CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Where are we now?

    1. Is the analysis in the 'where are we now' section accurate and complete? If not, what evidence supports your view?

The analysis reflects latest trends and assessments of local economic data. Given that this is a regional assessment, some of the fine grain of areas that are performing differently has been lost.

How do we get there – by theme?

    2. Do you think the categorization of the current themes and sub regional priorities adequately captures the ambitions of the regional economic and spatial strategies?

The identification of key themes and sub-regional priorities does seem relevant. However, it is not clear on many of the themes as to which organisation is the lead and which are supporting.

The number of programme (67) with additional sub-regional priorities does seem complex.

There should also be a greater reference to the National Indicator set.

Housing

    3.

    a) Does the theme and its programmes capture the ambition for the region and scale of the challenge? If not, what changes would you suggest and what evidence supports these changes?

The housing programmes will not support the delivery of the housing ambition for the area. In the main they appear to be about advice, guidance and monitoring. The challenge in delivering housing schemes is about affordability. Affordable housing will continue to be an important issue outside of the current economic downturn.

    b) Is there other existing or planned work we should include that will significantly deliver the headline targets and ambitions of the RES and RSS?

The work of HCA is critical in this area.

    c) Are there programmes that you would prioritise or remove? What are your reasons for this?

The Strategic Development and Research Unit programme should be deleted. This appears to duplicate the work of local authorities and agencies such as HCA and EERA.

In addition to affordability of housing (see comments above), the programme for improving energy efficiency in the existing housing stock should have a greater priority. It offers an important approach to energy efficiency, reducing poverty and creating business and job opportunities.

Transport

4.

   a) *Does the theme and its programmes capture the ambition for the region and scale of the challenge? If not, what changes would you suggest and what evidence supports these changes?*

The value of rail links for passenger transport and rail freight is significant. However, improvements to the quality of station facilities are equally important. The importance of stations as gateways to key town centre locations should also be included in the programme.

Rail freight options are also being proposed by developers to the North of Luton and there is also a strategic rail freight site in Luton Town Centre.

   b) *Is there other existing or planned work we should include that will significantly deliver the headline targets and ambitions of the RES and RSS?*

In terms of improving connections to International Gateways, there is a Government requirement that any airport with more than 1000 Aircraft Traffic Movements a year is required to produce an Airport Surface Access Strategy, which will maximise the opportunity for passengers and airport employees to travel by sustainable modes. This needs to be mentioned in Table 16.

   c) *Are there programmes that you would prioritise or remove? What are your reasons for this?*

The key issue is the development of innovative funding mechanisms. In this context, the advantage of promoting large development sites is that they are more capable of delivering and sustaining the range of infrastructure required to support them, including transport. The two areas where there is often disagreement between local authorities and developers with regard to transport, particularly where there is already a deficit in transport investment in highway schemes, are that:

     i)   developers often want to phase the implementation of strategic transport infrastructure, whereas the local authorities would want to deliver a strategic transport scheme in one go, and

     ii)   developers are reluctant to invest in infrastructure over and above that required to support their development, which can result, for example, in a strategic highway scheme only needing to be a single carriageway to support a related development, but given the strategic role may need to be a dual carriageway.

The other key priorities should be improving connections to international gateways (given the high economic value of such links), together with transport interventions to facilitate sustainable travel in the KCDCs, and key inter urban journeys both for passengers and freight. In the case of the latter the MKSM transport strategy has indicated that rail, rather than bus/coach services, is likely to play the most significant role for inter-urban journeys.

The section on the main Delivery Partners in Table 18 needs to recognise that SUSTRANS are a key delivery partner for investment in sustainable transport particularly within the KCDCs.

Utilities

5.

a) Does the theme and its programmes capture the ambition for the region and scale of the challenge? If not, what changes would you suggest and what evidence supports these changes?

b) Is there other existing or planned work we should include that will significantly deliver the headline targets and ambitions of the RES and RSS?

c) Are there programmes that you would prioritise or remove? What are your reasons for this?

Notwithstanding the fact that, as set out in response 4c above, bus/coach travel is unlikely result in mode shift for inter-urban journeys (mainly because such services are infrequent), consideration needs to be given more frequent inter-urban coach services (such as the X5 from Bedford to Cambridge) to how Real Time Passenger Information about such services could be improved (Table 33 refers).

Enterprise, Business Support and Innovation

6.

a) Does the theme and its programmes capture the ambition for the region and scale of the challenge? If not, what changes would you suggest and what evidence supports these changes?

The theme and programmes support the broad agenda. However, there does not appear to be any flexibility for locally identified priorities. For example, sectors such as advanced manufacturing and aerospace are relevant to Luton. Whilst it is understood that creative industries have been included under other programmes, this should also feature here.

There does not appear to be a reference to UK based inward investment. From experience in Luton the majority of inward investment enquiries are from within the UK. Whilst regional authorities may not be able to be involved in this type of work, it is an important area of activity for local authorities.

b) Is there other existing or planned work we should include that will significantly deliver the headline targets and ambitions of the RES and RSS?

c) Are there programmes that you would prioritise or remove? What are your reasons for this?

Enterprise Hubs provide a useful linkage between a number of programmes in this thematic area between research, business and support. The development of the role of Enterprise Hubs should be a key priority.

Skills and Employability

7.

a) Does the theme and its programmes capture the ambition for the region and scale of the challenge? If not, what changes would you suggest and what evidence supports these changes?

