

**TEESDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report To: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
10 MARCH 2008**

**From: LEAD MEMBER FOR HOUSING, COUNCILLOR PAULINE CHARLTON  
LEAD MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, COUNCILLOR OSSIE HEDLEY  
LEAD MEMBER FOR REGENERATION, COUNCILLOR JO FERGUS**

**Ward Member: All**

**Subject: VIEW: SHAPING THE NORTH EAST - REGIONAL SPATIAL  
STRATEGY: PROPOSED FURTHER CHANGES (DRAFT  
REPORT)**

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**1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy sets out a long-term strategy for spatial development in the North East to 2021. Once approved, the Regional Spatial Strategy, together with the Local Development Framework will become the statutory development plan for the District/Unitary. The Local Development Framework must conform to the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 1.2 The Submission Regional Spatial Strategy was published in June 2005 and following public consultation, an Examination in Public was held before an independent Panel to test the soundness of the document. The report of the Panel was published in August 2006, this report recommended a number of Changes. Proposed Changes to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy were published in March 2007, having taken into account the recommendations made by the Panel, and other considerations. Following consultation, Proposed Further Changes are now published, the consultation period ending on 2 April 2008.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to seek Members views on the implications for Teesdale of the Further Proposed Changes **only** (marked as bold in the document), and suggest how the District Council might respond. All Councillors have been notified of the availability of the document.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**2.1 It is recommended that**

- 2.1.1 Members approve the response to Regional Spatial Strategy Further Proposed Changes as set out in Appendix 1 as the formal response of the Authority, and instruct the Director**

**of Regeneration to submit the response to Government on their behalf.**

### **3.0 LINK TO CORPORATE KEY PRIORITIES/AMBITIONS**

3.1 Priority: All

3.2 Ambition: Most

3.3 Outcome: Most

### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

4.1 Members will recall that the Regional Spatial Strategy gives the land use interpretation to the Northern Way Growth Strategy. Development is therefore located so as to secure the regional competitiveness of the Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley conurbations within the National and International market place. This Authority has been concerned about the emphasis on the primacy of the conurbations and therefore concerned that County Durham, and Teesdale were potentially disadvantaged by this approach. Representations have been made in this regard both individually and jointly with other Durham Authorities.

4.2 Submissions have been based around housing provision, employment land and the approach taken towards rural areas, we were also invited by the Panel to present additional evidence to the Examination in Public regarding the specific issue of Affordable Housing in Teesdale.

4.3 There are a number of changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy that Members may wish to support as set out in Appendix 1, however this report focuses on explaining the current position around housing numbers as this may still be subject to change and so we need to strongly maintain our position.

### **5.0 HOUSING**

5.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy seeks to re-balance the housing stock in the region with an emphasis on development in the conurbations, however the need for County Durham to maintain a stable population and not be subject to population decline is also recognised.

5.2 As previously reported to Members revised population estimates that emerged after the Examination in Public have now been accepted for the region and by the Durham Authorities. These increased estimates are largely based around more optimistic population projections, and as a result of sustained economic growth in the region. These revised figures have increased the regional housing figure and accordingly the County Durham figure, (from 20, 000 to 23 540 new units). This figure allows for slight growth in the County. It is also

important to note that in line with Government's latest housing policy the document is amended to emphasise that the Regional Spatial Strategy housing figures are now "guidelines" and do not represent a ceiling - provided that local authorities can make the case for higher figures if it can be justified through their Local Development Frameworks. Most importantly for Teesdale housing growth must be linked to housing land availability.

- 5.3 These figures should however be viewed as an interim as we await the announcement regarding the Government growth points. An announcement on growth point bids, including one based on the Durham Coalfields Communities is expected from government in the near future, this may have implications for the distribution of this figure.

Regional Spatial Strategy 2004-21	County Durham (Annual Build Rate)	Teesdale (Annual average)
Consultation Draft	1090	1020 (60)
Submission Draft	1175	1190 (70)
Proposed Changes	1120	1360 (80)*
Current Position	1385	1265 (75)

\*Figures recommended by the Panel and not endorsed by the NEA, subsequently challenged by Government Office. Re-run of the model produced current figures which are supported across the County. (Teesdale increase considered an "anomaly" as reported previously).

- 5.3 Members are advised to support the current position as a rational and reasonable proposition of the overall allocation, which at worst allows for population stability, and at best allows for some population growth. The increase in the our allocation from the Consultation Draft now stands at 255 units, the equivalent of an additional three and a half years supply overall.

## 6.0 **STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial Implications: None

- 6.2 Risk:

Risk	Category	Implications
Failure to respond to a key document, that directly influences our ability to deliver on key objectives, eg, affordable housing	Reputational	Housing apportionment may be lowered to an unacceptable level post consultation.

