

BRIEFING



North West Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 Adopted

3 October 2008

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England (the RSS) was published on 30 September 2008. This is a revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy (formerly known as the Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG 13, March 2003)), and replaces it as the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England 2008.

The RSS covers the period up to 2021.

The document is available to view or download from the websites of the Government Office for the North West (www.go-nw.gov.uk) and the North West Regional Assembly (www.nwra.gov.uk).

Summary

The RSS provides for a minimum of 413,000 new homes in the region by 2021, at an average monitoring rate of 23,111. The Strategy has a very strong regeneration focus, with development primarily focused in the City Regions of Manchester, Liverpool and Central Lancashire (Bolton, Blackpool, Burnley and Preston) and with at least 70% of housing being provided on previously developed land (locationally specific targets are provided).

The Secretary of State has made some changes to the locational priorities for housing types and tenure, including removing specific reference to the need for market housing in sustainable locations in Southern Manchester/North East Cheshire. By contrast, reference to the need for market housing is introduced into the section dealing with South West Lancashire.

Former policy L5 – which set out a residential density policy for the region – has been deleted by the Secretary of State. The policy replicated guidance in PPS3.

Significantly, the RSS does not set an overall affordable housing quota. Instead councils are required to establish through their LDFs, based upon evidence from their SHMAs, the amount of affordable housing required in their area. However, they are required to look at a range of mechanisms to help deliver these targets, including the release of publicly owned land.

The RSS states that there is no need for 'exceptional substantial strategic change to Green Belt' within Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside before 2011, and Warrington before 2021. Strategic studies, coordinated by the Regional Planning Body might be initiated after this date if there is a need for land supply.

Like other adopted or emerging RSSs, the NW RSS adopts a strong line on reducing carbon emissions. The Strategy requires councils to set out policies for new developments to provide energy from renewable sources and to connect up to, or provide, decentralised energy. On a more welcome note, the Strategy reinforces the need to adhere to the national timetable for the Code for Sustainable Homes – the Secretary of State changing Policy L4 from the Regional Assembly's wish to anticipate the agreed timetable and demand that all housing developments to meet level 3 before 2010.

Key Policies

The following section provides a brief overview of the key policies insofar as they relate to house building:

Policy DP 2: Promote Sustainable Communities

The policy promotes places where people 'want to live and work'. Sustainable communities must meet diverse needs while also respecting the environment.

Policy DP 3: Promote Sustainable Economic Development

Aim is to reduce disparities in economic wealth chiefly by reviving the fortunes of the declining cities (Liverpool and Central Lancashire in particular). Housing allocations will thereby follow suit.

Policy DP 4: Make Best Use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure

Essentially about supporting urban renewal rather than investing in new infrastructure in growing employment locations. Development should follow a sequential approach, reusing previously development land, followed by infill, followed by other land (green-field) in locations near housing and existing infrastructure.

Policy DP 5: Manage Travel Demand

Housing and employment growth to be located in areas with good strategic and public transport connections.

DP 6: Marry Opportunity and Need

Development and investment will be prioritised for areas of greatest need and with potential for regeneration.

Policy DP 7: Promote Environmental Quality

Respecting the character of places; protecting the historic environment; reclaiming and remediating derelict land; and maximising opportunities for regeneration.

Policy DP 8: Rural Issues

The need for affordable housing in rural areas, but, by omission, a presumption against market development?

Policy DP 9: Reduce Emissions and Adapting to Climate Change

A policy which encourages higher densities; eco-homes types standards; decentralised energy; renewable energy; sustainable urban drainage.

Policy RDF 1: Spatial Priorities

The policy sets out a hierarchy of growth locations with:

first priority being given to supporting the growth of the regional centres of Manchester and Liverpool;

second, are the inner areas surrounding the above regional centres;

third, are the town and cities of the three City Regions; and

fourth, are the cities of Carlisle and Lancaster.

Policy RDF 2: Rural Areas

Emphasis on affordable housing delivery only.

Policy RDF 4: Green belts

The policy commits to maintaining the Green Belt. It states no need for substantial strategic changes to current boundaries within Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire or Merseyside before 2011 or Warrington before 2021. Thereafter a review might be initiated if evidence of need supported this, carried through as part of a review of the RSS.

Policy L 2: Understanding Housing Markets

The policy addresses the need to achieve better match between supply and need and to overcome issues of affordability. It also requires SHMAs are undertaken, and the supporting paragraph 7.7 requires these to be carried out *in partnership with house builders*.

Policy L 3: Existing Housing Stock and Housing Renewal

The policy sets out the Housing Market Renewal Areas and reduction of vacancy rates to 3% of the stock.

Policy L 4: Regional Housing Provision

Requirement to meet a regional housing target of 416,000 homes by 2021, at an average annual rate of 23,111 net additions.

The policy *encourages* developments to be built to Code for Sustainable Homes Standards and *promotes* the Lifetime Homes standard.

Policy L 5: Affordable Housing

No overall percentage target set. The policy requires LPAs to set out need in their DPDs, supported by SHMAs. LDFs must consider a range of delivery mechanisms to secure affordable housing including the release of publicly owned land.

Policy RT 1: Integrated Transport Networks

Plans and strategies should seek to make best use of existing infrastructure and to capitalise on developments in intelligent transport systems.

Policy RT 2: Managing Travel Demand

The policy aims to reduce car, commuting, traffic, especially along the regional motorway network. Developments to be located to make best use of public transport.

Policy EM 3: Green Infrastructure

The policy seeks to enhance and create new green infrastructure.

Policy EM 10: Regional Approach to Waste Management

Includes a target for household waste to be recycled, reused, or composted by 40%.

Policy WM 16: Energy Conservation & Efficiency

Plans to facilitate reductions in energy consumption.

Policy EM 17: Renewable Energy

By 2010 at least 10% of the region's electricity should come from renewable energy sources, rising to 15% by 2015 and at least 20% by 2020.

Policy EM 18: Decentralised Energy Supply

Requires councils to set out in DPDs targets for decentralised energy supply. All residential developments comprising ten or more units are required to secure at least 10% of their energy requirement from decentralised or renewable sources.

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