

## Places Advisory Panel

12 November 2008

## **REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY (RSS)**

### **1 ADOPTION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY**

- 1.1 A new Regional Spatial Strategy, the 'North West of England Plan' was published on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008.
- 1.2 The strategy provides a framework for development and investment in the North West to 2021. Planning policy documents produced as part of the Local Development Framework must be in general conformity with the RSS and planning applications should be determined in accordance with it, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 1.3 The new strategy replaces the previous RSS and the Cheshire Structure Plan. However, a small number of policies from the Structure Plan have been 'saved' and will be replaced by a future review of the RSS.
- 1.4 Prior to the adoption of Development Plan Documents as part of the Cheshire East Local Development Framework, the Statutory Development Plan for Cheshire East will consist of:
  - The new Regional Spatial Strategy;
  - The Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005) Saved Policies;
  - The Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan (2005) Saved Policies;
  - The Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (2004) Saved Policies;
  - The Cheshire 2016: Structure Plan Alteration Saved Policies (GEN5 - Jodrell Bank Zone; GEN8 - Regional Parks; HOU6 – Caravan Sites for Gypsies; T4 – Strategic Improvements to Transport Network; T5 – Former Railway Infrastructure; T7 – Parking; T8 – Improvements to the Railway Network; T9 – Motorway and Trunk Road Schemes; T10 – Roadside Services; TR3 – Visitor Accommodation; and TR4 – Golf Course and Other Extensive Outdoor Recreation).
- 1.5 All other Structure Plan policies have now been superseded.
- 1.6 The new RSS sets out a number of spatial principles and then details a regional spatial framework to address these principles. It also contains chapters on the policy areas of living, working, transport and environment, minerals, energy and waste. Chapters dedicated to sub-regions give specific policies for the Manchester City Region, Liverpool City Region, Central Lancashire City Region, and the Cumbria & North Lancashire sub-region.

Crewe and Nantwich had previously been contained in a separate South Cheshire sub-region, but this is now included within the Manchester City Region along with the rest of Cheshire East to reflect Local Government re-organisation.

- 1.7 The Strategy is based on eight key spatial principles:
  - Close the gap in economic performance
  - Manage travel demand
  - Marry opportunity and need
  - Promote environmental quality
  - Reduce emissions and adapt to climate change
  - Promote sustainable communities
  - Make best use of existing resources / infrastructure
  - Mainstreaming rural issues
- 1.8 Growth and investment within the region should take account of the stated spatial priorities:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> priority: the regional centres of Manchester and Liverpool
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> priority: the inner areas surrounding these centres
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> priority: 23 towns and cities in the three city regions (including Crewe and Macclesfield), with the potential for Local Development Frameworks to designate additional large suburban centres for growth
  - 4<sup>th</sup> priority: towns and cities outside the city regions
- 1.9 It had previously been proposed to highlight a number of towns and cities in the third priority that offered particular opportunities for growth that should be harnessed in sustainable ways (including Crewe). This has not been carried through to the final published version of RSS.
- 1.10 In rural areas, development should be concentrated in 'Key Service Centres' (to be identified in the Core Strategy), which act as service centres for the surrounding areas. Development should be of a scale and nature to meet local needs and enhance the quality of rural life. Below this level, small-scale development will be allowed in 'Local Service Centres' to help meet local needs and sustain local services. Development in the open countryside is only acceptable in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.11 The general extent of the Green Belt will be maintained. There is a presumption against exceptional strategic change to the Green Belt in Cheshire. However, there is scope to make changes to provide for Manchester Airport expansion.
- 1.12 The strategy focuses on building on the region's economic strengths, although a surplus of employment land has been identified within Cheshire & Warrington. Local authorities within this sub-region will need to plan together to de-allocate 297 ha in total. The Local Development Framework should support sustainable economic growth in Crewe, promote its role as regional

public transport gateway and provide for continued regeneration in the town. Elsewhere in Cheshire East, employment development should be focussed on Macclesfield town in order to support the overall economic growth of the City Region, to meet local needs and to address worklessness.

- 1.13 Retail investment should be promoted to assist the regeneration and economic growth of town and city centres. Manchester / Salford and Liverpool will function as the primary centres but comparison retailing facilities should be enhanced and encouraged in 25 other towns and cities (including Crewe and Macclesfield). Investment in other centres should meet local needs. There is a continuing presumption against large out-of-centre comparison retailing facilities.

- 1.14 The annual average rate of housing provision for Cheshire East to 2021 is 1,150 additional dwellings per annum (net of clearance) as shown below. Overall, 72.17% should be on brownfield land.

