
JOINT ACTION AREA PLAN – LAND WEST OF ROCHFORD

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides details of a proposal for the preparation of a Joint Action Area Plan (JAAP) in conjunction with Southend on Sea Borough Council for an area of land to the west of Rochford, which incorporates London Southend Airport and Aviation Way Industrial Estate.
- 1.2 The administrative arrangements for preparing the Joint Acton Area Plan are outlined in the report, together with a draft timetable, which would need to be incorporated into a revision of the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 London Southend Airport is recognised as a key driver for economic change in the Thames Gateway South Essex sub-region. The airport is identified in the interim plan for Thames Gateway published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and in the proposed modifications to the East of England Plan published in December 2006. (A report on the East of England Plan is included elsewhere on the agenda).
- 2.2 To the west of the airport is Aviation Way Industrial Estate, also of significant importance for employment, with particular emphasis on skilled jobs, apprenticeships and innovative industries. Some of the businesses on the estate are closely tied to the important maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) businesses at the airport.
- 2.3 Following discussions with Southend on Sea Borough Council it is suggested that, given the importance of these sites to the economy of South Essex, there would be merit in preparing a JAAP to include the airport and the industrial estate as well as land to the north and south.
- 2.4 The map attached at appendix one suggests the action area be bounded in the north by Hall Road, to the east by Southend Road, to the west by Cherry Orchard Way and to the south by Prince Avenue, though the exact boundary will need to be agreed between the two Authorities.

3 PLANNING ISSUES

- 3.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 allows for the preparation of JAAPs, effectively a development plan document (DPD) prepared by two or more Authorities. The procedures for preparing a JAAP are similar to a DPD, except that agreement needs to be reached on the joint governance arrangements required to manage the process.
- 3.2 As explained above, the economic importance of the airport, which straddles the boundaries between the two Authorities and the businesses on Aviation

Way, more than justifies joint working. The suggested boundary for the JAAP provides the opportunity to explore broader options for supporting the economic potential of the airport and businesses in the area, but also allows consideration of the protection of the historic centre of Rochford, access arrangements and perhaps the creation of a 'green wedge' to complement the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park on the west side of Cherry Orchard Way.

- 3.3 The timescales for the preparation of DPDs are dictated by the requirements of the legislation. Assuming the identification of resources to enable the preparation of baseline information and the first stage issues and options consultation, it is considered that the timescale might be:-
- Issues & Options (Regulation 25) – ongoing from May/June 2007
 - Preferred options public consultation (Regulation 26) – Autumn 2007
 - Submission to Secretary of State – Spring 2008
 - Examination in Public – Autumn 2008
 - Adoption – end 2008
- 3.4 This is an ambitious timetable and will require additional resources, beyond those currently available for the documents in the LDS, and is not likely to be deliverable without assistance from the East of England Development Agency, (EEDA), DCLG and perhaps other agencies, as well as requiring early commitment from both Authorities to set up a joint committee to manage the process.
- 3.5 The preparation of the JAAP is linked to the economic strategy to promote investment and employment on the airport site. With that in mind, it is considered that it would be helpful to prepare a shared economic policy framework, to include proposals for investment and to inform the preparation of the JAAP.
- 3.6 There are then several issues on which further information is required as the baseline for the preparation of the JAAP and the economic strategy for investment.
- *Aviation and aviation related industries* – the long term sustainable growth of the airport, particularly for business travellers, is a key objective but the most appropriate means of achieving this has yet to be fully tested. In order to give some underpinning to strategic consideration of the entire site it is proposed to commission some further advice on the sector, including the potential implications of decisions regarding a second runway at Stansted, and the possible imposition of aviation fuel duties. This element of research will include

aviation and MRO related industries as well as the airport itself. Regional Airport Ltd's ambitions also rely on the extension of the runway, itself a significant planning issue. The commissioned advice will consider the aviation opportunities available if the runway remains as it is, so that strategic decisions are informed by the potential economic benefits.

