



# a clear vision

FOR THE SOUTH EAST

## **THE SOUTH EAST PLAN** **Executive Summary**

**March 2006**  
**Draft Plan for submission**  
**to Government**



## 1. Introduction

The Draft South East Plan was submitted to Government on 31 March 2006, following over two years of intensive work by the Regional Assembly with local authorities and stakeholders. The Plan provides a framework for the region for the next 20 years to 2026. It brings together policies for development with other policies and programmes that influence the nature of places and how they function, including those governing health, social issues, the economy, culture, skills and the environment.

The Plan sets out the direction that we need to take and the scale of change we need to make if we are to sustain a high quality of life across the region. The core objectives are to balance continuing economic and housing growth with rising standards of environmental management and reduced levels of social exclusion and natural resource consumption. The Plan's vision for 2026 is for a healthier region, a more sustainable pattern of development and a dynamic and robust economy, the benefits of which are more widely shared.

The inadequacy of infrastructure provision to keep pace with new development is the single most critical issue that has emerged throughout the Plan's preparation. The legacy of past under-investment in the region not only has an adverse impact on the economic performance of the region, but increases environmental impacts and reduces quality of life.

But delivering the South East Plan will not be achieved solely through investment in hard infrastructure. We also need to tread more lightly in our demands, so that we first stabilise and then begin to reduce the 'resource footprint' of the region, and make significant progress towards more sustainable patterns of new development and lifestyles.

This is a considerable challenge. It will require changes in behaviour by everyone in the region. But global climate change and resource

depletion show that there is no other direction to travel. The debate now is about how far and fast we can move.

The good news is that the process of change in the region has already begun and in several ways we are already moving in the right direction. For example:

- i Our new homes are much more water and energy efficient than 20 years ago
- ii Waste recycling rates have increased by 50% in five years
- iii The re-use of aggregates is increasing
- iv Tree cover is growing and wildlife is generally thriving
- v Housing densities have increased 40% in eight years, meaning we are making more efficient use of our land resource
- vi The proportion of housing development on previously developed land already exceeds the 60% national target
- vii Average trip lengths by car are beginning to decrease.

We already have in place a regional sustainable development strategy - the Integrated Regional Framework; this sets clear objectives and targets for quality of life in the South East against which progress is monitored. Existing regional strategies for transport, tourism, waste, minerals, energy efficiency and renewable energy emphasise reducing resource use and pose challenging targets for the future. Public attitudes too are encouraging. The Assembly has researched public opinion extensively in preparing the Plan. This has shown that over 90% of people in the region are willing to change some aspects of their behaviour, for example to recycle more waste and to use water and energy more efficiently. On other aspects of behaviour such as car travel the response is however less positive.

The South East Plan is supported by an Implementation Plan that not only sets out the framework for investment but also identifies measures to change behaviour in order to use resources – natural, physical, social and financial –



more efficiently. As the business plan for the region, the Implementation Plan identifies what needs to happen, when it needs to happen and who needs to take the action.

Some may argue that some of the environmental or economic aspirations in the Plan are set too low. The Assembly has sought out the best research to make assessments about what is realistically achievable over the next 20 years. The Plan is designed for possible revisions and our regular monitoring and review process gives the scope to make adjustments.

## 2. Our Vision: The Healthy Region

**Through the Plan and other measures, the South East will show a sustained improvement in its quality of life over the period to 2026, measured by the well-being of its citizens, the vitality of its economy, the wealth of its environment and the prudent use of natural resources.**

## 3. The Core Strategy

The South East is a region of economic opportunity and enterprise, with an especially varied and attractive countryside and a perceived high quality of life. But it is also a region with considerable social inequalities, environmental conflicts and development tensions. Over the period to 2026, we need to nurture and enhance the region's assets, maintain its high quality of life, increase its prosperity and meet its reasonable needs through a sustainable programme of better

management of our assets, efficiency of resource use and increased adaptation and mitigation. This combination is intended to provide the context for a substantial programme of housing development and economic growth, phased and closely related to the availability of infrastructure and associated services. The overall result of the Plan will be a healthier region, a more sustainable pattern of development, a dynamic and robust economy, a reduced level of social exclusion, a more bio-diverse environment and a reducing level of natural resource consumption.

