

18 August 2009

How many more homes? The public debate begins

The public will be asked for their views on how many more homes are needed in the East of England in a major public consultation being launched on the 2nd September, the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) announced today (18 August 2009).

The consultation will run until 24th November 2009 and will primarily seek views on four different scenarios for the number of new homes needed in each council area every year to 2031. Eleven consultation events are being held across the region in September where members of the public can hear more.

EERA Chairman Cllr John Reynolds said: "This consultation is to promote public debate on planning for the future of the region and specifically the issue of new homes.

"The East of England Plan is of interest to everyone in the region as it provides the framework for councils' local plans and covers the economy, housing, transport, the environment and climate change.

"The Assembly has already rejected the highest end of the range of new homes being proposed by the Government. But we do need to plan ahead to ensure that people can gain access to homes they can afford and that new homes are close to jobs, transport and other public services."

The Government has asked the Assembly to revise the East of England Plan which sets out how many new homes should be built each year (See Notes to Editors). The revised Plan will not be completed until 2011 and the public will have further opportunities to have their say. It is the responsibility of local councils to determine the exact locations of where new homes should be built through their local development frameworks.

Full details of the public consultation will be published on the Assembly's website at midday on 2nd September.

Consultation events are being held in September at the following locations:

2nd - Norwich
3rd - Chelmsford
8th - Chicksands, Bedfordshire
9th - Stevenage
10th - Cambridge
14th - Peterborough
16th - Ipswich
22nd - Luton
23rd - Southend-on-Sea
24th - Thurrock
30th - Huntingdon

Residents can book a place online at: <http://events.eera.gov.uk/conferences/>
or contact Jayne Cole, Conference Organiser, EERA, 01284 729405,
jayne.cole@eera.gov.uk

An information pack with full details of the review of the East of England Plan is available at: www.eera.gov.uk/News/public-information-packs

Ends

Notes to Editors:

For further information or to arrange an interview with an EERA spokesperson, please contact:

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EERA will issue a media release for each county in the East of England on 2nd September 2009 with the content of the consultation document and how to respond.

East of England Plan

The long-term planning framework for the sustainable development of the region is provided by the East of England Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy). The East of England Plan provides the basis for local authorities to prepare their local development plans and for other organisations to plan their investment e.g. NHS, Highways Agency, water companies etc.

The current East of England Plan¹ sets out regional planning policy to 2021 but many councils are already preparing local plans stretching to 2026 and beyond. A focused review of the East of England Plan is therefore needed to set out regional planning policy from 2011 to 2031. It will plan for the region's growth and prosperity, housing needs and respond to issues such as climate change.

The review of the East of England Plan will be completed in 2011. There will be public consultation at key stages of the process to enable members of the public and others to contribute. The review will consider:

- jobs and homes targets for 2011-2031 including affordable homes;
- broad locations for new development;
- regional infrastructure needs e.g. transport;
- targets to reduce the use of natural resources (energy, water) and greenhouse gas emissions;
- priorities for the environment such as the countryside and biodiversity protection.

In undertaking the East of England Plan 2031, the Assembly will be working closely with the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East).

East of England Regional Assembly

1. The East of England Regional Assembly is independent of Government and is not a Government agency or quango. It represents the regional interests of people living and working in the East of England.
2. The Assembly has 96 members of which two thirds are elected councillors (from the 52 local authorities in the region) and one third are stakeholder representatives. Its meetings are open to the media and general public.
3. The Assembly is the designated Regional Planning Body for the East of England until March 2010 when it will cease to exist.
4. During 2008/09 EERA's work included:

¹ There was a successful legal challenge to the adopted East of England Plan in 2009. This only affects the district council areas of Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield. Further information is available at www.gos.gov.uk/goeast/planning/regional_planning/837825/?a=42496

- £1 billion bid for investment in public transport and roads across the region including final stretch of A11 dualling
- Campaigned against a second runway at Stansted Airport
- Held EEDA to account at six Economic Summits
- Influenced European funding programmes worth £500 million to support employment, skills, climate change and low carbon economic growth
- Delivery of 328 training courses to develop thousands of local authority employees and councillors in the region

For more information on EERA, see the website at www.eera.gov.uk

East of England Regional Assembly Group Leaders

Cllr John Reynolds (Chairman), Conservative 07720 379699

Cllr Kathy Pollard (Deputy Chair), Liberal Democrat, 07889 123702

Cllr John Kent (Deputy Chair), Labour, 07799 074120

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