

Local Development Framework Working Group

6th September 2010

Report of the Director of City Strategy

LDF Core Strategy

Summary

1. This report considers the implications of recent government policy changes on the LDF Core Strategy, in particular the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS).

Background

2. Since the Core Strategy public consultation in autumn last year there have been a number of key changes nationally that have effected the context in which decisions are made. Chief among these is the change in Government and the adoption of the 'Localism' agenda which has led to the revocation of Regional Plans. The nature of these changes are considered in detail in paragraphs 3 and 4 below. It should be noted however, that the commitment to plan making remains as does the local need for an adopted development plan for the City of York to provide certainty and clarity about the Council's planning position.

Change in Policy Context

3. The coalition agreement published in May 2010 by the new government made a commitment to '*rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and return decision making powers on housing and planning to local councils*'. Following on from this on 6th July the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG), Eric Pickles, announced the revocation of Regional Strategies with immediate effect under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. RSSs therefore no longer form part of the statutory development plan, making LDFs the basis for local planning decisions. The letter and guidance about its significance are attached at Annex 1.
4. The change has significant implications for decisions made by local planning authorities and inspectors about strategic housing provision and other policies in LDFs. The

announcement was made in a letter sent to chief planning officers in local planning authorities across England. It included the guidance highlighted below:

- Local planning authorities will be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision in their area, and identifying a long term supply of housing land without the burden of regional housing targets. Some authorities may decide to retain their existing housing targets that were set out in the revoked Regional Strategies. Others may decide to review their housing targets. We would expect that those authorities should quickly signal their intention to undertake an early review so that communities and land owners know where they stand.
- It is important for the planning process to be transparent, and for people to be able to understand why decisions have been taken. Local authorities should continue to collect and use reliable information to justify their housing supply policies and defend them during the LDF examination process. They should do this in line with current policy in PPS3.
- Local planning authorities should continue to use their plans to identify sufficient sites and broad areas for development to deliver their housing ambitions for at least 15 years from the date the plan is adopted. Authorities should also have a five year land supply of deliverable sites. This too will need to reflect any changes to the overall local housing ambition.

Response to Policy Changes

5. In early August, house builder CALA Homes launched a legal challenge to the government's decision to revoke RSSs. They argue that the Secretary of State breached his obligations under European law by failing to assess the environmental effects of withdrawing RSSs and that the government should have put in place transitional arrangements. Their challenge centres on their proposals to build 2,000 homes in Winchester on a site that was identified in the South East Plan (RSS for the South East). They are seeking the reinstatement of the Plan. They have requested a hearing in the first half of September.
6. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee has launched an inquiry into the abolition of RSSs. The Committee will be focussing particularly on the implications for house building in the absence of regional targets. The inquiry is expected to take place during the Autumn.
7. Research undertaken by Roger Tym and Partners provides some insight into how local authorities are responding to the revocation of RSS. The researchers undertook a survey of policy planners in a sample of 70 local authorities across England. They found that just over half (51%) of the authorities surveyed expected to review their housing targets following the abolition of RSS, whilst 35% said they expected to stay with existing targets (12% were undecided).

8. With regard to employment figures, 22% of those authorities surveyed said that they expected to review their targets following the revocation of RSS, with 26% undecided. Half of those questioned said that they anticipated retaining their existing employment targets.

Potential Implications for the LDF Core Strategy

9. The revocation of RSS has important implications for the production of York's LDF Core Strategy. These relate specifically to the levels of housing and employment growth which will effect the overall LDF spatial strategy including decisions on the Green Belt and related factors such as the provision of essential infrastructure. These issues are explored in more detail below.

