



# The Draft South East Plan What's in it for Forestry and Woodlands?

This is draft until the South East Plan is published, expected early 2008. Policies may be subject to change after the Examination in Public. However the current draft Plan gives a guide as to the direction of the final Plan. This note will be updated as necessary during its development.

## What is the South East Plan?

Each Region in England is required to have its own Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), prepared by its Regional Assembly. The South East England Regional Assembly have been preparing the South East Plan.

## Why is the South East Plan required?

There has been a change in the Planning System, with the introduction of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). This has changed the Planning system as follows:

Organisation	Old Planning Structure	New Planning System
Regional Assembly	Regional Planning Guidance	Regional Spatial Strategy (South East Plan)
County Council	County Structure Plan	Minerals and Waste Development Framework
Local Authorities	Local Plan	Local Development Framework

The Act requires the Regional Assembly to prepare a Regional Spatial Strategy.

### So what does the South East Plan cover?

A Spatial Plan is required to set out the broad strategic policies at the regional level for matters that apply across the region. A Spatial Plan sets out the land use implications of other policies such as housing (setting regional and district levels), employment, transport and environment.

There are also 9 sub-regional strategy areas with their own more focused statements of policies alongside the housing levels. Work continues with Principal Authorities (i.e. County Councils and Unitary Authorities) to translate these to more specific levels of housing for each District/Borough/Unitary Authority and these will be included in the final submission to government.

### Aren't such Plans only focused on Housing and Jobs?

These are indeed often the headline issues, which capture the concerns of the public and focus the minds of planners. However the change in the planning system, has introduced a more holistic approach to planning. Planners seriously consider the wider aspects of how spatial planning can contribute to sustainable development of the area. This could include considering housing, infrastructure and health policies together to design new communities where there will be less reliance on the car and greater use of cycling and walking, in green corridors, as well as public transport, to move around the area.



These new houses could also be developed using sustainable construction techniques, to mitigate climate change. There is also greater focus on implementation - for example indicators on a wide variety of policies will track annually implementation of the plan. This includes biodiversity indicators, such as extent of ancient woodland.

### So how does it relate to the Forestry and Woodlands Sector?

Generally the document recognises the important contribution that woodlands make to the high quality of landscape in the region. The landscape is of great economic value to the region, as it attracts both businesses and tourists. It recognises the need to support land-based businesses and diversification of rural businesses.

Importantly it has a specific policy on woodlands (see Appendix), which reflect the aims of the Regional Forestry and Woodlands Framework - 'Seeing the Wood for the Trees'. This is also recognised as a Regional Strategy - giving extra weight to activities carried out under that policy.

The Biodiversity policies introduce the concepts of areas of strategic opportunity for biodiversity. It also sets out regional targets for the improvement of habitats including woodland. These are to be used as guidance for planners in Local Authorities to set targets at the District level. The woodland targets in the draft S E Plan are as follows:

Existing habitat resource (ha)	Target for habitat improvement 2010 (ha)	Target for habitat improvement 2026 (ha)
247,000	30,350 (12% of total resource)	111,300 (45% of total resource)

Assuming that we would wish 70% to be in favourable condition or improved by 2026 and that currently 25% of woodlands are already in favourable condition, to get from 25 - 70% by 2026 would mean an extra 111300ha improved over this time. Based on a steady level of improvement each year of 5060ha, the targets could be improved to those above.

### The Draft South East Plan also recognises wider issues to which forestry and woodlands can contribute:

- **Climate Change** is a Cross-Cutting policy, including provision for mitigation through more land use acting as carbon sinks.
- **Sustainable Construction** is a Cross-Cutting policy, with the policy text allowing for promotion of features that will reduce the impact of resource use in construction, such as timber frames.
- **Renewable Energy** policies support the use of biomass, hence providing an opportunity for forest and woodland industries. They also specifically note the role of renewable energy in heating as well as electricity generation.
- **Green Infrastructure** is referred to in various parts of the document, thus showing that it is supported. There is not, however any specific reference to standards such as English Nature's Access to Natural Greenspace Standard.



- Recreation, Tourism and Social, Cultural and Health sections do not specifically mention trees and woodlands, however the wording of the policy allows for areas of trees and woodlands to contribute to these agendas, through activities such as green gyms, Forest Schools, community woodland activities, woodland-based tourist facilities.



