

SEERA defends South East strategy

A new settlement at Dunsfold Park is "not a runner" and "is simply in the middle of nowhere" says the South East England Regional Assembly's (SEERA) Planning Strategy Director.

At the recent hearing in Reading Town Hall, Ian McDonald, Dunsfold Park Ltd's strategic planning advisor, pressed the Government appointed panel of Inspectors examining the draft South East Plan to change the strategy to allow a new settlement of 2,600 homes at Dunsfold Aerodrome.

Mr McDonald said that Dunsfold Park Ltd had a vision of a national exemplar of sustainable development. He emphasised that although there is space on the site for 5,000 homes their proposal was for only 2,600. The company had not "gone in any opportunistic fashion for maximum development".

On behalf of the Stop Dunsfold Park New Town campaign, Godalming based Town Planner Colin Meade, told the Panel that however much the scheme is dressed up with bio-mass and eco-friendly systems it is quite simply in the wrong location. The road network in the area is poor and there is little public transport. The site is almost ring-fenced by the Area of Great Landscape Value and it has Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other ecologically sensitive areas around it.

In summing up at the end of the session, Catriona Riddell, the Planning Strategy Director of the South East England Regional Assembly, defended the Assembly's spatial strategy in the plan. She agreed with the Stop Dunsfold Park New Town campaign that a new settlement at Dunsfold Park would be in the wrong location.

Ms Riddell emphasised that the proposed settlement "simply doesn't stack up in terms of the spatial strategy". "It's not even close to a main urban settlement, it is simply in the middle of nowhere". "It's not a runner as far as the Assembly's concerned."