

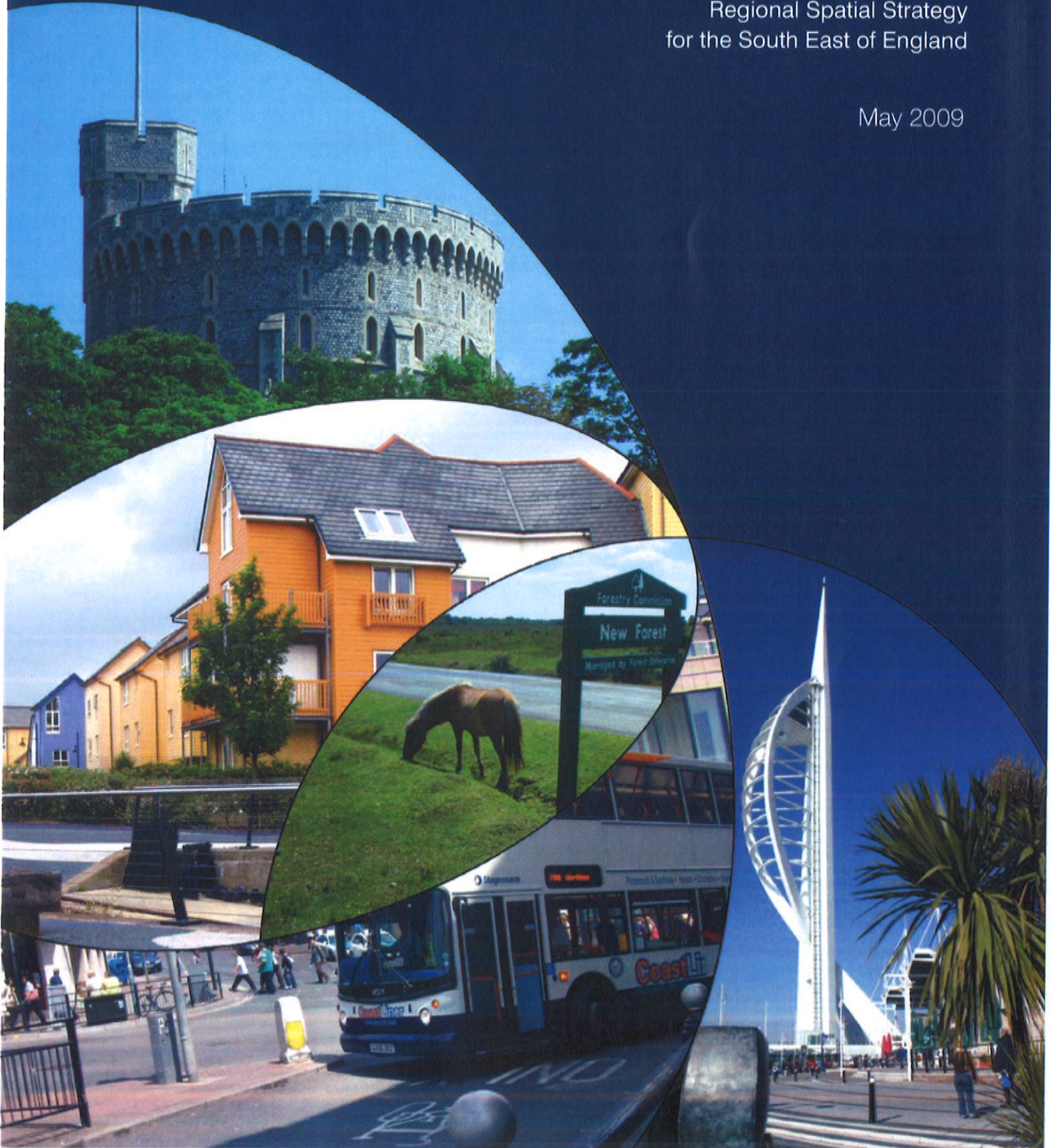


GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

# The South East Plan

Regional Spatial Strategy  
for the South East of England

May 2009





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FOR THE SOUTH EAST

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- 4.2 Sub-regions have been identified where they show strong economic potential or particular regeneration needs. This supports the principle of '*sharper focus*' which helped inform the development of this strategy, and aims to help support the economic competitiveness of the region whilst spreading the benefits of prosperous areas more evenly round the South East.
- 4.3 The Key Diagram shows areas covered by sub-regional designations - this is set out inside the rear cover of this document. Chapters 16-24 of this Plan set out the particular challenges and specific policy guidance for these areas. A further chapter (25) sets out strategic policy on areas outside the identified sub regions, including the Isle of Wight, Whitehill/Bordon and the two hubs at Maidstone and Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells.

