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# **Delivering Growth? Planning and growth management in the South East of England**

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# DELIVERING GROWTH? PLANNING AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The role of planning in delivering growth is currently at the centre of public debate in England. The current UK Government has promoted 'localism' in planning as a means to re-assert the advantages of development and the role of local communities in achieving it. At the same time, some ministers and commentators have characterised planning as a barrier to achieving growth. Major reforms have been introduced with a view to changing planning practice and culture.

These reforms have been in contrast to the increasing attention that had been paid over the previous decade or so to cross-boundary and cross-sectoral strategic planning, especially in relation to housing, population change and economic growth. Within the overall context of regional planning under the previous Labour Government, so-called 'soft' sub-regional planning spaces – effectively alternative administrative geographies to existing 'hard' planning areas – were introduced as a means of delivering growth targets, overcoming local political differences and responding to historic shortfalls in housing and infrastructure.

The question is, what are the early implications from these changing economic governance arrangements in key growth areas, and how might we begin to evaluate their performance? This research examines these changing planning policy and governance arrangements, and the potential impacts on delivering economic growth in the South East of England, specifically in three distinctive 'soft spaces' – the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), the Gatwick-Diamond Initiative (GDI), and South-central Oxfordshire/Science Vale UK. Although these areas have their own particular settlement patterns, administrative arrangements and political complexions, there are likely to be implications for planning and growth management across the UK.

This report, from research conducted for the RTPi by Oxford Brookes University and University College London, suggests how policymakers, decision-makers, planners and others might respond.

### Who should read this?

This report should be of interest to anyone with an involvement in planning for economic growth and related issues such as housing, transport infrastructure and so on – from local and regional policymakers and decision-makers, to local planners, and central government policymakers.

It should be noted that this report relates directly only to England, although there may be implications for sub-national strategic planning in the other UK countries and beyond.

This report is based on research conducted for the RTPi by Dave Valler from Oxford Brookes University and Nick Phelps from University College London, funded through the RTPi's Small Projects Impact Research (SPIRe) scheme.

## **Key messages for policy and practice**

1. These soft planning spaces are in part intended to ensure a greater role for business. However, based on the areas investigated in this research, the overall strength of governance arrangements for delivering growth may rest primarily on the strength of commitment and resourcing from the public sector, especially local government. This reflects the role of local government in devoting resources to spatial planning, the generation of an effective evidence base to underpin policymaking, and the need to agree spatial commitments regarding housing and employment land allocations.
2. To date, in each of the three case study areas there has been a notable commitment to the housing and employment land allocations established under the previous era of regional planning. Planning and politics across the South East region as a whole has long embodied an approach that has sought to allocate land as accretions to the existing settlement patterns rather than to embrace the comprehensive planning of new settlements. Across the case study areas there is an emerging recognition of the limits of this approach.
3. However, the process of introducing the localism agenda has created considerable uncertainty. The risk is that localism licenses popular concerns over housing and population numbers, and in some cases prompts a return to an earlier reluctance to plan positively for population and economic growth. Indeed, contrasting approaches are being taken by local authorities within the same sub-regional planning spaces. In time, this may weaken the coherence of such 'soft spaces' and so their ability to promote growth and development.
4. This research presents a framework against which 'good economic governance' can be judged. This framework examines the quality of sub-regional economic governance as perceived by stakeholders, including: the identity and image of the area; the clarity and detailing of development strategy; the ability to effectively prioritise development and investment; patterns of 'ownership' and stakeholder engagement; the clarity of the business agenda; wider political influence and leverage; resourcing; and monitoring/evaluation processes. These criteria derive from previous extensive research in the sub-region areas, interviews conducted as part of this research, and web-based consultation.
5. In terms of the areas evaluated in this research, somewhat counter-intuitively the area with the strongest business voice and the strongest 'spatial metaphor' and identity – Gatwick Diamond – emerges as perhaps the weakest area in terms of its likely ability to deliver on growth as part of a sub-regional strategy. PUSH emerges as the strongest area in terms of its governance arrangements, against expectations given its lack of image and identity and the level of business input, and given the history of local government stances across the South East as a whole and in South Hampshire historically. SVUK emerges as a sub-regional strategy that is somewhere in between in terms of its capacity to deliver growth.
6. There are a number of contributory factors to this, including: the scale of resources that have been devoted to spatial planning and the allied generation of an evidence base which in no short measure has derived from local government contributions; the extent to which partners in these initiatives have been able to agree to specific spatial commitments to issues such as housing and employment land allocations; and the near coterminosity between the PUSH and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas and a strong measure of interlocking directorships which appear likely to ensure a high degree of coordination between public and private sectors.

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## **1. The changing landscape for sub-national economic development**

The landscape for sub-national economic development has been changing rapidly alongside significant reductions in public spending.

### **The challenging economic context**

The current UK Government came to power in May 2010 in the wake of the 2008 financial meltdown and the ensuing economic crisis. In response to the costs of the bank bailout, increased welfare expenditure and reduced taxation associated with the recession, and the subsequent increase in the UK national debt by an estimated £260 billion, the Government has strategy has sought to reduce public spending across a range of areas and ensure financial stability, thereby keeping borrowing costs under control and encouraging productive (private) investment.

Economic conditions throughout the first three years of the Government were very challenging. Unemployment, which had peaked at 2.51 million in February 2010, subsequently rose further to 2.68 million in October 2011 and two years later, despite some recent improvement, in September 2013 stood at 2.47 million people or 7.6 per cent of the economically active population. Youth unemployment and long-term unemployment returned as major social issues. With regard to housing, after peaking at 177,000 in the year ending December 2007, annual housing completions fell through 2008, 2009 and 2010 to 107,950 houses in the 12 months to September 2013, or 39 per cent below the 2007 peak (DCLG, 2013: 5). Thirdly, despite the ambition to 'rebalance' the economy, the North-South divide has been exacerbated in terms of overall employment and population changes, house prices and household financial stress, and business insolvencies.

### **The changing arrangements for economic growth and regeneration**

Since 2010, the Government has almost completely removed previous programmes for local growth and replaced them with a new set of structures and funding mechanisms, alongside new local freedoms and responsibilities. The implications for sub-national governance arrangements have been considerable. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were introduced in 2011, in part to replace Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), reflecting Conservative Party criticisms of the regional arrangements that had been introduced under the previous Labour administration. At the same time, the Government's localism agenda has introduced significant changes to the planning system as well as the institutional and policy landscape for economic growth. In planning, major changes have taken place with the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework, effective from April 2012, as well as the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013. In terms of institutional change, new experiments in urban governance have been introduced through City Deals, and new – or rediscovered – mechanisms have been established including Enterprise Zones (EZs), the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) and the Growing Places Fund.

As might be expected, the Government's plans for local growth have continued to develop since the 2010 Local Growth White Paper, as new initiatives and funds have been added and changes have been made to address apparent weaknesses. The Heseltine Report 'No Stone Unturned' (Heseltine, 2012) marked a critical contribution, recognising the limitations of the Government's programme, and the Government has subsequently responded with further initiatives, for example: additional funds to build LEPs' capacity; the formation in June 2013 of a 'Local Growth' Cabinet committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister to oversee initiatives affecting local economic growth; and improved central scheme management for the RGF, reflected in improvements in the management of the third and fourth rounds of the scheme.

However, the Government's record on economic growth and regeneration has been subject to some critical comment. Firstly, in terms of investment, a 2013 report by the National Audit Office noted that central government spending on local economic growth programmes fell from £11.2 billion over the five-year period 2005-06 to 2009-10 to £6.2 billion over the five-year period 2010-11 to 2014-15 (NAO, 2013: 7). More broadly, central and local government spent £52.7 billion on wider growth-related activity in 2012-13, a reduction of £11.4 billion (18 per cent) from 2010-11 (op. cit., 10).

Secondly, there have been criticisms regarding how these changes have been introduced. For example, the NAO report argues that the objective of "an orderly transition from Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to the new delivery landscape" under the current Government, as set out in the 2010 Local Growth White Paper "has not been achieved" (op. cit., p.10).

Further, despite improvements, LEPs continue to face significant capacity issues, particularly in light of the new responsibilities for Growth Deals and EU Structural Funds, while the rediscovered EZs face a significant challenge to create the number of jobs expected. Job creation forecasts for the 24 new EZs have changed from an initial expectation of 54,000 additional jobs by 2015 to an assessment of between 6,000 and 18,000. The NAO also reported that evidence of outputs from local projects funded by the Growing Places Fund in terms of new jobs, houses and improved transport to date has been limited, and the slow start of the RGF means that the fund now faces a heavily back-loaded spending profile.

The NAO also questioned the Government's overall strategy for economic growth, noting for example that: local economic growth initiatives were not designed as a coordinated national programme with a common strategy, set of objectives and implementation plan; there was no clear strategy to measure outcomes and evaluate performance and value for money; that objectives to "increase democratic accountability and transparency, and ensure that public expenditure is more responsive to the needs of local business and people" had not been clearly met; and that in certain instances links between LEPs, and therefore EZs, Growing Places Fund and the Growth Deals, and the local democratic process are complex and weak.

One outcome of this restructuring has been a question over the status of so-called 'soft' planning spaces, which had been introduced alongside the regional arrangements cultivated by the previous Labour Government (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007, 2012). The emergence of soft planning spaces reflected the proliferation of planning initiatives at various spatial scales, ostensibly to facilitate cross-boundary working and responsiveness to functional economic areas, but also to usher in significant policy change. Some of the soft planning spaces – including the three cases considered here – emerged as sub-regional components of the Regional Spatial Strategy preparation process. In some instances these dovetailed with the enabling and financing of multi-area agreements which were taken up by the most active of sub-regional planning groupings. Elsewhere, broader cross regional cooperation saw the emergence of meta- or supra-regional spatial planning initiatives, such as 'The Northern Way' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007).

Arguably, a measure of continuity exists with such sentiments having remained in the emphasis placed on the Duty to Cooperate by the current Government alongside its localism agenda. However, it is also the case that the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) and regional tier bodies such as the RDAs, and the expectations set in train with the initial introduction of the localism agenda, have left these soft spaces and their fledgling patterns of governance somewhat exposed.

## Research aims and objectives

It is against this backdrop that this research assesses the relative effectiveness of three diverse planning spaces in delivering growth in the South-East region (in part building on previous research), namely the areas covered by the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), the Gatwick Diamond Initiative (GDI), and Science Vale UK (SVUK) in south-central Oxfordshire. Specifically, the research has sought to:

- Describe the respective governance scales, organisational forms and patterns of leadership across three sub-regions;
- Examine the status and operation of such new spaces in setting planning policy, given the developing context of localism;
- Offer some initial reflections on the likely impact of these diverse arrangements in delivering growth – including a set of criteria for judging ‘good economic governance’ in relation to delivering population and economic growth.

The research has consisted of a review of published documents relating to spatial planning and economic development across the relevant local government and LEP areas, together with new empirical research in the form of semi-structured interviews with officers and elected politicians from local government planning and economic development departments, LEPs, and business, civic and environmental organisations. These interviews took place over the period June 2013 to January 2014. In the cases of SVUK and PUSH ten interviews were conducted as part of a ‘light touch’ updating of previous extensive research. In the case of the GDI, fifteen interviews were conducted.



