

COMMITTEE: WEST LUTON AREA COMMITTEE

DATE: 24th January 2005

SUBJECT: East of England Plan (RSS14) - Consultation

REPORT BY: Head Of Planning

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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	✓	COMMUNITY SAFETY	
EQUALITIES		ENVIRONMENT	✓
FINANCIAL	✓	CONSULTATIONS	✓
STAFFING		OTHER	

WARDS AFFECTED: NONE Directly

PURPOSE

To brief the Area Committee on the current public consultation and to note the report

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Area Committee is recommended to note the report

BACKGROUND

2. On 8th December 2004, the 'East of England Plan' or Regional Spatial Strategy 14 (RSS14) was launched for public consultation. The consultation is a 14-week public consultation and it will close on 16th March 2005.
3. The East of England Plan sets out a draft strategy to guide the planning and development of the East of England to 2021. It sets out policies for how many jobs, people and houses should be accommodated in our communities, where and how people should live and travel to work, improvements in roads, rail and bus services, culture, sport and recreation facilities. And it makes proposals for implementing those plans.

REPORT

4. The East of England Plan has been prepared by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) and has now been submitted to Government as EERA's recommended strategy for public consultation.
5. Preparation began 3 years ago with Stakeholder events around the Region in November 2001 and an Options Consultation was conducted in September 2002. 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.
6. As part of the consultation strategy, EERA have sent copies of the plan to people who have previously commented on strategic planning issues i.e. this includes local Luton consultees on the Bedfordshire & Luton Structure Plan, the new Local Service Provider groups and representatives of residents' associations. EERA have also consulted a statutory consultees list for RSS14. Furthermore, in Luton all the area committees will receive a briefing report.
7. To publicise the plan the Borough council issued a press release and an article appeared in the Council's newspaper 'Luton Line'. Deposit copies are available for inspection at the Town Hall main reception and Planning reception. Copies have been distributed to all the 8 main libraries in Luton. Copies have also been sent to all Luton Borough Council Members.
8. EERA have also made the Plan available on their web site together with downloadable and on-line response forms. Local authorities, organisations and individuals who have access to the internet (most Libraries will have internet access) have been strongly urged to use the online response form to submit their comments – this will greatly assist in managing the analysis and response. They will also be hosting a number of workshops around the Region. At present, ten sessions are planned, including one at Putteridgebury, Luton on 24th January 2005.

Key features of the Plan

- plans for 421,500 new jobs across the East of England up to 2021 to meet future economic growth needs and regeneration needs of less prosperous areas;
- provision for 478,000 new homes by 2021. Nearly 60,000 have already been built since 2001 and, of the balance, more than half already have planning permission or are allocated in existing development plans;
- a major increase – more than doubling – of the supply of social rented, key worker and other forms of affordable housing to address housing shortages and the widening gap between house prices and incomes in the region. At least 30% of all new dwellings should be in the social rented sector.
- proposals for more sustainable forms of transport which seek to reduce the rate of growth in car and lorry traffic and promote public transport, walking and cycling;

- an extensive package of proposals for environmental and social measures such as more energy/water efficient development, investment in education, skills training and health services and cultural and recreation development.

9. The Plan rejects:

- proposals for a second runway at Stansted Airport
- Government's request that a further 18,000 homes be built, on top of those already proposed in the Plan in the Cambridge/Peterborough area.

How will it affect Luton?

10. Currently, the draft raises the following issues for Luton to 2021:

- To ensure sufficient provision of affordable homes to meet local needs
- To provide employment opportunities, including strategic sites
- To secure sustainable development to improve people's quality of life
- To reduce the need to travel. Luton is identified as a Regional Interchange Centre, which means that major improvements in public transport will be sought.
- To focus major development in and around existing urban areas rather than in the open countryside
- To support the growth of London Luton Airport to the maximum capacity of the existing runway

11. Parts of the East of England, including Luton, fall within the Milton Keynes - South Midlands (MKSM) sub-region. This sub-region straddles three regions, the East of England, the East Midlands and the South East. The strategy for the sub-region has been prepared through a separate process to ensure that policies for the MKSM sub-region are developed in a co-ordinated way. The MKSM strategy has already been through a public consultation and public examination process and is not, therefore, part of the consultation process for this RSS.

12. Because Luton falls entirely within the MKSM growth area, the draft RSS makes no further proposals in respect of housing or job growth numbers.

13. Once the East of England Plan has been agreed, Luton Borough Council will have to follow its guidance in preparing its local plans.

14. And the Plan warns that without strong commitment from Government and others to increased investment in physical, social and environmental infrastructure it will be impossible to deliver its proposals. The outcome of a bid to Government earlier this year for £1.5 billion extra investment in additional infrastructure is still awaited.

What happens after the consultation?

15. The Plan will be tested at an Examination in Public (EiP) starting in September 2005 in front of an independent panel. Responses to the consultation will be used by the panel to help decide the key issues for discussion and who should

participate in the EiP. But all comments made in response to the consultation will be taken into account by the Panel in drawing up its recommendations on the Plan. The EiP panel will report back to the Secretary of State who will then produce the final version of the East of England Plan during 2006.

Conclusion

16. This is your opportunity to respond to proposals that will have a significant and long term impact on the Luton community. You can respond via the EERA website at www.eera.gov.uk. Copies are also available through EERA (tel 01284 729438/442; e-mail planning@eera.gov.uk or write to EERA at Flempton House, Flempton, Bury St Edmunds IP28 6EG (please note there will be a charge for multiple copies). Alternatively you can inspect copies at the town hall receptions.

PROPOSAL/OPTION

To note the consultation on the East of England Plan (RSS14)

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report. Agreed, Legal Services, xxxxxx.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

The long term growth and economic regeneration of the town including community services and infrastructure provision, environmental protection and enhancement, open space leisure and cultural facilities, transport, congestion, pollution and quality of life.

CONSULTATIONS

Councillors Franks, Rutstein and Strange have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

APPENDIX

None

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

East of England Plan (RSS14)