### Regional Hubs

#### **POLICY SP2: REGIONAL HUBS**

**Relevant regional strategies, local development documents and local transport plans will include policies and proposals that support and develop the role of regional hubs by:**

- i. **giving priority to measures that increase the level of accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling**
  - ii. **encouraging higher density land uses and/or mixed land uses that require a high level of accessibility so as to create "living centres"**
  - iii. **giving priority to the development of high quality interchange facilities between all modes of transport**
  - iv. **focusing new housing development and economic activity in locations close to or accessible by public transport**
  - v. **delivering long term development in strategic development areas where identified around hubs.**
- 4.4 Chapter 2 explained the changing geography of the region and how the South East exhibits a very 'polycentric' structure, with a patchwork of cities and towns scattered throughout the region, each demonstrating varying degrees of self-containment and influence on each other. Whilst transport and economic activity in the region remains dominated by London, commuting patterns and business relationships in the region are becoming increasingly more complex, with major settlements often becoming more economically self-contained but also more dependent on one another for labour and knowledge capital. On average 70% of the wider South East population lived and worked in the same Functional Urban Region in 2001, although this figure varies widely depending on proximity to London. <sup>1</sup>
- 4.5 This represents a challenge for the forward planning of the region. On the one hand there is a need to support the development of these centres and acknowledge that there will be a great deal of interaction between settlements in the region and beyond, on the other there is a need to make settlements as self-contained as possible, to reduce the need to travel and make the best use of targeted investment - particularly infrastructure.
- 4.6 The South East Plan's approach to this challenge is to recognise that there is a network of cities and towns where most employment, leisure, retail and cultural activity in the region will gravitate, by virtue of their more developed transport networks and their wide mix of services combined with demand from accessible populations. As dynamic 'hubs of activity', they are the logical areas within the South East within which the various components of growth will need to be focused and co-ordinated to help deliver more sustainable forms of development. A major part of this approach will be reducing the need to travel through closer alignment of local labour supply and demand.

- 4.7 The South East Plan therefore identifies a network of 22 regional hubs. The 22 hubs are listed in Table SP1 and identified on the key diagram. The designation of the term 'hub' is not intended to imply that all hubs share similar characteristics, and they vary in function and scale.
- 4.8 Regional hubs will be:
- a focus for investment in multi-modal transport infrastructure both within and between hubs, supported by initiatives to re-balance travel patterns through behavioural change
  - a focus for other new infrastructure, including health, education, social and green infrastructure, and public services
  - a focus for new investment in economic activity and regeneration, including skills and training investment
  - a focus for new market and affordable housing, to support the creation of higher density 'living centres'
  - a focus for new major retail and employment development
- 4.9 The following table provides further information on the designation of each hub. It is anticipated that given demand in the area hubs in the sub-regions in the Inner South East (Gatwick, London Fringe, Western Corridor/Blackwater Valley and Central Oxfordshire) will accommodate a large component of additional growth in the region, and may need to expand beyond their current development boundaries. Two regional hubs – Maidstone and Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells – are not located within one of the nine sub-regional areas. Both are identified as accessible settlements of regional significance with Maidstone identified as having the potential to accommodate significantly higher levels of development during the Plan period than other urban settlements located outside the sub-regional strategy areas. Policy is provided for the 22 hubs in Chapters 16-24 of the Plan, along with guidance for the areas of the region that fall outside the sub-regions (Chapter 25).
- 4.10 Before and during the preparation of the South East Plan initiatives were brought forward which will influence the role of each hub. In particular:
- the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan of 2003 set out a plan of action to accelerate new development in designated growth areas at Milton Keynes/South Midlands, Ashford and the Thames Gateway. Subsequent partial reviews of Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (2001) took this initiative forward, and policies in these partial reviews have been incorporated (and in some cases updated) within this RSS. Five of the hubs lie in these growth areas (Aylesbury Vale, Ashford, Ebbsfleet, Medway and Milton Keynes)
  - the Government announced its Growth Points initiative in October 2006, which aims to support high rates of housing delivery over the first ten years of the South East Plan. Nine growth points were announced at the end of the bidding processes (Basingstoke, Didcot, Maidstone, Oxford, Reading, South Hampshire, Reigate & Banstead, Dover and Shoreham), all of which are designated as hubs by this Plan, with the exception of Didcot (Shoreham is included within the Brighton hub). Areas with Growth Point status are shown on the Key Diagram. Growth at Whitehill/Bordon in Hampshire is also proposed in this Plan. In April 2008 this site was announced by the Government as one of three potential 'eco-towns' in the South East. A further two eco-towns have been short listed in the South East (Ford in West Sussex and Weston Otmoor in Oxfordshire). At the time of publication, the Government had not yet announced decisions on eco-towns. Local development documents and any future reviews of this Plan will need to take account of the outcome of any eco-town announcement. It is expected that any future RSS review will test the longer term issues that arise from the eco-town proposals - such as the ultimate size of settlements
  - eleven hubs were covered by the eight areas designated as 'Diamonds for Investment and Growth' by the South East England Regional Development Agency. These diamonds are identified as being capable of stimulating prosperity, with

