

Towards more effective coordination of strategic policy and infrastructure investment across the wider South East

Draft 'Roundtable' discussion note

1 Background

- 1.1 SEEC, and more recently EELGA, leaders have been meeting informally with the London Deputy Mayor for Planning to discuss common strategic planning issues, supported by a pan region officer group. Local planning authorities outside London have been engaging with the GLA on Local Plan proposals as part of their 'Duty to Cooperate'.
- 1.2 In July 2014 fifty one of these authorities jointly, as well as SEEC/SESL and some others individually, indicated formally in response to the Mayor's Bedford Duty to Cooperate letter and the Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) that they had not been engaged sufficiently in its preparation. They asked to be more closely involved in the next full review of the Plan.
- 1.3 Since then the Mayor, EELGA and SEEC have been investigating options for more effective coordination of strategic policy and infrastructure investment across the wider region. This led to a Regional Summit in March 2015 to test provisional objectives for a new structure to provide:
- a better understanding of common issues;
 - more effective engagement in strategic policy development eg the London Plan review; and
 - more effective engagement on strategic infrastructure investment

All 155 authorities within the region were invited to the Summit and over 100 attended. The political leadership of all three organisations outlined some of the issues which required more effective strategic coordination and the process that could lead to putting in place a structure to support it.

- 1.4 The independent chair of the Summit summarised its conclusions as:

The summit supported the creation of a mechanism to take forward discussions between London, East and South East England on planning, housing, infrastructure and the economy based on Option 2 (Wider South East Roundtables).

It was agreed that the process should reflect the following principles:

- *It must address the challenges facing the places around London as well as London itself;*
- *The focus must be on economic growth as well as housing growth and resulting infrastructure requirements;*
- *It must reflect the fact that there is a variety of views within the East and South East;*
- *It must be a robust and independently facilitated process.*

It was also agreed that:

- *A first step should be to pull together a shared data base to underpin the work*

- *LEPs should be involved to support work on economic growth and skills;*
- *There should be a political steering arrangement to act as a clearing house for emerging issues, to ensure that the momentum is maintained with an output-driven process and that the difficult issues are not kicked into the long grass;*

The summit asked the elected members on the panel together with the deputy mayor to agree a more detailed action note based on the above for circulation to all the councils involved.

- 1.5 This note has been prepared in response to the Chair’s final recommendation to provide suggestions or options for establishing a more effective structure for coordinating strategic policy - including the full review of the London Plan - and investment across the region. It is anticipated that it will be a ‘live’ document subject to iterative refinement and review as the work of the proposed Roundtables proceeds and will inform recommendations for consideration by a further Regional Summit in December 2015. The meetings have been arranged as follows, and a separate paper about the proposed arrangements for the Roundtable meetings is included as Annex 1:

10 July	9.30 – 11 am	first South East session	City Hall, CR 4
10 July	2.30 – 4 pm	first East of England session	City Hall, CR 4
4 Sept	10.30 am – 12	second East of England session	Homerton College Cambridge
18 Sept	10 – 11.30 am	second South East session	City Hall, CR 4
18 Sept	1 – 2.30 pm	third South East session	City Hall, CR 4
11 Dec	2 – 4 pm	second Wider South East Summit	City Hall, Chamber

- 1.6 EELGA, SEEC and the Mayor are already working to establish the interim political steering arrangements suggested by the Summit to guide the process of testing options for the new structure.
- 1.7 It should be noted that the Mayor has also asked his Outer London Commission to investigate, from a London perspective, more effective arrangements for coordinating strategic policy and investment across the region. This process will operate collaboratively with the Roundtables, and it is hoped that the Commission will report to a similar timeline to the above and that its recommendations will inform the second Regional Summit in December.

2 Factors bearing on the form of a new structure for regional coordination across the wider SE

- 2.1 The importance of a coordinated approach to regional planning for the wider South East was recognised before the second World War and there have been three attempts at establishing a structure to support it in the last forty years (*SCLERP?*, *SERPLAN*, *Inter Regional Forum*). To varying degrees these improved understanding of how the region works but some would question how much impact they had on the ground and/or whether this was proportionate to the resources put into the structures eg in terms of increased housing output or actual infrastructure investment.