Housing

10. The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for Yorkshire & the Humber (2008) included a housing requirement for York of 640 homes per annum for the period April 2004 - March 2008 and 850 homes between April 2008 - March 2026.
11. Prior to the publication of RSS the figures included within the document were the subject of a report to the Council's Executive on 18th December 2007. The Council's response included the following key points:
 - despite concerns regarding the ability of the City to absorb the additional numbers, we recognise the higher household projections since draft RSS and the need identified in our Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA);
 - we are prepared to accept a step up to 850 per annum, but this should be from 2011 not 2008, to allow time to put the necessary LDF spatial strategy in place in a way that reflects York's environmental constraints and addresses transport infrastructure constraints; and
 - additional growth must be conditional on two things: (1) a recognition of the important role of windfalls in future housing provision; and (2) substantial assistance with infrastructure costs being made available from national and regional sources.
12. With regard to windfalls, the published RSS recognised the high number of windfalls which had come forward across the region historically, but pointed to the important role of Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs) in identifying sites and areas that would previously have been accounted for in windfall calculations. This approach reflects national guidance set out in PPS3 (June 2010) which makes it clear that local authorities, in planning for housing land, should not plan for a set level of windfalls, except in the most exceptional of circumstances.
13. The figures included within RSS were considerably less than the national household projections for York. This was in recognition of the City's

environmental constraints including protecting the historic character and setting of the City and other regeneration priorities of the plan which prioritised development in the large urban areas such as Leeds. The latest figures provided by CLG are based on the 2006 population projections and were released in March 2009. The number of households in York is projected to grow to 117,000 in 2031. This equates to 1,400 new households per year. This is a trend based analysis that does not take account of economic considerations.

14. The RSS figures were also lower than the net housing demand included in the Council's SHMA, published in 2007. The SHMA concludes that to achieve a balanced housing market in York, an additional 982 dwellings would be needed per annum. It should be noted however that the study indicates that this is not necessarily a compelling argument for changing housing targets as other factors have to be borne in mind, including infrastructure constraints and the character and setting of the city.

Employment

15. The adopted RSS included an annual potential job growth figure for York of 2,130, but allowed for the use of local employment studies to modify its projections. The adopted figure was significantly higher than the figures included for York in the draft RSS in 2005 (544 jobs a year).
16. Prior to the adoption of RSS, on 18th December 2007 the council's Executive considered a report on the proposed amendments recommended by the Secretary of State, including the change to the employment figures. The council's response raised the following points:
 - the employment figures proposed (2,130) are way in excess of the potential identified in our own Employment Land Review (ELR, 2007) of 1060 jobs a year;
 - York's ELR figures are a realistic and sustainable figure for York as they reflect past rates of growth, would deliver Science City York aspirations to grow by 5% a year and would allow York to fulfill its important local and regional economic role;
 - we are concerned that the Regional Economic Model includes a significant element of double-counting; and
 - the RSS should be amended to state that plans only have to 'take account of' the employment projections set out, rather than 'help to deliver'.
17. Following the adoption of RSS in 2008, the council published a further Employment Land Review (2009) which indicated that the total number of jobs in York would increase between 2006 – 2029 by 25,600. Therefore projecting York's job growth to 2029 at 1,113 a year.

Delivery Against RSS Targets

18. The rate of housing delivery in York has been falling. The table below sets out delivery rates for housing in York since 2004 against the targets set out in the RSS. The table highlights the impact of the recession on delivery over the last three years.

Table 1: Rates of Housing Delivery

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	TOTAL
Housing							
RSS Target	640	640	640	640	850	850	4260
Delivery Rate	1160	906	798	523	451	507	4345

19. In terms of employment, job growth has been forecast at 1,113 jobs a year. The Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) from the Office of National Statistics provides data on the number of jobs in York over the past ten years as set out in the table below. This enables a comparison with the 1,113 a year forecast although it should be noted that these figures are limited to employees, for example they do not include those who are classed as self employed or partners.

Table 2: Estimate Number of Employee Jobs

Year	Employee Jobs
1999	93,350
2000	93,800
2001	102,050
2002	100,300
2003	104,170
2004	100,350
2005	99,500
2006	97,700
2007	102,000
2008	101,200

Core Strategy - Spatial Strategy

20. The draft LDF Core Strategy was published for the purpose of public consultation in Autumn 2009 and reflected the national policy position at that time. It was in conformity with the RSS and accordingly incorporated a housing requirement for York of 640 homes per annum for the period April 2004 - March 2008 and 850 homes between April 2008 - March 2026. Beyond the end date of RSS (2026), an annual rate of 850 homes per year was projected forward until the end date of the LDF (2030). Discounting for dwellings that had been completed, had consent or were part complete meant that the spatial strategy needed to direct the

