

## **INFORMATION NOTE 2**

### **Spatial Strategy, Development Policies A, B, & C And Rural / Urban Issues**

**South West Regional Assembly  
16 January 2006**

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# **SOUTH WEST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

## **INFORMATION NOTE 2**

### **Spatial Strategy, Development Policies A,B & C and Rural / Urban Issues**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Information Note sets out the process that was followed and choices that were made at the various stages of developing the core Spatial Strategy of the Draft RSS. It highlights the main evidence used and provides background as to how the Strategy was shaped and reported through the Assembly Member Advisory Group. In addition it covers the functional approach to defining the Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCTs) in the document. Finally it discusses the way in which urban / rural issues have been addressed in developing the strategy as expressed in the Development Policies in Section 3 of the Draft RSS.
- 1.2 Throughout the development process the Draft RSS has been steered by the relevant Assembly Member sub-group which consists in the main of Assembly Members together with representatives from the Statutory Environmental Bodies. The group also has an RDA Board member involved to ensure general alignment of the Draft RSS and the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). This Member steerage helped to ensure successful completion of the process and agreement of the Draft RSS at the full Regional Assembly on 10 March 2006. The designated Regional Planning Body is the full Assembly and all key decisions on the Draft RSS, particularly its signing off for submission, have been taken by the Assembly of 117 Members in full session.
- 1.3 The development of the Draft RSS has been tested against regional sustainability objectives (incorporating the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive) and has been the subject of a thorough Strategic Sustainability Assessment (SSA) (EiP Library Documents SWRD 30.11 to SWRD 30.14) by a consortium of consultants led by Land Use Consultants. The latter have worked with a broadly based technical steering group chaired by a local authority chief officer and they have reported directly to the Assembly Member group at all key stages. The SSA recognises that there is much to commend in sustainability terms in the Draft RSS. It highlights sustainability strengths and weaknesses of the overall strategy and policies. A particular strength is the focussed approach to development at the Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCTs). It raises concerns over the implications for climate change, particularly the potential increase in travel, reflecting the region's strong economic and population growth. Separate Information Notes have been produced concerning the SSA process (Information Note 6) and climate change (Information Note 10).

## **2. Starting Point for Strategy Review**

- 2.1 Initial reports prepared for the Member group by the Assembly Secretariat, starting in September 2003, emphasised that the spatial strategy to be put forward in the Draft RSS was not being developed with a completely 'blank sheet of paper'; rather, a number of formative matters had to be taken account of. These are summarised below.

### **Draft Legislation and Supplementary Guidance to PPG11**

- 2.2 The early part of the process was marked by a changing legislative environment and decisions on process were made on the best available interpretation of the guidance emanating from ODPM. Work started before the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) was on the statute books or PPS11 guidance was issued. This had most effect in relation to sub regional elements of the Draft RSS, which are covered in detail in Information Note 4, and particularly the need for the Draft RSS to cover 'strategic policy deficits' arising from the projected removal of Structure Plans from the Development Plan. It also greatly influenced thinking in that period about the role and function of the Draft RSS. Guidance at the time suggested that the Draft RSS should be more comprehensive and holistic than a traditional land use plan and should be based on a clear understanding of functionality at the strategic level, not hidebound by local authority boundaries. These sentiments were carried though largely into the Act and PPS11, and the submitted draft is based on this approach.

### **Review of Regional Planning Guidance RPG10**

- 2.3 The main foundation for developing the spatial strategy for the Draft RSS was RPG10, published in September 2001. Baker Associates were commissioned in late 2003 / early 2004 to assess the 'fitness for purpose' of RPG10 and establish which elements of RPG10 needed to be transformed to fulfil the requirements of the Draft RSS revision. When the process of producing the Draft RSS formally commenced, in March 2004, RPG10 was only two and a half years old but it was based largely on analysis and thinking of the mid to late 1990s. The key finding of Baker Associates', *Assessment of the Fitness for Purpose of Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10)* (EiP Library Document SWRD 30.20) was that the core strategy of RPG10 was basically sound but in need of updating. Draft RSS should be saying "more on less", and that the Draft RSS should be explicit, positive and specific on a number of matters that need a strategic view. The report went on to recommend what those matters might be; identifying the need for a strong sub regional approach. The report also stated that the Draft RSS should not repeat national policy or pre-empt anything that should more appropriately be dealt with in an LDD.

