

14 July 2008

‘Eco-town’ dash is unacceptable

Plans for nearly 50,000 new homes in ‘eco-towns’ in the East of England are “unacceptable”, according to the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA).

The Assembly is concerned that the planning system is being bypassed and that the proposals for ‘eco-towns’ in the region are not sustainable.

Responding to the eco-towns public consultation, the Assembly raised concerns that the new homes are not well linked to jobs and public transport and could become dormitory towns with high levels of commuting by car.

Cllr Derrick Ashley, Chairman of the Assembly’s Planning Panel said: “Government should halt this dash for eco-towns before more money and effort is wasted. The public want high environmental standards for all new housing not speculative development in unsuitable locations.

“Proposals for new settlements in the region should be decided through the Assembly by local councils and other stakeholders to ensure sustainable growth in appropriate locations.”

Under this system, EERA has already planned for two new settlements at Northstowe in Cambridgeshire and Wixams in Bedfordshire as part of the East of England Plan, the regional development blueprint up to 2021.

The Assembly believes that the eco-town decision-making process should be transferred to its review of the East of England Plan which will identify the region's housing needs up to 2031.

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Notes to editors

For further information or to arrange an interview with an EERA spokesperson please contact Stephen Hinchley, Senior Communications Officer on 01284 729430 / 07710 312237 or email stephen.hinchley@eera.gov.uk

Eco-towns

The Government issued a consultation document with a shortlist of 15 eco-towns on 3 April 2008. The consultation document is available at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/ecotownsgreenerfuture

10 of the 15 shortlisted eco-towns are expected to go forward to implementation and the East of England has four shortlisted locations as follows:

<u>Strategic authority</u>	<u>Development</u>	<u>Homes</u>	
Bedfordshire	Marston Vale*	7000	
	New Marston*	15400	
Cambridgeshire	Hanley Grange	8000	
Essex	Elsenham	8000	or 5000
Norfolk	RAF Coltishall	10000	
		48,400	

*The Marston Vale and New Marston bids were two overlapping proposals. The New Marston eco-town proposal was withdrawn by developers Gallagher Estates on 9th July 2008.

EERA consultation response

EERA's Regional Planning Panel confirmed the Assembly's response to the public consultation at its meeting on 8th July 2008. The response is available at: www.eera.gov.uk/News.asp?cat=38&id=SX87EE-A77FE145

East of England Regional Assembly

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) exists to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the region through a partnership of elected and stakeholder representatives and is recognised by two Acts of Parliament.

It undertakes four primary functions:

- regional planning and housing body for the East of England
- scrutiny of the Regional Development Agency
- regional local government association
- regional employers organisation for local government

East of England Regional Planning Panel Group Leaders

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