further growth being unlocked through targeted investment in infrastructure. Diamonds for Investment and Growth are shown on the Key Diagram

- in addition, hubs are intended as a focus for new major retail development. Following the advice of the independent Panel which examined the draft plan, this Plan (see Chapter 13 – Town Centres) names certain hubs as 'Centres for Significant Change', 'Primary Regional Centres' and 'Secondary Regional Centres'.

4.11 Although all these designations were driven by various initiatives and different consideration of their functions there is a great deal of synergy between each designation. The following table clarifies and summarises the role of each hub according to these initiatives.

Hub Reason for Designation	Growth Point	Growth Area	Centres for Significant Change	Primary Regional Centre	Secondary Regional Centres	Diamond For Growth
1. Ashford High level of access to strategic rail and road networks. Existing international rail station served by Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Interchange opportunities between international and local rail services.		•	•			
2. Aylesbury Administrative centre and county town for Buckinghamshire, identified for major growth in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy and in this RSS. This opportunity to realise the longer term potential of the town to provide higher order functions and fulfil role of a regional hub will be dependent upon improved strategic transport connections.		•	•			•
3. Basingstoke Major focus for commercial activity, in particular administrative and headquarter related functions. Well related to strategic rail and road networks. Interchange point for inter and intra-regional rail services.	•			•		•
4. Brighton Largest settlement on the South Coast. A historic centre, tourist destination and a focus for media and cultural activity. An important commercial centre providing higher order and administrative functions, and a transport hub. Growth expected at Shoreham. A key interchange for Coastway intra-regional services and inter-regional rail services. High level of access to the strategic road network.	•			•		•
5. Canterbury				•		

<p>One of the largest town centres in the South East with an existing role as a population and service centre. Canterbury is also an important centre for culture, history and tourism, and is classified as a 'tourism' hotspot.</p>							
<p>6. Crawley-Gatwick</p> <p>Commercial and administrative centre providing a wide range of higher order functions. Proximity of London Gatwick Airport serves to attract organisations requiring good access to international and European markets. Rail station acts a key interchange between inter and intra-regional rail services. High level of access to the strategic road network, with the coach station at Gatwick acting as a national hub for coach services.</p>			•				•
<p>7. Dover</p> <p>Important transport interchange and gateway to the region, Dover port is also the largest roll-on/roll-off gateway in Britain and forecast to grow significantly. Dover is also an area for economic growth and regeneration, and housing development. It is an identified growth point.</p>	•				•		
<p>8. Ebbsfleet</p> <p>Key development node in the Thames Gateway sub-region that provides the opportunity to create a new transport hub of regional significance. Identified location for major business district in a mixed settlement. Development will be focused on the new international rail station located on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.</p>		•					•
<p>9. Guildford</p> <p>Historic town that is an increasingly important regional administrative and commercial centre serving a wider area. Some interaction with activities and facilities available at Woking. Key interchange on rail network between inter-regional, intra-regional and local rail services. High level of access to the strategic road network.</p>			•				
<p>10. Hastings</p> <p>A number of strategic, multi-modal services converge on the town. The town is a major employment centre, supporting higher order activities and both current initiatives and future plans for Hastings and Bexhill will strengthen this role. It is a focus for future major development for employment, housing, retail and leisure uses. Increasing accessibility is a central plan of the integrated regeneration package for the town. Regeneration initiatives</p>					•		