### **Development Performance**

- 2.4 The Annual Monitoring Reports prepared for 2002 and 2003 illustrated the pattern of development happening under RPG10, with a relatively unsustainable degree of dispersal still evident. The focus on function and capacity of urban areas to increase the rate of housing delivery was an early

influence on strategy development and the sub regional studies. This led to the emerging Draft RSS being characterised by some stakeholders as too urban-focused and not dealing adequately with rural matters, although the issue had been addressed in a study of rural policy requirements commissioned from Land Use Consultants in 2004, *Better Planning of Rural Areas in the South West* (EiP Library Document SWER 43.01) - see also Section 5 of this Information Note.

### **Integrated Regional Strategy Issues Report**

- 2.5 The South West Regional Assembly has carried out pioneering work on developing an integrated strategy approach which resulted in *Just Connect! - an Integrated Regional Strategy for the South West 2004 – 2026*, published in November 2004<sup>1</sup>. This involved a major piece of technical work and consultation with stakeholders and a public attitudes survey in 2003/04 to establish the key issues affecting the region preparatory to the development of a consensus based Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) and high level aims for the region. This IRS work was carried out in parallel with preparations for the RSS revision and the outcome features in the Draft RSS both in terms of the content of Section 1 and 2 of the document and the structure of Sections 6 to 10. See Information Note 1 for further explanation of the underlying issues, strategy vision and aims of the Draft RSS.

## **3 Main Stages in Developing the Draft RSS Spatial Strategy**

### **Key Principles for Development of the Draft RSS**

- 3.1 In early 2004, shortly before the formal launch of the RSS revision process the Assembly produced a comprehensive Project Plan for the process which it included as part of its formal business plan submission to the ODPM on 1 March 2004. This Project Plan stated that the following key principles would guide work on the RSS revision:
- RSS will derive its key priorities from the IRS.
  - RSS will transform regional planning while evolving from the current RPG and will be based on functional analysis of the region; 'sub regions' will be based on functional rather than administrative units.
  - RSS will be developed to 'add value' to national and local planning processes. It will not duplicate national policy.
  - RSS will be concise and easy to use.
  - RSS for the South West will look forward to 2026. Based on 'plan monitor, manage', it will not be a 'blueprint' (predictions seldom come true) but a strategy that gives a clear direction, yet flexibility to adapt. It will be closely monitored and reviewed when necessary.
  - RSS will set out a strategic spatial vision for the region, together with regional and sub-regional policies. It will be clear about the actions needed to implement these. It will also mean being more specific

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<sup>1</sup> Just Connect! - [http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/IRS/Just\\_Connect.pdf](http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/IRS/Just_Connect.pdf)

about places and locations – but recognising the appropriate role to be played by Local Development Frameworks in enabling choices to be made locally. Subsidiarity will be a key principle.

- RSS will focus on delivery and implementation, using the Regional Forum as a mechanism to allow inter-agency partnerships to establish an implementation plan for RSS.
- RSS will embed principles of sustainability and a Strategic Sustainability Assessment (based on Strategic Environmental Assessment principles) will ensure that the chosen spatial strategy has been tested against the Regional Sustainability Framework.
- Results from the RPG Annual Monitoring Report and the South West Regional Observatory's 'State of the Region' report will be fed into policy development.
- Mapping and 'visualisation' of spatial policies for RSS will wherever possible be used.

### **Options Consultation and Testing**

3.2 A key part of the development of the spatial strategy approach in the Draft RSS was the extensive consultation that was carried out on Spatial Strategy Options based on the '*From Issues to Options*' report in the summer of 2004 (EiP Library Document SWRD 30.10). Given the conclusion of the 'Fit for Purpose' Review (reference at paragraph 2.3 above) and the fact that the RPG had only relatively recently been subject of an in-depth Examination in Public in spring 2000, it was decided that the broad strategy options for testing would be variations of the RPG strategy approach, i.e:

1. No change in the basic strategy – continue with RPG 10 strategy approach.
2. Strengthen RPG 10 and concentrate development at a smaller number of PUAs.
3. Differential approach recognising the varying needs and potential of different parts of the region.

Three other options, 'dispersal', 'low growth' and 'major new town' were given limited consideration at this stage and were discounted as likely to be less sustainable given expected levels of development. The independent SSA (reference at paragraph 1.3 above) concurred with this view. In parallel, four housing growth options were also tested in broad terms and subjected to the SSA process.