2.2 It is therefore suggested that before proposing new structures, the Roundtables may wish to consider the issues and challenges that the structures will have to address, and the most effective and realistic way of doing so in current and foreseeable circumstances.

- **What is 'strategic'** for the purposes of the proposed new structure? For example, should it mean issues that affect more than a single County/LEP area, or distinct issues that are most effectively addressed through action below national level but above County/LEP area level? Should particularly acute problems which affect a number of disparate Districts eg deprivation, be included? Are some 'strategic issues best addressed at District grouping/County level; others at LEP level; others at EELGA/SEEC/GLA levels and yet others at pan-regional level by the new structure? Or should the new structure seek to address all issues of more than local importance?
- **Which strategic policy issues** should it focus on? Engagement on the London Plan review is a key focus, but what other aspects should be considered. Officers will make presentations on their initial views of these to the Roundtables. At this stage they are likely to include demographic pressures; supporting and accommodating economic growth and regeneration; housing need, supply and delivery (eg construction industry capacity/skills and incentives for delivery); models/distribution of growth / strategic development patterns; climate change and environmental concerns/infrastructure eg water, energy, waste, minerals; transport infrastructure requirements eg commuter patterns, strategic orbital/radial transport investment but also freight transport; digital connectivity; skills and education.
- **Are there any formal strategic planning process issues** which the new structure should be involved in? Legally, the statutory Duty to Cooperate is discharged by Local Planning Authorities and the Mayor's similar Duties to Consult and Inform are discharged through the GLA. Could the new structure 'add value' to discharge of these duties, and if so what would be the best form it could take to do so?
- **What strategic intelligence/evidence** is required to better inform the new structure in addressing its proposed objectives? How can the structure itself be framed to best deliver this intelligence? The GLA currently provides consistent demographic projections across the region and officers are exploring the possibility of providing consistent economic projections. Can these be refined to be more effective? Should the new structure seek to engage with government/ONS to provide consistent variants on national projections to more effectively reflect the regions distinct circumstances? How and to what extent would consistent intelligence on other strategic policy issues be investigated/provided?
- **More concrete outcomes:** the Summit was clear that these should be its core objective eg representations to government/the London Mayor on distinct policy matters and to secure strategic infrastructure investment. How should they be identified? For example, should they be the result of a pan regional assessment/prioritisation eg through agreed proposals or a 'plan', or the result of voluntary partnership working among groupings of authorities within the aegis of the wider forum? And how would this relate to existing infrastructure strategies eg LEP SEPs, London's Infrastructure 2050, priorities in London Plan or local plans.
- **Differences of view:** the Summit noted that the new structure should seek to accommodate such differences. What is the best mechanism for doing this while still addressing core objectives eg majority/minority resolutions; area/issue based groupings based on common concerns; or focus just on matters of universal concern?

3 Components of a new structure

3.1 With the above issues in mind, and noting that the Roundtables will work iteratively to identify preferred options, at this stage it may be useful to consider possible components of a new structure(s) rather than define them 'in the round' from the outset. Some of these possible components are set out below to inform discussion.

