

January 2010



**Friends of
the Earth**

Briefing

The South East Plan: Useful climate change policies to quote

Your Regional Campaign Coordinator, Brenda Pollack, played an active role in securing progressive policies in the Plan. The final version was approved in May 2009.

To make sure these policies start to affect real practice on the ground it is important that your council is aware of the final policies as set out in the version approved by the Government. Your council will have to demonstrate that its own plans conform to this regional strategy.

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The full South East Plan can be found at:

<http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/>

Background and explanation of the purpose of the Plan can be found at

http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/sep_what.html

The following is a summary of key policies which are important for those lobbying on climate issues at a local level. The heading corresponds to the relevant chapter/policy number in the South East Plan.

Cross Cutting Policies (section B Ch.5)

Policy CC1: Sustainable Development

This section sets out important priorities for the South East region when applying national government guidance on sustainable development. Three of the five top priorities for the region relate to climate change.

- i achieving sustainable levels of resource use*
- iii reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with the region*
- iv ensuring that the South East is prepared for the inevitable impacts of climate change*

This policy also points out that all councils in the region must ensure “that their actions contribute to meeting the objectives set out in this policy and in the Regional Sustainability Framework”. This document is a set of regionally agreed objectives and indicators. A number of these relate to environmental issues. Local strategies and policies which have to undergo Sustainability Appraisals (SA’s) should be tested against the objectives in this document.

http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/sustainability_rsf.html

Policy CC2: Climate Change

This policy requires “local planning policy and other mechanisms” to help mitigate and adapt to climate change. It sets a target to reduce the region’s carbon dioxide emissions,

“by at least 20% below 1990 levels by 2010, by at least 25% below 1990 levels by 2015 and by 80% by 2050.

It sets out 10 ways in which local authorities should be achieving adaptation and mitigation. The five relating to climate mitigation are useful to quote to local authority councillors and officers:

- i. improving the energy efficiency and carbon performance of new and existing buildings and influencing the behaviour of occupants***
- ii. reducing the need to travel and ensuring good accessibility to public and other***

sustainable modes of transport

iii. promoting land use that acts as carbon sinks

iv. encouraging development and use of renewable energy

v. reducing the amount of biodegradable waste landfilled.

Policy CC3: Resource Use

The South East's ecological footprint is 17% higher than the UK average and this policy seeks to address this and should be useful to quote. The background text of this section is worth reading too as it emphasises that attention must be paid to existing developments as well as new ones and that behaviour change is important.

“A sustained programme of action to help stabilise the South East's ecological footprint by 2016 and reduce it by 2026 should be incorporated into plans and programmes. Such actions will include:

i. increased efficiency of resource use in new development

ii. adaptation of existing development to reduce its use of energy, water and other resources

iii. changes in behaviour by organisations and by individuals.”

Policy CC4: Sustainable Design and Construction

This policy asks local authorities to promote best practice in new and existing developments. It outlines how good design can reduce resource use and emissions. Critically, it includes a clause which states that councils can go beyond national sustainable construction guidelines if the local circumstances warrant this. No specific standards are required at the regional level as the Government assumes that national policies such as its Code for Sustainable Homes and amendments to Building Regulations will apply to all developments. The Government aims to achieve a 20% reduction in carbon emissions from new homes by 2010, nearly 50% by 2013, reaching zero carbon in 2016; it also wants all new non-domestic buildings to be zero carbon from 2019.

Energy (9.59 onwards)

The Energy section is situated in a chapter called Natural Resource Management. If you have the time it is worth reading the background text to the policies. The targets for renewable energy are in Policy NRM13 - these are set as minimum targets – aiming for 10% of electricity generation to come from renewables by 2020 and 16% by 2026.

POLICY NRM11: DEVELOPMENT DESIGN FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Local authorities should:

- i. promote and secure greater use of decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy in new development, including through setting ambitious but viable proportions of the energy supply for new development to be required to come from such sources. In advance of local targets being set in development plan documents, new developments of more than 10 dwellings or 1000m² of non-residential floorspace should secure at least 10% of their energy from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon sources unless, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, this is not feasible or viable*
- ii. use design briefs and/or supplementary planning documents to promote development design for energy efficiency, low carbon and renewable energy*
- iii. work towards incorporation of renewable energy sources including, in particular, passive solar design, solar water heating, photovoltaics, ground source heat pumps and in larger scale development, wind and biomass generated energy*
- iv. actively promote energy efficiency and use of renewable and low carbon energy sources where opportunities arise by virtue of the scale of new development including regional growth areas, growth points and eco-towns.*

Local authorities and other public bodies, as property owners and managers, should seek to achieve high levels of energy efficiency when refurbishing their existing stock.

POLICY NRM12: COMBINED HEAT AND POWER

Local development documents and other policies should encourage the integration of combined heat and power (CHP), including mini and micro-CHP, in all developments and district heating infrastructure in large scale developments in mixed use. The use of biomass fuel should be investigated and promoted where possible. Local authorities using their wider powers should promote awareness of the benefits of mini and micro-CHP in the existing build stock.

POLICY NRM14: SUB-REGIONAL TARGETS FOR LAND-BASED RENEWABLE ENERGY

This policy sets out renewable energy targets for specific sub regions within the South East region and states that local authorities must collaborate with the renewables industry and other stakeholders to achieve these targets. Policies NRM15 and NRM16 deal with the location and design of renewable developments and the criteria which should be adopted in assessing applications. This suite of policies makes clear that councils should be doing as much as they can to promote low carbon development in their areas to achieve the targets set out.

Housing

Policy HI sets out the housing allocations for each local authority in the region. The Plan says that authorities must allocate sufficient land and aid the delivery of 654,000 additional dwellings between 2006 and 2026.

Policy H5 deals with design and density – mentioning the need to reduce environmental impacts of new housing. It advises authorities that in order to make good use of available land and encourage more sustainable patterns of development, *“higher housing densities will be encouraged, with an overall regional target of 40 dwellings per hectare.”*

Policy H6 deals with making better use of existing stock and covers the need to bring empty homes back into use and consideration of conversion of larger houses into flats where applicable.

So policies CC4 and NRM11 are the policies which should be mainly referred to when looking at guidance on lower energy new housing developments.

Transport

Chapter 8 of the Plan sets out the Regional Transport Strategy. The background text recognises the need to rebalance the transport system in favour of sustainable modes” and acknowledges the important role of transport in tackling climate change. This set of policies provides the context within which local authorities will be reviewing their Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) – two key local policy documents which as local groups you may want to be aware of and try to influence.

The policies themselves list the ways in which local authorities should be achieving a more sustainable transport system using a package of measures such as management of highway space, parking charges, travel planning advice, improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes. However the Plan still talks about the need for “investment in upgrading the transport system” in such a way that leaves the door open to new and improved road building projects.

Friends of the Earth has a separate briefing about lobbying your council on LTPs.

Other Policies

If you are interested in further information on other policies not covered here, such as those on Waste and Water or require help in accessing relevant parts of the Plan please get in touch with Brenda Pollack at brenda.pollack@foe.co.uk or telephone 01273 766641 (Tues-Thurs)

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January 2010