

DRAFT REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS - RESPONSE TO PROPOSED CHANGES

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY : ENVIRONMENT

CABINET

4TH DECEMBER, 2003

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To consider the changes proposed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to draft Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), and respond accordingly.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

That the following comments on the proposed changes to the RPG be made:

1. Rural renaissance Chapter 5 - Concern be expressed in respect of apparent diminution of the importance of this aspect in the RPG.
2. Table 3 Housing on previously developed land in the Column "2001-2011 Target % on previously developed land" on the Herefordshire line be amended to read 63% not 44% as stated.
3. In policy PA16, the encouragement to development plans to include positive policies for farm diversification should be strengthened to include the possible use of non-agricultural developments in the wording.
4. Quality of the Environment Chapter 8 - the table in policy M2 be amended to refer to the Revised National and Regional Guidelines for Aggregates Provision 2001- 2016 issued on 10th June 2003 and the agreed sub regional apportionment (the current RPG refers to figures contained in MPG 6 1994)
5. In Policy M3 the requirement to "develop better systems to improve the way in which alternative sources of materials are used in construction projects", although necessary are quite beyond meaningful influence by planning authorities. The words should be deleted from the policy.
6. Minerals Output Targets and Indicators - M1 be amended by adding the word "only" after "To" in the first sentence.

7. the reference to 0% sterilisation in the third target wording be removed as being impossible to implement.
8. **Transport and Accessibility Chapter 9**
 - a) **RPG para 9.69 be re-drafted. Proposed wording:**

“The A49 in Hereford is subject to increasing congestion. This has a number of implications for sub-regional land use development and regeneration. To address this issue a Local Multi Modal Study has been carried out. The study identifies a package of measures to release travel capacity needed to accommodate development and regeneration and to allow Hereford to fulfil its identified role as a sub-regional centre. This role includes supporting long term balanced sustainable growth. Where appropriate, elements of the recommended package are included as priorities for investment in policy T12.”
 - b) **a line be added in table policy T12: “Hereford outer distributor road as recommended by the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study” (this should appear following reference to “A500 City Road & Stoke Road junctions”).**
 - c) **an entry be added at the end of table policy T12: “Implementation of recommendations from the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study”.**
9. **Fig. 6 on p. 141 be amended to show A417 Hope under Dinmore to Gloucester as 'primary route' providing alternative to travelling through Hereford on A49 in times of flood.**

Reasons

The recommendations are required in support of the Council's position on issues of regional planning significance, and to make an appropriate response to the changes proposed by the ODPM. A copy of the consultation material is available for inspection in the Members Room.

Considerations

1. Many of the proposed changes to the RPG are to be welcomed in principle, as the attempt has been made to give the document more clarity and brevity. However, in reducing the number of policies, by removing those perceived as duplications, it could be said that the emphasis on some elements is reduced. This is particularly the case with rural renaissance.
2. **Spatial strategy Chapter 3**
 - The spatial strategy, based on countering decentralisation and population drift from the conurbation, has been endorsed.
 - Emphasis is very much on recognising all places/settlements are important in their own right.
 - Hereford remains as one of five 'sub-regional foci for development' beyond the major urban areas (along with Rugby, Shrewsbury, Telford and Worcester. Burton on Trent has been deleted from the original list).

- All the policies previously contained in this chapter have been amalgamated into the more detailed policies in the later topic based chapters.

3. Rural renaissance Chapter 5

- Government has implemented all the EIP Panel's recommended changes to the Rural Renaissance Chapter. There are now just four policies in this Chapter compared to nine in draft RPG, thus:
 - RR1 is now 'Rural Renaissance',
 - RR2 is now 'Rural Regeneration Zone',
 - RR3 is now 'Market Towns' (previously draft RR5),
 - RR4 is now 'Rural Services' (previously draft RR9).

Whilst:

- Draft RR2 'Economic Development' removed and placed within PA15. This policy continues to feature the A49 as a corridor in the RRZ, with priorities to be given to traffic management and public transport improvements to aid accessibility, and this is to be welcomed. New investment opportunities should be considered within towns and villages in the A49 corridor, and this is very much in line with UDP proposals at Leominster, Hereford and Ross.
- Draft RR3 'Agriculture and Farm Diversification' removed and placed within PA16; see comments under this chapter for detail.
- Draft RR4 'Tourism' removed and placed within PA10,
- Draft RR6 'Villages' and Draft RR7 'Open Countryside' deleted, and
- Draft RR8 and text regarding community regeneration deleted but is reflected in paras 5.6 to 5.10.
- Overall, the reduction in the number of policies in this chapter does appear to diminish the importance of rural issues in the overall strategy, particularly in respect of the dominance of implementation actions outlined in the plan which are predominantly in and around the conurbation.

