

## **East Midlands Regional Plan (RSS8) EIP Panel Report Briefing Note**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) is made up of 68 local authority councillors and 43 representatives from social, economic and environmental bodies (including the Region's 6 MEPs). The Assembly was designated as the Regional Planning Body (RPB) under the Planning & Compensation Act 2004. As RPB, the Assembly published the Draft East Midlands Regional Plan (the Regional Spatial Strategy) for public consultation in September 2006. An Examination in Public (EiP) on the key issues raised by this consultation was held in early 2007, led by an independent Panel appointed by the Secretary of State.
- 1.2 The EiP Panel Report was published in late November 2007. The Report is made to the Secretary of State, not the Regional Assembly. The Secretary of State cannot enter into discussion with any party about the Report prior to the publication of formal 'proposed changes' to the Draft Plan for public consultation in early 2008. The Secretary of State must consider the Panel's recommendations in developing these 'proposed changes', but they are not binding.
- 1.3 The Chair of the EiP Panel, Prof. Stephen Crow, sadly died shortly after the Panel Report was published.

### **2. Concerns about the EiP Panel Report**

- 2.1 The Assembly's Housing, Planning & Transport Joint Board met to discuss the Panel Report on the 18 December 2007. Members of the Board (which comprises 15 local authority members and 7 partner representatives) expressed a number of concerns about the Panel's recommendations which they felt should be drawn to the attention of the Region's MPs, including the Regional Minister Gillian Merron MP. These concerns are outlined below.
  - Some of the Panel's recommendations are unclear and not fully justified. This lack of clarity is likely to delay the adoption process and place additional pressure on local planning authorities developing local development frameworks in the absence of strategic guidance.

- Some of the Panel's recommendations effectively throw difficult issues back into the 'melting pot'. As a result, the final RSS even when adopted may also result in further delay at local level until key policy issues, such as district housing provision and the location of major urban extensions, are resolved.
- The Panel's radical proposals to remove the Greenbelt from the north, east and south of Nottingham are likely to be hugely controversial, and have the effect of creating more uncertainty about the likely location of major development.
- The Panel's approach to transport at both the regional and local level places at risk the investment priorities agreed with Ministers through the Regional Funding Allocations process, upon which a number of major development proposals depend.
- The Panel's recommendation to scale back the proposed Western Growth Corridor in Lincoln have already put in jeopardy the retention of one of the City's major employers (Siemens) in the Lincoln area and the Region, and could, along with the Panel's criticisms of the proposed Eastern Bypass, significantly undermined the City's status as a 'Growth Point'.
- The Panel's recommendation to significantly reduce development on the Lincolnshire Coast pending further work with the Environment Agency may have the effect of undermining investor confidence in an area of high regeneration need, if not handled sensitively.

2.2 On a separate but related manner, the Board was concerned about the Government's support for new free standing 'eco towns'. A number of eco-town proposals have been made in the East Midlands, mostly by private developers. It remains unclear how local authorities and the public can inform the short listing process currently being undertaken by Government. Certainly none of the proposals are consistent with the Draft Regional Plan in its current form, nor were any the subject of any debate at the recent EiP.

East Midlands Regional Assembly  
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