In order to reduce distance travelled and other resource requirements, development will be focused on the urban areas of the region. The urban areas are defined as settlements with a population of 10,000 or more, where an effective range of services can be grouped together. A network of 21 regional hubs has been identified; these are highly accessible urban centres which should continue to provide a focus for the provision of higher-order economic, social and cultural activities. Particular efforts will be made to improve the attractiveness of those towns and cities, to improve quality of life and achieve effective urban renaissance. The main spatial proposals in the Plan are set out in the Key Diagram (see map C1 on centre pages).

## 4. Cross-cutting Issues

The core of the Plan comprises cross-cutting policies as well as policies for specific topics, such as the economy or the countryside. The cross-cutting policies are summarised below:

## Sustainable Development

This requirement underpins the whole Plan. The policy places a clear duty on all public bodies to contribute to the goal of more sustainable development. Sustainable development is defined as: 'Development which meets the social and economic needs of today in a manner which respects the environmental and resource needs of future generations'.

## Climate Change

The evidence that global climate change is occurring is compelling. The South East is relatively sensitive to climate change. The need for action is clear and the Plan therefore provides measures to both mitigate and adapt, involving behaviour change and development standards. In order to clarify and prioritise actions the Assembly has developed and will maintain a specific climate change implementation plan.

## Resource Use

This policy intensifies the drive to make more prudent use of resources, especially natural resources such as water, energy and minerals, and a reduction in waste generated. By 2016 the aim is to stabilise our resource 'footprint', and ultimately to reduce it.

## Sustainable Construction

Both new and refurbished buildings will be expected to adopt higher, more resource efficient standards and technologies, and to increase the use of renewable energy sources and the recycling and re-use of materials.

## Infrastructure

The provision of infrastructure and services to support new development is critical. The Implementation Plan identifies the infrastructure requirements in greater detail and includes proposals designed to substantially improve

delivery of infrastructure and restore confidence that infrastructure will be provided in a timely manner.

## The Use of Public Land

There are extensive areas of property and land in public ownership in the region. The scale and distribution of this land is of particular significance for the region. The Ministry of Defence holdings are particularly substantial and may provide further significant opportunities for development/regeneration.

## Inter-regional Links

The region will continue to play an important role as an international gateway. Inter-regional links are also of importance and a programme of active co-operation to co-ordinate common development issues is being pursued with neighbouring regions. Links with London, East Midlands, the East of England and the South West of England will be of special significance.

## Urban Focus and Renaissance

Development will be focused in urban areas, with a target of at least 60% of new development in the region to be on previously developed land. The Plan identifies 21 highly accessible major urban areas which provide a wide range of employment, service and leisure facilities for their surrounding hinterlands. These Regional Hubs will be the focus for investment in transport and provide opportunities to create well designed higher density 'living centres', to promote urban renaissance.

## Addressing Intra-regional Disparities

The South East contains some of the most economically prosperous parts of the country. However, it is also home to large areas of economic underperformance and social deprivation, particularly along the coast and there are intense concentrations of social



exclusion in some of the larger urban centres. Tackling underperformance and exclusion will be a strategic priority for national, regional and local partners.

## Green Belt and Strategic Gaps

The existing Green Belt areas will be retained, but the opportunity will be taken to improve their management and access for recreation. Elsewhere the Plan provides the framework for the identification of strategic gaps where these need special protection to preserve the identity of settlements and prevent coalescence.

## Supporting an Ageing Population

The proportion of the population over 65 will grow substantially by 2026. This will increase the demand for health and social facilities and the pressure for development in focused spots such as coastal towns. We therefore emphasise the need to plan specifically to provide facilities to take into account these special needs.

## Character and Quality of Life

A high quality of life will be supported through the creation and conservation of high quality environments, both natural and man made, which reflect local character and distinctiveness and promote high quality design and innovation to create a sense of place.