are intended to meet the social and economic needs of both the urban area and the wider local economic area.						
<p>11. High Wycombe</p> <p>High Wycombe is a relatively large service centre and acts as a focus for economic activity for surrounding areas. The inclusion of High Wycombe as a hub reflects its location on the M40 and the Chiltern rail line between London and Birmingham, providing high frequency connections with both major cities. Strategically situated in between the Western Corridor/Blackwater Valley and Milton Keynes/Aylesbury Vale sub-regions.</p>				•		
<p>12. Maidstone</p> <p>The county town of Kent serving as the focus for administrative, commercial and retail activities. Well related to strategic rail and road networks. Interchange point between intra and local rail services.</p>	•			•		
<p>13. Medway Towns</p> <p>An identified regeneration opportunity within the Thames Gateway sub-region, but the longer-term potential of the towns to provide higher order functions and fulfil role of a regional transport hub dependent upon improved strategic transport connections.</p>		•	•			•
<p>14. Milton Keynes</p> <p>Major administrative and commercial centre. High level of access to strategic rail and road networks. Key interchange point between inter-regional, intra-regional and local rail services, with the scope to improve opportunities for public transport through development of East-West rail corridor. Identified as a Growth Area in the Sustainable Communities Plan.</p>		•	•			•
<p>15. Oxford</p> <p>Historic and cultural city of international status, drawing tourists from around the world. County town for Oxfordshire serving as the focus for administrative, educational and higher order commercial and retail activities. Well related to strategic rail and road networks. Interchange point between intra and inter-regional rail services, including services connecting with London. Located on strategic north-south road corridor.</p>	•		•			•
<p>16. Portsmouth</p>	•		•			•

<p>Historic port and long-standing administrative centre. A major employment centre that provides a focus for retail activities. Well related to strategic rail and road networks. Major ferry terminal for services linking to Isle of Wight with direct interchange with passenger rail services. Second largest roll-on/roll-off ferry port in the region providing cross channel services.</p>						
<p>17. Reading</p> <p>Largest settlement in the Thames Valley and long-standing administrative centre. Focus for higher order commercial and retail activities. The location for European and international corporate headquarters. Second largest interchange on national rail network outside of London, with connections provided between inter-regional, intra-regional and local rail services. Well related to strategic road corridors. Direct coach link with Heathrow Airport. Main rail station identified as the focus for major redevelopment opportunity that would maximise interchange opportunities between all modes.</p>	•		•			•
<p>18. Reigate/Redhill</p> <p>Settlements that have a high level of access to the strategic rail network and road network. Redhill provides a key interchange between intra-regional services and to Gatwick Airport, with the potential to develop orbital movements as an alternative to established radial links to London afforded a high priority.</p>	•		•			
<p>19. Slough</p> <p>Administrative and commercial centre. Strong interaction with activities at Heathrow Airport. Interchange point on rail network between local and intra-regional rail services. Regeneration opportunities within the town centre could provide the catalyst for delivery of a long-term vision for the town that is consistent with its regional role.</p>				•		
<p>20. Southampton</p> <p>Largest settlement in the South Hampshire sub-region and long-standing administrative centre. A major employment centre that provides the focus for higher order commercial and retail activities and port related industries. Well related to strategic rail and road networks. Interchange point on rail network between inter and intra-regional rail services. Second largest deep-sea container port in the UK, which is forecast to grow significantly. Southampton International Airport is a regional airport of significance serving a large business community.</p>			•			•
<p>21. Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells</p>				•		

<p>The joint hub reflects not only the proximity of the two centres, but also their complementary roles: Tunbridge Wells as significant economic and service centre and Tonbridge as a major transport interchange.</p>						
<p>22. Woking</p> <p>Important centre of economic activity. Some interaction with activities and facilities available at Guildford. Key interchange on rail network between intra-regional and local rail services. Direct coach link with Heathrow Airport. Well related to the strategic road network.</p>			•			

**Strategic Development Areas (SDAs)**

- 4.12 Seven strategic development areas for major mixed-use development schemes are identified in this Plan. The seven locations are:
  - South East Milton Keynes
  - South West Milton Keynes
  - Fareham, Hampshire
  - North of Hedge End, Hampshire
  - South of Oxford
  - Shoreham, West Sussex
  - Whitehill/Bordon, Hampshire
  