3.3 The consultation, which ran until the end of November 2004, generated around 400 responses. The findings of the consultation and testing against the six broad evaluation criteria set out in the consultation document was reported to Members on 25 January and 10 February 2005. Further consideration was then given by officers and Members to the nature of a 'preferred strategy' which would provide the core strategy for the Draft RSS.

### **Preferred Spatial Strategy**

- 3.4 The 'summer debates' in 2005<sup>2</sup> considered a series of papers which helped develop spatial strategy for the Draft RSS. This was not a formal 'consultation' but provided stakeholders with the opportunity to question and make inputs. A number of workshops were organised around the region. The preferred strategy drew on key strengths of the three strategy options put forward for consideration. A paper considered by members on 1 March 2005 restated the point that developing the preferred strategy would, 'involve identifying which combination of features of the three possible strategies best meets the needs of the region.' The preferred strategy therefore was seen as an evolution and refinement of the RPG10 core strategy rather than a radical departure. The preferred strategy at that stage combined key features of Strategy Options 2 and 3. These were, from Strategy 2, the focus on a small number of nationally/regionally significant centres, supplemented by a broader band of smaller but still functionally significant centres; and from Strategy 3, the differential approach recognising the diversity of the region and the need for different approaches to development in three broad sub regional areas.
- 3.5 Following the summer debates this preferred strategy and accompanying development policies were further refined to arrive at the Spatial Strategy Statement and Development Policies A, B and C. These evolved through successive drafts of the Draft RSS document during autumn/winter 2005. Inputs were made by officer and member groups and drafts of the RSS document were considered by full Assembly in October 2005 and January 2006.

## **4 The Spatial Strategy 'Emphases' and Settlement and Development Policies**

- 4.1 The core spatial strategy of the Draft RSS is stated in the Spatial Strategy Statement at paragraph 3.1.3 of the document. In the most straightforward terms, the spatial strategy is to guide development to the most sustainable locations and in so doing achieve a better balance between where houses and jobs are located in future. This requires three main actions: 1) a concentration of new housing provision at those locations across the region where jobs are likely to arise in future; 2) a permissive approach to economic development at appropriate locations across the region; and 3) an appropriate scale of housing provision outside of designated centres to match job growth and meet local needs. While this general approach to development is appropriate across the region, the spatial strategy takes account of the region's diversity through the three broad sub-regional areas, with their different strategic emphases (see paragraphs 4.3 – 4.10 below).
- 4.2 RPG 10 introduced the notion of four broad sub regional areas in the region which are reflected in the RPG Key diagram: north, south east, central and western sub regions. Initially, in developing the Draft RSS, these sub regional components were included in the emerging spatial strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> Documentation on the Summer Debates consultation available at - [http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/nqcontent.cfm?a\\_id=565&tt=swra](http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=565&tt=swra)

However, consultation revealed that while stakeholders wished to see the diversity of the region recognised, the four sub regions (subsequently reduced to three by combining the west and central sub regions) did not command wide support as a way of dealing with regional diversity. Particularly strong views were expressed from the far south west of the region. It was felt that a sub division of the region into three or four crude sub regions with 'hard' boundaries would be largely arbitrary (there being no conclusive statistical basis for sub division) and would suggest the need for strong sub regional strategies when it was felt the same core strategy to guide development was required across the whole region.

- 4.3 Following the comments made in the summer debates in 2005, the issue of how to reflect sub regional diversity without creating 'artificial' sub regions with hard boundaries was dealt with by suggesting that the core strategy should be applied with three distinct strategy 'emphases', reflecting different circumstances in different parts of the region and influenced by Housing Market Area (HMA) studies, Travel to Work Areas, Functional Economic Zones and other relevant data such as GVA performance and housing affordability. This takes forward the thinking of RPG10 and ensures the spatial strategy recognises the varying economic circumstances between the north/eastern parts of the region and the western peninsular, taking account of connectivity issues (travel to London) outlined in the Regional Transport Strategy, and recognising the particular circumstances affecting development potential in the south east of the region which experiences unique constraints.
- 4.4 For the derivation of the housing requirement proposals in Table 4.1 of the Draft RSS, a statistical subdivision of the region was used as a starting point for debate with local stakeholders, particularly local authorities, based on three broad sub regional areas which align reasonably well with groups of HMAs and their associated districts.
- 4.5 These strategy emphases are presented in the Draft RSS as part of the Spatial Strategy Statement at paragraph 3.1.3 of the document. In addition, the different emphases manifest themselves in other parts of the Draft RSS, particularly as a way of grouping the sub regional development strategies for the SSCTs.