## 2. Governance scales, organisational forms and patterns of leadership

Table 1 summarises important contrasts between the three study areas in terms of the scale and form of governance. The diversity of the spaces is immediately apparent, ranging from a population of around 1 million covered by the PUSH area, to 60,000 in SVUK. While SVUK is located within a single county and incorporates parts of just two district councils, PUSH includes 11 local authorities. Meanwhile, GDI is the sole case which cuts across county council boundaries, incorporating parts of West Sussex County Council and Surrey County Council. PUSH and GDI emerged earliest, in 2003-4, partly in response to the regional planning agenda under the previous Government, while SVUK is a more recent initiative, from 2008.

**Table 1. Key facts for three case study areas**

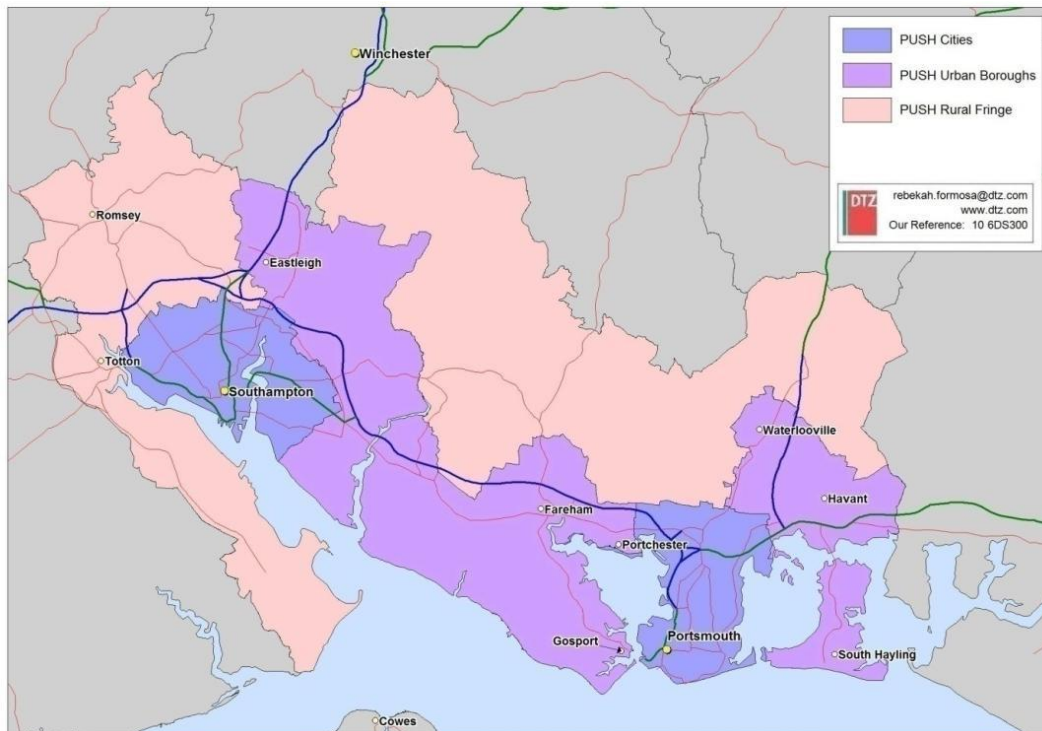
	<b>GDI</b>	<b>SVUK</b>	<b>PUSH</b>
<b>Year introduced</b>	2003-4	2008	2003-4
<b>Population</b>	~600,000	~60,000	~1m
<b>Local authority composition</b>	Two counties, 6 local authorities	Single County, 2 local authorities	Single County, 11 local authorities
<b>Initial objectives</b>	An internationally recognised business location. Higher levels of business development. 'Skills escalator' to match skills needs. Enhance new investment in high growth business. Maintain and improve transport accessibility.	Hi-tech employment growth. Housing.	Housing and employment growth; Raise contribution to national GVA. Improve skill levels. Additional employment floorspace.

### **PUSH**

To begin with, PUSH was a local government initiative, with no significant business involvement. The soft planning space of 'urban South Hampshire' in reality comprises a diverse set of local authorities and settlement types having two cities (Portsmouth and Southampton), a set of semi-urbanised or suburban authorities (such as Eastleigh, Fareham and Havant and Waterlooville) and a rural fringe which includes parts of the remaining authorities (see Figure 1). Across these areas the character of settlement and associated socio-economic complexion and political interests vary considerably. A South Hampshire sub-regional spatial strategy emerged under the local authority-led grouping from 2003-4. This was presented at the time in terms of the need to plan positively for growth rather than have (for example) housing figures imposed through the RSS process, though there is a strong sense that a sub-regional growth oriented strategy would not have been forthcoming had the 'threat' of imposition through regional planning not existed. Hence it displays signs of both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' pressures (Phelps 2012).



Figure 1. The PUSH area



Source: DTZ/Oxford Economics (2010, p.2)

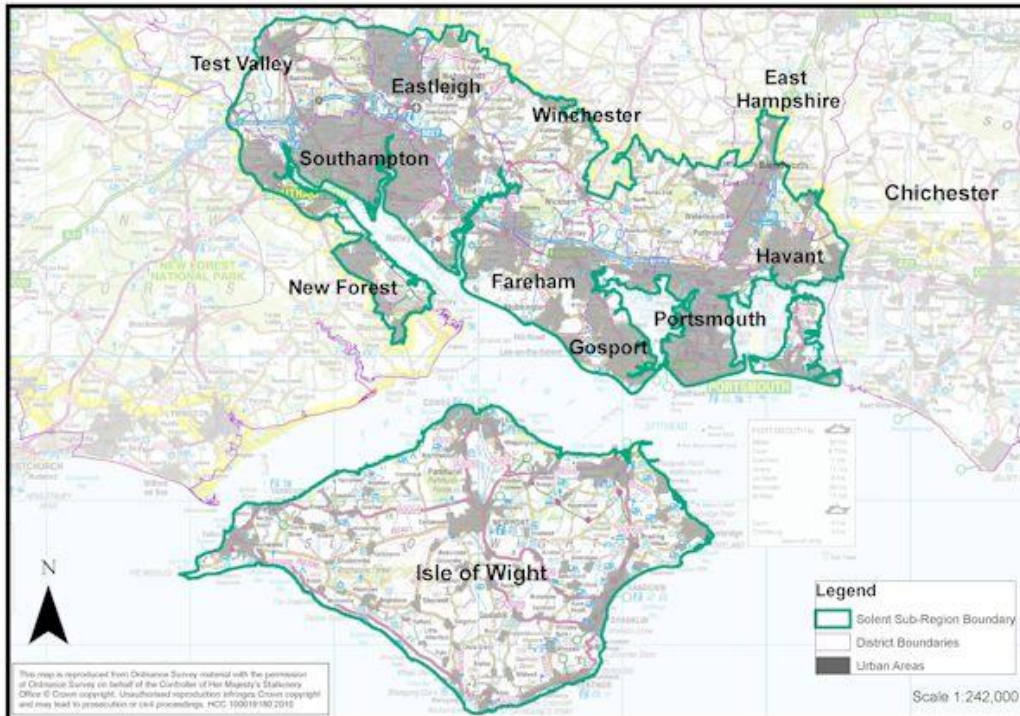
For a county with a long history of perceived reluctance to plan positively for population and economic growth the PUSH strategy represented something of a break in attitudes. The argument presented by key local authority leaders, chief executives and chief planning officers was that the sub-region needed to seek a growth in productivity to converge on the regional average. In this respect there appears to have been some recognition of the point noted some time ago by Colin Buchanan and Partners (1966) that the sub-region had underperformed in economic terms. Against this backdrop the PUSH objectives were significant: 80,000 new dwellings to 2026 with the majority to be built in the two cities of Portsmouth and Southampton, but with a significant tranche of 16,000 in two new Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) at Fareham and Eastleigh.

The argument that economic growth would drive the need for additional housing and infrastructure – rather than simply accepting more housing *per se* – was one that PUSH were keen to make in their submission to the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy, the South East Plan, also known as the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East (Government Office for the South East, 2009). At the same time, Hampshire County Council’s ‘Holding out for Hampshire’ campaign represented the other side to the argument that more housing and population would not be acceptable without supporting infrastructure and economic growth. This reflects the perception locally of a long record of population and employment growth not being accompanied by infrastructure in this sub-region, and the difficulties of ensuring such ‘concurrency’.

The Solent LEP area has been broadly coterminous with the PUSH area. There appears to have been little controversy about the definition of the LEP area in broad terms. Despite its size and the separate spatial planning challenges which have seen the Isle of Wight remain outside of PUSH, the inclusion of the Isle of Wight in the LEP area may reflect the several ways it nevertheless forms part of a single economic region along with the mainland local communities in PUSH. There is a measure of labour market integration as a result of the several ferry connections that exist across the Solent.

The PUSH local authorities and the Isle of Wight also share economic structures that partly reflect a broadly defined set of marine industries.

**Figure 2. The Solent LEP area**



Source: Solent LEP, [http://solentlep.org.uk/about/functional\\_economic\\_area](http://solentlep.org.uk/about/functional_economic_area)

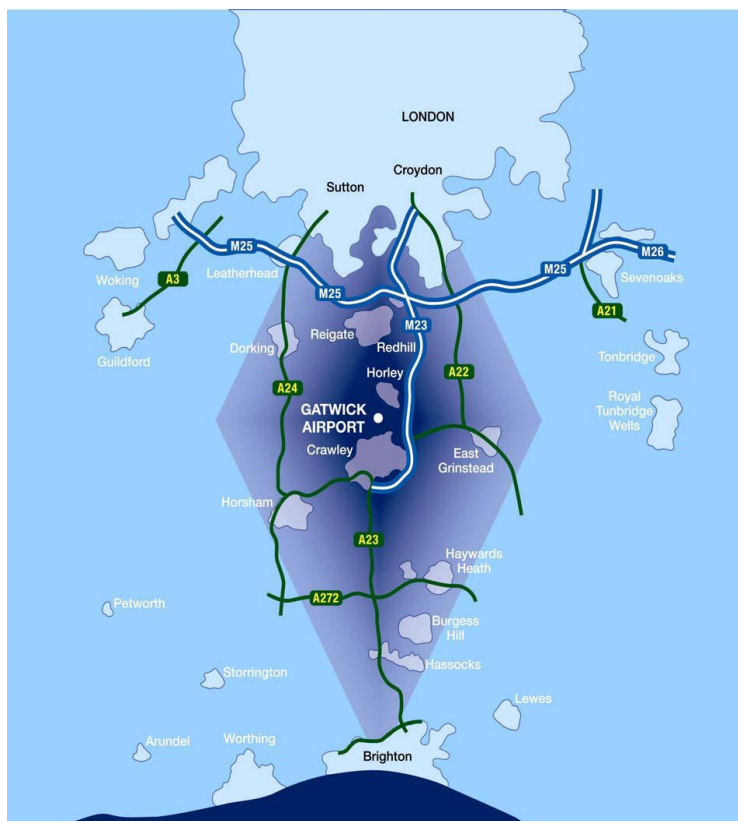
### **Gatwick Diamond Initiative**

The Gatwick Diamond Initiative (GDI) was established in 2003 as a business-led joint venture by the then Surrey and West Sussex Economic Partnerships to stimulate and maintain strong economic growth. On the face of it this would appear to be a major strength of planning for growth in this sub-region given the generalised lack of interest of business representative bodies in issues of local and strategic spatial planning across the South East. However, the private sector initiative here gradually merged with on-going local authority planning efforts under the RSS process to create the public-private partnership that is GDI, and a Local Strategic Statement was produced for the area only relatively recently in 2012.