- *Non-aviation related activities at the Airport* – there is a significant cluster of other employment sites at Aviation Way. The number and density of jobs, their sustainability and so on also need to be reviewed to ensure long term planning, (both for land use and economic strategy). The site should actively contribute to the sub-regional ambitions for high-value and sustainable jobs in existing developed areas.
- *Transport and access* – there are a complicated range of possible options for surface access to the airport site, including road and junction choices, parking and a station. These need to be systematically reviewed in the light of the most recent Government and local decisions. The brief for this piece of work will not encompass wider debates about access to Southend or Rochford town.
- *Site assessment* – the larger site proposed for the JAAP has never been fully surveyed for development related constraints, including contaminated land, protected species, etc.

4 GOVERNANCE AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

4.1 The key to preparing a JAAP is a formal agreement between the two Authorities to set up a joint decision making committee, together with a strategy and delivery group tasked with driving the project to implementation.

4.2 It is proposed that the groups to oversee and deliver the project would be:-

- *Rochford & Southend AAP Committee* – a Member level committee to make recommendations to each Council on the preparation and adoption of the JAAP. It is proposed that the AAP Committee comprises four Members from the two Authorities.
- *Strategy Group* – comprising Leaders and Chief Executives of both authorities, senior planning officers, the Chair and Chief Executive of the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership and Chief Executive of Southend Renaissance. This group would seek to reconcile strategic differences, ensure adherence to the timetable and pursue resources for the project.

- *Delivery Group* – an officer team comprising representatives from Rochford, Southend, Thames Gateway, EEDA and Renaissance Southend.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The majority of the area proposed for the JAAP, excluding part of the airport, Aviation Way Industrial Estate and land within Southend is notated as Green Belt and any development proposals will therefore need to be carefully considered. There are likely to be implications for protected species and studies will be required to establish the baseline situation. Part of the area is within the flood zone.
- 5.2 A long term development plan for the area will enable consideration to be given to the identification of a green wedge to enhance the environmental value and benefits of the area.
- 5.3 Any development proposals must recognise the importance of protecting the historic core of Rochford town centre.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are pressures for development in the JAAP area and it is essential that a proper framework is prepared to avoid ad hoc, opportunistic schemes from being brought forward.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The preparation of the JAAP will require financial and officer resources and, given the commitment to the preparation of the Core Strategy, Allocations and Development Control DPDs, it will be difficult for Rochford to move forward with this work unless additional resources can be found. Realistically, there will be a requirement to appoint consultants to prepare the baseline material, the issues and options document and associated Strategic Environment Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal. It is difficult to be precise about the costs of this work but, based on experience with consultants' work in other areas, it may be that these initial stages could cost in the region of £75,000-£100,000, divided between the two Authorities.
- 7.2 It will be important for the Strategy and Delivery Groups to work with interested agencies, including Thames Gateway South Essex, EEDA and Renaissance Southend to establish the resources available to deliver the project. At present there are positive indications that funds might be forthcoming for the baseline economic work, but if Members are minded to agree to the principle of a JAAP, then further work will be undertaken to determine the availability of funds. Whilst there is a significant commitment to the preparation of development plan documents currently included in the LDS, it may be that some funds would be available from the planning delivery grant to cover an element of the required work.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The arrangements for the delivery of the JAAP will need to be formally agreed between the two Authorities.
- 8.2 The procedures for preparing an Action Area Plan are set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and supporting Government guidance.

9 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the Rochford Local Development Scheme be amended to include the timetable for the preparation of a Joint Action Area Plan with Southend on Sea Borough Council to cover the area shown on the plan in Appendix One to the report.
 - (2) That the preparation of a shared economic strategy for the airport and Aviation Way Industrial Estate be agreed.
 - (3) That the governance arrangements for the preparation of the Joint Action Area Plan and Economic Strategy be agreed, as set out in the report.

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Background Papers:-

Interim Plan for Thames Gateway, DCLG, December 2006.

Proposed changes to the East of England Plan, DCLG, December 2006.

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