4. Communities for the future Chapter 6

- No change to housing figures for Herefordshire (800 dwellings per annum to 2006, then 600 to 2021). So far in UDP period, average is 870 dwellings per annum.
- UDP figures assume existing RPG provision will be met.
- In **Table 3 Housing on previously developed land** in the Column "2001-2011 Target % on previously developed land" on the Herefordshire line should read 63% not 44% as stated.

5. Prosperity for All Chapter 7

- The rural employment policies moved from the original Rural Renaissance

chapter appear as the last two policies in the Chapter together with elements of the rural tourism policy being amalgamated into policy PA10. It is also clear that the neither the EIP Panel or the SoS have taken on board this County's written comments in respect the range of uses suitable for rural regeneration.

- The preamble to Policy PA15 stresses the need to broaden the economic base, reduce the over-reliance on traditional employment in order to retain local people. However, neither Policy PA15 Economic Development and the Rural Community or PA16 Agriculture and Farm Diversification take this view forward. Policy PA16 Agriculture and Farm Diversification specifies "innovative business schemes including tourism, environmentally sustainable farming, forestry and land management, new and innovative crops, on-farm processing etc.", all largely agriculturally based added value activities.
- This stance does not match the policy statements in PPG7 para 3.4A advice which indicates "diversification into other forms of non-agricultural activities is vital to the continuing viability of many farm businesses". In the Council's view this aspect is largely absent from the policy statement and should be strengthened in the wording by including examples in addition to the farm based listing set out above.

6. Quality of the Environment Chapter 8

Suggested amendments to RPG Part 3 Minerals policies:

- Amend the table in policy M2 to refer to the Revised National and Regional Guidelines for Aggregates Provision 2001- 2016 issued on 10th June 2003 and the agreed sub regional apportionment. (The current RPG refers to figures contained in MPG 6 1994)
- In Policy M3 the requirement to "develop better systems" to improve the way in which alternative sources of materials are used in construction projects", although necessary are quite beyond meaningful influence by planning authorities. These words should be deleted from the policy.

Minerals output targets and indicators:

- Amend M1 by adding the word "only" after "To" in the first sentence. As drafted the target appears to actively promote the development of mineral sites in AONBs.
- Remove the ref to 0% sterilisation in the third target as being impossible to implement, if retained this would prevent any development on known mineral reserves, many of which may never be worked but which cover most of the county.

7. Transport and Accessibility Chapter 9

- RPG includes the regional transport strategy. This sets priorities for investment to support the regional strategy.
- In Herefordshire this would include the role of the A49 as summarised above in the context of the RRZ.
- By issuing RPG, the Government will be committed to taking forward those transport proposals for which central government is responsible subject to

statutory procedures and viable schemes that represent good value for money.

- The following changes should be sought to RPG to recognise the fact that the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study has been concluded and makes specific recommendations.
- RPG para 9.69 be re drafted. Proposed wording:
- “The A49 in Hereford is subject to increasing congestion. This has a number of implications for sub-regional land use development and regeneration. To address this issue a Local Multi Modal Study has been carried out. The study identifies a package of measures to release travel capacity needed to accommodate development and regeneration and to allow Hereford to fulfil its identified role as a sub-regional centre. This role includes supporting long term balanced sustainable growth. Where appropriate, elements of the recommended package are included as priorities for investment in policy T12.”
- An additional line should be added to policy T12: “Hereford outer distributor road as recommended by the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study”. This should appear following reference to “A500 City Road & Stoke Road junctions”.
- Addition of an entry at the end of table policy T12: “Implementation of recommendations from the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study”.
- Amend Fig 6 on p. 141 to show A417 Hope under Dinmore to Gloucester as 'primary route' providing alternative to travelling through Hereford on A49 in times of flood. De-priming could be accepted if Hereford ORR can be progressed.

Alternative Options

Comments on the proposed changes have to be made by 12th December, 2003 in order to present the Council's views, or not made at all.

Risk Management

Without making comments the Council would lose the opportunity to influence the development of the RPG.

Consultees

Following the announcement of the consultation, the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, Cllr B Hunt and officers attended a regional conference on the proposed changes. Planning Committee (28 November) has also considered the suggested responses.

Background Papers

None identified.