Gatwick had previously been part of the 'Western Policy Area' in the Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9), which had provided a regional framework for the preparation of local authority development plans, and subsequently the 'Gatwick Sub-Regional Strategy Area' in the South East Plan, extending north to the edge of Redhill, east to East Grinstead, south to Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath, and west to Horsham with strong functional links with Redhill and Reigate to the north and Southwater to the west. This 'strategy area' makes up most of the current Gatwick Diamond. The GDI does not have any formal boundaries but is broadly defined by a diamond-shaped area stretching between London and Brighton and extending west to Horsham and east to East Grinstead. It includes parts of two counties, and incorporates the Boroughs of Crawley, Reigate & Banstead, and large parts of Horsham, Mid Sussex, Mole Valley and Tandridge Districts.

High levels of local (Greater London and South East England) and to some extent national accessibility via road and rail, and international accessibility via the airport, make GD a focus for growth. Surrounding statutory designations such as the green belt and South Downs National Park have effectively channelled growth pressures into the GD area. Towns such as Horsham have had a long history of municipal entrepreneurialism dating back to the early 1900s, and reinvigorated significantly during the 1980s.<sup>1</sup> At the same time large-scale developments such as Gatwick Airport and Crawley New Town have set in train an ostensibly new growth trajectory, not the least of which has been the build-up of the very business community that has driven the GDI itself.<sup>2</sup> As one respondent noted in interview, then: “... there has always been in this area a general presumption in favour of growth; there has never been any particular negativity regarding growth in this area.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, from the point of view of local conservation interests the desired objective of the business community has been to leverage on such inherent growth pressures to fashion another M4 corridor along this axis.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 3. Gatwick Diamond Initiative area**



Source: Gatwick Diamond Business Plan, June 2009

Initial attempts to have a LEP designated corresponding to the GDI area evaporated with central government ministries indicating that this would be too small an area for a LEP. Instead the LEP that has now come into existence (see figure 4) has a coverage that reflects a number of separate initial bids being put forward for LEPs across this part of the South East. These proto-LEPs represented

<sup>1</sup> Interviews, Director, Horsham Museum, 23 December 2013; former Chief Executive, Horsham District, 10 January 2014.

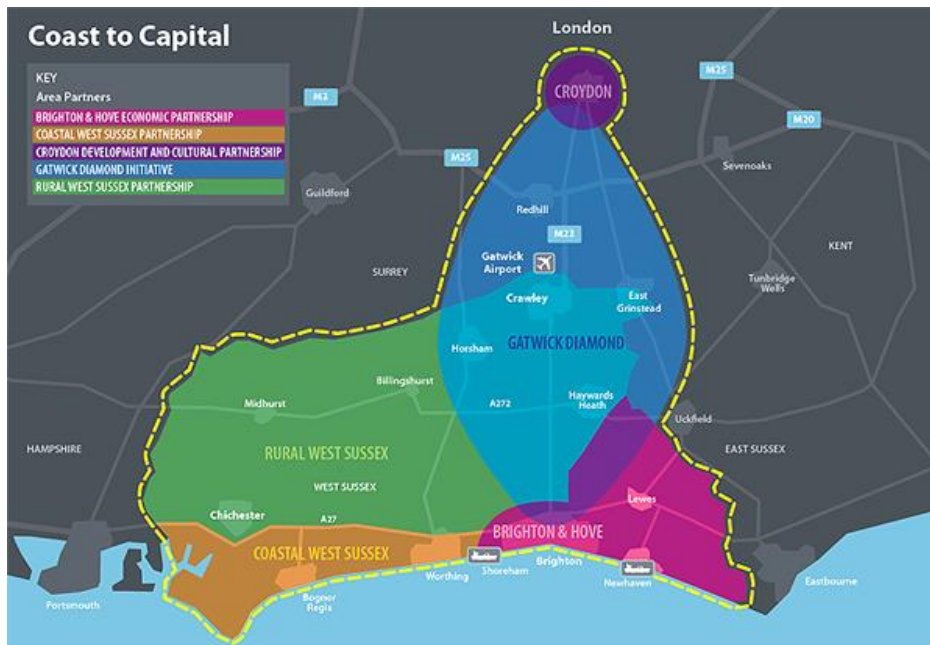
<sup>2</sup> Interview, Representative, Crawley Museum Society, 22 January 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Interview, Private Sector representative, 10 July 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, Chairman Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign, 26 November 2013.

rather different types of economy from those that are now incorporated into one large 'Coast to Capital LEP (C2CLEP)', the different economic interests and logics of which far exceed those of the GDI area. This immediately raises significant questions regarding the extent to which LEP activities dovetail with the growth aspirations of the GDI. For some, the fact that GDI is one among five different LEP sub-regions is unproblematic since there is appropriate representation of each of the distinct economic areas on the LEP board.<sup>5</sup> Others, however, noted the challenges of coordinating spatial agendas and priorities across Croydon, Gatwick, Brighton and rural and coastal areas.

**Figure 4. Coast to Capital LEP area**



Source: <http://www.coast2capital.org.uk/about-us/maps/map-coast-to-capital-area.html>

## SVUK

'Science Vale UK' is a relatively recent innovation (introduced in 2008) encompassing the towns of Didcot, Wantage and Grove, and the employment centres of Harwell Oxford (previously Harwell Science and Innovation Campus), Milton Park and Culham Science Centre (CSC). The SVUK concept (known initially as the 'Quadrant') emerged at the tail end of the era of regional economic and spatial strategies and the parallel enabling of cross-boundary agreements across local government districts (so called 'multi-area agreements'). The agenda nationally was upon encouraging strategies for the delivery of employment and housing growth, with a corresponding recognition that many key growth areas would straddle existing local government boundaries. Despite the influence of rather more parochial concerns in providing the initial impulse for the Quadrant (specifically as a mechanism through which the Vale of the White Horse District Council might compete more effectively for funding allocations within Oxfordshire), there is a clear sense in which the move towards SVUK was facilitated by these broader developments, and it was subsequently officially recognised in the South East Plan in 2009.

Following the initiation of the SVUK concept, moves were undertaken to substantiate the idea and to drive the project forward. SVUK was formalised in organisational terms as a partnership with a management board drawn from the district and county authorities, the UK Atomic Energy Authority

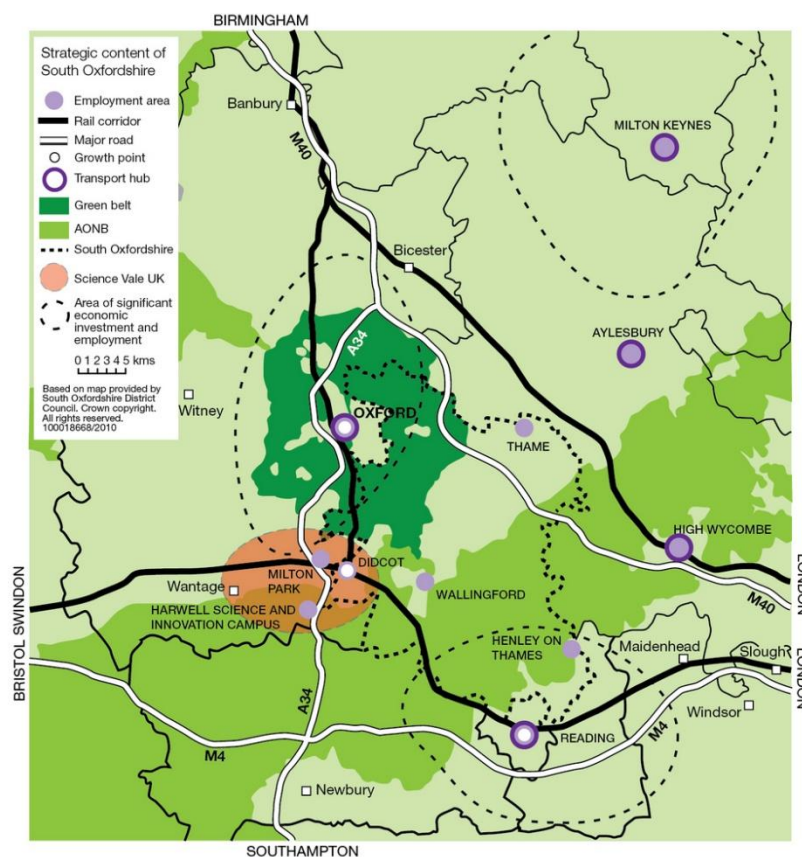
<sup>5</sup> Interview, Coast to Capital LEP, 18 October 2013.



(UKAEA), MEPC Plc. (owners of Milton Park), the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), and the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA), though serviced directly on a very limited basis predominantly by a single employee. A consultants report was commissioned in 2007 to investigate the nature and economic potential of the SVUK area, though this served to underline the sense of relative neglect felt in the districts in the south of the county since it argued that the competitive position of SVUK – its scale and image – would be somewhat constrained without direct reference to the universities and science parks in and around the city of Oxford to the north (SQW Consulting, 2007). In this way the SVUK notion must be seen within the particular context of politics in Oxfordshire.

It is estimated that the SVUK area accounts for about 4 per cent of total R&D employment in England and 13 per cent in the South East region. Harwell Oxford has transformed from the former government centre for civil nuclear power research under the UKAEA into a leading centre of science and technology business which now houses the Diamond Synchrotron, the UK’s largest investment in science for 30 years and ISIS, the world’s largest pulsed neutron source, together with the STFC, the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, the Medical Research Council and European Space Agency Space Centre amongst others, with more than 4,500 people working in over 140 organisations. Milton Park is one of Europe’s largest multi-use business parks, hosting more than 160 companies employing around 6,500 people, with particular strengths in the bio-tech and ICT sectors. CSC hosts the UK’s fusion research programme and currently the world’s largest fusion experimental facility, the Joint European Torus. The SVUK area is programmed for significant expansion with approximately 12,000 net additional dwellings and 12,000 additional jobs planned by 2026 (OxonCC, 2010: 8), albeit in a dispersed, environmentally sensitive, semi-rural setting.

**Figure 5. Strategic context of South Oxfordshire**



Source: Adapted from South Oxfordshire District Council Proposed Submission Core Strategy, November 2010

The Oxfordshire LEP was launched in March 2011. In contrast to Government guidance, which had explicitly directed that new sub-regional LEPs would incorporate ‘groups of upper tier local authorities’, and some discussion locally regarding linkages with neighbouring areas in the Thames Valley and to the north of the County, Oxfordshire was accepted as a ‘functional economic area’ *per se*. However, a corollary of this has been a perception that the LEP has allied itself most closely with the County’s particular agendas in terms of overall economic and spatial strategy, a viewpoint reinforced in the eyes of some interviewees by the County Council’s primary role in supporting and resourcing LEP operations in its early years. The implications for SVUK are not necessarily negative, and indeed development of the SVUK area features prominently in LEP strategic priorities and day-to-day activities, though there remains residual concern within the SVUK district authorities of undue County Council influence in certain policy areas and a question over the relative prioritisation of investment at SVUK given competing commitments across the County.