- **Geography:** the Summit was convened on the basis of authorities from across the historic East and South East of England regions and London. Should this continue to be the geographical basis for the new structure? Should it be more focused eg on those authorities most affected by London migration and commuting (see Maps 1 and 2); should it be cast more widely eg Northamptonshire authorities have already expressed a wish to be more involved; should it better reflect economic linkages (eg see Corridors shown in Map 3) or should it seek to reflect a composite of these different geographies?
- **Format:** There are over 150 different authorities across the wider SE. Given the expected functions of the new structure what would be the best format eg. would it be most practical to have a Regional Plenary meeting, say once or twice a year, to provide strategic direction, at least as an interim measure, and a platform for discussion, with Sub Committees to address particular issues or areas, perhaps meeting more regularly, and a Steering Group to provide more immediate direction? What are the alternatives to this type of structure eg topic focused forums or a standing forum. How will agendas be set? Eg forward programme of agendas focused around London Plan timetable/key issues, or more ad-hoc arrangements?
- **Local authority membership:** the Summit was convened by EELGA, SEEC and the London Mayor for all Districts, Boroughs, Unitaries and Counties across the wider SE, and London Councils. Should EELGA, SEEC and the Mayor continue to be the main convening bodies at least for the interim or should the new structure seek from the outset to establish different arrangements? If so, what should these be eg sub regional groupings of the different types of authorities? Should London boroughs be represented on the Steering Group through London Councils and individual London boroughs be invited to attend the Regional Plenary?
- **LEP membership:** the Summit agreed that to be effective the new structure should include business interests represented by the LEPs. There are currently 11 such partnerships across the wider SE, each with what are effectively sub-regional plans (Strategic Economic Plans - SEPs). Should all be invited to participate in the Regional Plenary, perhaps with strong representation on an economic Sub Committee if one is established and one representative on the Steering Group? What other arrangements might best accommodate business interest? Should a systematic, strategic appraisal of SEPs to identify current sub-regional economic priorities be an early task for the officer group (see below)?
- **Officer support:** this will be essential to the effective running of the new structure and resources available to support it are likely to be constrained. So far support has been provided through the established, pan regional Strategic Spatial Planning Officers Liaison Group (SSPOLG), membership of which has evolved over time. Should membership be reviewed to ensure that it can represent all different parts of the wider SE and draw on experience from the range of different types of authorities engaged in the new structure? Can Members provide commitments to continue (and probably increase) the resources currently available?

- **Venues and 'housekeeping':** it has so far been found convenient for current arrangements to be focused on City Hall in London with 'one-off' events on regional coordination being held elsewhere. Should these arrangements continue as an interim arrangement, and how should the work of the new structure be publicised, e.g. webpage?
- **Interim/short term and longer term structures:** would it be prudent to focus first on setting up practical interim working arrangements and then to agree a final structure in light of experience of addressing specific policy issues ie for the form of the final structure to reflect the functions of the organisation rather than for this to be pre-defined? Would this mean that we should focus on the outcomes derived from these interim arrangements (together with parameters for the scope of the work of the new interim structure, participation and mechanisms), and then repeat that exercise for the longer term structure? What can be learnt from experience of establishing and running historic arrangements for pan regional coordination?
- **Longer term structures:** there is already a considerable body of thinking (see Annex 2) on how arrangements for pan regional cooperation/planning could be made more effective in the longer term. Models range from loose voluntary associations to structured proposals for the reintroduction of regional planning. Informal soundings have already generated other suggestions eg a regional 'senate' and a regional equivalent to the London Planning Advisory Committee. Should officers identify and appraise the key elements of these arrangements to inform discussion of options for the new structure?

Annex 1

Proposed Roundtable Arrangements

This note sets out a proposed approach to the round tables that have been planned in July and September 2015 to agree a mechanism for more effective co-ordination between London, the East and South East on planning, infrastructure and the economy.

Dates and venues have been agreed for five round tables in July and September:

- 10 July 2015 (am): South East, City Hall;
- 10 July 2015 (pm): East of England, City Hall;
- 18 September 2015 (am): South East, City Hall;
- 18 September 2015 (pm): South East, City Hall;
- 4 September 2015 (am): East of England, Homerton College Cambridge.

The task of these events is to develop a mechanism for more effective coordination which can be put to a second Wider South East Summit in December 2015.

In the light of the forthcoming general and mayoral elections and the envisaged timescales for the production and adoption of a new London Plan one option which will need to be explored in the round tables is the agreement of interim arrangements to operate until, say, autumn 2016 with longer term arrangements to be agreed with a new Mayor.

The current proposal is for:

- Around 25 people to attend each event;
- Each event will begin with short presentations by a senior GLA representative and a leading politician from the area concerned, together with a background presentation on the issues involved.

An important aim of this process is to build political support for the proposed arrangements.

It is recommended that events should be used to build agreement in an incremental way. This means that the starting point for the July events would be the agreement reached at the March Summit, and the starting point for the September events would be a summary of the conclusions reached at the two July events.

The focus of the July events could be:

- To discuss the idea of a two stage process;
- Begin the scope possible arrangements.

