of this campaign has been the Community Voice events in each of the main towns in the District. A summary of January/February Community Voice Meetings is contained at Appendix C to this report (pages 16 – 28B).

5.2 The Council set up an East Herts Member Regional Spatial Strategy Scrutiny Panel:

‘To scrutinize in detail the Regional Spatial Strategy Consultation document and to make recommendations to the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee.’

5.3 Officers from a number of relevant East Herts Council Departments have been involved in scrutinising the RSS. There has also been close working between County and East Herts District Members and Officers in the drafting of this response.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 The RSS, once adopted, will form part of the statutory Development Plan and replaces the existing County Structure Plan. Future local planning documents will therefore be required to be consistent with the provisions of the RSS.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 The cost of formulating the Council’s response to the RSS and the associated publicity campaign is being funded through existing budgets.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 The RSS process to date has involved significant officer time and this is likely to continue over the coming months.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 No known implications.

Background Papers

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (RSS) 14 – East of England Regional Assembly – December 2004.

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List of Appendices

A – List of RSS Policies subject to East Herts Council Response
(Pages 6A – 6B)

B – Key RSS Extracts for East Herts- Stansted/M11 Sub- Region
(Pages 7 - 15)

C – Summary of the East Herts January/February Community Voice Meetings
(Pages 16 – 28B)

D – East Herts Council Response to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England –Consultation Document-December 2004
(Pages 29 - 69)

E – SPA Consultants – Harlow Regeneration/Economic Growth – Draft Findings by Strategic Planning Advice Ltd for East Herts Council(Pages 70 - 117)