**Figure 6. Oxfordshire County**



Source: Oxfordshire County Council, <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/direct-access-equipment-map>

To summarise then, South Hampshire represents the largest and most complex of these spatial planning agendas, comprising 11 local authorities but also involving significant variety in the complexion of these authorities. SVUK is the smallest and seemingly the least complex of the areas in terms of the planning and LEP authorities involved, yet it is challenged by the specificity, isolation and separation of the three key sites that drive its economic growth, as well as the complex political realities in Oxfordshire. GDI has perhaps the greatest growth pressures resulting from London related spill overs, given its excellent road and rail access into London and internationally via Gatwick Airport. Its situation is something akin to the pressures apparent in the M4 and M11 corridors emanating from London.

### 3. The status and operation of new spaces in setting policy under localism

#### PUSH

Despite the pressures unleashed by the emergence of localism since 2010, the sub-regional strategy developed by PUSH as part of the South East Plan has remained largely intact. While some of the detailed targets and figure work have changed, the thrust of the overall vision – including a focus on regenerating the two cities – has remained the same. Housing figures have been adjusted in an updated plan to take account of housing units already built and to reflect the downturn in development activity since 2008. Thus, as the revised South Hampshire Strategy (SHS, 2012: 13) notes the target of 3,700 new homes per annum to 2026 is slightly lower than the original South Hampshire Strategy (2008). Overall then, a figure of 80,000 homes for the period 2011 to 2026 put forward in the PUSH submission to the South East Plan has reduced to a figure of 55,600 from 2011 to 2026 in the revision in October 2012. As one interviewee involved in both the South East Plan and the revised SHS argued:

*The overall scale of development is pretty similar. The old South East Plan was 80,000 ... so if you allow for what has been built in those further five years the actual scale of development is pretty similar. It's only 6,000 less, which I think is pretty good really that locally, people, politicians have volunteered to stick with a scale of development which is not far short of the South East Plan which was a substantial increase on previous house building rates and what was in previous plans. It was regarded across the region as being one of the areas that was volunteering for growth. So that, in an era of localism, when in so many other parts of the country politicians take the opportunity to reduce house building it is quite encouraging that, locally, in South Hampshire they were willing to accept broadly the same scale.<sup>6</sup>*

One notable change, though, has been the abandonment of the Eastleigh SDA and the absorption of the houses allocated to that site elsewhere within the Borough – correspondingly reducing the proportion of all new housing to be built on such large greenfield sites. Interview evidence suggests this was necessary due to public concern and opposition to housing, and employment land being allocated to a single large site. Such popular concerns have amplified the existing anxieties of officers and politicians over the impact of past out-of-town commercial development in Hedge End on Eastleigh town centre. Some of the same concerns were voiced at the Examination in Public (EiP) of the Fareham SDA which is now proceeding under the name 'Welborne'. Partly as a result of the more detailed planning regarding the capacity of the North Fareham SDA site itself and partly as a result of differences with land owners and developers the major commercial land uses planned for the SDA have been reduced, in line with the a reduction in the housing numbers from an initial 10,000 suggested in the RSS down to 6,500-7,500 houses.

Despite some important revisions, then, the overall strategic direction laid out in the South-East plan has been largely retained. In some senses the PUSH organisation itself has become somewhat attenuated in the context of localism, and one informed ex-DCLG interviewee (now chairman of the Standing Conference concerned with the planning of Welborne) argued that 'PUSH is not the beast it was'.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it continues to exist and performs an important function for the exercise of strategic thinking among political leaders, chief executives and planning officers.<sup>8</sup> Alongside the LEP it acts as a vehicle through which the evidence base for sub-regional planning is sustained, thereby

<sup>6</sup> Private Sector planning consultant, 3 September 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Interview, Welborne New Community Standing Conference, 21 November 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Interviews, Principal, Private Sector Consultancy, 3 September 2013; CEO, Eastleigh Borough Council, 28 November 2013.

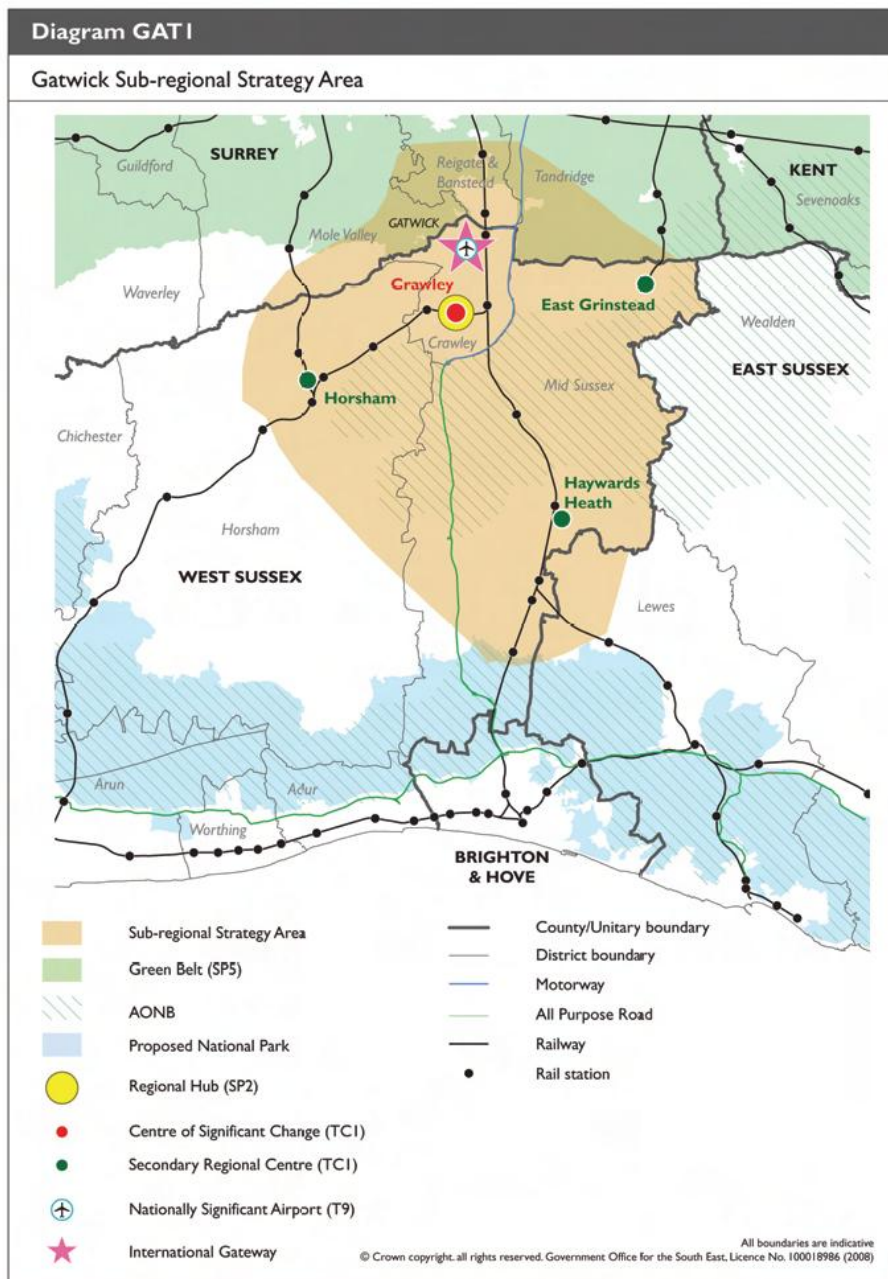


providing an important benchmark for demonstrating implementation of the Government’s new ‘duty to collaborate’.

### Gatwick Diamond Initiative

Under the previous regional arrangements and the South East Plan, detailed housing targets and employment objectives were specified for sub-regional growth areas. With reference to the Gatwick Sub-Regional Strategy Area (see Figure 7), the RSS (2009) committed to an interim target of 17,400 additional jobs between 2006 and 2016, with further monitoring and analysis required at the local level before targets were established beyond 2016.

Figure 7. Gatwick Sub-Regional Strategy area



Source: Government Office for the South East (2009) – The South East Plan

Net additional dwellings were set at 36,000 between 2006 and 2026, with clear targets for local authority districts as follows:

District	Housing delivery target - Annual Average	Housing delivery target – Total
Crawley	375	7500
Horsham (part)	460	9200
Mid-Sussex (part)	840	16800
Reigate and Banstead (part)	125	2500
<b>Sub-Regional Total</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>36000</b>

In addition, housing locations were defined as follows:

- i. Westward expansion of Crawley for 2,500 homes after 2006;
- ii. Westward expansion of Horsham for 2,000 homes after 2006;
- iii. West and south-west of East Grinstead for 2,500 homes after 2006;
- iv. South-east and south-west of Haywards Heath for the residue of at least 1,400 homes not already completed by April 2006;
- v. North-west and north-east of Horley for the residue of 2,600 dwellings not already completed by April 2006;
- vi. North East Sector, Crawley for up to 2,700 dwellings.

In order to understand the implications of the removal of regional planning here it is useful first to outline governance changes which had been underway in the GD area towards the latter stages of the previous Government and in the run-up to the general election of 2010. During this period the business-led organisation that had initiated GD was merging into a public-private partnership in 2006-7, which itself then went through a further restructuring and reformation around 2008-9 to give it a stronger governance with an overview group including members from local authorities and a management board. This new governance structure brought forward a growth plan centred on three strands: i) GROW (spatial planning, housing); ii) CONNECT (transport); iii) INSPIRE (mainly education). According to the senior planner involved in creating the LSS,

*That new governance created a much stronger link between business and the local authorities. And arising out of that we started to gain funding out of the Gatwick Diamond Initiative to take forward the local strategic planning work as a mechanism to support the drive of the local partnership which had developed. We then started to work on the policy framework including the Local Strategic Statement (LSS) under the umbrella of the Gatwick Diamond Initiative.<sup>9</sup>*

The LSS was adopted in 2011, by all the relevant local authorities except Tandridge District Council (which interestingly had signed up to a previous Memorandum of Understanding on the LSS process). Yet what is absolutely clear is that the LSS was a fundamentally different document to the previous sub-regional strategy set out in the RSS, as the Senior Planner working for GDI highlighted:

*The local authorities all signed up to the LSS. It post-dates the change in legislation and so was driven in its latter stages by the emerging duty to cooperate. The very fact that five districts and two counties signed up to a Local Strategic Statement which provided a short and medium term direction but also then looked into the longer term future, I view that as a major success. There were differences, there were arguments.*

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Senior Planner, GDI, 18 June 2013.

*Things that might have been in there weren't in there. It doesn't go into numbers. It doesn't specify locations. It doesn't go into detail'.<sup>10</sup> (emphasis added)*

Beyond this loss of detail and specific policy commitment, progress on local plans amongst GD authorities has been uneven. At the time of writing, for example: Crawley Borough Council's 'Submission Consultation Draft' local plan was taken to the Full Council on 18th December 2013, but was not approved for submission to the Secretary of State for Examination or for publication consultation; Mid-Sussex District Council's 'District Plan' was submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2013 and a first hearing session took place in November focusing on whether or not the Council had met the Duty to Cooperate. The Inspector ruled that he was not satisfied that the Council had met the Duty to Cooperate, and advised the Council to withdraw the plan; Horsham District Council's Planning Framework Preferred Strategy was put out for consultation between August to October 2013, the results of which were reported to a Council meeting on 11th December; and Mole Valley and Tandridge District Councils adopted their Core Strategies respectively in 2009 and 2008.