### **Realise Potential**

- 4.6 The northern and central parts of the region are characterised by relatively buoyant economic prospects and a relatively strong demand for development and regeneration challenges, largely within the SSCTs. For the West of England, Swindon, Gloucester/Cheltenham, Exeter, Taunton and, to a more limited extent, Trowbridge, Chippenham and Yeovil, the emphasis is on realising economic and other potential to add to general regional prosperity and address local regeneration, particularly in Bristol and the Forest of Dean.

### **Manage Growth**

- 4.7 Similar economic potential exists in the south east of the region and there is also strong housing demand particularly from inward migration and second

home ownership. The second strategy emphasis is concerned with managing growth within environmental limits, defined principally by national and international designations, particularly in the south eastern part of the region where development pressures are high and future outward expansion and development of the South East Dorset conurbation is heavily constrained by environmental designations and the sea.

### **Stimulate Economy**

- 4.8 West of Exeter, economic prospects are more difficult and, notwithstanding the tangible effects of Objective 1 funding in Cornwall and the recent resurgence of Plymouth, there is a need for policy intervention to stimulate market demand and investment in economic activity, especially if inroads are to be made into relatively low wages and housing affordability. The third strategy emphasis therefore is concerned with stimulating economic activity and development to help achieve regeneration and reduce disparities, particularly in the western part of the peninsula and address low rural / industrial productivity (this includes the Forest of Dean).
- 4.9 The latter strategy emphasis is supported by a clear statement of priorities for addressing deprivation and disadvantage (at paragraph 9.2.4 of the Draft RSS) which identifies priorities for economic development, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal, and urban and rural renaissance across the region.
- 4.10 The particularly strong economic potential of Exeter helped ensure that the western boundary was pushed back beyond the City. The distinction between Newton Abbot (Realise Potential) and Torbay (Stimulate Economy) is important, and one which was the subject of debate during the development of the Draft RSS.

### **The Draft RSS Settlement Strategy: Development Policies A, B & C**

- 4.11 The core strategy of the Draft RSS is concerned with focussing strategic new development on a relatively small number of functionally important settlements and guiding the broad scale and location of development. Also, in order to cover the strategic policy deficits left in the new system by the removal of Structure Plans, the Draft RSS identifies by name a number of settlements where detailed guidance is considered to be necessary, in line with PPS11 and the conclusions of the 'Fit for Purpose' review (reference at paragraph 2.3 above), as follows:
- Settlements which are considered to have regional or sub regional functional significance and significant growth potential, where development will be concentrated and where, in order to provide sufficient strategic guidance to local authorities and other bodies, specific job growth proposals and allocations of housing provision are made in the Draft RSS. These settlements are termed SSCTs in the Draft RSS document and in some cases they have been the subject of in-depth Joint Study Area (JSA) studies (see Information Note 4) with separate development strategies contained in the Draft RSS Section 4. These are the SSCTs where it was assessed that cross boundary issues merited this treatment (paragraph 2.5.9 of the Draft RSS lists the JSA

studies) and the RPB concluded that more detailed strategic guidance for LDDs in the Draft RSS was needed to signal directions and scales of growth where new urban extensions were required.

- Other settlements which are designated as SSCTs and have a separate job growth and housing provision figure in Table 4.1 and policy coverage in Section 4 of the Draft RSS, but which did not require the same JSA treatment and policy coverage as the SSCTs because significant cross boundary issues were not identified. These are Chippenham, Trowbridge, Yeovil, Salisbury, Dorchester, Weymouth and Barnstaple.
- Some other settlements are named in Section 4 of the Draft RSS which are not identified as SSCTs but which, following advice from Strategic Authorities, were considered to require some general strategic policy guidance in the Draft RSS to help steer local development proposals.