## Housing Supply

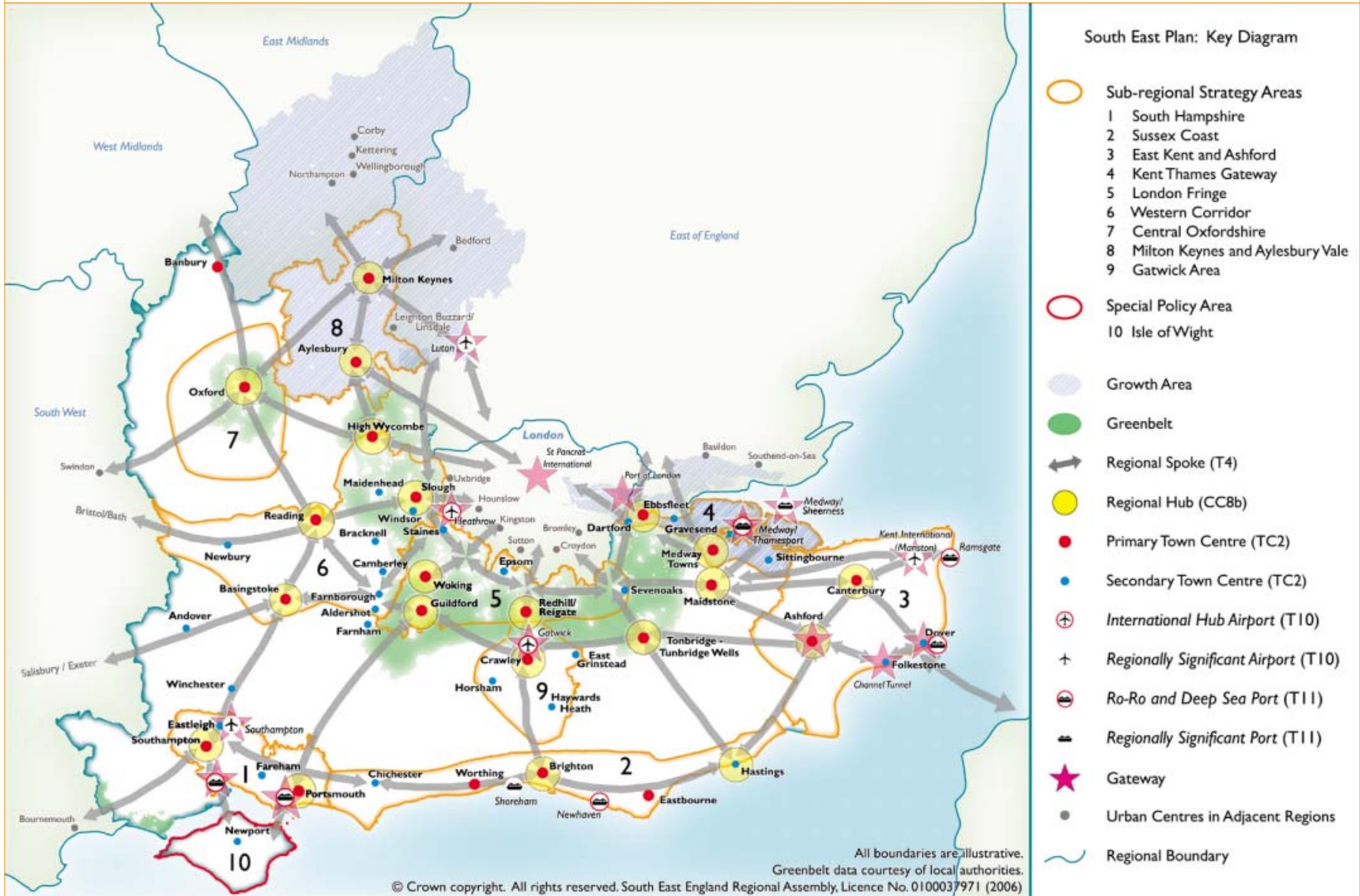
In order to meet overall housing needs, the Assembly has decided that provision should be made for an average of 28,900 dwellings per annum across the region. This compares with a past target of 28,000 per annum. The Assembly will monitor progress and the development achieved annually against that required to ensure that the acknowledged backlog of housing is addressed in the first 10 years of the Plan. In 2004/5 31,907 dwellings were completed.

## 5. Regional Policy Framework

The draft Plan contains more than 100 other policies on key issues for regional planning. The main topics are summarised here:

### Economy

- i Planning for the development of strong economic networks and business clusters, especially in major urban areas
- ii Providing a good range of employment sites and premises to reflect economic needs
- iii Giving high priority to improved skills training and re-training
- iv Positively promoting the provision of technology-enabled development and suitable sites, premises and facilities
- v Addressing economic underperformance along the coast and supporting continued dynamism of the best performing parts of the region.



## Housing

- i Delivering the Plan's target for housing provision
- ii At least 60% of new housing on previously developed (brownfield) land
- iii Delivering a substantial increase in the supply of affordable housing, with an overall target of 35% of new homes as affordable
- iv Increasing housing density to an average of 40 dwellings per hectare, but with a strong emphasis on high design standards
- v Making more efficient use of the existing housing stock, through appropriate conversions and refurbishment
- vi Creating more small-scale affordable housing sites in rural areas.