Subject to the outcome of the July events, the focus of the September discussions could be to:

- Firm up proposals for the initial period for submission to the proposed second summit;
- Develop a proposition for longer term arrangements for discussion at the summit and with a new Mayor following the mayoral elections in May 2016.

Annex 2

Strategic Planning – Recent Publications¹

English Regional Planning 2000 – 2010 Lessons for the Future (2013) – edited by Corinne Swain et al: Study contributes to understanding of how strategic planning can – based on past experience – provide a framework for guiding spatial change and allocating resources, looking to a long-term sustainable future. <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415526081/>

Lyons Housing Review (Oct 2014): Housing funding streams should be consolidated as part of an economic development fund and devolved to city and county region authorities working across functional economic areas.

http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/The_Lyons_Housing_Review_2.pdf

Royal Town Planning Institute: Strategic Planning –

- **Beyond ‘Co-operation’** (Sept 2014): Proposals draw on existing arrangements but require much stronger incentives to cooperation and making plans for the future.
<http://rtpi.org.uk/media/1110489/Strategic%20Planning%20Beyond%20Cooperation.pdf>
- **Effective Cooperation for Planning Across Boundaries** (Jan 2015): Includes a range of case studies. For England the focus should be on incentives where the duty to cooperate has not been effective, and to build on the momentum to harness the potential of the city regions.
<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1230885/RTPI-Strategic%20Planning-Brochure%20FINAL%20web%20PDF.pdf>

Highbury Group on Housing Delivery: In response to the above RTPI paper, it calls for a new strategic planning for the London metropolitan preparing a Metropolitan regional plan.
http://www.westminster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/338118/HIGHBURY-GROUP.-Response-to-RTPI-strategic-planning-paper.-FINAL.-3.10.14.pdf

Future of London: Working Beyond Boundaries (Oct 2014): Calls for the Mayor to take a broader perspective and relieve planning pressure on local elected officials.

<http://www.futureoflondon.org.uk/futureoflondon/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/10/Working-Beyond-Boundaries-briefing-paper-web.pdf>

Andrew Boff GLA Conservatives: Southern Power House (Jan 2015): Promotes a comprehensive reform of London’s governance and tax powers and the establishment of a Thames City-Region to give the South East a say in London’s growth and prosperity.

<http://glaconservatives.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/southern-powerhouse.pdf>

Also relevant in this context:

Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners: London’s Unmet Housing Needs – Meeting London’s overspill across the wider South East (Apr 2014): Study shows how London’s unmet housing needs could be distributed using a ‘Gravity Model’ approach and calls for the GLA and the authorities within the wider London Housing Market Area to work together to address this unmet need effectively.

<http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/285GladmanDevelopmentsLtdResponse.pdf>

Foresight, Government Office for Science: Investing in city regions – How does London interact with UK system of cities and what are the implications of this relationship? (Oct 2014): Study discusses whether stronger UK supply chains would enable faster growth for a number of cities and the UK as a whole. It concludes that a strong counterweight to London’s global role should not be its restriction and that local rivalries should be made a positive force for innovation.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/365099/london-and-UK-system-of-cities.pdf

¹ Only selection – not comprehensive.

DCLG: National Planning Policy Guidance: Duty to Cooperate, paragraph 7: Cooperation between the Mayor, boroughs and local planning authorities bordering London will be vital to ensure that important strategic issues, such as housing delivery and economic growth, are planned effectively. <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/duty-to-cooperate/what-is-the-duty-to-cooperate-and-what-does-it-require/>