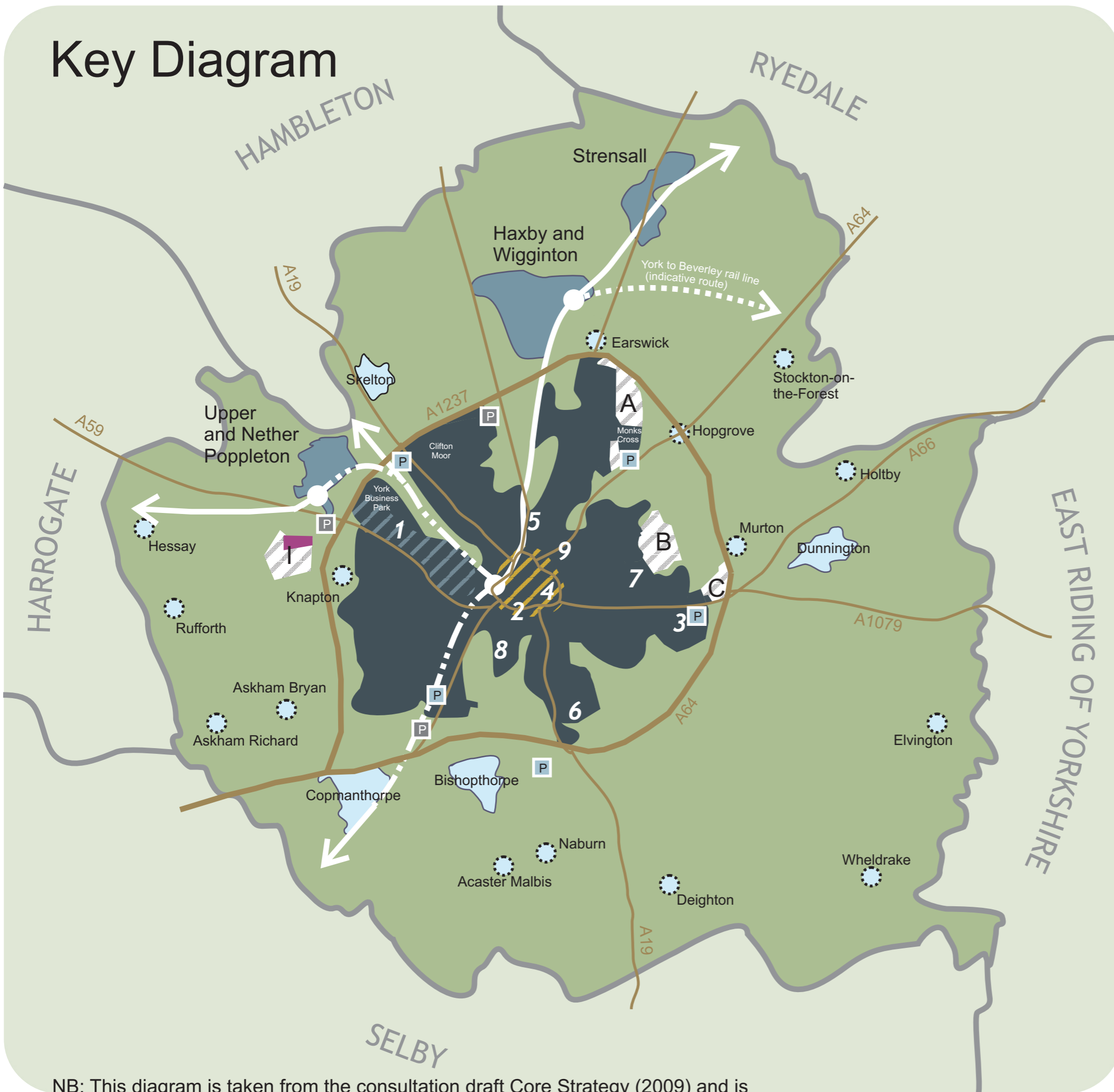
location of an additional 13,442 homes by 2030 (these figures are currently being updated).