- 6.3 Equality and Diversity: None

- 6.4 Human Resources: None

- 6.5 Community Safety: None

- 6.6 Legal Issues: None

**Background papers:**

- 1. Regional Spatial Strategy Further Proposed Changes and Statement of Reasons**
- 2. Regional Spatial Strategy Proposed Changes and Statement of Reasons**
- 3. Sustainability Report on Proposed Changes**
- 4. Regional Spatial Strategy Submission Draft**
- 5. Regional Spatial Strategy Background Paper 10**
- 6. Regional Spatial Strategy Consultation Draft**

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Response from Teesdale District Council to the Secretary of State's Further Proposed Changes to the North East of England Draft Regional Spatial Strategy as Submitted by the North East Assembly.**

#### **FPC 19 Tees Valley City Region**

Whilst we welcome clarification that the Tees Valley City Region can also be considered to include parts of Teesdale, it is disappointing that the influence of the City Region upon Barnard Castle, as the key Rural Service centre for the District is not acknowledged in the same way as it is for both Richmond and Northallerton and recommend that paragraph 2.30 be amended accordingly.

#### **FPC 30 Tourism and Culture**

We support the acknowledgement that tourism is a major source of employment and investment in rural as well as urban areas this however applies equally to the rural areas within and around the Tees Valley City Region although this is not recognised in para 2.149. In this vein it is also disappointing that some of the key attractions of this part of the region/area such as the internationally recognised Bowes Museum and High Force, as well as the Gem town of Barnard Castle itself and the North Pennines area are omitted as being part of the culture and tourism offer and strategy of both the southern part of, and indeed the region as a whole..

#### **Omission (Tees Valley City Region/Rural Areas/Historic Environment)**

It is a matter of concern that the Regional Spatial Strategy fails to reflect the Regional Economic Strategy in terms of the ability to foster the renaissance of Market towns as a driver for regional growth. Barnard Castle Vision is a 20 year project, sponsored by ONE and potentially leveraging in significant private sector investment that aims to drive this renaissance and yet is not mentioned in this document unlike other regeneration projects.

This also related to FPC 91 which recognises the benefits of heritage led regeneration. Within this context, we recommend that the regeneration of Barnard Castle is reflected in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

#### **FPC 47 Labour Market**

The recognition of the role and in some case dominance of the country estates in parts of county Durham is most welcome. Whilst there can be advantages here, there can also be large disadvantages for example, a large proportion of the non decent housing stock is owned by the large estates. The North East Rural Estates Network has identified issues around the sustainability of some of the Estates themselves as they can experience the problems of the wider community in terms of ageing populations in tied accommodation, this in turn can create problems around the release of family accommodation to attract new families onto the estates and in to some locations. And so whilst we support the recognition of the large estates in

rural area, we are not convinced that the associated text presents a balanced picture of the issues around large estates, they are not homogenous but all have an important role in the rural economy, some more positive than others.

We support the acknowledgement that rural areas can attract new business to the Region.

#### **FPC 52 Brownfield Mixed-Use Locations**

It is disappointing that the request to recognise the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village in Weardale has not been accepted and no specific explanation offered as to why. This project (for which a planning application is imminently anticipated) will bring significant benefits to both Wear Valley and Teesdale.

#### **FPC 77 Improving and Increasing the Housing Stock**

We support the statement that the housing figures established in the Regional Spatial Strategy do not present a ceiling where the case for higher figures can be justified.

#### **FPC 78 Gross and Net Dwelling Provision**

We welcome an increased allocation for the District of 75 units per annum as a minimum to sustain rural communities through the provision of both private and affordable housing and the associated retention of young people and a local labour force. We continue however to view this figure as an absolute minimum and would strongly resist and object to any future proposed reduction.

#### **FPC 81 Improving Inclusivity and Affordability**

Whilst we strongly object to the omission of Teesdale as an area that has particular affordability issues from both the Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy, we acknowledge the reference in this change in so far as it recognises affordability as being an issue in Teesdale, albeit somewhat understated and in our view. This text does not fully reflect affordability as being **the** key issue facing our District and its long term sustainability.

#### **FPC 82/83/85/86 Improving Inclusivity and Affordability**

We recognise the requirement for the Regional Spatial Strategy to make provision for gypsies, travellers and show people. We do however have concerns about the accuracy and quality of data used in the White Young Green Survey. We question the need for this data to be included in the document when the Regional Spatial Strategy actually puts the emphasis on local authorities to determine need at a local/sub regional level. Whilst this work has commenced across County Durham, and having learned lessons about how best this data can and should be collected, we do not consider any of the evidence currently in the public domain to be adequately robust to form a policy or resist challenge. We therefore suggest that the results of the White Young Green Survey be removed from the document.

