

THAMES GATEWAY – SOUTH ESSEX STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the progress made to date on the development of a strategic framework document for the Thames Gateway – South Essex area. This document, which will outline the vision and objectives for the area over the next 20 years, is currently being drafted. This report highlights some of the issues likely to be contained in the document for early Member consideration and comment.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At its next meeting in November, the Thames Gateway – South Essex Board, on which Councillor P. Webster is this Authority's representative, will be considering a draft strategic framework document for the area. The draft is currently an internal working document and does not, until finalised and approved by the Board, represent the official position of the Partnership. Once agreed, it will form the Board's view in terms of how the area should be developed over a period. It should not however, be regarded as the statutory planning document for the area, in the way that the Structure Plan and the various District Local Development Plans are recognised. It will nonetheless, provide an important reference point for these documents and will certainly help influence the amount of resources allocated to the area from Central Government over a period.
- 2.2 At this stage it is important for Members to consider the likely content of the draft, so that Councillor Webster, as this Authority's Board representative, has as clear a mandate as possible from this Council when the draft document comes before the Board for consideration.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

Context

- 3.1 Thames Gateway is the Government's top priority for economic and social regeneration. It is a focus for public and private investment in

regeneration and growth, of which transport infrastructure is a vital component. It is the largest regeneration project in Europe.

- 3.2 Thames Gateway South Essex is an extension of the original Thames Gateway, which was designated by the Government in 1995. New Regional Planning Guidance for the South East, which was published by the Government in March 2001, confirmed the extension into South Essex to include more of Thurrock, part of Basildon (including Basildon New Town), the boroughs of Castle Point and Southend on Sea, and a small part of Rochford including London Southend Airport.
- 3.3 The Gateway covers a wide geographical area, spanning the boundaries of three regional development agencies, for London and those for the East and South East of England. It includes the areas of 20 local authorities (either in whole or in part) in London, North Kent and South Essex.
- 3.4 Approximately 640,000 people live within South Essex. Many more work in the area, thus forming the largest built-up area in the East of England Region. It contains one tenth of the Region's population. There is a need to identify priorities for Thames Gateway South Essex within the Gateway as a whole, having regard to:-
 - its position in relationship with London
 - the commonality of need for regeneration along the River Thames and its estuary
 - the shared past of declining industries
 - similar problems associated with structural economic change.
- 3.5 Early visions for Thames Gateway talked about notions of a 'linear city' developing between London and the sea. This 'city' however, conjures images of the worst aspects of a concrete jungle, and of being on the extended urban fringe --without any of the advantages a city environment can bring.
- 3.6 The overarching vision for South Essex should challenge this notion of 'city' and replace it with a new approach. Such an approach will need to demonstrate it is possible to bring together both the advantages of city living, and the advantages of country living – and with the added advantage of having easy access to the river and the sea along its linear coast. Nowhere else, outside the Thames Gateway, shares these features – at least, nowhere that it also intimately connected with a world city – London.
- 3.7 To deliver this agenda, the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership has already agreed to focus its efforts around 3 'regeneration hubs' which together include those communities suffering from deprivation,

along with key new sites for potential development. The focus is provided through the identification of key sectors within each hub. These are:-

- Southend/Rochford – creative/cultural, leisure/tourism and higher education
- Basildon/Castle Point – manufacturing/engineering, business systems and services
- Thurrock – transport/logistics, community enterprise

3.8 Within the context provided by these, certain areas (Southend, Thurrock Riverside, Shellhaven, Basildon) have been defined as Zones of Change. Castle Point and Rochford however, have been defined as Zones of Influence.

Current Position

3.9 Over the past 12 months a number of officer groups have been working to provide the draft strategic framework documents. Six themes have been identified:-

- Skills, learning and employment
- Transport and infrastructure
- Investment and development
- A better environment
- Health and community
- Marketing and communication

Work around each theme has focused on analysing the problems and opportunities in the area, looking at strategic priorities and developing a list of suggested actions.

3.10 In addition, consultants employed by Thames Gateway – South Essex have been looking at the various Zones of Change and Zones of Influence, identifying potential key projects, and providing advice and guidance as to how these might be delivered. At the same time, consultants employed by the East of England Development Agency have been looking specifically at mechanisms for delivery if the Government's wishes for the area, in terms of development, regeneration, and infrastructure are to be delivered. An Options document (to be reported to Environment Overview & Scrutiny committee in November) has been published by the East of England Local Government Conference, and this will form the basis for new Regional Planning Guidance. All this work will impact upon the strategic framework document now being produced.