21. Whilst acknowledging that the SHLAA should identify most available sites for the short and medium term, given the timescale of the LDF (to 2030), the approach in the Core Strategy Preferred Options was to include an allowance for windfalls after fifteen years although this was at risk.
22. In terms of the levels of employment growth the LDF position was based on the City of York's Employment Land Review (2009) indicated that the total number of jobs in York would increase between 2006 – 2029 by an average of 1,113pa.
23. The approach to housing and employment led to the key diagram included as figure 1 attached. The spatial strategy included as part of the document concentrated development within the main urban area and identified key development sites in the City. In addition it also identified two potential future areas for urban extensions for housing (Areas A & B) and employment (Area C) along with land around the existing Northminster Business Park for employment (Area I).
24. The draft Core Strategy published for public consultation, within the context of national policy at that time, attempted to balance both housing and employment growth and through its policy approach create places where people want to live and work, that are safe and inclusive, well planned and built, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

Consultation Responses Relating to the Spatial Strategy

25. Reports to the LDF Working Group in January and April 2010 provided Members with information that came out of the consultation. With regard to future housing and employment growth and the spatial strategy in summary the citywide questionnaire included the comments below.
 - 90% of respondents supported the key constraints used to help shape the spatial strategy relating to green infrastructure, flood risk and historic character and setting.
 - 43% of respondents felt that York's economy should grow by 1000 jobs per year and 9% by more than this amount.
 - 58% of respondents felt that we should be building less than 850 new homes a year.
 - Around 60% of respondents felt that land should not be identified in the draft green belt for housing or employment. However, if we had to identify land in the draft green belt for housing, 67% of respondents felt that Areas A and B would be most suitable. 58% of respondents believed that Area C was suitable for industrial and distribution employment, whilst 41% agreed that Area I was suitable.

Key Diagram



York - Sub-Regional City (main urban area)
Defined by RSS and relates to the main urban area of York as the focus of employment, housing, shopping, health, leisure, business and public service

Local Service Centres
The most sustainable settlements after York itself, ensuring good access to services, employment and public transport

Villages

Small Villages

General extent of the proposed Green Belt

1 York Northwest
2 Castle Piccadilly
3 Heslington East (pp)*
4 Hungate (phase 1 pp)
5 Nestle South
6 Germany Beck (pp)
7 Derwenthorpe (pp)
8 Terry's
9 Layerthorpe area

*pp: planning permission granted

Potential Areas of Search
A Monks Cross, Huntington
B East of Metcalfe Lane, Osbaldwick
C North of Hull Road
I Northminster Business Park (nb existing employment allocation shown as)

York North West Area Action Plan
 City Centre Area Action Plan

Existing/proposed new or relocated Park and Ride site*
*exact locations to be determined

Tram-train
 Main rail network
 Main road network

NB: This diagram is taken from the consultation draft Core Strategy (2009) and is based on the housing and employment figures included within that document.

- 77% of respondents agreed that we should be allowed to include a higher level of windfalls in the plan.

26. Through the other forms of consultation a variety of other issues were raised including those highlighted below.

- Concerns surrounding the levels of growth of housing, employment and retail including implications for the green belt, infrastructure implications and the environmental impact of the proposed overall approach. Although there was support for focusing growth on the main urban area.
- Comments both against and for the proposed areas of search, including issues about phasing and location and whether the outer ring road should form a constraint.
- Support for the precautionary approach to flood risk and the focus on previously developed land.
- Discussion on how to deliver the right mix and type of housing, comments both for and against the inclusion of windfalls and the need for a flexible approach to housing density.
- A recognition that YNW is essential to achieving the Core Strategy vision.

Analysis

27. In revoking RSSs the Secretary of State hands back to local planning authorities the direct responsibility for a series of policy decisions. Significant among these is the question relating to the level the council, as local planning authority, should set for its strategic housing requirement. An important aspect of the Secretary of State's announcement is the stress placed on reasonableness and the justifying of decisions.

28. The change in policy context gives rise to some key issues highlighted below in relation to the overall spatial strategy. These include:

- level of future housing & employment growth;
- the distribution of development; and
- appropriate infrastructure provision.

Level of future housing & employment growth

Issue 1: The continuing relevance of the evidence supporting the RSS housing figures for York in light of:

- response to the LDF Core Strategy Consultation indicating that a majority of respondents thought that we should be building fewer than 850 homes per year;
- the latest CLG projections for York;
- identified housing need to create a balanced housing market; and

- the impact of the recession on the level and potential phasing of housing delivery.

