

LONDON AND WIDER SOUTH EAST STRATEGIC PLANNING NETWORK

Note of meeting on 26th January 2021 (MS TEAMS)

Present: Duncan Bowie (chair), Andrew Barry-Pursell, Andrew Jones, Joseph Ward, Vincent Goodstadt, David Valler, Judith Ryser, Kevin Reid, Tim Marshall, Nick Wolfenden, Sue Janota, Deborah Sacks, Peter Eversden, Ismail Mulla, Michael Thonon, Simon Eden, Martin Crookston, Catriona Riddell, Ian Gordon, Nicolas Bosetti, James Stevens.

Apologies: Chris Tunnell, Peter Studdert, Jorn Peters, Nick Smith, Janice Morphet

Attendees introduced themselves

1. Waste and Minerals planning

Deborah Sacks gave a presentation (slides attached)

Deborah discussed the different categories of waste, noting that household waste got the most attention. There was less data on commercial and industrial waste. She noted that during the COVID19 epidemic, household waste had increased, but commercial and construction waste had reduced.

Deborah presented regional data on household waste- London's performance on recycling of household waste was poor – only 30%, partly attributable to the number of higher rise flats, compared with the national target of 65%. Progress towards the target was slow. Household waste per person was however slightly lower in London than in other regions.

The London Plan had a target that London waste disposal management should be self- contained by 2026. Currently waste was exported to landfill in East and South East regions and to other countries. The landfill tax of £94 per tonne had been successful in reducing landfill – mostly in NW and East Midlands. Landfill capacity was limited in London. Moreover, there was strong objection to new incinerator facilities. There was less opposition in North.

Deborah discussed the structure of regional technical advisory groups. There was however no mention of waste in the NPPF. National Waste Planning Policy document was under review. Separate food waste collection was supposed to be mandatory. but not implemented by all LAs.

In contrast, aggregates supply was nationally managed. Nine aggregates working parties were supported by MHCLG. Many transfer stations had been lost to redevelopment – aggregates were becoming more expensive with some impact on housing construction costs.

Kevin Reid (MHCLG) commented that it was recognised that waste and minerals planning needed to be incorporated in any new planning structure. The role of aggregates working parties was under review. Aggregates supply was important to delivering housebuilding targets. Providing new sites for transfer stations and incinerators was a lengthy process.

Peter Eversden was concerned that there was no guidance for waste management for new developments and that household waste included plastics and other waste which could be separated and recycled. Deborah responded that DEFRA were trying to get consistency between LAs

on collection systems but this was problematic as LAs were locked into outsourcing contracts. She noted that waste facilities were often missing where offices had been converted into homes through permitted development arrangements and stronger planning controls were necessary. She referred to technical innovations for converting plastic into fuel.

Catriona Riddell referred to a national waste and minerals planning group she chaired. It was important that waste and minerals planning was incorporated into the strategic planning structure, because county and district councils had different interests. She also pointed to the difficulty in safeguarding waste and minerals sites from redevelopment. She was concerned that the proposals relating to use class E would put further sites at risk. Deborah shared the concern about further exporting of waste from the South East, given the focus on increasing housing output. She also noted that disposal of hazardous waste needed to be managed at a national level and could not be left to local arrangement.

2. Update on Planning White Paper and London Plan

Duncan Bowie reported on a meeting that he, Chris Tunnell and Catriona Riddell had had with Kevin Reid (MHCLG) to discuss the Network's submission on the Planning White Paper.

Kevin Reid commented that he was currently working on options for strategic planning to put to Ministers. A Planning Bill was intended for publication in Autumn 2021. Ministers were focusing on a national framework rather than on specific arrangements for London and the wider South East. They were interested on a bottom-up approach to strategic planning. He welcomed the proposals from the network in relation to an increased role for growth boards and noted our suggestion for introducing clear guidance for statements of common purpose. Further discussion on options or improved collaboration across the wider South East would follow from the adoption of the proposed revised London Plan. He pointed out that the main outstanding issue relating to the adoption of the latest version was in relation to the Airports National Policy Statement following the Supreme Court judgement in favour of the statement which included support for the expansion of Heathrow airport, to which the Mayor objected. It was noted that the six-week deadline for MHCLG to respond to the Mayor on his Intent to Publish draft was 1st February.

Tim Marshall drew attention to the consultation on the Government's proposals to extend Permitted Development. He was concerned at the potential impact on LAs control over development and land use, especially in urban areas. Peter Eversden endorsed this view and pointed to the negative impact on town centres. While the Network had not made a submission in relation to this specific consultation, it was noted that network members present (MHCLG attendee excepted) were all opposed to the Government's proposals.

Catriona Riddell stressed the need for strategic plans and for place leadership whatever new development management framework was to be introduced. Andrew Barry-Pursell supported a bottom up approach to inter-authority strategic planning but stressed the importance of a nationally set 'standards of adequacy' framework within which different regional/ sub-regional mechanisms could operate as appropriate. He considered that the strategic impact of individual development proposals, including in relation to Permitted Development schemes must be assessed. This was not limited to the issue of loss of ground floor retail space.

3. Transport Strategy and Infrastructure

The NIC report on the Principles for Effective Infrastructure and the Terms of Reference for the Hendy Union Connectivity Review were noted.

Andrew Barry-Pursell noted that Government policies on location of new homes and infrastructure and transport funding were not integrated. This had implications for the deliverability of the government's housing targets and for the sustainability of major new residential settlements.