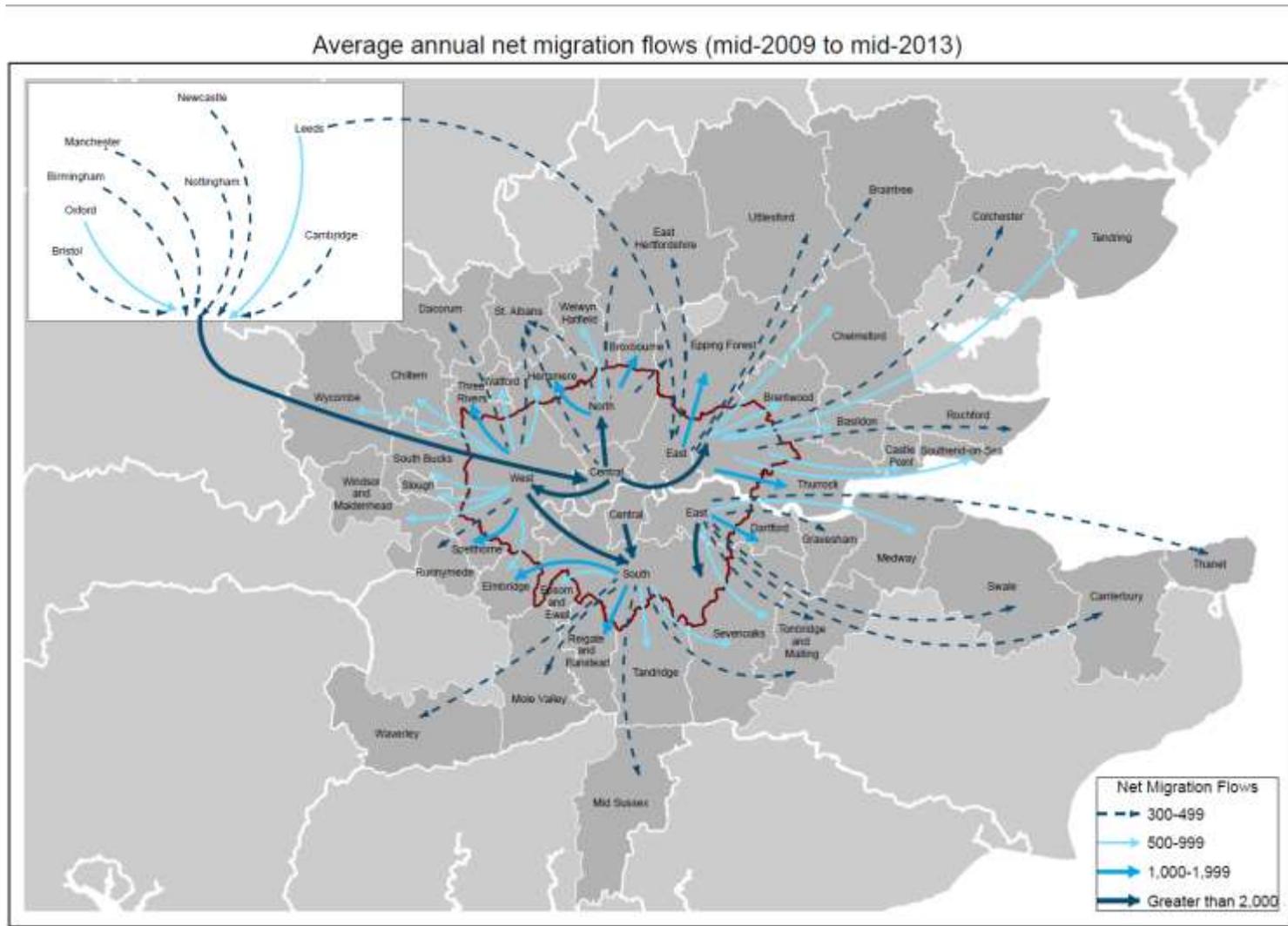
Planning Advisory Service has developed a suite of practical guidance tools to facilitate compliance with the Duty to Cooperate. This includes a 'Duty Statement template', which addresses Governance and working arrangements and suggests for example memorandums of understanding to evidence agreements. http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas1/events-and-support2/-/journal_content/56/332612/6387362/ARTICLE

Grant Thornton: Where growth happens (Autumn 2014) - report and index analyse growth at a local level on a range of measures and identify nine growth corridors across the country. http://www.grant-thornton.co.uk/Global/Publication_pdf/Where-growth-happens-the-high-growth-index-of-places.pdf