Issue 2: The continued use of the employment figures included within the preferred options document given the impact of the recession and the role of the Core Strategy in balancing housing and employment growth. This includes the need to recognise York's Sub Regional Economic Role and the view of 43% of respondents to consultation that York's economy should grow by 1000 jobs per year and 9% by more than this amount.

The distribution of development.

Issue 3: The future distribution of development including implications for the existing draft Green Belt within the context of:

- overall growth levels for housing and employment;
- responses to the LDF consultation document indicating that around 60% of respondents felt that land should not be identified in the draft green belt for housing or employment; and
- based on the growth levels included in the draft Core Strategy produced for consultation responses highlighted that if we had to identify land in the draft green belt for housing, 67% of respondents felt that Areas A and B would be most suitable. 58% of respondents believed that Area C was suitable for industrial and distribution employment, whilst 41% agreed that Area I was suitable.

Issue 4: The inclusion of windfalls. National guidance remains unchanged and indicates that plans should not include a set level of windfalls. The Core Strategy Preferred Options document, given the timescale of the plan (to 2030) includes an allowance for windfalls towards the latter end of the plan (after 15 years). In addition 77% of respondents agreed that we should be allowed to include a higher level of windfalls in the plan. Given the changing national context, subject to Member views, it could be appropriate to lobby Central Government directly on this issue. National guidance could be refined to allow plans to include an allowance for windfalls where there is area based evidence that, with continued economic restructuring and urban renewal, windfalls will remain an important source of new housing opportunities as part of a planned approach.

Appropriate infrastructure provision.

Issue 5: Ensuring that adequate infrastructure is provided to support future levels of sustainable growth.

Options

29. Members have two options in light of the issues raised within this report.

Option 1: Progress the LDF Core Strategy spatial strategy reconsidering the housing and employment figures used for the purposes of public consultation by testing or modifying them in light of the issues raised in paragraph 28 above.

Option 2: Request Officers to come up with an alternative approach to calculating the City's future growth.

Analysis of Options

30. Option 1: reconsidering and further testing the housing and employment figures previously included in the consultation draft Core Strategy in the light of the factors highlighted in paragraph 28 above would allow progress to be made towards an adopted Core Strategy in 2011. At the same time it would provide an opportunity to reflect local issues including whether trajectories need to be reconfigured in light of the recession, changes to the housing market and delivery.
31. Option 2 represents a more substantial review of growth assumptions and would require a sub area based approach to consider the interrelationship between York and neighbouring authorities in terms of housing, employment and travel. This would have time implications for the production of the Core Strategy and would ultimately necessitate further public consultation. A piece of work of this type would be likely to take a minimum of twelve months.

Next Steps

31. If Members wish to progress with option 1 then officers will prepare a report on the LDF Core Strategy pre-submission document for the Working Group to consider in October 2010. If option 2 is the preferred way forward then officers will undertake to develop a methodology and timetable for carrying out the required work.

Corporate Priorities

32. The Core Strategy has the potential to contribute towards the delivery of all the Corporate Priorities through its policies and actions. It will aim to make York a:
 - Sustainable City
 - Thriving City
 - Safer City
 - Learning City
 - Inclusive City
 - City of Culture
 - Healthy City

Implications

33. The following implications have been assessed:

- **Financial** – None
- **Human Resources (HR)** - None
- **Equalities** - None
- **Legal** - None
- **Crime and Disorder** - None
- **Information Technology (IT)** - None
- **Property** - None
- **Other** - None

Risk Management

34. In compliance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy, there are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

35. That Members:

- request officers to produce a report for the LDF Working Group in October in line with option 1 outlined in paragraph 29 of this report; and
- request officers to press government to refine the national guidance on windfalls as outlined under issue 4, paragraph 28 of this report.

Reason: To help progress the LDF Core Strategy to its next stage of development.

