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**DRAFT REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR THE SOUTH EAST**  
**(RPG9) – PROPOSED CHANGES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Following a public inquiry in early 1999, the Government has now published its proposed revisions to Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9).

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 RPG9 is intended to provide a regional framework for the preparation of local authority development plans and a spatial framework for other strategies and programmes.
- 2.2 The initial draft guidance was prepared and published by the London and South East Regional Planning conference (SERPLAN) and their proposals were examined in public by a panel chaired by Professor Stephen Crowe.
- 2.3 The so called 'Crowe Report' was published in September 1999 and the Government has now examined the Panel's findings and published their conclusions for a further round of consultation.
- 2.4 The closing date for submissions on the Government's proposals is 19 June 2000. A copy of the report has been placed in the Members' Room.
- 2.5 Members should be aware that RPG9 will guide the form and content of the Essex Structure Plan and hence the specific policies and proposals to be included in the Rochford District Local Plan, particularly future housing allocations.

**3. KEY ALTERATIONS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 SERPLAN's vision of planning guidance for the South East was that it should provide for a broadly based, sustainable development strategy extending beyond solely land use issues.
- 3.2 However, the Government has discarded this proposed wider policy framework in favour of an approach which is focussed on providing guidance solely for the production of development plans. The revised document contains only land-use policies, rather than the broader spectrum of policies proposed by SERPLAN covering social, environmental and economic issues.

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**3.3**    *Housing*

- 3.3.1    The revised RPG indicates that housing requirements across the Region should be based on a 'Plan, Monitor and Manage' approach. Such an approach requires that the planned level of housing provision and its distribution should be based on a clear set of policy objectives, linked to measurable indicators of change. Annual monitoring should then be combined with five year reviews and adjustments in the allocations if there is over or under provision.
- 3.3.2    The Government takes the view that, through a plan-led system, it will be possible to provide more dwellings than have been provided historically with proportionally less impact on land and other resources. Therefore, RPG9 concludes that a higher dwelling provision than proposed by SERPLAN is possible without increasing land take, particularly if development plan policies are altered to exercise more control over layout and type of housing and the efficient use of land.
- 3.3.3    The RPG (Policy H1) proposed that housing should be provided at the annual average rate of 43,000 dwellings within the South East excluding London. A letter from Nick Raynsford accompanying the RPG document explains that one option would be for the distribution proposed by SERPLAN to be factored up to achieve the Government's higher total (see Appendix 1 to this report).
- 3.3.4    However, the Government is not happy with this approach and has asked SERPLAN to consider the matter and to put forward views on the appropriate distribution based on the overall total of 43,000 dwellings per year.
- 3.4.5    With regard to the use of previously developed land, the Government requires local authorities to adopt a sequential approach to the allocation of land and to seek to achieve at least 60% of all new housing development on previously developed land.
- 3.3.6    In preparing development plans, local authorities should:
- Carry out vigorous studies of urban capacity and potential.
  - Identify vacant, poorly used and under used land.
  - Identify areas of vacant and under used property.
  - Make proposals for high quality intensive residential and mixed use development on land close to town centres and at good points of public transport accessibility.
  - Base policies for the release and development of land on a sequential approach.

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3.3.7 The RPG recognises that in future there is likely to be a higher proportion of one and two person households that at present. Accordingly, development plans should:

- Make provision for a range of dwelling types and sizes.
- Set out clearly the mix of dwelling types that would reasonably be expected.
- Provide for dwellings to meet the needs of elderly and disabled households.

3.3.8 In addition, sufficient affordable housing should be provided to meet locally assessed needs.

### *3.4 Thames Gateway*

3.4.1 Authorities in South Essex had lobbied strongly for an extension to the Thames Gateway. The RPG recognises the potential for the Thames Gateway to make a vital and major contribution to the growth of the regional economy.

3.4.2 In recognising the importance and value of the Thames Gateway, the RPG proposes to extend the boundary of the Thames Gateway within Southern Essex to include more of Thurrock, part of Basildon District, the Boroughs of Castle Point and Southend and Southend Airport in Rochford District. A map is included in the document (see Appendix 2) which shows a 'general' boundary for the extended area.

3.4.3 The RPG also explains the need for a new strategic partnership to deal with the Thames Gateway and the Government is considering appropriate delivery mechanisms.