Area	Total Net Housing Provision 2003-2021	Annual Net Average Rate of Provision	Target Proportion on Brownfield Land
Congleton	5,400	300	80%
Crewe & Nantwich	8,100	450	60%
Macclesfield	7,200	400	80%
Cheshire East Total	20,700	1,150	72.17%

- 1.15 Despite the recommendations in the Examination in Public Panel Report, these overall and annual average housing provision figures are not absolute targets, and may be exceeded where justified by evidence of need, demand, affordability and sustainability issues and fit with relevant local and sub-regional strategies. This follows recommendations made by the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit on the need to increase rates of housebuilding nationally, and to accommodate potential growth points in the region.
- 1.16 Housing provision in Southern Manchester & North East Cheshire (including Macclesfield and Congleton Boroughs) should focus on meeting local and affordable housing needs, and support agreed local regeneration strategies. Careful monitoring and management will be necessary to ensure that new housing development does not result in an adverse cumulative impact on local and neighbouring housing markets.
- 1.17 In Crewe and Nantwich, housing provision should meet local and affordable needs, plus general market housing in sustainable locations to support agreed local regeneration strategies and the role of Crewe as a key regional town and gateway to the North West.
- 1.18 The results of up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments should inform the allocation of, and development control decisions upon specific sites. Local Authorities should

also encourage new homes to be built to the Code for Sustainable Homes standards and promote the use of the Lifetime Homes standard.

- 1.19 Local Development Frameworks are required to develop policies setting out requirements for decentralised renewable and low carbon energy provision in new developments. In advance of local targets being set, the RSS requires that new non-residential developments of 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> or more and residential developments of 10 or more units should secure at least 10% of their predicted energy requirements from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources unless it can be demonstrated that this is not feasible or viable.

## **2 PARTIAL REVIEW**

- 2.1 Although the RSS has only recently been published, a partial review of the strategy had already begun earlier this year. This had been intended to update policies in the areas of housing, waste, renewable energy, Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and regional parking standards in light of recent developments in Government policy, and new evidence and research.
- 2.2 On 11th September, 4NW (the Regional Planning Body) announced changes to the Partial Review of RSS, which have been implemented in light of:
- Changing circumstances in the housing market;
  - A letter sent from Caroline Flint to all Regional Planning Bodies in July 2008;
  - The need to get a more complete evidence base on a number of issues including housing land availability and infrastructure capacity;
  - Feedback from stakeholders on the recent Options consultation exercise in June 2008;
  - The policy position emerging from the publication of the final version of RSS;
  - Work commencing in the North West on a Regional Strategy ahead of emerging legislation for a Single Regional Strategy.
- 2.3 The policy areas of housing, renewable energy and waste will now not form part of the Partial Review and the scope of the review will be limited to Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and regional parking standards. As a result, 4NW will also revise the timetable for the Partial Review and further information will be circulated once any announcement is made.
- 2.4 4NW intend to continue working on developing the evidence base for housing, renewable energy and waste and incorporate it as appropriate into joint work with the North West Development Agency (NWDA) in developing the forthcoming non-statutory "Regional Strategy".

## **3 REGIONAL STRATEGY AND THE SINGLE REGIONAL STRATEGY**

- 3.1 Following proposals set out in the Government's Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration, the NWDA, 4NW and the Government Office for the North West (GONW) agreed that the region should work together over the next two years to produce a Northwest 'Regional Strategy'. This will bring together spatial, economic and environmental strategies and investment plans in order to create the conditions for achieving higher levels of sustainable economic and social well being while strengthening the Northwest's contribution to tackling climate change.
- 3.2 The Regional Strategy will be spatially focussed and will:
- Refresh economic development actions and build on the 2006-9 Regional Economic Strategy (RES);
  - Integrate priorities in the Regional Housing Study (RHS), Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the RSS Partial Review with sustainable economic priorities in a strategic review;
  - Set out a delivery and implementation plan with actions and accountability for all relevant partners.
- 3.3 Although the Regional Strategy will not be statutory, its development will allow the preparation of a statutory 'Single Regional Strategy' quickly and effectively after the necessary legislative changes, which are unlikely to occur before 2010. Until these legislative changes take place, the RSS will remain the statutory basis for spatial planning.
- 3.4 The new Regional Strategy will be developed in partnership but led by the NWDA working with 4NW. A Regional Strategy Advisory Group will guide much of the day-to-day work. Full engagement of all public, private, voluntary and community sector partners is essential, and sub-regional partnerships and local authorities will have an important role.
- 3.5 An Issues and Principles paper will be published in December 2008 with a 12-week regional consultation on the options and vision development between January and March 2009. Full public consultation on the draft regional strategy will take place between October and December 2009, with submission to Government timetabled for January 2010.