- 4.12 The settlements identified in RPG 10 as offering the greatest potential for accommodating growth and change were termed “Principal Urban Areas” (PUAs). The 11 PUAs were defined principally according to population size and functionality. The 11 PUAs were supplemented by ‘Other Designated Centres for Growth’ (ODCGs) to be identified through the Structure Plan process. In the Draft RSS, the PUAs and ODCGs have been replaced by the single group of 21 SSCTs listed in Table 3.1 on page 35 of the Draft RSS. The SSCTs were defined principally according to their “functional significance”, using the output from work carried out by Roger Tym & Partners entitled *Functional Analysis of Settlements* (EiP Library Document SWRD 30.04) and assessments of their growth potential derived from JSA studies and advice from strategic authorities. This is a distinct and important difference to the approach taken in RPG10.
- 4.13 Differentiation between SSCTs was contemplated in the development of the preferred strategy but this was not proceeded with due to the absence of any reliable indicator to facilitate differentiation other than population size. Additionally it was felt that the same broad policy approach to development was needed at all SSCTs regardless of their size.
- 4.14 Following on from the Spatial Strategy Statement and the three broad sub-regional areas, the scale and location of development, in strategic region-wide terms, is dealt with through the three linked Development Policies: *A - Development at the SSCTs*, *B – Development at Market Towns* and *C – Development in Small Towns and Villages* (pp.33-8 of the Draft RSS).
- 4.15 Development Policy A is based on the principle that the strategically significant places (the SSCTs) are best placed to enable the alignment of jobs and homes, and potentially offer the greatest levels of accessibility and sustainability. This is reinforced by the RES assumption that the region’s largest urban areas, in particular, will continue to be the engines of the South West’s economy, with their travel to work areas providing around 80% of future employment growth<sup>3</sup>. They are also the places where economies of scale from investment in public facilities and transport are most likely to be

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<sup>3</sup> Regional Economic Strategy annex: *Spatial Implications – Place Matters*, available at [http://download.southwestrda.org.uk/file.asp?File=/res/general/spatial\\_annex.pdf](http://download.southwestrda.org.uk/file.asp?File=/res/general/spatial_annex.pdf)

realised. Policy A states that approximately 15,125 dwelling per annum should come forward at the SSCTs. This implies, given the overall scale of housing growth set out in the Draft RSS of approximately 23,000 dwellings per annum, that approximately 8000 dwellings per annum are required to come forward in places other than the SSCTs. This broad division, of approximately 66% of new housing development happening in SSCTs and 34% elsewhere, reflects analyses carried out by Cambridge Econometrics about what a reasonable expectation for economic growth in different parts of the region over the next 20 years might be<sup>4</sup>.

- 4.16 Outside of the SSCTs, the same principles of concentration of development apply to the 34% of housing provision not accounted for in those places. This is the ‘break point’ in policy terms between sub regional guidance contained in the Draft RSS and generic guidance for local interpretation in LDDs (other than the additional places identified in the text of Section 4, listed in the second bullet point under paragraph 4.11 above). Development Policy B is based on the principle that smaller places may be sustainable but at a smaller scale. It is a criteria-based policy and allows LDDs to identify their own “Policy B settlements” using the criteria and advocating a functional approach to their identification. Many Policy B settlements are those known colloquially as ‘market towns’ and the Draft RSS, through Policy B and the RTS, recognises that they play an important local servicing, economic and transport hub role and should be encouraged to grow in future at an appropriate rate, related largely to their economic prospects. The Draft RSS recognises that too rapid growth of housing in these settlements could result in unsustainable commuting patterns.
- 4.17 Settlements other than SSCTs and those identified through LDDs using Policy B criteria, are covered by Development Policy C. Policy C sets out criteria which, coupled with an analysis of roles and functions, give guidance as to what development would be appropriate in smaller towns and villages not meeting Policy B criteria. Again the emphasis is on authorities linking new development of housing with evidence of local need or economic growth, and the strategy is designed to accommodate this in a balanced way, while not limiting any “above trend” economic potential that the smaller towns and villages might later demonstrate.

## **5 RSS Policy for Rural Areas**

### **Development in “rural areas”**

- 5.1 The rurality of the region is clearly stated in the opening statement of the Draft RSS (para 1.1.1) which reads, “The population is also more dispersed with around 35% living in settlements of fewer than 10,000 people and a

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<sup>4</sup> Discussion Paper 6 - Strategic Assumptions about the Future and Projections of Population and Economic Change - [http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/Summer%20Debates/Strategic\\_Assumptions.pdf](http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/Summer%20Debates/Strategic_Assumptions.pdf)

higher proportion of very small villages than any other region. Some parts of the region are very sparsely populated and accessibility varies.”