Clearly, then, it is difficult at the present time to come to any precise judgement on the implications of localism in this case. Yet there is little doubt that previous specific growth commitments for the GD area have been called into question and it would be difficult to resist the conclusion that the planning policy foundations for economic growth are less solid. One interviewee, the former Chief Executive of Horsham District Council, has argued that the expectations created at the outset of Localism have interrupted the normal course of forward planning and resulted in something of a strategic planning vacuum at the local level into which the private sector was also now taking a more opportunistic stance in development proposals.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally here, the status of the GD in setting planning policy has to some extent been diluted by the introduction of the Coast to Capital LEP, though the position is complex. For example, for one individual intimately involved with spatial planning for the GDI area:

*With this much larger LEP and new powers coming its way, for the Gatwick Diamond my view is that it is an opportunity because it is a mechanism whereby funding, resources and strategic direction can come to it, but it is also a challenge because there are big players involved. You've got Croydon, you've got Brighton. You might say we are a big player, Gatwick Diamond, but we are not unitary we are a series of districts and counties. We are slightly more amorphous than they are.<sup>12</sup>*

Such an appraisal further underlines the weakness of the position of GDI, in the sense that the lack of numeric and spatial detail in the LSS presents a likely difficulty in effectively influencing the activities of a LEP which is large and diverse. The comment of an interviewee from the business community captures a sense of the context:

*The net result is that in my view the Gatwick Diamond Initiative has lost its impetus and its way to an extent and has to reinvent itself into something else. It has been absorbed into the LEP which is a much larger area.<sup>13</sup> (emphasis added)*

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<sup>10</sup> Interview, Senior Planner, GDI, 18 June 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Interview, Former Chief executive, Horsham District Council, 10 January 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, Senior Planner, 18 June 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Interview, Adam Godfrey SHW, 20 September 2013.

## SVUK

Since its introduction in 2008 the SVUK concept has become well established as a planning entity and is referenced widely in formal planning documentation including, for example, the (former) SEP, Oxfordshire County Council transportation policies, and the local development frameworks and core strategies of relevant district councils. It also underscored a broader shift in Oxfordshire's overall planning context marked initially by the South East of England Development Agency's adoption of the RES in 2006 and subsequently incorporated into the SEP. A representative of the County's Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP) commented:

*Harwell, Culham, Milton Park ...they're all key areas of activity. There has been a change of emphasis over time. You can go back a couple of structure plan periods certainly, and economic growth was almost a dirty word in Oxfordshire. Looking at Oxford (city), it was: 'you don't want to overheat the economy'. The underlying theme in a couple of structure plans was: 'well, ok, we want to support the rural economy, we do want to push housing out to the county-towns because we want to protect the greenbelt around Oxford'... but jobs hadn't necessarily flowed. There was an element where the Structure Plans were trying to encourage economic growth outwards, to match the 'housing for sustainable communities' point of view, rather than saying we need to get full square behind the area as a powerhouse engine of the economy. With the Regional Economic Strategy and the introduction of idea of the Central Oxfordshire 'Diamond for Growth', there was a change of focus. That is, we needed to look at things more carefully in terms of what we're trying to do, and the natural assets of Harwell and Culham and Milton Park all coming together started to do that. Then you started to get your key ribbon of development up the A34: SVUK in the south, Oxford city, and, in a different way, Bicester to the north of the county".<sup>14</sup>*

The South East Plan identified 'Central Oxfordshire' as its sub-regional planning entity in Oxfordshire. Employment growth for the sub-region was seen as 'difficult to predict' but set a guide figure of a minimum 18,000 net new jobs from 2006 to 2016. There would be a need to ensure a balance of jobs and houses at both the sub-regional and main settlement level to 2026, such that the housing market situation would not worsen. Key housing targets within the SVUK area itself were set at about 8,750 at Didcot and about 3,400 at Wantage/Grove by 2026, as part of the overall Central Oxfordshire target of 40,680 net additional dwellings. These figures represent a significant growth agenda in the SVUK area, not least given the semi-rural and village-based nature of much of the area, and the historic infrastructural shortfall which goes along with this context.

Despite the Government's revocation of regional spatial strategies from July 2010 and the ensuing removal of housing allocations by many local authorities, South Oxfordshire District Council voted to retain previous housing growth commitments established under the South East Plan in the 'submission version' of its Core Strategy, adopted in November 2010. This was despite the rapid emergence of a new oppositional group – the 'Didcot Ring of Parishes' (DROP) – which sought to exploit the opportunities provided by localism and overturn the previous commitments. In taking this decision, significant pressures in terms of affordable housing and infrastructure provision weighed heavily on SODC, as well as the need to plan for longer-term economic growth in the SVUK area. In addition, there was a clear sense that the Council was seeking to maintain some degree of control over future housing development, given the likelihood of speculative housing applications and a very uncertain legal context.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview, Oxford City Council officer, 22 March 2012.

However, there is also evidence that localism has given rise to policy divergence between SODC and the Vale of the White Horse District Council (VOWH), as the two neighbouring authorities have responded differently to the new planning context. In part this is a question of timing; while SODC pushed through their Core Strategy in 2010-11, VOWH was later into the policy process and has subsequently faced significant challenges in progressing to submission. Indeed, the VOWH local plan will be delayed even in draft form well into 2014 with adoption thereafter. Also, though, there are emerging differences in strategic approach, which is interesting given the notion of a single 'Science Vale UK' identity. While SODC housing allocations are dominated by growth allocations to Didcot and other towns in the district, for example, VOWHDC has actively considered a hybrid strategy, including small and medium sized allocations to larger villages as well as housing development on the edges of existing towns. This differentiation across the SVUK area poses questions regarding the coherence of the overall planning policy response, and associated patterns of physical and social infrastructure provision. The comments of a developer-consultant in response to the question of whether the existence of SVUK had changed the way planning is approached were particularly instructive:

*I think it has. There's a definite feeling that all the different organisations are trying to pull together. For example, infrastructure. We've had discussions with the County Council about the strategic road links – how it's going to be funded and how we put together the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. There's been a more coordinated approach ...but then again probably not as coordinated as it could or should have been. We've been pointing out for some time that it's odd that you've got two councils working on SVUK, bringing forward two core strategies. They've actually got the same management team, the same Chief Executive, the same Head of Planning and Head of Planning Policy, and yet they've got two completely separate core strategies that are running to different timescales. They've got an upcoming Didcot Area Action Plan [AAP] which actually will cross the boundary – but this AAP is not going to deal with the big issues. The big issues are dealt with first, through the separate core strategies. So, yes, SVUK has made a difference on a day-to-day level; it's brought people together, it's got people talking about infrastructure delivery, about employment, about where the housing is going. But in terms of the actual planning mechanisms, the actual process of plan-making, it hasn't. It's almost outside of Planning that people are now talking to each other and working, but inside Planning it's still very much the old system which is creaking along. I see it as a two tier approach.*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Interview, private sector consultant, 22 March 2012.



#### 4. The potential implications of soft spaces for delivering economic growth

##### Evaluating governance arrangements for economic growth

A long-standing objective of research on sub-national economic development has been to examine the efficacy of economic governance arrangements in delivering growth in particular territories. However, there are considerable practical and conceptual challenges of undertaking such an evaluation. In practical terms for example, while we might seek to uncover the impact of governance arrangements on particular policy outcomes (such as the number of new houses built, roads improvements delivered or skill-levels raised), there are at least four reasons why such judgement might be problematical. Firstly, these outcomes are often – perhaps typically – very long-term, with large-scale developments and policy programmes often taking place over 5-10 years or longer. A snapshot at any one particular time is unlikely to capture overall outcomes, even if (as in two of the cases in this research) the governance arrangements have been in place for a decade. Secondly, policy outcomes may be profoundly impacted by the wider context outside of sub-regional governance arrangements, including for example overall patterns of economic performance and macro-economic policy, as well as broader political and regulatory change. This obviously has particular resonance at the present time in light of the credit crunch and ensuing economic crisis since 2008. Thirdly, and relatedly, is the question of attributing causality to sub-regional economic governance arrangements, given the complexity and dynamism of processes underway which influence local economic growth. Fourth is the problem of the counterfactual, or capturing the likely outcomes that would have been produced had our particular governance arrangements not been in place. In practice, then, distilling the impact of governance arrangements on policy outcomes is not in any sense straightforward. As a result, this research adopts an alternative evaluative stance which focuses on the perceived ‘quality’ of economic governance, as described below.

At a more conceptual level, the notion both of ‘governance’ per se and its novelty has itself been subject to critical examination, with concomitant implications for processes of evaluation (Imrie and Raco, 1999). Bovaird and Loeffler (2003, p.293), for example, define local governance as ‘the way in which local stakeholders interact with each other in order to influence the outcomes of public policies’, focusing on ‘the interplay of structures, processes and other mechanisms which link networks of stakeholders’. This though is in contrast to other well-known definitions of local governance which have proved problematic from the perspective of empirical analysis. As Bovaird and Loeffler argue:

*Rhodes (1997, p.53) stipulates that ‘governance refers to self-organizing, interorganizational networks’, which is so general that it is not clear how any evaluation of the quality of governance could be conducted. Kooiman (2003, p.4) suggests: ‘governance can be seen as the totality of theoretical conceptions on governing’, where he defines ‘governing’ as ‘the totality of interactions, in which public as well as private actors participate, aimed at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities; attending to the institutions as contexts for these governing interactions; and establishing a normative foundation for all those activities’. While Kooiman’s concept of ‘governing’ has strong similarities with our definition of ‘governance’, it is so all-embracing (‘the totality of interactions’) that it is difficult to see what boundaries could be drawn around it in empirical research.<sup>16</sup>*

In light of this, Bovaird and Loeffler deploy their particular definition to underpin empirical research which focuses on the ‘quality’ of local governance as perceived by the stakeholders concerned. This

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<sup>16</sup> Bovaird and Loeffler (2003). p.293-294.

is necessarily a relative measure, with standards constructed by stakeholders themselves, but this in turn is seen as:

*...a strength of the approach, not a weakness, as it means that the assessment is grounded in the values and meanings important to the stakeholders, rather than being imposed or second-guessed by an uninvolved and therefore potentially insensitive or out-of-touch external assessor.<sup>17</sup>*

In taking forward their research on 'good governance', Bovaird and Loeffler identify key public governance principles, the assessment of which is based on how far these principles have been honoured in interactions between the different stakeholders. While Bovaird and Loeffler accept that this clearly involves value-judgments, both in assessing each of the key elements and in aggregating them into a final 'governance scorecard', this does not mean that the process is entirely subjective. Rather, it is a process of 'structured and explicated subjectivity', which can be analysed and contested, and which has the potential advantage of practical usefulness having been drawn from the insights of local stakeholders themselves. The principles of good governance might include the following, for example:

- Democratic decision-making;
- Citizen and stakeholder engagement;
- Transparency;
- Accountability;
- Social inclusion and equality (of opportunity, of use, of cost, of access or of outcomes) for disadvantaged groups;
- Fair and honest treatment of citizens;
- Willingness and capacity to work in partnership;
- Ability to compete in a global environment;
- Respect for the rule of law;
- Respect for the rights of others;
- Respect for diversity;
- Sustainability of policies.<sup>18</sup>

This approach finds a good deal of resonance with the question of evaluating economic governance, where the 'quality' of such arrangements is perceived differently by the range of stakeholders involved. In order to create a framework for comparing and contrasting the efficacy of governance arrangements for delivering growth in the three case study spaces here, this research constructs a set of criteria against which 'good economic governance' might be judged. An initial set of criteria have been based on previous research in the field of local and regional economic development, and also on the 100-plus interviews that conducted in these case study sub-regions as part of the current project and previous research activities. Draft criteria were also circulated via interested groups on the social networking site LinkedIn, eliciting useful responses from planning and other local government practitioners and students in order to refine the list further. Finally, opinions were sought in the interviews on what informants thought would be appropriate criteria for 'good economic governance'.