## Transport and Communications

- i A twin-track approach: managing the transport system to make the most of existing capacity, combined with increased investment, especially in public transport, cycling and pedestrian access
- ii Improving access to international and regional gateways, such as the international airports, the Channel Tunnel and the ports of Dover and Southampton
- iii Investing in communications technology to increase access to goods and services without the physical need to travel
- iv Adopting stronger parking policies, but linked to a programme of access improvements and reasonable provision for residential development
- v Accepting a major future role for road freight but also encouraging railways to carry an increasing share of freight, especially on four strategic corridors
- vi Supporting up to three regional freight transport interchanges
- vii The Assembly accepts continued growth in aviation traffic but considers that the scale of growth currently proposed by Government is unsustainable. Provision is not therefore made in the Plan for additional runways at either Heathrow or Gatwick.

## Natural Resource Management

- In addition to the cross-cutting policies, the Plan:
- i Aims to improve the management of water resources and quality, including greater water efficiency and development of new reservoirs
  - ii Sets out policies for effective flood management, including the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems and other measures to reduce the risk of flooding
  - iii Sets out policies to protect ancient woodlands and ensure better management and expansion of key wildlife habitats
  - iv Improves management co-ordination and planning in sensitive coastal areas
  - v Sets out proposals to improve air quality and noise reduction
  - vi Sets challenging targets and positive planning policies to expand renewable energy and requires that developers ensure that at least 10% of new developments' energy needs are met from renewable sources
  - vii Promotes measures to achieve higher standards of energy efficiency.

## Waste and Minerals

The Plan's policies for waste and minerals:

- i Aim to reduce growth in waste generated
- ii Propose minimising reliance on landfill through recycling and composting of as much waste as possible, with further recovery of energy from materials that cannot be recycled
- iii Provide for a large number and range of new facilities to provide for recycling and recovery
- iv Reduce the amount of waste exported from London for disposal in the South East
- v Increase the use of recycled aggregates, while also planning for an adequate supply of raw materials for building
- vi Promote use of sustainable construction techniques to reduce waste and make use of recycled materials.



## Countryside and Urban Management

- i The South East has a wonderfully rich and diverse range of countryside and the Plan sets out a hierarchy of protective measures, starting with the New Forest, our new National Park. But it also places much emphasis on better management of the wider countryside to improve access, renew landscape and increase bio-diversity
- ii There are new proposals to improve urban areas, with particular emphasis on suburban renewal and adaptation. The suburbs are where the majority of the South East residents actually live
- iii Where town and country meet – the urban-rural fringe – has often been neglected. The Plan sets out a strategy for better management to improve access and landscape variety.

## Town Centres

- i Accessible, attractive and vibrant town centres can provide the focal point for development of a mix of uses
- ii A new network of towns and cities is set out in the Plan, where development will be encouraged
- iii Further large-scale out-of-centre regional shopping centres will be discouraged and new out-of-centre retail sites should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.

## Tourism and Related Sport and Recreation

- i Positive support for tourism development, especially in regeneration areas
- ii Promoting the diversification of the economy in coastal resorts
- iii Clearer guidelines for planning major tourist attractions and tourist accommodation.

## Deprivation and Social Inclusion

Despite overall prosperity, the region contains nationally significant pockets of deprivation and wider problems of social exclusion with poor access to services. The Plan places much emphasis on reducing these differences by:

- i Developing proposals and programmes that target pockets of deprivation
- ii Promoting health provision closer to home, working with local authorities and Primary Care Trusts
- iii Increasing mixed-use provision, so that formal education and health facilities sit close to community facilities
- iv Requiring good access to all large public facilities such as colleges and hospitals
- v Taking a long-term perspective on the design of public services.

## 6. The Role of Sub-regions

The South East is a varied region so it is not adequate simply to adopt policies covering the whole region. The Plan therefore proposes a set of nine sub-regions where the majority of development will be concentrated. Each sub-region has distinctive issues that need to be addressed and the Plan sets out strategies for each. Sub-regional strategies have been developed jointly with the South East's principal planning authorities. The Isle of Wight has also been designated a special policy area.

### South Hampshire

This sub-region is planning for increased levels of development to realise potential, improve economic performance and address significant social deprivation problems in Portsmouth and Southampton.

### Sussex Coast

In this sub-region the focus is on improving the economy to reduce deprivation and bring its economic performance closer to the regional average.

### East Kent and Ashford

Here the emphasis is to give particular priority to regeneration-led development of coastal towns such as Dover, Folkestone and Ramsgate, using the stimulus created by the Ashford Growth Area.