### *3.5 Transport*

3.5.1 The chapter of the RPG document dealing with transport strategy focuses on the need to develop a more sustainable pattern of spatial development which minimises the need to travel and reduces the need for car parking.

3.5.2 Specifically, development plans should have regard to the following locational criteria:

- Development should be planned holistically to minimise the need for movement.
- Development generating a large number of passenger movements should be located close to sites convenient for access on foot, cycle or public transport.
- Development that generates a large quantity of freight and goods movements should be located close to rail, sea or inland waterways.

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- New development should make use of existing transportation networks.
  - Development should enhance the viability of existing public transport services.

### **3.6    *Parking Strategy***

- 3.6.1 The RPG states that it is essential for there to be a consistent approach to the determination of parking standards across the regions to avoid the destructive potential for competitive provision of parking between different location to the detriment of sustainable development.
- 3.6.2 Local authorities will be required to adopt maximum parking standards for all new development proposals. For B1 uses, planning authorities will need to provide a specific justification for the maximum standard and for residential development, authorities are asked to include maximum standards which are more rigorous than those set out in national planning guidance.

### **3.7    *Airports***

- 3.7.1 The Government's policy on UK airports is currently being prepared. Nevertheless, local authorities will need to consider the extent to which planned development is related to the operation of the airport, and is sustainable given the prevailing levels, and potential for enhancement, of public transport.
- 3.7.2 Therefore, any surface access measures necessary to cater for airport growth within existing planned limits should be sustainable.

## **4.    **DISCUSSION****

### **4.1    *Housing***

- 4.1.1 The Government's proposals on housing are, on the face of it, based on the Plan, Monitoring and Manage approach. In theory, such an approach should be more responsive to the needs of local areas and ensure that land is not unnecessarily allocated for housing development.
- 4.1.2 However, local authorities are still required to make provision for the period 1996 – 2016 at a predetermined rate of 43,000 dwellings per annum and it is difficult to see how such a prescriptive policy statement fits into a 'Predict, Monitor and Manage' approach.
- 4.1.3 It is perhaps too early to give an accurate picture of the implications of such a level of provision for Rochford. The table in Appendix 1 to this report shows an average annual rate for Essex of 5,420 dwellings per annum. Over a five-year period this would yield 27,100 dwellings. As

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a guide, based on the draft Structure Plan housing distribution, this would equate to a requirement for 1,145 dwellings to be provided in Rochford in the period 2011 – 2016.

- 4.1.4 The RPG concludes that it should be possible to provide a greater number of dwellings by making better use of land within existing urban areas. Indeed, the RPG indicates that local authorities should seek to achieve at least 60% of all new housing development on previously developed land.
- 4.1.5 There is no doubt that such a figure is not capable of being achieved in Rochford and it is considered that the guidance should make very clear this is an average figure to be achieved across the whole region and not within each individual district or even county area.
- 4.1.6 A further and related point for Members to consider is that the Government is proposing their higher rate of housing provision could be accommodated within the same land area as that proposed by SERPLAN. Inevitably this would mean higher densities, but there seems to be no explanation within the RPG of mechanisms to achieve a higher urban component in housing development.

#### *4.2 Thames Gateway*

- 4.2.1 The Government's acceptance of the justification to extend the Thames Gateway is to be welcomed. The written text suggests that only London Southend Airport within Rochford District might be included, though the accompanying map is much less clear about the exact position of the boundary.
- 4.2.2 It is considered that there is little need to be unduly prescriptive about the position of the boundary and it makes sense for the airport, adjacent industrial area and the Rochford Business Park to be included within the Thames Gateway area.

#### *4.3 Transport*

- 4.3.1 There is some concern that the more integrated proposals for transport developed in the SERPLAN document have been watered down to little more than a programme of commitments and constructions.
- 4.3.2 It is clear that it is crucial to address the problem of transport movement within any regional strategy, but the RPG does not seem to pay any attention to the problems of congestion and the impact this has on the economic vitality of the region.
- 4.3.3 Transport improvements must be linked with the spatial strategy for the region and the overreaching problems of congestion must be addressed by considering the role of demand management measures.

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**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The RPG provides the strategic framework for planning in the South East for the period to 2016.

**6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That subject to additional comments from Members, the contents of this report form the basis of this Council's comments on the Draft Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9).(HCPI)

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**Background Papers:**

Draft Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9)

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