The following framework (Table 2, below) focuses on indicators of good governance specifically tailored to delivering economic growth, that is, the efficient design of institutions for delivering economic growth (such as coterminosity of organisational jurisdictions, the ability to prioritise goals,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.294.

<sup>18</sup> Bovaird and Loeffler (2007). p.294.



and so on). Other indicators, such as those relating to the participation/ownership and clarity of agendas and priorities, could be thought as applying whether the objective is economic growth or other social or environmental agendas.

Each of the case study areas has been ‘scored’ against these criteria. This should be treated as an indicative enterprise, on which further feedback is welcome. The indicators have been grouped according to broader headings which may encourage reflection on the governance capacity that exists across public, private and third sectors and broader civil society. In reality, some of these headings may include several potentially distinguishable indicators or elements. Further, ‘governance’ is by its very nature a complex process based in social and institutional interaction, with all the uncertainties and dynamism that implies. The framework is designed in part to recognise such imperfection by accepting the distinctive perceptions of diverse stakeholders. Additionally, the scoring represents a snapshot only of the ‘quality’ of governance at a particular moment in time (late 2013) and may therefore be subject to rapid and significant change.

Table 2 presents scores for each case study area in terms of a number of indicators of good governance. The scores are on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score obtainable, indicating a situation that approaches the best conceivable, while 1 represents a situation that is unlikely to contribute significantly to delivery. The rationale for the judgements in each case are presented further below.

**Table 2. Indicative scorecard of governance indicators for the three case study areas**

	GDI	SVUK	PUSH
<b>Image:</b>			
Distinct and cohesive identity/image	3	2	1
<b>Strategy:</b>			
Clear and agreed overall agenda/strategy	2	3-4	4
Detailed plans, including spatial commitments	1-2	3	4-5
Ability to prioritise development/investment	2	3-4	2-3
<b>Breadth of ownership:</b>			
Stakeholder engagement	3	2-3	1-2
Clear business agenda	4	3	1-2
Political influence/leverage	3	3	3-4
<b>Resourcing and influencing delivery:</b>			
Resources for spatial planning	1-2	1-2	3

Influencing effective delivery (coterminosity etc)	2	2	3-4
Overcoming identified barriers	2	3	3
<b><i>Adaptive/reflexive capacity:</i></b>			
Monitoring/evaluation processes	2	3	4

### **Gatwick Diamond Initiative**

Starting with the Gatwick Diamond, it is evident that the simple spatial metaphor that emerged from the business community has been effective in establishing a communicable identity for the sub-region. Indeed the metaphor appears to have been sufficiently strong for it to have been picked up and used elsewhere, for example in SEEDA's "diamonds for growth and investment". The image is certainly recognised within the region, not surprisingly perhaps amongst the strong and active business community, although it has less resonance with the local population and civic and environmental groups. Despite the presence of major international linkages and significant foreign investment, however, it is not an image that is widely recognised internationally. As a result there are continuing efforts on the part of the business community to initiate and build such a profile.<sup>19</sup>

With regard to the overall growth agenda for the GD area and associated strategy-making there is a widely-shared desire on the part of both business and local government communities to address the perceived issue of economic under-performance and raising skills levels. Until recently the debate has largely accepted that growth will be driven by Gatwick within its current configuration of a one runway, two terminal airport, alongside associated mitigation measures (GDI, 2012). However, the Airports Commission decision in December 2013 to include a second Gatwick runway as one of its three future options for airport capacity growth in the South East obviously has major implications (Airports Commission, 2013). At the present time there is little agreement locally regarding the second runway and the prospect is of on-going tension in local governance arrangements as a result of this issue. This is likely to spill-over into questions regarding future development and investment priorities, which have shown some marked successes in terms of roads/rail improvement in the past, but which is currently in a period of uncertainty given the impact of the recession and the on-going second runway debate.

The business community, meanwhile, has come out in favour of a second runway, although there is by no means total agreement given the breadth and diversity of business interests across the Gatwick Diamond area.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, up until the 2000s, it appears that local authorities of different character and political complexion had been unified in their opposition to a second runway, partly as a result of a legal agreement between the then British Airports Authority and West Sussex County Council signed in 1979 that prohibited any new runway before August 2019.<sup>21</sup> The emergence of a growth agenda which to some extent cuts across business and local government circles during the last decade does signal an important change in mood and notably the opening up of lines of difference among local authorities in the GD area. This change in mood pre-dates the current localism era; localism may subsequently serve to crystallise the differences that have appeared among local authorities.

<sup>19</sup> Interview, Jeremy Taylor, 10 September 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews, GDI, 18 June 2013; Gatwick Diamond Business, 10 September 2013; Coast to Capital LEP, 18 October 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Interview, former Chief Planner Mole Valley, 17 December 2013.

Turning to planning policy more specifically an agreed but imprecise strategy is currently in place with the 'Gatwick Diamond Local Strategic Statement' (GDI, 2011) which represents something of an advance on historic tensions among the different local authorities.<sup>22</sup> However, as noted earlier, the LSS does not provide details on overall housing numbers nor indicative locations for housing allocations. This is justified with reference to the imposition of top-down housing numbers and detailed allocations under the previous regional arrangements, yet it is difficult to see the context here as anything other than a step backwards from the more specific commitments established by the South East Plan. The implications for future investment plans and priorities are also evident. In these respects Gatwick Diamond compares less favourably to our other two 'soft' planning spaces where plans are more fully elaborated, and also represents a potential source of friction between the local authorities and the business community which would support further clarity and certainty.

In terms of 'ownership', a major strength of the Gatwick Diamond has been the involvement of business interests from the very start, in contrast perhaps to the usual experience across much of the South East of England. The business community initiated the idea of a 'Gatwick Diamond' which has now become a formalised private-public partnership arrangement, the GDI. Business retains a strong voice here, and we might suggest that the local political context for growth is more positive generally than in some other parts of the South-East region. However, it is also arguable that some of the impetus provided by business has been diluted as a result of local authority politics and procedure, as well as the need for greater engagement with the public and civic and environmental groups in recent years.

Some sense of unease with the growth aspirations represented by the GDI is evident among residents and environmental and civic groups away from the most intense growth pressures within the GD area. There is a particularly strong set of groups active at the local level in the Horsham area, for example. These include Transition Horsham, Residents Against Greenfield Erosion (RAGE), Save Horsham and the Horsham Society. Not all of these have been aware of the work conducted under the GDI banner and not all of the opposition appears to be centred on population and economic growth in the GDI area *per se* but rather on the details of what land is likely to be earmarked for housing and other land uses while the Horsham Society has both in the past and at present broadly offered support for the orderly planned growth of the town. Opposition to housing and economic growth in the GDI area has been portrayed in local newspaper headlines referencing the creation of "a London Borough of Crawsham" (West Sussex County Times, 2013) sensationalising valid and live concerns over the gradual encroachment on a strategic gap maintained between Crawley and Horsham. In the case of Horsham the complaint was made very strongly that localism – in contrast to South Hampshire – was not associated with a greater voice for local residents but their exclusion from decision-making regarding the allocation of development sites within draft local plans.<sup>23</sup>

While the GDI emerged early and strongly to be taken up by SEEDA, the evidence regarding the extent to which the GDI has mobilised high-level political influence is mixed. It does not appear to have figured prominently in Whitehall discussions and it does not have representation from front-bench MPs. Among the back benchers, the greenbelt and national park designations and the rural context across much of the GD area mean that MPs such as Nicholas Soames have come out strongly and publicly against major proposed housing developments such as the Mayfields new market town near Henfield (Hansard, 3 December 2013), while the business community can also cite the general support of the likes of Francis Maude for its growth aspirations.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, Senior Planner, Crawley Borough Council, 18 June 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Interview, Representatives, Save Horsham, 29 November 2013.

The resources devoted to spatial planning work specifically within the GDI area have been modest in comparison with SVUK and especially PUSH. It has consisted of one senior planning officer working part time on the preparation of the LSS but able to draw on input from planners among the signatory local authorities. Therefore, although drawing strength from its roots in a business initiative, it has emerged only later as a fully-fledged public-private partnership able to draw on the capacity that exists within the public sector for developing a spatial plan and building an associated evidence base. This has left GDI with a relatively limited evidence base which is progressing slowly and behind the anticipated schedule due to the voluntary nature of a number of committees or working groups within the GDI umbrella.<sup>24</sup>

The lack of specificity in the LSS and the fact that the GDI is one of six other areas within the LEP appears likely to represent a major challenge to the GDI itself being able to influence delivery. There is an acknowledgement that the Spatial Economic Strategy of the Coast to Capital LEP is a balancing act not least due to the scale of the LEP area and the need to retain all interests but also over major investment issues such as the second runway and even housing numbers and their location. Housing and its spatial location is something that the LEP will most likely have to assume a greater role on in the near future.<sup>25</sup> Arguably, however, the ability to draw down funding for concrete projects in the GDI area and indeed the monitoring and evaluation of performance of the institutions that comprise governance arrangements in the GDI is critically exposed by the lack of numeric and spatial detail in the LSS. While C2CLEP has been active in supporting applications and applying for various funding streams and funding for projects under the RGF (round 4) which have been successful, these are not for projects applied for directly by the LEP itself and are not focused on the GD area.<sup>26</sup> There has to date been no city-deal won in the C2CLEP area. Moreover, in a recent comprehensive study of LEPs, C2CLEP's performance in securing funding has been modest (Pike et al, 2013).

## **PUSH**

The sub-region associated with PUSH lacks a strong metaphor or image around which ownership of a growth agenda can emerge. The 'Solent' label assumed by the LEP has not been used in the sub-regional spatial planning work of PUSH due to political sensitivities and is not necessarily one – despite the maritime heritage of the area – that resonates with the different populations that exist across the area since harbours and tributary rivers to some extent divide this sub-region. Sensitivities surrounding use of the word Solent to describe planning ambitions have been acute since Colin Buchanan and Partners' South Hampshire Study in 1966 (Phelps, 2012). While some recall that these sensitivities have persisted in recent years, others suggest that they are lessening over time.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the Solent itself is questionable as an integrative vision as conceivably the littoral space of the Solent (a) does not adequately describe the South Hampshire PUSH area (originally minus the IOW) which stretches some way in land, while it also (b) divides the LEP area (which does include the IOW).