4. UK2070 Commission Report on Levelling Up

Duncan Bowie summarised the key recommendations in the report. He raised two issues: the reference to full fiscal devolution did not specify which tax raising powers would be devolved from national to regional government; he queried why the responsibility of a National Spatial Plan should be given to the National Infrastructure department rather than to MHCLG which was responsible for planning policy.

Simon Eden referred to research by the Southern Policy Centre on spatial inequalities within the South Central sub-region. Michael Thornton referred to the Centre for Cities report on the differential spatial impacts of COVID-19. Andrew Barry-Pursell referred to the Treasury incorporation of Levelling Up factors in its Green Book for project assessment. Catriona Riddell referred to the importance of Government departments and agencies have common agendas and priorities, referring to a disconnect between the Highways agency and Homes England.

5. The NIC Growth Across Regions report

This was a technical report referring to measurement and assessment criteria. The report was noted.

6. The One Powerhouse Report

The national report and South East regional blueprint were introduced by Andrew Jones and Joe Ward (AECOM)

Andrew referred to the links with the UK2070 project. The report was based on the view that the current framework for delivering balanced growth was inadequate. The 4 regional reports were blueprints as a framework for strategic regional plans and were not in themselves regional plans. The blueprints and national report were published separately from the UK 2070 report as they included specific spatial development choices. Joe focused on the case for regional planning. He noted that within the region, national growth priorities were the CAMKOX arc and the Thames Estuary. He noted that the largest airports and seaports and road transport hubs were within the region. There were also high levels of spatial inequality within the region and there was a need for equitable and balanced growth within the region as well as in relation to the other regions.

Vincent Goostadt commented that infrastructure investment decisions had a spatial dimension. Deprivation within the South East was spatially polarised. Projections were too often based on historic trends and there was a need to rethink our growth assumptions. The new approach to housing targets risked reinforcing existing regional inequities and imbalances including the overheating of the housing market in the South East. Infrastructure policy and priorities needed to be more evidence based and coherent, rather than based on a bidding contest for limited resources.

In response to Duncan Bowie's earlier points on the UK2070 Commission report, Vincent recognised that transfer of responsibilities to regional or sub-regional bodies needed to be supported by devolved resources, as the current system impeded local entrepreneurialism. Further work needed to be undertaken on specific fiscal devolution options. The UK2070 report had recommended the NIC lead on a national spatial plan to parallel its work on a national infrastructure investment framework. Planning and infrastructure decisions needed to be co-ordinated on an inter-departmental basis and there was a role for the Cabinet Office. Any national plan had to be owned by central government as an entity.

Tim Marshall welcomed the One Powerhouse report as a reassertion of the role of strategic planning. The regional blueprints were excellent demonstration projects. Some updating would be needed post pandemic. We needed to give further consideration to intra-regional levelling up and deal with the challenges and impact of delivering higher housing targets. Catriona Riddell said we now needed to focus on how to make a new approach work, learning the lessons not just of the 2004-2010 regional planning regime but of the earlier regime of structure plans and Regional Planning Guidance. Strategic planning operated at various levels with varying geographies. We needed to focus on a spatial level which was neither too large or too small. A wider SE including London, the South East and East of England regions was too large for effective strategic planning. There were a range of impressive local initiatives including growth boards around London, with strong local governance arrangements.

James Stevens also welcomed the One Powerhouse project. He thought that central government seemed to like the current fragmented framework so was interested in whether the project had central government support. We needed to be seen as helping government with a way forward and avoid being seen as adversarial. Nick Wolfenden stressed the need for a united lobby as the risk of a series of separate initiatives could have a scattergun effect. We also needed to recognise the weaknesses within the SE region rather than be seen as just promoting its positives. Andrew Barry-Pursell pointed out that London was not organised as an integrated strategic planning unit. We needed to focus on co-ordinated delivery as well as co-ordinated plan-making. We needed flexible governance structures rather than a rigid framework. Spatial planning and economic planning needed to be undertaken in parallel. Transport development was critical- Crossrail 2 was now deferred and TfL were now examining options to fund their revenue gap, for example charging for road travel across the London boundary from the Home Counties.

Andrew Jones agreed that political support for the project was essential. He recognised that the 3 regions basis was possibly not the most appropriate spatial geography and that much of the focus should be on the London centred travel to work area and the future location of settlements relating to London's overspill.

Vincent Goodstadt welcomed the discussion noted that the debate over devolution, levelling up and Treasury revisions to the Green Book were generating a new momentum in terms of ideas. The shock of OVI19 was opening up a new range of possibilities. Public sector finances need reforming and the basis of future economic growth needed to be re-assessed, as did the form and functions of cities. We were in a position to influence the national conversation.

7. Any updates from Network Members

There were none

8. Any matters outstanding from note of last meeting

None were raised

9. Date and agenda for next meeting

Agreed Tuesday 23rd March at 11am

Andrew Jones and Vincent Goodstadt agreed to draft a paper on key issues for the network to pursue in the context of the UK2070 Commission and One Powerhouse reports. This would focus on issues for London and the Wider south East rather than national issues.

Simon Eden agreed to draft a note on intra-regional inequities

Michael Thornton agreed to draft a note on planning collaboration between London boroughs and Home Counties planning authorities.

Judith Ryser agreed to draft an update to her previous paper on post CIVI19 resilience planning