- 4.13 The rationale for the designation is twofold. Firstly, the South East performs strongly on the economic level with much of its wealth generation coming from the highly networked information-rich knowledge economy centred in the 'Golden Arc'<sup>(2)</sup> – from Bournemouth and Poole and South Hampshire and extending into a Western Crescent taking in Reading and Oxford and onto Milton Keynes to Cambridge. This success brings with it challenges for managing expected growth including predicted labour shortages, high housing demand and transport congestion. Research indicates that it would be inappropriate to limit the natural growth to the west of the region<sup>(3)</sup> as it would inhibit wealth creation and lead to more pressure on existing housing stock and longer journeys to work.
  
- 4.14 This Plan therefore promotes development surrounding towns in this arc to support current spatial patterns of service economy clustering, economic growth potential and to better align employment and housing growth. As part of this strategy, five strategic development areas are identified around hubs in this arc comprising mixed-use developments of more than 4,000 dwellings and where the direction of growth is known. Secondly, further opportunities for significant new growth and regeneration also exist on land formerly in public use in mid Hampshire (Whitehill/Bordon) and through the redevelopment and regeneration of land on the south coast at Shoreham. The two areas are designated as SDAs accordingly.
  
- 4.15 Further information and policies for SDAs are included in the relevant sub regional sections of this document. Any further review of this Plan should identify further opportunities for growth in the Golden Arc to support wealth generation in the South East.

2 Connecting England: A Framework for Regional Development, Town and County Planning Association, 'The Hetherington Commission', May 2006

3 South East England in Northern Europe: Trends & Messages from Polynet, ICS/Young Foundation 2005





13.15 The 22 Primary Regional Centres include all the centres designated as regional hubs except Hastings and Ebbsfleet. The list of primary regional centres also includes a further three centres identified as major regional centres from the research. The secondary regional centres include a further 27 centres identified as being of sub-regional importance from the research. The policy takes into account developments, trends and proposed changes and sets out a network of town centres for 2026. The network will be the focus for large scale developments. However, growth will not be restricted to these centres. The full network of town centres in the South East includes other towns which provide the main retail and other services in a local area as well as villages and local centres, which typically comprise a smaller range of services serving a smaller catchment. Local authorities should set out the other towns, villages and local centres to complete the network of town centres in their area and they should review their needs using robust data and analysis to provide a strategy for their future development.

## POLICY TC1: STRATEGIC NETWORK OF TOWN CENTRES

A network of strategic town centres will be developed across the region as set out below. This is intended to be a dynamic network of centres which will be kept under review. Local planning authorities should carry out regular assessments of town centres in the network.

Primary Regional Centres	Secondary Regional Centres
Ashford (Kent)*	Aldershot
Aylesbury*	Andover
Banbury	Bognor Regis
Basingstoke	Bracknell
Brighton	Camberley
Canterbury	Chichester
Chatham*	Dartford
Crawley*	Dover
Eastbourne	East Grinstead
Guildford*	Eastleigh
High Wycombe	Epsom
Maidstone	Fareham
Milton Keynes (Central)*	Farnborough
Oxford*	Folkestone
Portsmouth*	Gravesend
Reading*	Hastings
Redhill/Reigate*	Haywards Heath
Southampton*	Horsham
Slough	Maidenhead
Tonbridge-Tunbridge Wells	Newbury
Woking*	Newport (Isle of Wight)

<p><b>Worthing</b></p>	<p><b>Sevenoaks</b></p> <p><b>Sittingbourne</b></p> <p><b>Staines</b></p> <p><b>Westwood Cross (Thanet)</b></p> <p><b>Winchester</b></p> <p><b>Windsor</b></p>
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**\* Centres for Significant Change**