The draft Plan gives the sector many 'hooks' to demonstrate how woodlands and forests can contribute to the sustainable development of the region. It is up to us now to show the planners that this potential can be realised!

**That all sounds great, but what influence and weight will the South East Plan have?**

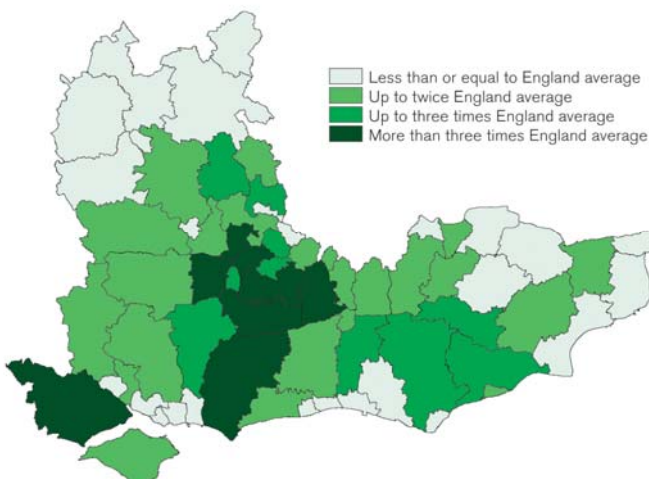
The South East Plan policies will guide the preparation of policies in each Local Authority's Local Development Framework. Therefore the policies in the plan can be used to influence Local Authorities in their preparation of Development Plan Documents. The fact that this Plan has so specifically included the importance of woodlands also gives strength to the use of such policies when influencing other bodies about what trees and woodlands can do for the region. For example funding may be easier to lever for activities that fulfil the policies in the plan, as they have been recognised widely.

The implementation of the South East Plan will be monitored annually, against specific targets. The South East Plan will go to Public Examination in late 2006, before coming into force in 2008. For more information on the Regional Assembly and how it makes decisions <http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/assembly/faq.html>

**So where can I see this Plan?**

Look at [http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/plan/view\\_plan.html](http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/plan/view_plan.html)

Density of woodland cover in the districts of the region.



**Appendix—Policy NRM5 on Woodland from the Draft South East Plan**

**7. Woodlands**

- 7.1 The region is the most wooded in England, with almost 275,000 hectares covering around 15% of the land area (the area of woodland having increased over recent years), although coverage varies around the region. This provides many social and environmental benefits for its inhabitants. The management of a substantial proportion of this resource is, however, inadequate and many woodlands are neglected.
- 7.2 The Regional Forestry and Woodlands Framework highlights how trees, woodlands and forestry can contribute to the sustainable development of the region and sets out the steps needed to secure the future of its woodland. This framework is the regional expression of the England Forestry Strategy.
- 7.3 In order to ensure that woodlands continue to contribute towards the sustainable development of the region and the quality of life, we need to:
  - i protect and enhance the value and character of the region's woodland, promoting appropriate woodland planting in association with major areas of development to restore and improve degraded landscapes
  - ii realise the economic, environmental and social benefits that woodland management and tree planting can provide
  - iii promote higher standards of management of existing woodlands, and seek new markets for woodland produce
  - iv support the implementation of the Regional Forestry and Woodland Framework
  - v manage woodland in light of the impact of climate change.

**POLICY NRM5: WOODLANDS**

**In the development and implementation of Local Development Documents and other strategies, local authorities and other bodies will support the implementation of the Regional Forestry and Woodland Framework, ensuring the value and character of the region's woodland are protected and enhanced. This will be achieved by:**

- i **Protecting ancient woodland from damaging development and land uses**
- ii **Promoting the effective management, and where appropriate, extension and creation of new woodland areas including, in association with areas of major development, where this helps to restore and enhance degraded landscapes, screen noise and pollution, provide recreational opportunities, helps mitigate climate change, and contributes to floodplain management**
- iii **Replacing woodland unavoidably lost through development with new woodland on at least the same scale**
- iv **Promoting and encouraging the economic use of woodlands and wood resources, including wood fuel as a renewable energy source**
- v **Promoting the growth and procurement of sustainable timber products through application of the Forestry Stewardship Council certification scheme**

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