

2. Background

- 2.1 RSS14 was launched at Stakeholder Events around the Region in November 2001 and an Options Consultation was conducted in September 2002.
- 2.2 The Regional Planning Panel (RPP) 'banked' a Draft RSS14 with Government on 27 February 2004 and a 'final' version was released by RPP on 5 November 2004.
- 2.3 In mid-July 2004, EERA established a Public Relations and Consultation Task Group to help establish what would be needed to ensure that the upcoming Consultation on the Draft RSS14 would be as effective as possible. Membership was extended to all County and Unitary Authorities in the East of England but not to the Districts. LBC and BCC each have representatives and they have tried to ensure that the County's requirements were built into the consultation process. Successes have included persuading EERA to add the great majority (450 - 500) of the Structure Plan consultees to the statutory consultees list for RSS14 (plus the new Local Service Provider groups). Unfortunately, EERA were persuaded by other more rural counties such as Norfolk and Suffolk that Parish Councils should not be included. However, Bedfordshire has since persuaded EERA to produce a briefing paper outlining the background to RSS14, how they can access/obtain the document and how to submit their response forms. These will be sent BCC and distributed to the Parishes with a covering letter. In Luton the area committees will receive a briefing report.
- 2.4 The next major stage of the process is a 14-week public consultation on the Draft East of England Plan (RSS14). This commences on 8 December 2004 with a formal launch 'event' at The Maltings, Ely. This will include the media/press and invited representatives of statutory consultee groups, etc. The consultation ends on 16 March 2005.
- 2.5 Bedfordshire and Luton have supplied EERA with a range of information to help them to distribute details/copies of the plan as widely as possible. This includes providing contact details of Press Officers at each of the Authorities; arranging for copies to be distributed to all libraries in the County; arranging for copies to be sent to public reception areas at each Authorities 'head office(s)'; and for a substantial number of copies to be sent to each Authority and a copy for each member.
- 2.6 To raise the level of public involvement and participation, EERA are arranging for the Plan to be available on their web site (from late November) together with downloadable and on-line response forms.
- 2.7 They will also be hosting a number of workshops around the Region. At present, ten sessions are planned, including one at Putteridgebury, Luton. Bedfordshire has raised concerns that, at present, no workshop is planned for the North of the County. EERA have agreed to see if anything can be done but their limited staff resource may make this difficult.
- 2.8 EERA are also considering workshops with developers and businesses but no decision has been made as yet.

- 2.9 Some Local Authorities in the Region may be arranging their own briefing meetings in order to reach more locally based groups.
- 2.10 EERA propose to host a briefing meeting at Westminster for the Region's M.P.s on a date between 10 January - 10 February 2005.
- 2.11 The present programme suggests that the Public Examination will be in September 2005 and that the East of England Plan will be adopted in 2006.
- 2.12 The proposed responses to the RSS14 consultation (December 04 – March 05) will be reported to each authorities Executives on 28th February 2005 in Luton and 22nd February 2005 in Bedfordshire.