

The Independent Voice of Local Business.....

SOUTHAMPTON & FAREHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
COMMENTS ON
EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL'S LDF AREA ACTION PLAN
FOR
SOUTH HAMPSHIRE STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT ZONE
OR - LAND EAST OF EASTLEIGH
PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION, OCTOBER 2006

These comments are in response to Eastleigh Borough Council's preliminary request for comment ahead of the main wider consultation process to commence early 2007.

1 Is the Area Action Plan boundary appropriate? If not what amendment should be made?

1.1 Indicate the gaps between or overlaps of the Eastleigh Town Centre Area Action Plan boundary with this boundary and indicate along the common straight road/rail boundary the locations of possible links over the railway line with Eastleigh town along the straight road/rail boundary.

1.2 One of the two Area Action Plans needs to embrace the industrial land north of the town centre - units at the Shakespeare Business Park and the area between Twyford Rd and the railway. This would help to address access issues resulting from the railway line.

1.3 Eastleigh Railway Station is shown as part of the Town Centre Area Action Plan but it is assumed there would be access from both sides of the station to serve the proposed Employment Zone.

2 Does the list of issues cover all the problems/opportunities that need to be addressed? Is there anything else that needs to be included?

2.1 The opportunity to build a by-pass route for Eastleigh town which has several small industrial estates scattered around it causing the heavy traffic to use the two main routes through the town.

2.2 Flood defence for the railway line and new Link Road

2.3 Consider the less costly alternative of not having a rail chord as shown, but instead running all trains in and out of Eastleigh rail station with extra platforms. This would eradicate further severance of the Alstom site, eliminate the expense of the rail chord construction and ensure Eastleigh is not marginalised as a town centre rail destination with adjacent bus station.

2.4 Consideration should be given to the major upgrade of Eastleigh rail station as a modern transport hub with extra platforms. It could be developed as a Transport Development Area with the town centre on one side, the new employment zone on the

The Independent Voice of Local Business.....

other, as well as two adjacent motorways, adjacent regional airport and major passenger/freight port a few miles away.

2.5 This theme could be further developed by the conversion of Parkway rail station into a park-and-ride facilities building and building a light rapid transport link from Eastleigh rail station to the Airport and on to a Park-and-Ride site. Parkway could be the site of a multi-storey Park-and-Ride car park. This would allow more frequent access to London by trains from Portsmouth/Hedge End and Romsey/Chandlers Ford.

2.6 The issues listed do not distinguish the strategic issues from local ones. The strategic issues appear to be:

- Transport (air, rail, road)
- Employment (existing, proposed)
- Regeneration
- Impact on European Nature Conservation

Looking at the strategic employment issues, Southampton Airport is the principle airport in South Hampshire; the railway works and yards are the largest complex in Hampshire; both are independently of major strategic significance. In combination with each other and with the motorway, that strategic significance increases.

2.7 The regeneration aspects are not referred to in the “issues” but have figured as matters of importance within the Local Plan.

The proposals of the Local Plan appear to propose large-scale redevelopment of the existing areas as well as development of new ones. All of the existing areas are occupied at present, many by transport-related and warehousing activities. These firms will need to be relocated but there is no recognition of this, nor of the time delay and identification of land on which so much existing floorspace could be moved to.

2.8 Timescales for the delivery relate not just to developers but also to the availability of funds from Government for the construction of the road. Also Government is involved in setting the policy for this area and particularly for the future of the rail infrastructure. This may be done through the Regional Spatial Strategy or require further discussion through the transport policy documents of the Regional Assembly or of Government.

3 From the issues identified, which 3 do you consider to be the most important for the Council to tackle?

3.1 Analysis and forecast of industry sector employment floor space needs and timings in South Hampshire in comparison with the employment land availability in the recent Joint Southampton/Eastleigh Employment Land Study.

***The Independent Voice of Local Business*.....**

3.2 Discussions with SEERA, SEEDA, highways authorities, rail industry, the Airport and Port on transport infrastructure solutions and pump priming funds for this major strategic sub-regional area of about 130 hectares with enormous potential for economic growth in South Hampshire.

3.3 Decide on a delivery mechanism of either a public sector ringmaster or a private sector lead body to co-ordinate the land ownership interests.

4 In broad terms, what land uses would you expect to see within the Area in 20 years time?

4.1 Land uses expected in 20 years time are:

- Park-and-ride site to serve both Eastleigh and Southampton.
- Warehousing/rail freight depot use in the restricted airport public safety zone.
- High value knowledge based technology, generating employment particularly in sectors that could be the drivers of the sought after improved economic performance in South Hampshire.

4.2 Before the opportunity is lost consideration must be given to using some of the existing rail track facilities at the Alstom site for a major goods terminal to encourage goods by rail rather than road. This would be supported by the planned rail freight upgrade (SMART) to connect the Solent area with the already upgraded West Coast Main Line, which is waiting a Government funding decision by the end of 2006.

5 Could you suggest a more suitable name for the Area - appropriate to its profile as a site of sub-regional significance?

5.1 South Hampshire is too vague. Eastleigh is the town right next to the Employment Zone and most people employed there will live in Eastleigh, where there is a proud history in its beginnings when the railway arrived in the last century. Also the town has already lost its name from the airport.

Eastleigh Enterprise - EE

Eastleigh Strategic Area for Growth - ESAG

Eastleigh Growth Area for South Hampshire - EGASH

Strategic Action for Growth in the Solent Area - SAGSA

Solent Economic Growth Area - SEGA.

South Hampshire Strategic Employment Area - SHSEA

6 Any other comments/suggestions?

6.1 The land was already marked for employment use in the recent Local Plan, but the justification given for not releasing additional land for commercial needs was that there was already full employment within Eastleigh and that therefore more land was not required. The needs of small firms or the particular sectors of the economy were not investigated. Instead the decision was made on the number of those employed regardless of the type of employment.

The Independent Voice of Local Business.....

6.2 With the recent considerable loss of skilled jobs in Eastleigh due to the closure of several firms and land developed residentially, there is now a lack of suitable employment and land for it. Quality land is needed to pump prime employment in the area to provide jobs for those unemployed now and for those who will move in to the regenerated town centre with residential accommodation planned to be built over existing retail premises. All suitable land in the foreseeable future should be identified whether used in the short term or not.

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