Contact Details

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Report
Approved



Date 27/08/10

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

- Annex 1: CLG correspondence on revocation of RSS

The Chief Planning Officer
Local Planning Authorities in England

6 July 2010

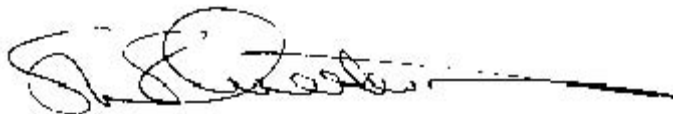
Chief Planning Officer Letter:

REVOCATION OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Today the Secretary of State announced the revocation of Regional Strategies with immediate effect.

I have attached some 'questions and answer' advice on immediate issues that may arise from this announcement. It will be important for local planning authorities to carry on delivering local development frameworks and making decisions on applications and the attached document focuses on how to continue taking these forward.

Please address any queries to Eamon Mythen at CLG in the first instance (Eamon.Mythen@communities.gsi.gov.uk).



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Guidance for Local Planning Authorities following the revocation of Regional Strategies

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government confirmed today that Regional Strategies will be revoked (see the attached copy of the Parliamentary Written Statement). In the longer term the legal basis for Regional Strategies will be abolished through the “Localism Bill” that we are introducing in the current Parliamentary session. New ways for local authorities to address strategic planning and infrastructure issues based on cooperation will be introduced. This guidance provides some clarification on the impact of the revocation; how local planning authorities can continue to bring forward their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs); and make planning decisions in the transitional period.

1. Under what powers are Regional Strategies being revoked?

Regional Strategies have been revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This guidance covers the period between revocation of Regional Strategies and legislation to abolish them altogether.

2. Do Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) remain in force?

Yes. The Policy Statement on Regional Strategies (February 2010) is cancelled, and references to Regional Strategies in other Policy Statements are no longer valid. But all other PPSs will continue to apply until they are replaced by the National Planning Framework.

3. Will this affect the London Plan?

The London Plan will continue to provide the planning framework for London boroughs. As part of a wider process of decentralisation in London, we are reviewing how powers and discretion can be shifted downwards from central government to the Mayor and Assembly, to London Boroughs and to local neighbourhoods. This will include reviewing the scope for devolving power from the Greater London Authority down to the Boroughs and below.

The following sections provide advice on some of the issues likely to arise following revocation of Regional Strategies, until the “Localism Bill” and the new National Planning Framework are in place. This guidance should be regarded as a material consideration by local planning authorities and the Planning Inspectorate in their decisions.

4. How will this affect planning applications?

In determining planning applications local planning authorities must continue to have regard to the development plan. This will now consist only of:

- Adopted DPDs;

- Saved policies; and
- Any old style plans that have not lapsed.

Local planning authorities should also have regard to other material considerations, including national policy. Evidence that informed the preparation of the revoked Regional Strategies may also be a material consideration, depending on the facts of the case.

Where local planning authorities have not yet issued decisions on planning applications in the pipeline, they may wish to review those decisions in light of the new freedoms following the revocation of Regional Strategies. The revocation of the Regional Strategy may also be a material consideration.

5. Should we continue preparing LDF documents?

Yes – the revocation of Regional Strategies is not a signal for local authorities to stop making plans for their area.

Local planning authorities should continue to develop LDF core strategies and other DPDs, reflecting local people's aspirations and decisions on important issues such as climate change, housing and economic development.

These local plans will guide development in their areas and provide certainty for investors and communities. Local authorities may wish to review their plans following the revocation of Regional Strategies. We recommend reviews should be undertaken as quickly as possible.

6. How does this affect adopted local plans / LDFs?

Adopted DPDs and saved policies will continue to provide the statutory planning framework. Local authorities may decide to review these now that Regional Strategies have been revoked. There is no need to review the whole LDF, only those issues or policies which local authorities wish to revisit. When undertaking consultation and sustainability appraisal on their draft policies, authorities should take an approach that considers the stage reached, the extent of work already undertaken and the scope of the policy changes they are making.

7. What if my LDF document is still being prepared?

Where local planning authorities are currently bringing forward development plan documents they should continue to do so. Authorities may decide to review and/or revise their emerging policies in the light of the revocation of Regional Strategies. Where authorities decide to do this they will need to ensure they meet the requirements for soundness under the current legislation. When undertaking consultation and sustainability appraisal on their draft policies, authorities should take an approach that considers the stage reached, the extent of work already undertaken and the scope of the policy changes they are making.