### Kent Thames Gateway

This is part of the key Growth Area also covering London and Essex. The emphasis is strongly on new infrastructure investment and development to include social and economic regeneration.

### London Fringe

This sub-region has an especially critical relationship with London, which needs careful management. Further growth should be supported but the considerable limitations imposed by the extensive Green Belt and environmental designations are recognised.

### Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley

The Thames Valley has international economic significance, and here the need is to provide more affordable housing and ensure that economic growth continues without unreasonably increasing the pressure on resources and the natural environment. The Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) is a natural asset and the impact of planned growth needs to be mitigated.

### Central Oxfordshire

There is a need to capitalise on the unique potential of Oxford as a world class university city at the centre of this sub-region, while taking into account the constraints of the Green Belt and the need to improve housing availability and affordability.

### Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale

Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale form part of the wider Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area, which is planned to accommodate development in key urban centres throughout the Plan period. A critical challenge will be to ensure that economic growth and employment increase in line with population.

### Gatwick Area

The main task here is to capitalise better on the presence of Gatwick Airport and good links to London and Brighton, to develop a better balanced and more diverse economy.

### Isle of Wight Special Policy Area

The Isle of Wight's relative isolation means that it needs to diversify its economic base and improve economic performance to reduce economic and social deprivation. It has therefore been designated a Special Policy Area.

## 7. South East Plan Supporting Material

### Sustainability Appraisal

An independent programme of sustainability appraisal and environmental assessment has been undertaken as part of the development of the South East Plan. This work incorporated the requirements of the European Sustainable Environmental Assessment Directive. The work was informed by advice from an independently chaired sounding board. The process helped refine the Plan and resulted in some adjustments. A summary of the report has been



published alongside the Plan and the full document is available on the Assembly website.

### Public Opinion

A major effort has been made to collect public views and opinions throughout the preparation of the Plan. This included three phases of structured public opinion research, and a 12 week pre-submission public consultation from January to April 2005, which incorporated a questionnaire sent to 3.2 million households. A full report on this programme forms part of the submitted Plan.

### The Implementation Plan

The South East Plan differs from earlier regional strategies in the emphasis that it places on implementing its proposals. A vital element of the new approach is therefore the Implementation Plan, which identifies the agencies, processes and priorities that are required to help deliver the policies and proposals in the Plan. It links with the work of the Regional Housing and Transport Boards and with SEEDA's revised Regional Economic Strategy. A sub-regional investment framework forms part of the Implementation Plan, identifying critical infrastructure requirements for each sub-region. The new Regional Funding Allocation arrangements and the dialogue with Government on infrastructure provision will further strengthen delivery.

### Monitoring Framework

Regular monitoring of progress will be essential to ensure changes in behaviour and targets are achieved. The Assembly publishes an annual Regional Monitoring Report to assess progress and the need for further action. The content of the monitoring report has been extended and enhanced to ensure it identifies the extent to

which the Plan's objectives are being delivered, and any corrective measures required. A Monitoring Framework document forms part of the submitted Plan.

### The Planning Documents and Next Stages

In addition to this Executive Summary, the submitted Draft South East Plan comprises:

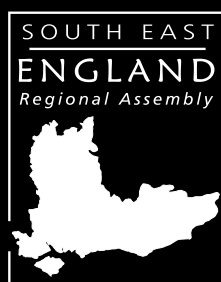
- i The Core Document, including regional and sub-regional policies
- ii Sustainability Appraisal: Non technical summary
- iii Pre-Submission Consultation Statement
- iv Monitoring Framework
- v Interim Implementation Plan.

A copy of the full printed set can be purchased from the Assembly at a cost of £35. Alternatively it can be inspected at major public libraries or downloaded free of charge from the Assembly website [www.southeast-ra.gov.uk](http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk)

Public consultation on the draft Plan from 31 March to 23 June 2006 gives the opportunity for interested parties to make representations, some of which will then be considered at an Examination in Public; an independent and informal form of Public Inquiry. The independent panel of Inspectors will report to the Deputy Prime Minister. Details of how to respond to this consultation are available on the Assembly website.

The final version of the Plan, including any amendments agreed as a result of the Examination in Public, will be issued by the Deputy Prime Minister and formally adopted as the Regional Spatial Strategy. As part of the statutory Development Plan, there will then be an obligation on local authorities to conform to the Plan in their planning decisions.

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Published March 2006  
by South East England  
Regional Assembly.