Framework Document

- 3.11 The draft Strategic Framework being worked on will focus around 4 guiding principles:-
- Quality – of life, environment, urban design, community and skills.
 - Diversity – of environment, living, style and opportunity.
 - Innovation – South Essex should be a driver for innovation, with an appropriate physical and intellectual infrastructure.
 - Sustainability – of environment and development, with an emphasis on inclusion and equality.
- 3.12 In terms of skills, learning and employment, it is likely the Strategic Framework will identify seven priority areas for action. These are:-
- Recognising and strengthening the learning culture.
 - Enhancing business competitiveness through skills development
 - Focusing on skills in local communities.
 - Maximising the skills of the workforce.
 - Tackling long-term unemployment and the low skills base.
 - Improving data collection and forecasting to underpin skills strategies.
 - Increasing aspiration relation to transport and infrastructure, it is likely the Strategic Framework document will emphasise the strategic links of the Gateway to and the achievement of higher-level skills.
- 3.13 Of specific interest to Rochford within this context will be the development of the University campus at Southend and the potential to develop an Engineering Skills Academy in the Rochford/Southend area.
- 3.14 In relation to transport and infrastructure, it is likely the Strategic Framework document will emphasise the strategic links of the Gateway to other parts of the Country and at the same time look to promote schemes which also improve linkages within South Essex. Schemes that might be considered in the context of Rochford and Southend are listed in Appendix 1. There is much in the list that Rochford would support, with perhaps the only area of dispute likely to arise in terms of any proposals by Southend to resurrect the outer by-pass issue through Rochford to open up the development sites at Shoeburyness and improve road access links to the eastern end of Southend.
- 3.15 As for investment and development, key sites within the Gateway are likely to be viewed as Shellhaven/Canvey; Basildon New Town; Southend Central and Southend Airport. Clearly, the latter is seen as an economic generator in its own right, and important to the Gateway as a potential regional airport facility and is particularly important to the

District in terms of its long term wellbeing as a major centre of employment.

- 3.16 In terms of environment, the Strategic framework document is likely to major on the following four key aspects of the environment in the area, ensuring that assets are enhanced, heritage recognised and public accessibility are issues put at the top of the agenda. The four areas are likely to be:-
- To develop a 'Green Grid' across the area, identifying, opening up and linking together a Thames Marshes Regional Park together with wildlife and heritage sites, and other attractions.
 - To work with the Thames Estuary Partnership and others to make the River Thames a real asset for leisure and business.
 - To identify 'key eyesores' to be tackled (for example the cats cradle of overhead power lines and pylons) and physical landmarks (such as redundant power stations) which are in need of renovation or demolition and seek ways of funding these.
 - To improve the way waste is managed in South Essex including dealing with the legacy of old landfill tips.
- 3.17 The 'Green Grid' concept should certainly provide the District Council with further opportunities to promote and develop the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park. It will also be interesting to see whether some of the estuarine initiatives developed in connection with the Thames can be extended to the rivers Crouch and Roach. The issue of waste management is also one in which this Authority will need to maintain an active interest.
- 3.18 In connection with health and community, it is likely the Strategic Framework document will concentrate on the following areas:-
- Educational aspiration and attainment
 - Primary health care
 - Personal and community safety
 - Community isolation
 - Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal
 - Culture and sport
- 3.19 The District already has a number of initiatives in these areas, e.g. Crime & Disorder Strategy, in many cases with partner organisations, and it will be important to ensure that the strategic context provided by the Gateway Framework document complements rather than conflicts with the development and implementation of these over time.

3.20 Finally, as for marketing and communications, it would appear that the Strategic Framework document will concentrate on the actions listed below:-

- Develop and promote the opportunities within south Essex and to address the imbalance between the economies of east and west London.
- Promote Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) within South Essex and Nationally/Internationally
- Develop a long-term sustainable marketing strategy that is adaptable to changes in priorities for South Essex.
- Promote the key objectives of Thames Gateway and the visions for the regeneration 'hubs' within TGSE
- Foster links with other Thames Gateway Partnerships to present a coherent Gateway promotion and marketing message.
- Improve the communications between partners including the development of a TGSE Intranet.

3.21 Again, within this context, it will be important for the District Council to recognise and make best use of any marketing and communication initiatives that emerge.

The Next Steps

3.22 Once approved by the Board, the Strategic Framework document will be launched by the Partnership early in 2003. As outlined in para. 2.1, it will not represent a statutory planning document as such. Those powers will still remain with the Structure Plan and District Local Development Plans. Nonetheless, it will undoubtedly be an important reference point for those documents in terms of strategic context and it will also be important in terms of securing resources from Central Government and other agencies for initiatives across the Gateway area.

4 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES**

to note the progress made to date on the development of a Strategic Framework document for the Thames Gateway – South Essex area

and in the light of the content of this report, consider any particular matters that it wishes to be raised at the next Gateway Board meeting when a draft framework document will be discussed.

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Background Papers:

Thames Gateway - South Essex – Working Papers for further discussion

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ROCHFORD AND SOUTHEND – POTENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEMES

Short Term ® 2006

- An assessment of transport capacity and movement issues within the area
- Improvements to the A127/A1159 Freight route
- Integrated local walking and cycle networks
- Upgrade Southend bus station
- Passenger Transport corridor improvements on the A13
- Improvements to railway stations on GER and c2c lines
- Complete Local Transport Plan schemes and devise new 2nd LTP five year programme
- Development of National Cycle Network
- Quality Bus Partnership
- Provision of Travel Plans

Medium Term ® 2011

- Upgrading of the London – Basildon/Grays – Southend – Shoeburyness railway line
- Upgrading of Southend Central as a strategic interchange station in connection with new University facilities
- New terminal and business development at London Southend Airport
- New London Southend Airport railway station
- Enhanced surface access to the airport and surrounding business area
- Improved road access links to Southend
- Upgrading Southend Victoria railway station as a Strategic Interchange and enhancing the links between Southend Victoria station, Central Station and the town centre retail and leisure areas
- Links to and within the Shoeburyness development sites
- Extension of Passenger Transport Corridor Improvements
- Improvements to the A127/A1159 Freight route
- Complete National Cycle Network to full operations status
- Complete 2nd LTP five year programme

Long Term ® 2021+

- Developing the strategic transport network in South Essex
- Introducing hovercraft services on River Thames
- Developing a rapid transit system for South Essex