Nevertheless, the limits for this sub-region are effectively set to the north and east by the South Downs National Park and to the west by the New Forest National Park. These insert relatively new planning influences into the mix at the fringes of the PUSH area where the singular objectives of protecting the natural environment of these National Parks may cast a shadow effect on growth objectives and the possibilities for development land allocations in parts of the South Hampshire

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<sup>24</sup> Interview, Senior Planner, GDI, 18 June 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Interview, CEO Coast to Capital LEP, 18 October 2013.

<sup>26</sup> See: <http://www.coast2capital.org.uk/news/press/49-coast-to-capital-region-to-benefit-from-regional-growth-fund#sthash.wrQf9ukr.dpbs>

<sup>27</sup> Interviews, Chair Welborne New Community Standing Committee, CEO, 21 November, Eastleigh Borough Council, 29 November 2013.

area. In the long run these two national parks are likely to exert a pressure cooker effect on the urban South Hampshire area that will require new thinking regarding how the skills and productivity growth of the area can be improved. Unlike the GDI area there is the legacy of the port-industrial complex of the two cities and an absence of significant London overspill opportunities to contend with.

It is a testament to PUSH that the potentially fragile governance structure which emerged under the RSS era has remained intact with a revised sub-regional spatial plan which continues to shape the planning context for the preparation and examination of local authority core strategies. The strength of planning for and delivering on growth in the case of PUSH lies in the agreement obtained over both a 'cities first' focus and detailed housing and employment numbers and associated land allocations which has remained intact after the revocation of the South East Plan. This includes, controversially, two major new sites allocated to particular local authority areas, although one of these was agreed to under the PUSH strategy despite the clear intention that Eastleigh BC would resist it. Crucially, with exception of the abandonment of the SDA originally proposed for Eastleigh BC, local authorities have remained signed up to the broad contours of PUSH's submission to the South East Plan. While numbers have been moderated downwards, they remain substantial and the level of spatial detail remains.

In the context of localism's Duty to Cooperate, the level of spatial detail contained in PUSH's initial and revised sub-regional spatial plan has provided the glue binding the different local authorities together. It also serves as an important and detailed benchmark against which to judge local authority plans coming forward. The commitment of some of the rural fringe authorities to housing numbers and housing and employment land allocations under the revised PUSH spatial plan may yet be tested in the local plan preparation process. However, the 'cities first' emphasis within PUSH's spatial planning work from the outset may minimise the likelihood of core strategies failing at EIP on the basis of a duty to cooperate. Beyond this, the localism agenda appears to have created diversity of approach within the PUSH sub-region. For example, discussions surrounding the SDA North of Fareham have been couched very much in terms of the desirability of concentrating development into a properly planned new community as opposed to it being dispersed across the local authority area. Yet the undesirability of concentrating development into a single SDA has seen politicians and the public favour the dispersal of housing and employment land allocations across a larger number of smaller sites in the case of Eastleigh.

One of the main criticisms of the PUSH growth agenda and associated sub-regional spatial planning activities in the RSS era was that there was little public consultation. With the exception of some presentations to civic societies, systematic public consultation took place only after the spatial plan had been agreed. However, the PUSH organisation had become a less closed organisation by the time of the publication of the South East Plan with minutes and agendas published and meetings opened to the public. The detailed planning of the one remaining SDA at North Fareham provides some indication of a greater stakeholder engagement – though it is difficult to judge the connection to localism. Early preparatory figure work had already indicated that the Fareham SDA would be unlikely to carry the 10,000 homes envisaged under the South East Plan. The figures for the SDA – given the name Welborne – continue to be adjusted but in a process that is now more reflective of some of the political aspirations for Localism.<sup>28</sup> It appears to have transcended the almost complete absence of public participation under the earlier PUSH deliberations. There is a standing conference established to feed in a variety of stakeholder views. If localism has not resulted directly and overtly in reductions in the likes of housing numbers it appears likely that politicians nevertheless have welcomed the opportunity to open up detailed planning to public scrutiny, recognising that public

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<sup>28</sup> Interview, Head of Spatial Planning and Head of Planning, New Community North of Fareham, Fareham Borough Council, 19 September 2013.

voice will help invoke long-standing elements of a local planning approach or culture – such as local and strategic gaps – to further moderate housing figures in ways that would be acceptable in political and popular terms.

In comparison to our other study areas, the business voice within South Hampshire policymaking has been weak and episodic. Those economic crises that have been felt in the sub-region have rarely been severe enough to prompt a concerted and enduring engagement between public and private sectors (Phelps, 2012). As with much of the South East, planning has been tinged with a general antipathy towards the development industry in particular and business in general (Axford and Pinch, 1994). The business community was reduced to expressing its passive support from the side lines while PUSH's submission to the South East Plan was prepared (Phelps, 2012). Whether recent reorganisations of business interest representative groups such as the local chambers of commerce and notably the formation of a Solent Chamber of Commerce – has altered this situation remains unclear at the time of writing.

Yet, PUSH as an organisation and its spatial planning activities continue to enjoy a measure of reputation in central government circles. While the South Hampshire area has had few direct political connections to central government via local MPs holding significant portfolios, PUSH emerged as something of a model of best practice under the RSS process among civil servants in Whitehall under the previous Labour Government. It was allocated growth point funding to further its work and was clearly regarded in previous interviews as one of the more mature efforts by local government to coordinate spatial planning efforts in the UK, with one of the better evidence bases to draw upon (Phelps, 2012). The fact that the two cities were invited to bid for City Deal money kept the PUSH area on the radar of government.<sup>29</sup> The express aim with the Welborne new community north of Fareham is to plan positively for a new settlement drawing on celebrated examples such as Poundbury in Dorset, and to become recognised as a model for the planning of new small communities, rather than repeat the mistakes of earlier periods of accretion onto the existing settlement framework.<sup>30</sup>

There is a formal joint committee arrangement with delegated powers created by the signatories to PUSH in advance of a special delivery vehicle to take forward the various developments envisaged in the RSS era, which provides an element of resourcing. While there is some potential for overlap in responsibilities between PUSH and the Solent LEP, the thought was that PUSH would remain the vehicle for Chief Executive Officers, political leaders and Chief Planning Officers to provide the strategic thinking – including spatial planning – to which the LEP would work. In practice, this appears to have been the case with the LEP exerting a moderating influence rather than being a competing voice. In the era of localism, the staffing devoted to sub-regional or specifically PUSH-related spatial planning has inevitably dwindled after being boosted by growth point funding. However, one of the intriguing things about developments in South Hampshire is that the staff built up in anticipation of PUSH assuming a significant oversight and delivery role in spatial planning have effectively redeployed to other emerging organisations such as the LEP. The former Chief Executive of PUSH is now the Chief Executive of the LEP for example. Moreover, local authority politicians and officers sit in a series of 'overlapping directorships' between PUSH spatial planning and LEP committees which ensures a very strong degree of consistency between the emerging LEP priorities and planning and the existing PUSH spatial planning agenda.

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<sup>29</sup> Principal, Private Sector Consultancy, 3 September 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Interviews, Head of Spatial Planning and Head of Planning New Community North of Fareham, Fareham Borough Council, 19 September 2013 and Chair Welborne New Settlement Standing Conference, 21 November 2013.



The Solent LEP has been highly active in securing funding for various concrete developments envisaged under the original and recently revised PUSH Spatial Plan, which itself worked to an initial economic analysis by DTZ. Whilst aspects of this strategy have been revised as a result of the creation of the LEP, the major employment sites to be developed and unblocked have been well known for some time. These include the Daedalus airfield, part of which has now been designated as an EZ and is eligible for various incentives. They also include the former railway coachworks at Eastleigh as well as Dunsbury Hill Farm in Havant and Waterlooville to be developed as a business and technology park.

To this end the LEP has been directly and indirectly successful in securing RGF, Growing Places and City Deal funding. Solent LEP secured £2.1 million of funding under round 2 of the RGF bidding process for its 'bridging the gap' scheme focused on SMEs and £15 million of funding under Round 3 of the RGF for a continuation of this as well as other projects aimed at advanced manufacturing industries (centred on the EZ). It claims to have been one of only three LEPs nationally to secure funding directly in Round 2 and the only LEP in Round 3 to secure funding directly.<sup>31</sup> In a recent study of all LEPs and the funding associated with their jurisdictions, Solent LEP compares favourably with others in the South East including those associated with our other two case study areas. When totalling all of the various sources of funding open to LEPs, Solent LEP ranked 21<sup>st</sup> ahead of Coast to Capital at 28<sup>th</sup> and Oxfordshire second to last at 38<sup>th</sup> (Pike et al, 2013).

Finally, on monitoring activity, PUSH's sub-regional spatial planning work has been able to draw on a large evidence base from the outset and this has already gone through one round of revision including a re-working of housing numbers and land allocations but also some moderation of employment land allocations as a result of input from the LEP. Further plans are underway to revisit the initial economic forecasting for the sub-region by DTZ which underpinned the whole submission to the South East Plan.<sup>32</sup> For example, there is an independent review of commercial sites and constraints on their deliverability across the sub-region planned, while the advent of the LEP allowed the business community to moderate overly generous employment land allocations originally envisaged as part of the original submission to the South East Plan.<sup>33</sup>

## SVUK

Introduced as a recognised planning entity from 2008, SVUK draws together three dispersed and relatively distinct science and business parks which have grown on the sites of former military bases and UKAEA installations. As a result the area differs quite dramatically from the 'international campus-garden-suburb style' of suburban technopoles (centres of high-tech manufacturing and information-based industry) which has come to prominence in high-tech developments throughout the world (Forsyth and Crewe, 2010). In contrast, the three major elements of SVUK are perhaps better regarded as 'camps' rather than 'campuses', arising from a largely accidental planning history and situated separately against a green, semi-rural background. In turn, they have been lacking in terms of coordinated and comprehensive planning, and are characterized by significant infrastructural shortfalls. Planning for the development of their economic potential embodies addressing not a set of urban contradictions (Saxenien, 1983) as in Silicon Valley, nor even a set of suburban contradictions but a set of rural contradictions.

In this context the image of SVUK *per se* is evolving, and the overall sense of identity and cohesion amongst the major sites is not fully developed. The spatial metaphor introduced here has clear resonance locally and in the regional and sub-regional context, though the diverse and

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<sup>31</sup> [http://www.solentlep.org.uk/regional\\_growth\\_fund/](http://www.solentlep.org.uk/regional_growth_fund/)

<sup>32</sup> Interview, Principal, Private Sector Consultancy, 3 September 2013 3 September 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Board Member, Solent LEP, 23 September 2013.



geographically separated nature of the science/business parks is evident and there remains an underlying question regarding the relationship with the wider image of the science-base in Oxford and Oxfordshire as a whole. It is noteworthy, for example, that the 'Oxford' brand is well-known globally, though the Science Vale UK name does not reference it specifically. Yet at the same time the individual sites which make up SVUK – and especially the world-leading scientific facilities and institutes located therein – have significant profile nationally and internationally.