**This network of town centres will be a focus for those town centre uses set out in PPS6.**

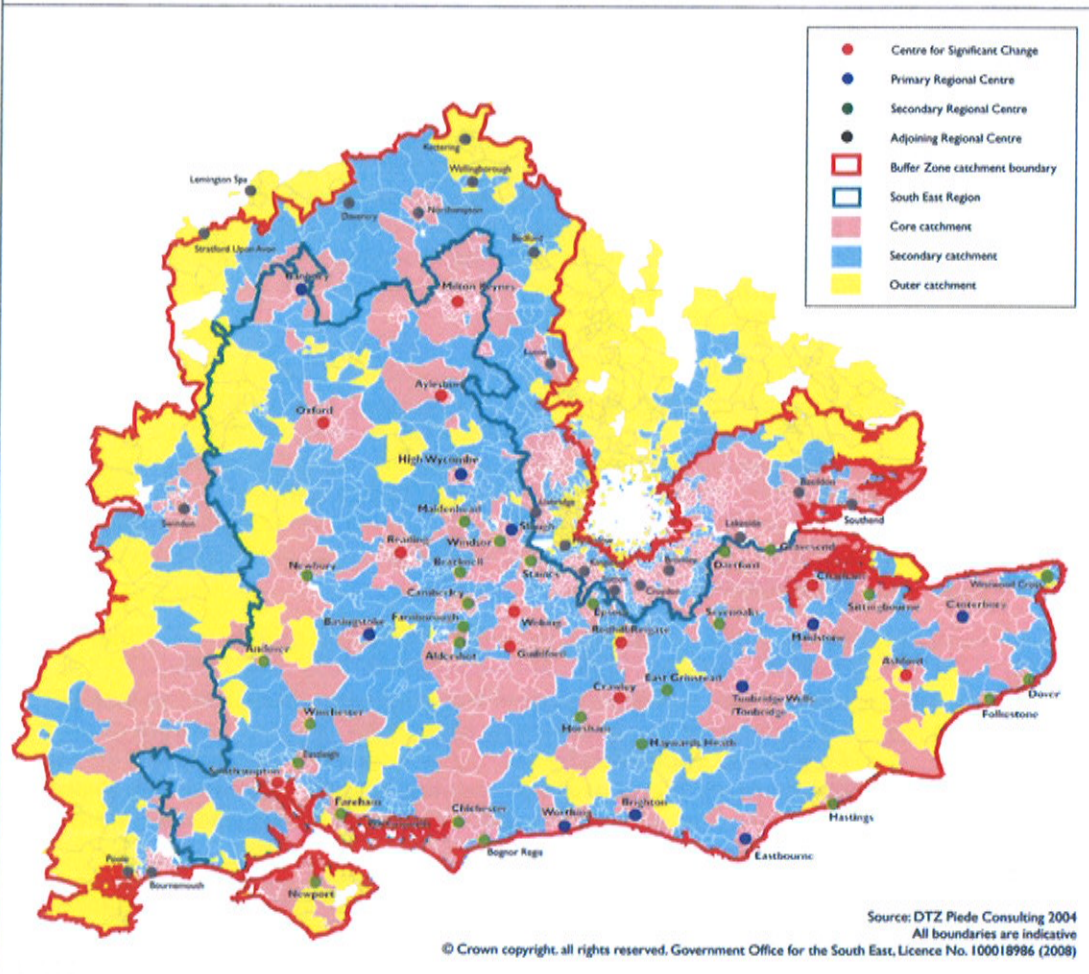
**Guidance on the implementation of this policy is set out in Policy TC2.**

### New Development and Redevelopment in Town Centres

- 13.16 Regional Priorities for Retail Development – A regional study into Town Centre Futures (November 2004) and addendum (April 2005), showed very substantial growth in residual retail expenditure and development in the period to 2026, even when the model's assumptions were sensitivity tested through reducing levels of expenditure growth and increasing levels of turnover efficiency and growth of e-commerce. The consultants advised that around £20 billion residual expenditure for new comparison retail floorspace should be used for planning at a regional level over the period to 2026. Taking into account floorspace proposals, assuming an average sales density for modern comparison goods floorspace of c.£5,000 per m<sup>2</sup>, and assuming that all spend generated by non-town centre retailing is accommodated in town centres first, this results in the floorspace capacity forecast of around 4 million m<sup>2</sup> gross. The forecasts indicate a doubling of the existing floorspace stock in the leading 50 town centres by 2026. However, for the rest of this decade there is no significant forecast capacity when the current proposals in the South East are taken into consideration.
- 13.17 In determining where the residual expenditure should be directed, policy in Planning Policy Statement 6 should be taken into account.
- 13.18 At a regional level the study also concluded that:
- i. there is increasing concern in relation to the homogeneity of our high streets and a need to promote and market the individuality of retail centres
  - ii. planning and managing change on the high street due to the impact of the Internet and new technological advances represents a major challenge to all town centres in the future. There is a need to monitor the growth of e-commerce and its impact on high street performance
  - iii. quantitative forecasts should be supplemented by a wider assessment of each centre's role as a focus for employment, leisure and recreation.
- 13.19 The consultants identified a 'buffer zone' (10 mile zone) around the South East regional boundary to examine the impact of larger surrounding centres on shopping patterns in the South East region (see Diagram TC2).