- 5.2 A clear approach to development in the rural parts of the region is articulated in Sections 3.4 and 3.5 of the Draft RSS in particular, and in paragraph 8.2.3, with the emphasis on the long term role of market towns and the need to maintain viable communities in smaller settlements.
- 5.3 During preparation of the Draft RSS, the needs of the rural parts of the region, particularly in terms of economic restructuring and the effects of housing market pressures on low/moderate wage households were clearly articulated. Initial drafts of RSS strategy focussed on place and scale of change, largely in terms of the SSCTs, with housing distribution initially geared toward these settlements. The response to the summer debates in 2005 was to build in greater emphasis of the role of market towns in particular as key locations for future service concentration, job growth and housing provision and to reflect this in the final housing distribution. The Draft RSS, in Development Policies B and C, provides sufficient guidance for economic and housing development in the more rural parts of the region.
- 5.4 The Draft RSS approach to rural planning and development matters was shaped by two pieces of work commissioned by the Assembly. The first is the *Functional Analysis of Settlements* study (reference at paragraph 4.12 above) and the second is the *Better Planning in Rural Areas* study (reference at paragraph 2.4 above), as well as work commissioned by the Countryside Agency on the role of market towns<sup>5</sup>. In particular, the *Better Planning of Rural Areas* study recommended that the new approach to regional planning, as defined in the Draft RSS, should seek to move away from a simple rural / urban policy distinction. This has been taken forward in Development Policies A, B and C. The study also highlighted the importance of the region’s market towns as sustainable locations for appropriate scale future growth.
- 5.5 The Draft RSS recognises that there are specific issues in the more rural parts of the region related to sparsity, accessibility, service provision, demographics, agricultural restructuring and housing affordability. It was decided that such issues are best addressed by general policy or policy relating to different settlement types rather than by way of a specific set of policies for ‘rural areas’, which would only lead to problems of definition. There are various views on which level of settlement constitutes ‘rural’ and which ‘urban’ so, for this reason, the Draft RSS deliberately does not use the phrase ‘development in rural areas’. Some would argue that all areas other than the SSCTs constitute rural areas, and some that only areas and places below “market town” level, i.e. beyond Policy B, should be judged as rural.
- 5.6 In helping to develop a coherent approach to strategic planning for the rural parts of the region, the Assembly engaged with rural stakeholders and rural issues in a number of ways. In particular, the Assembly worked with the South West Chamber of Rural Enterprise and the Rural Affairs Forum and

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<sup>5</sup> *The Role of Rural Settlements as Service Centres*, Land Use Consultants - <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/PP/planning/ruralsettlements.asp>

established a technical group to help steer research. A major conference on rural issues, *“Delivering a Sustainable Future for Rural Communities – the role of the Regional Spatial Strategy”*, was held as part of the summer debates in 2005. In addition, the issue of rural accessibility was considered at Regional Transport Forum workshops in 2005 and was informed by a report by Faber Maunsell entitled, *Significance of Transport Availability and Cost in Limiting Access to Jobs and Training* (EiP Library Document SWTS 51.06).

## **6 The sub Regional Dimension of the Draft RSS**

### **City Regions consultation, Joint Study Area (JSA) studies and First Detailed Proposals**

- 6.1 One of the features of the Draft RSS is the emphasis which has been placed on producing, on a cross local authority basis, coherent development strategies for the region’s main urban areas. In the early stage of development of the Draft RSS the Assembly wished to establish, with partners, how best to deal with the sub regional dimension, bearing in mind the proposed removal of structure plans from the development plan system, the resultant ‘strategic policy deficits’ and the need for sub regional policy coverage in certain parts of the region. The areas identified are places with strong functional links between the core urban centre and surrounding settlements and where significant cross local authority boundary issues are evident.
- 6.2 It was never the intention to aim for sub regional policy coverage for all parts of the region. To assist definition, the Assembly held a stakeholder consultation on City Regions (April 2003) which fed into the development of the Draft RSS. The outcome was reported to the Member group on 10 June 2003.
- 6.3 Following this, Joint Studies were carried out based on nine sub-regional areas (see Information Note 4). The RPB formally requested First Detailed Proposals for sub regional development strategies for the places covered by JSA studies. These were received in September 2005 and fed into the Draft RSS considered by the full Assembly in October 2005.

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