



COUNCILS AND
COMMUNITIES
IN PARTNERSHIP

Mr William McKee CBE
Chair of the Outer London Commission
c/o Peter Wright
By email to outer.londoncommission@london.gov.uk

5 May 2009

Dear Mr McKee,

OUTER LONDON COMMISSION – RESPONSE TO INITIAL QUESTIONS

The South East England Leaders Board ('the Leaders Board') thanks you for the invitation to input into the OLC's work, and welcomes the recognition by the OLC that the South East Region has an important role in relation to the way in which London functions.

The Leaders Board is the executive body for South East England Councils (SEEC). Members of the Leaders Board, together with South East England Development Agency Board members and through the South East England Partnership Board, form the Regional Planning Body for the South East Region.

Although our response focuses on the specific relationship between Outer London and the inner South East, we all recognise the strong links that the South East Region (and the East of England Region) has with London more generally, particularly in relation to transport and the economy. Unfortunately the artificial boundaries placed on us for planning purposes do not reflect this reality. We are therefore keen to work with the Mayor and the Commission to plan the Greater South East in a more co-ordinated way than we have perhaps done in the past. As a first step, I will be inviting the Mayor to meet with me and some of my SEEC colleagues to discuss how to take this forward.

The South East plays a key role in supporting the city region that stretches across regional boundaries, and is intricately linked - particularly economically - to South East England. The complexity of networks and flows between Outer London and the South East (particularly the inner South East) means that any mechanisms implemented to enhance the profile and economic role of Outer London must integrate with the policies and programmes being developed for the surrounding areas. (The annex to this letter summarises what we consider to be the most important networks and flows.)

One of the biggest challenges for Outer London and the inner South East is to be able to respond to the emerging economic, social and environmental challenges of the 21st century,

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such as evolving economic structures, adaption to and mitigation of climate change, and the growth of new technology. It is therefore important that London and the South East work together to develop complementary strategic planning policies and a joined up approach to infrastructure funding for the Greater South East.

Policy development - The development of London Plan policies in relation to Outer London should take account of the close links with the inner South East, in particular in relation to the economy, commuting, migration flows, transport and retail provision.

Hubs and Super Hubs - The linkages between the Regional Hubs and Primary Centres of the inner South East, and the Metropolitan Centres of Outer London need to be considered in terms of the cross boundary effects of sub-regions. There is a need to consider the mutual complementarity of such centres to ensure that each centre is able to play to its strengths. More clarity is needed on the concept of Super Hubs. For example, are they transport related or more generally development related? What would be the potential impact on the inner South East Regional Hubs and Primary Centres as set out in the South East Plan?

Co-ordination corridors – As well as local links between the Inner South East and Outer London, it is also important that the London Plan addresses how the identified ‘co-ordination corridors’ in the London Plan relate to the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy sub-regional geographies and the future planning of these corridors.

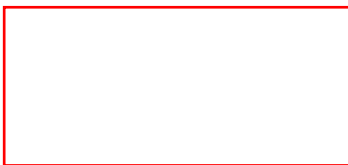
Funding

It is important that funding priorities in the Greater South East regions are properly aligned. For example, the ‘Delivering A Sustainable Transport System’ transport investment planning process provides a strong opportunity for the three regions to emphasise the strategic importance of investment in the part of the UK that is most likely to lead the country out of recession. Such funding opportunities should, where relevant, be sought in a manner that maximises opportunities for benefits to accrue across the Greater South East.

The Inter-Regional Forum - The Inter-Regional Forum, which acts as an advisory group in relation to planning policy across the Greater South East, has an important role to play in this work and must continue to be supported by the three regions. The Forum seeks to add value to the regional planning process by ensuring that emerging strategies and plans and funding priorities are complementary and that those topics and locations shared interest or concern are jointly addressed.

I hope the Commission finds our submission helpful – we would welcome the opportunity to participate in future discussions with you.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Carter
Chairman, South East England Leaders Board

The South East England Regional Assembly dissolved on 31 March 2009. The regional planning body is now the South East England Partnership Board, which is supported by staff from the former Assembly and from SEEDA. Whilst we work on our new identity, we're continuing to use Assembly stationery.

Annex - Key networks and flows between Outer London and the South East

The economy

The economy of the South East, especially the inner South East, cannot easily be distinguished from that of London, and the functional city region of London extends well into the South East region.