8. Will Examinations in Public continue for DPDs?

Yes – where local planning authorities are bringing forward new development plan documents or reviewing adopted plans they should present evidence to support their plans. The examination process will continue to assess the soundness of plans, and Inspectors will test evidence put forward by local authorities and others who make representations.

9. Will data and research currently held by Regional Local Authority Leaders' Boards still be available?

Yes. The regional planning function of Regional LA Leaders' Boards – the previous Regional Assemblies – is being wound up and their central government funding will end after September this year. The planning data and research they currently hold will still be available to local authorities for the preparation of their local plans whilst they put their own alternative arrangements in place for the collection and analysis of evidence. Notwithstanding, the new Government regards the Regional Leaders' Boards as an unnecessary tier of bureaucracy.

Clarification on policy issues

There are a number of areas where Regional Strategies supplemented the national policy framework. Further clarification on these areas is set out below.

10. Who will determine housing numbers in the absence of Regional Strategy targets?

Local planning authorities will be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision in their area, and identifying a long term supply of housing land without the burden of regional housing targets. Some authorities may decide to retain their existing housing targets that were set out in the revoked Regional Strategies. Others may decide to review their housing targets. We would expect that those authorities should quickly signal their intention to undertake an early review so that communities and land owners know where they stand.

11. Will we still need to justify the housing numbers in our plans?

Yes – it is important for the planning process to be transparent, and for people to be able to understand why decisions have been taken. Local authorities should continue to collect and use reliable information to justify their housing supply policies and defend them during the LDF examination process. They should do this in line with current policy in PPS3.

12. Can I replace Regional Strategy targets with “option 1 numbers”?

Yes, if that is the right thing to do for your area. Authorities may base revised housing targets on the level of provision submitted to the original Regional Spatial Strategy examination (Option 1 targets), supplemented by more recent information as appropriate. These figures are based on assessments undertaken by local authorities. However, any target selected may be tested during the examination process especially if challenged and authorities will need to be ready to defend them.

13. Do we still have to provide a 5 year land supply?

Yes. Although the overall ambition for housing growth may change, authorities should continue to identify enough viable land in their DPDs to meet that growth. Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments can help with this. Local planning authorities should continue to use their plans to identify sufficient sites and broad areas for development to deliver their housing ambitions for at least 15 years from the date the plan is adopted. Authorities should also have a five year land supply of deliverable sites. This too will need to reflect any changes to the overall local housing ambition.

14. How do we determine the level of provision for travellers' sites?

Local councils are best placed to assess the needs of travellers. The abolition of Regional Strategies means that local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand, and for bringing forward land in DPDs. They should continue to do this in line with current policy. *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments* (GTAAs) have been undertaken by all local authorities and if local authorities decide to review the levels of provision these assessments will form a good starting point. However, local authorities are not bound by them. We will review relevant regulations and guidance on this matter in due course.

15. How do we establish the need for minerals and aggregates supply without Regional Strategy targets?

Minerals planning authorities will have responsibility for continuing to plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregate minerals to support economic growth. They should do this within the longstanding arrangements for minerals planning. Technical advice provided by the Aggregate Working Parties, including their current work in sub-apportioning the CLG guidelines for 2005-2020 to planning authority level will assist with this.

Planning authorities in the South East should work from the apportionment set out in the "Proposed Changes" to the revision of Policy M3, published on 19 March 2010.

Planning authorities can choose to use alternative figures for their planning purposes if they have new or different information and a robust evidence base. We will work with the minerals industry and local government to agree how minerals planning arrangements should operate in the longer term.

16. How do we establish the need for waste management without Regional Strategy targets?

Planning Authorities should continue to press ahead with their waste plans, and provide enough land for waste management facilities to support the sustainable management of waste (including the move away from disposal of waste by landfill). Data and information prepared by partners will continue to assist in this process. For the transitional period this will continue to be the data and information which has been collated by the local authority and industry and other public bodies who

currently form the Regional Waste Technical Advisory Bodies. We intend for this function to be transferred to local authorities in due course.

17. Does the abolition of the hierarchy of strategic centres mean the end of policies on town centres?

No. Local authorities must continue to have regard to PPS 4: *Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth* in preparing LDFs and, where relevant, take it into account in determining planning applications for retail, leisure and other main town centre uses.

