

# Regional Strategy Update – Evidence Submission

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AGENDA ITEM NO:

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## **1. Purpose of Report:**

To inform the Partnership of the outcome of consideration of the South East England Partnership Board's (SEEPB) request for submission of local evidence to inform initial work on the new Integrated Regional Strategy. This Strategy combines the functions of the former Regional Assembly / Government's South East Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy – RSS) and the Regional Development Agency's Regional Economic strategy (RES). It is therefore an extremely important influence on SPIP work.

## **2. Background**

At its meeting of 1 March 2010 the Partnership considered a request from SEEPB to submit initial evidence for the new Plan. The template for this submission is attached for reference. The request primarily suggests a need to flag up evidence sources and research available at local authority level. However it also provides an opportunity to identify issues – both constraints and opportunities. Of course what might arise from this issues aspect would be any local pointers about future development pressures and growth opportunities.

The SEEPB had previously been advised that, for the purposes of early engagement, the Oxfordshire councils will contribute to the regional planning process through SPIP.

It was agreed that the evidence request would be considered by officers of the local authorities with a view to submission of a full SPIP response via a report to this meeting.

In discussion at officer level it has become apparent that this objective is not achievable at this stage. This is because there is considerable uncertainty about commitment to a future regional planning process and also likely local controversy about the issues that might be identified. As a result it has been suggested that the best way forward would be to tackle the substantive issues through an informal Member workshop to be held alongside the June (post

elections) meeting of SPIP (suggested lunchtime session). Of course it will only be sensible to proceed in this way should it be clear that regional planning process is to continue in some form.

In the meantime SPIP is able to feedback some generic advice on basic technical evidence sources that are either available, or will be developed, over the next 6 months:

- *County Council / SPIP Local Economic Assessment*
- *District Council Local Development Framework Core Strategies – emerging work and related evidence base*
- *Local planning Authority Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments*
- *Local Transport Plan 3 evidence base*
- *SPIP / HCA Local Investment Plan*
- *Joint County District work on climate change and sustainability requirements in new development.*

Additionally individual councils may wish to add detailed technical reference information of their own. Officers (the SPIP Executive Group) will collate any such submissions and circulate for information before the June meeting.

As a contribution to setting the agenda for the possible June workshop it would be useful to indicate to SEEPB that the following generic issues are relevant for future consideration:

- *housing delivery constraints are increasingly around development viability, land assembly and release – rather than identification of land through the planning system*
- *over focus on deliverability as a planning “policy” issue is threatening sound planning of housing and infrastructure(through pressure for release of less suitable off plan sites)*
- *viability and affordable housing and infrastructure needs / requirements are increasingly coming into conflict*
- *environmental sustainability pressures and requirements are increasingly important, but add another dimension to viability issues*
- *transport investment dilemmas are increasing*

### **3. Recommendations**

3.1 That the Partnership provides initial feed back to SEEPB on the basis of this report.

3.2 That individual councils make their own, additional and / or detailed evidence submissions as they see fit (including any relevant technical document references)

3.3 That, subject to consideration of any implications of the forthcoming general election for the future of regional planning, the Partnership invites SEEPB to hold a special workshop for SPIP Local Authority Members / officers and relevant partner representatives, linked

to its meeting on 28 June. Further, that, if appropriate SPIP follows up with a formal “key Oxfordshire Issues” submission to the regional plan process.