The growth agenda at SVUK is generally clear and established. The overall employment and housing targets which were laid out in the South East Plan have been largely maintained, and in the case of South Oxfordshire District Council specifically the Core Strategy (which was formally adopted in 2012 after the revocation of the SEP) is explicit in retaining the overall agreed growth targets and the spatial allocation of employment and housing. However, the position in the neighbouring Vale of the White Horse District Council is less clear. Here, for a variety of reasons, progress towards a new local plan has been significantly delayed and the Council has actively considered changes to the pattern of its housing allocations. Subsequently the process is subject to a further delay as the timetable has run into emerging challenges: A new 'Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment' (SHMA) being undertaken with Oxfordshire partner authorities; the need for the SHMA to align with a new economic strategy for the County to be produced by the LEP; and new government planning practice guidance which requires that when preparing housing numbers councils must correct the underlying government household projections if there is evidence of past housing undersupply, and for a range of other market signals. As a result questions emerge particularly regarding the overall housing allocations strategy for the Vale of White Horse area, and subsequently for parts of SVUK, though there is little evidence of any significant alteration in the overall commitment to employment growth.

Despite this over-arching question of strategic clarity other aspects of detailed planning have moved forward, including the successful development of a Local Development Order at the SVUK EZ based in Harwell and Milton Park. Major housing developments are already underway to the west of Didcot and are under currently consideration to the north of Didcot and at Grove in the western part of the SVUK area. In January 2014 the SODC Planning Committee voted unanimously to remove planning restrictions on land at Culham Science Centre to enable on-going research and scientific activity at the site, which had previously been time- restricted based on the activities of the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and the EC-funded Joint European Torus experiment.

With regard to development and investment priorities there has been a relatively clear and established set of proposals in place since the SEP era in the late 2000s. While some revisiting of the priorities might be anticipated as circumstances evolve, the broad pattern of planned commitments has remained largely in place. Yet the major question here is less one of prioritisation within SVUK, but rather one of delivery. Indeed, a sense of the challenge here might be gauged by the withdrawal of £62 million the County Council's transportation budget by the Department of Transport in 2010. This removed support for the 'Access to Oxford' project agreed by the Labour Government in 2007, a major package of investment incorporating expansion of Oxford railway station and measures to tackle congestion on the A34 and the city's ring road. The withdrawal of 'the largest sum for transport ever handed to Oxfordshire' (Oxford Mail, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010) would have direct and indirect impacts on transportation issues at SVUK.

In this context the delivery of sub-regional infrastructure priorities is increasingly reliant on the ability to generate significant s.106 and CIL monies and the capacity to influence the priorities of LEP and the County Council (in particular). Yet here SVUK faces competing priorities within Oxfordshire, and the overall backdrop of major public sector spending cuts which have already had significant

impacts on infrastructure delivery. The implications for delivering investment priorities within SVUK are evident.

'Ownership' of the SVUK project is generally quite well-developed, with strong buy-in from the relevant district councils and appropriate backing from the County Council and the LEP. Notably, however, Didcot Town Council has been far more sceptical of the SVUK notion as a whole, and oppositional parish and neighbourhood organisations have emerged to question the scale of proposed housing growth in particular (see Valler et al, 2012, for a detailed account). Meanwhile, business interests have been largely supportive, though there is no business representative group for the SVUK area *per se*, and an interesting potential divergence exists between Milton Park and Harwell Oxford which are owned by different commercial interests and operate at least to some degree in opposition.

SVUK has strong but perhaps relatively narrow leverage within central government, possibly reflecting the small scale of the area. Regular visits and interest from Cabinet members clearly reference the perceived importance of the area to 'UK Plc' and the central position of science and R&D to the Government's economic strategy. Yet the translation of such support into significant and transformative investment in infrastructure improvements, for example, is less immediately apparent, particularly in the context of on-going national austerity

Direct resourcing of SVUK has been limited since its inception, initially comprising a management board serviced by a single employee. Subsequently, this arrangement was altered with the partnership being serviced by employees of the district councils, and while this is reinforced by the active involvement of planners and other senior officers in the district councils along with the management board and partner interests, the scale of organisational support remains small. Despite this, however, and on-going concerns regarding the ability of SVUK to prosecute its strategic priorities through the LEP and the County Council, there have been clear examples of effective delivery on the ground, for example in the implementation of the EZ and the associated Local Development Order. Questions remain though over the capacity of SVUK to engage fully with the major strategic challenges of roads infrastructure improvements, and other social and economic infrastructure.

### **Overall comparison**

The initial judgement here suggests that PUSH emerges as the sub-regional governance form most favourably placed to deliver on its planned growth agenda. The finding is intriguing as it suggests that effective economic governance in the South East of England might not depend on the strength of the private sector involvement or leadership in governance, but on public sector leadership and resourcing. That is, the strength of governance arrangements for delivering growth may rest on the strength of commitment and resourcing from (local) government. In the case of PUSH, this public sector-led agenda has emerged in a sub-region where the public sector has historically been highly reluctant to plan positively for growth (Phelps 2012).

In contrast, the GDI area emerges as a sub-region that in these particular respects may be least well positioned to deliver on its agenda for growth despite strong private sector initiative and backing. A caveat is that growth may well be achieved in spite of any weaknesses apparent in governance arrangements here, given that the intensity of development pressure in this area is perhaps the strongest of the three case study areas. SVUK emerges as an intermediate case in which growth plans are relatively well-established, despite on-going delay in part of the area, and where growth pressures are evident. However, the capacity of the governance arrangement here to deliver on these growth plans relies substantially on other organisational interests.

## Conclusions

### Governing growth

In some respects these results are somewhat counter-intuitive since the area with the strongest business voice and the strongest 'spatial metaphor' and identity – Gatwick Diamond – emerges as perhaps the weakest area in terms of its likely ability to deliver on growth as part of a sub-regional strategy. Although the area emerged early and strongly as a result of initiative from a large and active business community voice, it comes out of this analysis as the weakest economic governance structure. PUSH emerges as the strongest area in terms of its governance arrangements, against expectations given the lack of image and identity and business input, and given the history of local government stances across the South East as a whole and in South Hampshire historically. SVUK emerges as a sub-regional strategy that is somewhere in between in its capacity to deliver growth.

There are a number of contributory factors to this, including: the scale of resources that have been devoted to spatial planning itself and allied generation of an evidence base which in no short measure has derived from local government contributions; the extent to which members have been able to agree to specific spatial commitments to issues such as housing and employment land allocations; the near coterminosity between the PUSH and LEP areas and a strong measure of interlocking directorships which appear likely to ensure a high degree of coordination between public and private sectors.

### The implications of localism

In each of the case study areas there has been a remarkable commitment to housing and employment land allocations established under the RSS process, with little claw back under the localism era. This reflects underlying concerns in each area about economic growth – especially in relation to the rest of the South East and in some instances in relation to other international benchmarks. In the three areas then, recent strategic aspirations for growth do not appear to have succumbed to the sorts of retrenchment that was being reported in the aftermath of the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategies.

However, that localism has not seen any overt reductions in housing numbers and the like should not be taken at face value. Politicians and planners alike now appear keen to relay popular concerns into the detailed planning and housing numbers associated with particular land allocations in ways which bear some resemblance with past patterns of a reluctance to plan positively for population and economic growth. Moreover, it is apparent across our interviews that the implementation of the localism agenda has created considerable uncertainty and false expectations regarding planning for population and economic growth and associated housing and employment land uses.

Agreed sub-regional strategies based on aspirations for growth have largely stayed in place and are enshrined in organisations and/or agreed statements, albeit with some modifications. In the best of cases – those which have a strong measure of quantitative and spatial detail – they embody yardsticks against which local plans are likely to be judged at examination for the Duty to Cooperate. On the other hand, where there is a lack of such detail, there is evidence that local authorities are preparing draft local plans in something of a strategic planning vacuum. It is also possible that the planning involved to date for these 'soft' spaces may rapidly be overtaken by the agendas associated with a newer set of specifically economic development organisations – the LEPs – rather than spatial planning organisations (Pike et al, 2013), with all that this entails regarding expectations built up around the initial promise of localism in the planning system.

Although this research does not delve fully into the deliberations of all the local authorities involved, it is apparent that the implications of localism are diverse. Indeed, contrasting approaches are being taken by local authorities within the same sub-regional planning spaces, for example in PUSH where new housing in Fareham is consolidated into one single new SDA community, while that in Eastleigh is distributed across many smaller sites. Similarly, there is evidence of contrasting strategies for housing allocation emerging across the two district councils that make up SVUK.

### **Effectiveness in delivering growth**

This report has presented a detailed exposition of the comparative performance of three soft spaces in governing economic growth. Each of these soft spaces are grappling with the issue that their communities are underperforming in relation to the rest of the South East as well as internationally. Some such as GDI have aspirations – especially on the part of the business interests involved – to fashion an international name (as one interviewee explained: “The vision of the Gatwick Diamond was to become an internationally recognised location by 2016”.<sup>34</sup>) Yet in each of these cases, while some of the images and metaphors associated with these soft planning spaces may be on the radar in Whitehall and Parliament and to an extent elsewhere, none register internationally in the way that leading high technology spaces such as Silicon Valley do. The allusions made to places such as Silicon Valley in labels such as ‘Science Vale’ are pale reflections in comparison and serve to point up the challenges for planning in contributing to ‘UK Plc’.

Across the three case study areas, growth agendas have been couched significantly in terms less of expanding employment *per se* as in terms of increasing productivity levels of business in each of the areas with a view to narrowing the gap with the South East region as a whole. These aspirations for growth in the study areas are wholly appropriate as a way of minimising the land take for employment and associated housing. Such intensive growth ought to be entirely possible given the development pressures that exist in the South East, however it remains unclear how the present planning system can make its own positive contribution to such strategies. In the interviews conducted for this research there was, for example, frustration that the available planning tools are unable to effect the retention of high value added jobs over lower value added jobs let alone any ‘ratcheting up’ of employment types in the GDI area.

Planning and politics across the South East region as a whole have long embodied an approach or culture that has sought to allocate land as accretions to the existing settlement pattern rather than to embrace the comprehensive planning of new settlements. Across the three case study areas there was an emerging recognition of some of the limits of this approach. This recognition appears to have developed albeit tentatively under the RSS era and it constitutes part of a wider debate that could usefully be had in the South East in particular, where there has been major opposition to the designation and development of new towns, eco towns and the like since the 1960s. Given the peculiarities of the South East as for the most part a web of market towns and villages lacking any major city-regions traversed by long-distance commuting, this would mean that debate would need to look anew at the appropriate scale of any new settlements and the meaning of and prospects for self-containment. However, it would be timely given the reassertion of the case for comprehensively planned new settlements being made by the TCPA (TCPA, 2011), the RTPI (RTPI, 2013) and the recently announced second Wolfson Economics Prize prize.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Interview, Private Sector representative, 10 July 2013.

<sup>35</sup> See [www.policyexchange.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/category/item/wolfson-economics-prize-seeks-to-inspire-answers-to-britain-s-housing-crisis](http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/category/item/wolfson-economics-prize-seeks-to-inspire-answers-to-britain-s-housing-crisis)

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**RTPI**

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## About the research

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## Further information

The report is available on the RTPI website at: [www.rtpi.org.uk/spire](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/spire)

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