AECOM: A Manifesto for long term growth of the London City Region - has identified a series of challenges affecting London and its city region up to 2065 as well as action to address them. It also provides a London City Region Key Diagram. http://www.aecom.com/deployedfiles/Internet/Geographies/Europe/Document%20Library/AECOM%20Manifesto%20for%20the%20London%20City%20Region_low%20res.pdf

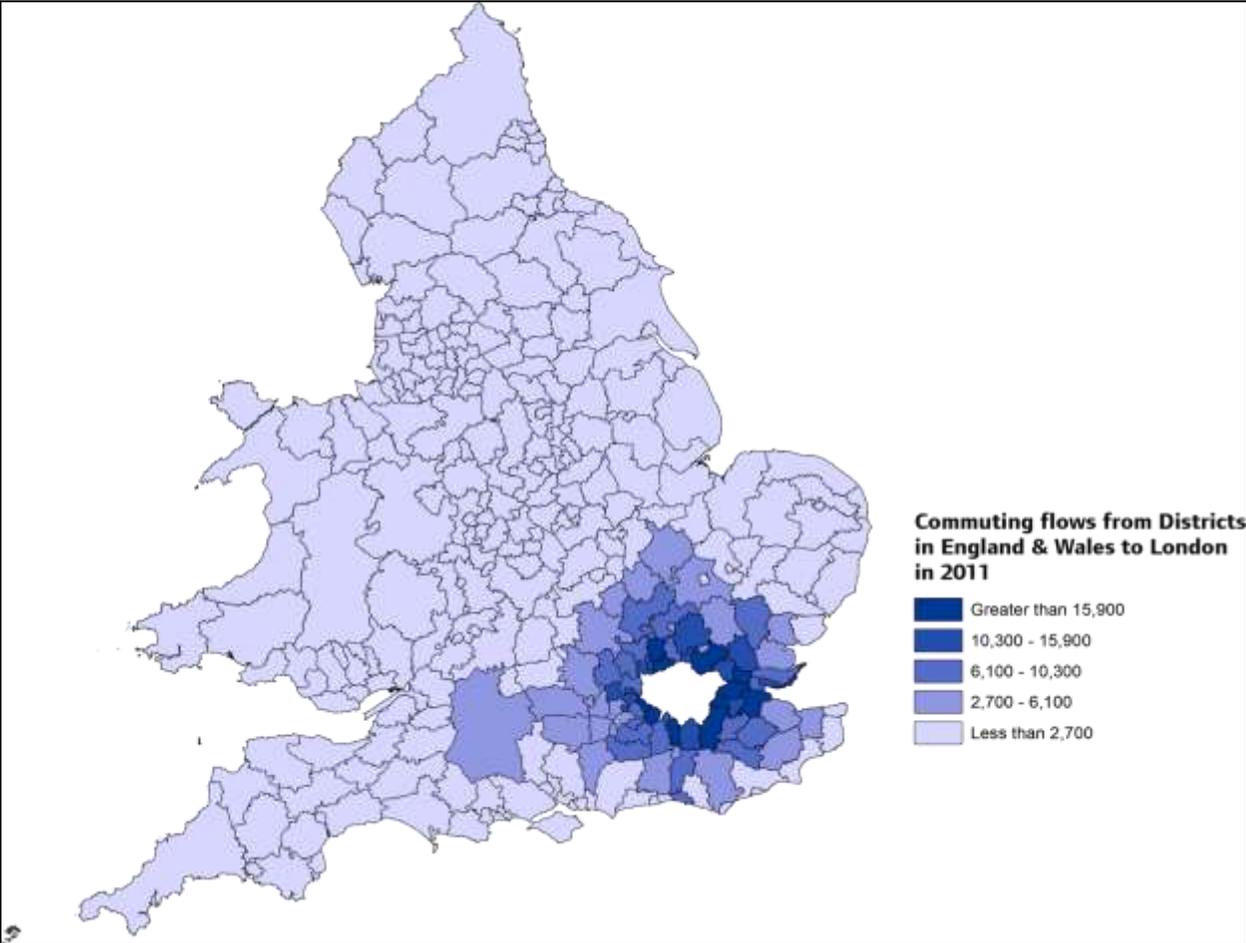
Martin Simmons (TCPA)... - details to follow