In assessing any planning applications proposing unplanned growth in out of town shopping centres, particularly those over 50,000 sqm gross retail floor area, local authorities should take account of the potential impacts of the development on centres in the catchment area of the proposal.

18. What about regional policies on the natural environment?

Local authorities should continue to work together, and with communities, on conservation, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment – including biodiversity, geo-diversity and landscape interests. Authorities should continue to draw on available information, including data from partners, to address cross boundary issues such as the provision of green infrastructure and wildlife corridors.

19. What about regional policies on Flooding and Coastal Change?

Local authorities should continue to work together across administrative boundaries to plan development that addresses flooding and coastal change. For flooding matters local authorities already have a duty to co-operate under the Floods and Water Management Act. The Environment Agency will continue to work with local authorities individually and/or jointly to provide technical support on these matters. The Coalition agreement is clear that we should prevent unnecessary building in areas of high flood risk.

20. What about regional policies on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy?

Through their local plans, authorities should contribute to the move to a low carbon economy, cut greenhouse gas emissions, help secure more renewable and low carbon energy to meet national targets, and to adapt to the impacts arising from climate change. In doing so, planning authorities may find it useful to draw on data that was collected by the Regional Local Authority Leaders' Boards (which will be made available) and more recent work, including assessments of the potential for renewable and low carbon energy.

21. What about regional policies on Transport?

Local authorities should continue to ensure their land use and local transport plans are mutually consistent, and deliver the most effective and sustainable development for their area. Local authorities should work with each other and with businesses and communities to consider strategic transport priorities and cross boundary issues.

22. Does the end of Regional Strategies mean changes to Green Belt?

No. The Government is committed to the protection of the Green Belt and the revocation of Regional Strategies will prevent top-down pressure to reduce the Green Belt protection. Local planning authorities should continue to apply policies in PPS2. As part of their preparation or revision of DPDs, planning authorities should consider the desirability of new Green Belt or adjustment of an existing Green Belt boundary, working with other local planning authorities as appropriate.

Parliamentary Statement Revoking Regional Strategies

Today I am making the first step to deliver our commitment in the coalition agreement to “*rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and return decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils*”, by revoking Regional Strategies.

Regional Strategies added unnecessary bureaucracy to the planning system. They were a failure. They were expensive and time-consuming. They alienated people, pitting them against development instead of encouraging people to build in their local area.

The revocation of Regional Strategies will make local spatial plans, drawn up in conformity with national policy, the basis for local planning decisions. The new planning system will be clear, efficient and will put greater power in the hands of local people, rather than regional bodies.

Imposed central targets will be replaced with powerful incentives so that people see the benefits of building. The coalition agreement makes a clear commitment to providing local authorities with real incentives to build new homes. I can confirm that this will ensure that those local authorities which take action now to consent and support the construction of new homes will receive direct and substantial benefit from their actions. Because we are committed to housing growth, introducing these incentives will be a priority and we aim to do so early in the spending review period. We will consult on the detail of this later this year. These incentives will encourage local authorities and communities to increase their aspirations for housing and economic growth, and to deliver sustainable development in a way that allows them to control the way in which their villages, towns and cities change. Our revisions to the planning system will also support renewable energy and a low carbon economy.

The abolition of Regional Strategies will provide a clear signal of the importance attached to the development and application of local spatial plans, in the form of Local Development Framework Core Strategies and other Development Plan Documents. Future reform in this area will make it easier for local councils, working with their communities, to agree and amend local plans in a way that maximises the involvement of neighbourhoods.

The abolition of Regional Strategies will require legislation in the “Localism Bill” which we are introducing this session. However, given the clear coalition commitment, it is important to avoid a period of uncertainty over planning policy, until the legislation is enacted. So I am revoking Regional Strategies today in order to give clarity to builders, developers and planners.

Regional Strategies are being revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and will thus no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Revoking, and then abolishing, Regional Strategies will mean that the planning system is simpler, more efficient and easier for people to understand. It will be firmly

rooted in the local community. And it will encourage the investment, economic growth and housing that Britain needs.

We will be providing advice for local planning authorities today and a copy has been placed in the house library.