The programme provides a broad approach to skills. However, there does not appear to be a link across to mainstream education and the 14-19 agenda. There also needs to be further explanation of the role and remit of regional groups such as the East of England Skills and Competitiveness Partnership.

The role of Local Economic Assessments, Skills and Employment Boards or other local/sub-regional partnerships does not appear to be reflected. The role of business also seems to be limited and should be emphasised more.

The role of migrant workers with higher skills and gaining UK recognition should be included.

b) *Is there other existing or planned work we should include that will significantly deliver the headline targets and ambitions of the RES and RSS?*

Opportunities for work under the Migration Impact Fund should be included.

c) *Are there programmes that you would prioritise or remove? What are your reasons for this?*

The key priorities should be those programmes that improve the relevant skills base in each area, in particular Leadership and high level skills, a demand led skills system, and skills for key sectors and clusters. The reason for this is that there are strong linkages between transport and the Skills base available in each area, which is particularly relevant in areas such as Luton where there is a high degree of "footloose" employment. For such companies, the local skills base can have two possible impacts:

i) the company could re-locate to an area where the skills are available, resulting in out commuting for key staff or

ii) could remain in their existing location, resulting in in-commuting for employees

Either of these could result in longer travel to work times/distances, which could explain in part the recent travel trends in the region as set out in the "How we are performing" section of the Transport chapter.

Culture, Creativity and the Visitor Economy

8.

a) *Does the theme and its programmes capture the ambition for the region and scale of the challenge? If not, what changes would you suggest and what evidence supports these changes?*

There do not appear to be any quantified targets for this theme.

The theme for Creative Places and Sustainable Communities only seems to relate to Creative Places. Whilst clearly creativity does help to create communities, it is only one element of sustainable communities.

b) *Is there other existing or planned work we should include that will significantly deliver the headline targets and ambitions of the RES and RSS?*

c) *Are there programmes that you would prioritise or remove? What are your reasons for this?*

In the light of the observations in response to question 7c on the importance of the local skills base, the programme aimed at creating skills and creativity for life (Table 62) should be a key priority.

Green Infrastructure, Landscape, Heritage, Flood Risk and Coastal Environments

9.

a) Does the theme and its programmes capture the ambition for the region and scale of the challenge? If not, what changes would you suggest and what evidence supports these changes?

This theme is effectively two elements: Green Infrastructure and Heritage; and Flood Risk. Some themes are aspirations and others are specific Biodiversity are very specific and focused around the fens.

This section has a very natural environment focus and so Table 73 does not seem to fit here.

b) Is there other existing or planned work we should include that will significantly deliver the headline targets and ambitions of the RES and RSS?

Further discussion should take place with the Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage and other built environment specialists.

c) Are there programmes that you would prioritise or remove? What are your reasons for this?

Climate Change as an overarching theme should be given higher priority within the document. In this context there is a strong linkage between use of Greenspace and in particular access by walking and cycling. SUSTRANS are a key delivery partner for investment in sustainable transport to access Greenspace.

The "East of England Implementation Plan" is very thin on Climate Change issues, in terms both of mitigation and adaptation.

Climate Change should be mainstreamed into each section. As well as threats there will be some opportunities for businesses, for example installation of insulation works and renewable energy equipment.

Any gaps?

10.   Are there any other programmes outside the themes that might be needed to successfully deliver the two regional strategies?

How do we get there – by place?

11.

a) Do the sub-regional priorities capture the ambition for the region and scale of the challenge? If not, what changes would you suggest and what evidence supports these changes?

The comments in the document to the creation of Central Bedfordshire causing issues on sub-regional approaches should be deleted. Joint working between Luton and Central Bedfordshire are currently developing on a number of areas such as Total

Place, MAA, Luton Gateway as well as existing programme such as the LDF through the Joint Committee and the Joint Technical Unit.

A number of additional sub-regional challenges need to be included:

- Delivery of housing targets and particularly affordable housing.
- The Skills and Employability and Culture, Creativity and visitor economy role of London Luton Airport.

b) Is there other existing or planned work we should include that will significantly deliver the headline targets and ambitions of the RES and RSS?

Further development of the IDP and evidence studies for the Core Strategy will be important developments.

c) Are there priorities that you would prioritise or remove? What are your reasons for this?

All the areas of work need to be identified as priority programme. Luton Northern Bypass is a key piece of transport infrastructure essential to support the planned growth of Luton and southern Bedfordshire, and should be specifically identified in Table83.

How do we monitor progress?

12. Do you have any comments about the proposed governance and monitoring mechanisms set out in the implementation plan?

The proposed monitoring arrangements seem complex to complete on annual cycle. However, the assessment of impact will be useful. There should be a stronger link to the National Indicator (NI) set. In this context, the region should play an important role in undertaking a comparison of NI monitoring to facilitate benchmarking between the different authorities. The role of and relationship to Local Economic Assessments also needs to be considered.

Presentation

13. Do you have any views on the presentation of the final implementation plan in terms of its length, structure or design?

Later versions of the document should focus on programmes and outcomes rather than the detailed evidence.

P155 is unclear; it refers to Luton & South Bedfordshire, since the demise of South Beds what does it now mean by the term "South Bedfordshire"? It says there has been a loss of employment in manufacturing in the area, in South Bedfordshire in particular – is it including Luton in that?

14. Do you have any comments on the Climate Change Action Plan document?

It seems quite comprehensive. Luton Borough Council contributed to the plan.