Diagram TC2

Retail Catchments



13.21

The map shows the extension of the catchment areas of the outer London centres into the South East region as well as the secondary and outer catchments of Milton Keynes, Banbury, Oxford and Southampton extending into adjoining regions.

- **Regional priorities for office and leisure development in town centres** – In line with advice in PPS6, the regional planning body, as part of the review of this guidance will develop more regionally specific guidance on the regional strategy for leisure and office uses in town centres.
- **Strategy for the development of the network of centres** – The regional study into town centre futures has helped inform the strategy for the development of a balanced network of centres for each sub-regional strategy area. Details about specific centres are set out in the sub-regional chapters (16 - 24 and Chapter 25). Reference is also made to links across the regional boundary and relationships to the five centres in the strategic network which do not fall within the sub-regions (Maidstone, Tonbridge-Tunbridge Wells, Banbury, Winchester and Andover).

## **POLICY TC2: NEW DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT IN TOWN CENTRES**

Until advice is available, via a review of this RSS, about the broad quantum of growth expected in the strategic network of town centres, local planning authorities, in preparing their development plan documents (DPDs), should be guided by the following considerations.

Local authorities should carry out further work, including joint working where there are issues that are common to two or more local authority areas, to assess the need for further floorspace in town centres and set out a vision and strategy for the network and hierarchy of centres within their area. This work should include other centres not listed in Policy TC1 as these centres may have an important role in meeting local needs. This should take account of the important inter-relationships between centres within and beyond the region's boundaries and especially with London.

The Centres for Significant Change, indicated with an asterisk in Policy TC1 are expected to undergo the most significant change across the range of town centre uses during the plan period and proactive, integrated strategies for their development will be particularly important. All of the Centres for Significant Change are identified as Regional Hubs. These town centres will be the focus for significant growth, along with areas where there are particular regeneration needs or a specific growth area focus. Major retail developments, and other town centre uses of a large scale, should be located in these Centres for Significant Change.

After the Centres for Significant Change, the most significant growth is expected to be needed in the remaining Primary Regional Centres, with less growth expected in the Secondary Regional Centres. However, as local planning authorities draw up their DPDs, they will need to consider whether there is a need to re-balance the network of centres to ensure that it is not overly dominated by the largest centres. Authorities will also need to consider whether there are areas where investment should be stimulated, including town centres with deficiencies, deprived areas, or areas that will undergo significant housing and employment growth.

Plans and strategies prepared by local authorities and other stakeholders should have regard to the following:

- i. the need to support the function and viability of pre-eminent town centres to accommodate change and growth within each sub-regional strategy area
- ii. the need to assess the capacity to accommodate change and growth in such areas
- iii. the need to respect the historic character, environment and cultural value of existing town centres
- iv. the need to ensure safe, secure and attractive environments for people to live, shop and work
- v. the need to promote new investment of an appropriate scale, in particular in vulnerable centres in need of regeneration
- vi. the need to support sustainability objectives, including the role of regional hubs, taking account of the impact on traffic and the need to minimise reliance on the car/lorry and promote public transport accessibility
- vii. the potential impact on the vitality and viability of town centres.

## **POLICY TC3: OUT-OF-CENTRE REGIONAL/SUB-REGIONAL SHOPPING CENTRES**

No need has been identified for any further out-of-centre regional or sub-regional shopping centres or large-scale extensions to such existing centres during the period to 2026. The role and regeneration of town centres should not be undermined by an intensification of such development.

- 13.22 There will need to be a review of the chapter on town centres, and the relevant parts of the sub-regional strategies to take account of further work that is required to assess the need for additional floorspace in the region. This information will be used to inform where growth can and should be accommodated in the network of town centres. This work will need to take account of the likely growth of e-commerce and home shopping, and the impact this may have on future floorspace requirements.

