

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Head of Planning Policy and Economic
Development

REPORT NUMBER **E 14**

TO: STRATEGY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING 28th April 2005

HAVEN GATEWAY BID FOR GROWTH AREA STATUS

1. **SUMMARY**

Report D265 on the Regional Spatial Strategy noted that growth in the Haven Gateway Sub-Region matched that in other areas which had specifically been identified as Growth Areas by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Support was also expressed for the East of England Regional Assembly's (EERA) position concerning the need for proper infrastructure funding to underpin growth. There is an opportunity for the Haven Gateway Sub-Region to be defined formally as a Growth Area which could bring benefits to the area in increased investment and infrastructure. Seeking this designation is recommended subject to key provisos being met.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That a bid to ODPM to establish the Growth Area status of the Haven Gateway Sub-Region is supported, subject to:-

- (a) it being clear that this support should not necessarily be seen as acceptance of higher levels of growth in Babergh in this or future reviews of the Regional Spatial Strategy,
- (b) there is appropriate protection of the environment,
- (c) access to jobs and services in Ipswich and Colchester is effectively maintained for Babergh residents.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no direct financial implications immediately resulting from this recommendation. If the bid were to be successful there may be additional financial support for infrastructure with the Sub-Region.

3.2 Additional funding for the operation of the Haven Gateway Partnership itself may be required to deal with the additional activity which would be involved. These costs would be shared with ODPM, EEDA and the other local authorities. The contribution level is uncertain at the present time and a bid would need to be made through the service and financial planning process for 2006/7.

4. **KEY INFORMATION**

- 4.1 The Haven Gateway Partnership has received a report from consultants on the Evaluation of Growth Areas Status for the Haven Gateway. The possible benefits are considered to outweigh the associated risks and the Partnership recommends that a bid should be pursued.
- 4.2 The Government identified a number of Growth Areas in its Sustainable Communities Plan, including the Thames Gateway and the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough corridor. As noted in the Report D265 on the East of England Draft Regional Spatial Strategy Consultation the Haven Gateway Sub-Region is proposed for a level of growth that matches and in some aspects exceeds those levels identified for other parts of the region which are designated as Growth Areas. As there is an opportunity to bid for Growth Area status to the ODPM the implications of this have been examined by the Partnership.
- 4.3 The aim of the Sustainable Communities Plan was to increase the amount of house building in the East and South East of England to help meet demand and need. Growth Area status is considered to be beneficial in helping achieve access to funding (particularly for infrastructure), increasing influence and for capacity building. EERA were concerned over the availability of infrastructure funding and this would be an effective way of addressing this for the sub-region.
- 4.4 The amount of funding which would be available is uncertain, but designation would also be likely to increase the prospect of support from others, such as the East of England Development Agency. The status would raise the profile of the region and would be a marketing tool to attract investors and employers. The status would also bring access to specialist advice such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and English Partnerships. Consideration would need to be given to how the Partnership should be best structured to deliver the Sub-Region's objectives. A new delivery vehicle might be required as identified in Report D265.
- 4.5 The growth is likely to be seen from the ODPM viewpoint as defined growth points within the area e.g. Ipswich and Colchester, rather than blanket coverage. The benefits would be the extra funding, support and influence which the status would command. A drawback could be the presumption of accepting further growth in the future. It is important that if the Growth Area bid is supported it should be made clear that this should not be viewed as supporting higher growth in the Sub-Region in the future, that the environment of the area is maintained and enhanced and that Babergh residents enjoy improved access to the jobs and services that Ipswich and Colchester will offer.

5. **APPENDICES AND BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

None.

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