Map 1



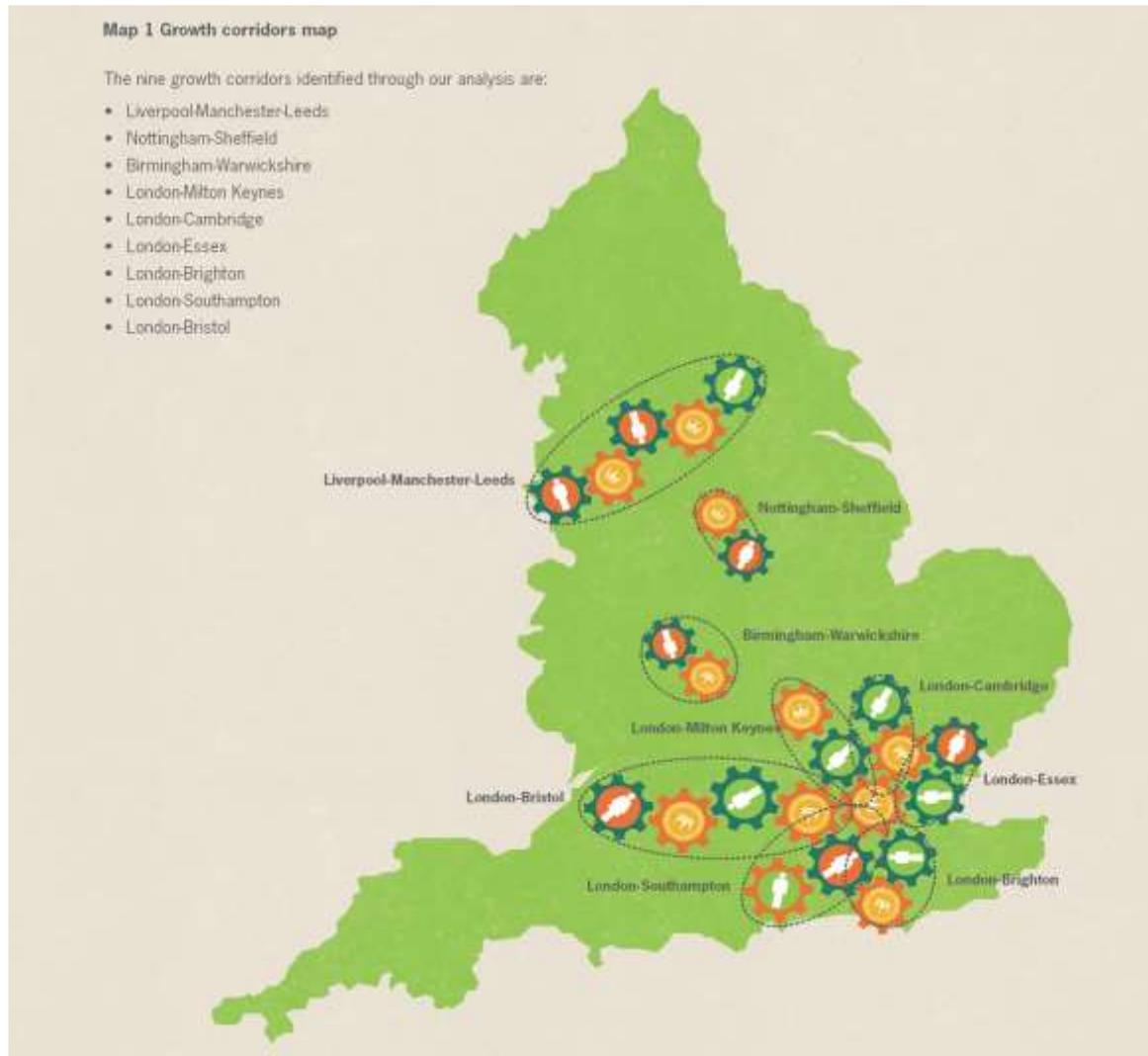
Source: GLA Demographics

Map 2



Source: GLA

Map 3



Source: Grant Thornton: *Where growth happens* (Autumn 2014)