

The Independent Voice of Local Business.....

SOUTHAMPTON & FAREHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

RESPONSE TO FAREHAM BC CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS STAGE 2 – February 2009

Southampton & Fareham Chamber of Commerce has been looking for ways to implement the economic policies of the South East Regional Spatial Strategy (SE RSS) for South Hampshire – i.e., that the growth of South Hampshire should be led and sustained by economic growth.

The growth objective is 3.5% GVA per annum by 2026 and certain sectors are identified as having growth potential. Local Development Framework documents (Core Strategies) are to look at these sectors in more detail, identify their specific needs and make provision for them. It is the Chamber's view that this turns the spotlight on those firms in South Hampshire that are able to provide the impetus for growth at this level. Whatever strategy is adopted to attract new employers to South Hampshire, the first priority must be to foster and encourage local firms and employment potential (e.g. education).

Southampton & Fareham Chamber of Commerce has been submitting comments on the Core Strategies of the City, District and Borough Councils within its area. It is pleased to see the progress that Fareham Borough Council has made to fulfil the requirements of the SE RSS. We are particularly pleased to see references to sectors and clusters, which are a key requirement of the RSS (see policies RE2 & RE3). However there is clearly more work to do to bring this document fully in line with the thinking of the RSS, although it appears to the Chamber that the Borough Council is substantially ahead of neighbouring councils.

The Chamber of Commerce acknowledges that the "sector and clusters" approach is a new one for planning at this level and that the Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications to the RSS (published for comment in autumn 2008) take the sectors and clusters approach further than the earlier draft version of the RSS. The sectors and clusters policy requires at least a sub-regional approach to which individual districts will need to fit. The Borough Council can rightly look to PUSH for a lead on this matter.

Policies RE2 and RE3 of the RSS require the Council to support the development of nationally and regionally important sectors and clusters. The Council has identified aerospace and defence, processed food and transport & logistics as sectors that are doing well locally (see Employment Topic Paper para. 1.17).

However, the Chamber of Commerce is concerned that the Council should give more consideration to the reports commissioned by PUSH on "Businesses in Growth Sectors in South Hampshire" (TBR, March 2008) and "Property Requirements for Distribution and Logistics" (Roger Tym & Partners, Sept. 2008). The use made of the Core Strategy's available evidence base is incomplete and renders the Core Strategy potentially unsound.

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The TBR report not only identifies those sectors identified by the Council as likely to grow, it also refers to 10 further sectors as likely to grow well in Fareham (TBR page 20, para.4.2). A number of these are likely to require warehousing space with or without any manufacturing element. They will also clearly need excellent access to the strategic road network.

We understand PUSH and SEEDA are using a co-ordinated approach to growing sector needs, including their site requirements across South Hampshire, so that Local Authorities will be in a position to make provision for this in their Core Strategies and detailed Development Plan Documents. We look forward to seeing the PUSH related reports on this.

Pending this co-ordination, the Core Strategy needs to include a commitment to allocate suitable sites to meet all sector needs and consolidate clusters. There is clearly insufficient land already allocated for the kind of space-hungry and/or high-tech development likely to be needed. This is especially the case since some of the existing B2 sites on which the Council seeks to rely for warehousing have unsuitable buildings and inadequate access (see Roger Tym – Property Requirements...particularly paras. 8.44-8.46).

The Chamber notes that the only additional employment land to be allocated by the Borough Council is limited to Daedalus (for warehousing) and to the North of the Fareham SDA growth area. We believe that Daedalus is poorly located for access by goods vehicles so it is unsuitable for warehousing. Sites closer to good transport networks should be preferred. It is, in any case, a site for cluster development and should not be used for general industry / warehousing.

The North of Fareham SDA growth area will in due course be a suitable location for employment but perhaps not in the time frame required by businesses to meet their growth targets. Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce would urge that additional employment land should be identified for development before 2015/16, which can be provided separately from both the North Fareham SDA and Daedalus.

The marine sector has been most intensively studied, with both survey information and recommendations to help the sector obtain enough floorspace. (See the SEEDA Solent Waterfront Strategy 2008 for more details.) SEEDA has sponsored working groups to help implement the Solent Waterfront Strategy. We think it would help if there was a commitment in the Core Strategy that the Borough Council will work closely with others to implement the recommendations of the Solent Waterfront Strategy and further analysis of the Fareham based marine firms and their needs is required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Borough Council and Southampton & Fareham Chamber of Commerce work together with SEEDA and others, to agree how the RSS policies on sectors and clusters can be implemented in Fareham Borough.



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2. That the Borough Council reviews the overall development strategy for the Borough and the proposed Employment policies and allocates more land for the development of sectors and clusters in the Borough. These should provide a range of sites in different parts of the Borough in order to meet all sector needs and consolidate clusters. They should be in addition to the existing proposals for employment development at Daedalus and the North of Fareham SDA.

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Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce.

ABOUT US

Your regional Chamber working for you locally.....

As the independent voice of local business, Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce is able to represent some 2,000 businesses in the South Hampshire region concerning the issues that affect their ability to grow and prosper. Their views are central to the Chamber's lobbying on issues of concern to our members and are the basis of our thinking on the many local, regional and national planning or government policy initiatives on which we are asked for formal comment as a business representative organisation. The volunteer Chamber members on the committees provide expertise and a wide knowledge of specialist topics. This is of great help in formulating the **Chamber Viewpoint**, which is published monthly in the centre pages of our magazine and on our web site.