Research undertaken to inform the development of the South East Plan highlighted the nature and extent of some of the functional economic relationships that exist including business to business and business to consumer trade, intra-organisational networks, government finances, and specialist business clustering (http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/publications/research/symbiosis_or_sibling_rivalry-future_links_between_london_and_se.pdf). It concluded that the high integration between London and its bordering regions implied that the three regions effectively functioned as one economy, and that London was dependent on the South East – both in terms of the rising trend of commuters from London to the South East (see below) and also in terms of the goods and services that London's consumers buy from the South East. It is therefore vital to ensure coordination between the East, South East and London if the three regions are to maximize their economic growth in the long term. Whilst economic circumstances are somewhat different now to when the report was published, we feel the conclusions remain relevant, and that in addressing the economic issues relating to Outer London it is important to look beyond administrative boundaries.

Commuting

A large number of South East residents commute into London for work. However, not all of these commuter journeys are long distance ones from the South East to central London. For example, over 130,000 people who live in the inner South East work in Outer London, and nearly 100,000 people of those living in Outer London work in the inner South East (ONS 2009).

These substantial commuting flows impact on the transport network – whilst longer distance commuting into central London from the South East may utilise radial rail routes, a substantial proportion of more local commuting journeys between Outer London and the inner South East are made by private transport (http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/documents/transport/se_commute_part1.pdf). Commuter movements also have implications relating to commuter spending patterns (http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/publications/research/symbiosis_or_sibling_rivalry-future_links_between_london_and_se.pdf).

Transport

Radial, but particularly orbital, transport routes are important in Outer London and the Inner South East. The South East Regional Funding Advice (<http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/documents/alignment/rfa-feb09.pdf>) identified a number of strategic transport corridors within the region that impact on London, including London to Kent Ports, London to South West/South Wales, London to Southampton and London Orbital. It also identified that within the inner South East investment is required in order to address the high levels of congestion which have an adverse impact both on economic activity and the environment.

The Greater South East regions need to build on the joint work carried out in support of the Community Infrastructure Fund process to enable the progression of the vital orbital links needed to help serve not only London as a global city, but also the hinterland supporting it. Key to this is upgrading the North Downs Rail Line (enabling the introduction of Reading to

Ashford services so relieving pressure on the M25), the early implementation of East-West Rail (to open up the strategic economic opportunities of the Golden Arc from Oxford to Cambridge), and the construction of the Lower Thames Crossing (now at options stage, to enable strategic movements from Europe via Kent to the north to be made in a way that supports both the Greater South East and national economic growth and prosperity.

Strategic interchange opportunities – these must be at the heart of any transport strategy that seeks to reduce reliance on the car. Prime examples are West Hampsted, which could provide direct interchange between Chiltern and Thameslink services; Stratford, with the legacy opportunities of the 2012 games (for example from Cambridge via Lea Bridge to High Speed 1); and the Heathrow Hub opportunities being considered at the national level. The upgrading of Clapham Junction remains critical, as does the implementation of Heathrow AirTrack to enable the airport to operate to its full potential within existing planning limits.

Family housing

The last decade has seen a decline in the proportion of houses, and especially larger houses, being built in both London and the South East along with an increase in the number of one bedroom flats built in both regions. This trend is not sustainable in either London or the South East and there is a need to ensure that more family houses are provided in the future, especially in London. Not only will this help overcome potential issues of overcrowding in both the social and private rented sector, but it may help retain young families (and skills) in Outer London, reduce pressure on housing in the South East, and/or avoid increased commuting into London from the South East.)

The Commission should therefore be aware of the implications of a future under-provision of larger social and market homes in Outer London. The provision of family-type social housing may be addressed through local and strategic housing strategies and of market housing by local and strategic planning documents. A study commissioned by the South East England Regional Assembly and SEEDA sets out more detailed recommendations (http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/documents/housing/housing_type_and_size_main_report.pdf)

Retail

Shopping patterns in inner South East town centres are influenced by Outer London centres, and there are considerable flows of retail expenditure from the South East to Outer London. Equally, the out of town regional shopping centre at Bluewater has an influence on catchment areas of some outer London centres. This ‘polycentric’ town centre network that exists in suburban London and the inner South East means that there is a need to consider the relationship between London centres and those in the South East to ensure that they complement each other. Different town centres provide different functions within this network, and whilst London centres may have a wider role in providing services of ‘sub-regional’ importance, other centres (including in the South East) need to be able to continue to supported to develop employment, retail, leisure and cultural provision.

We urge the OLC, when considering the suggested ‘superhubs’, to consider carefully the impact of these proposals on the hierarchy of town centres in and around London including in the South East. In particular, the OLC should have regard to the Centres for Significant Change identified in the South East Plan; also the need to sustain local services and local centres in the South East (especially to reduce the need for long-distance travel). We suggest that any future technical work relating to centres in outer London includes a ‘buffer zone’ extending into the South East region to ensure that the impact catchment areas is taken into account.