

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Development and Regeneration (Introduced by the Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration)	Executive Cabinet	25/05/06

## REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY – SUBMITTED DRAFT

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To set out the key aspects of the draft strategy and to recommend what representations should be made.

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report particularly relates to the Strategic Objectives to put “Chorley at the Heart of Regional Economic Development in the Central Lancashire Sub-Region” and to “Develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live.”

### RISK ISSUES

- The issue raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy	3	Information	3
Reputation	3	Regulatory/Legal	3
Financial	3	Operational	3
People		Other	

- This is a key strategy that has implications for spatial plans and strategies at the local level and how the Council operates to implement them. Effectively influencing the regional approach may well have on-going resource implications and ultimately could affect the reputation of the Council and the information it uses and communicates.

### BACKGROUND

- Under the new planning system the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) will not only replace Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) but also, in shire areas, County Structure Plans. It will become, along with Local Development Frameworks, part of the statutory development plan. The RSS is therefore a very important document that will influence many aspects of planning at the Borough level. Local Development Framework documents will need to conform with it.
- The procedure for producing RSS is that the initial work is done by the Regional Planning Body – which in this case is the North West Regional Assembly. A report on the interim draft of RSS was presented to the 3 November 2005 meeting of the Executive Cabinet. The revised draft RSS has now been submitted to Government for approval. However



the approval process is quite involved and following the current consultation stage the draft RSS is due to be subject to an Examination in Public in November this year. Final approval is not expected until late in 2007.

7. The switch of preparation responsibility for the RSS and the extensive process of consultation and review could mean there will be many changes to the Strategy before it is finalised. This presents both an opportunity, to influence the document at various stages, but it also means there is a long period of uncertainty that will have implications for progressing Local Development Framework documents.
8. A key related initiative is the Government's Northern Way Growth Strategy which is trying to redress the economic output gap between the south and the north of England. The emergence of the Northern Way is the reason why the Regional Spatial Strategies in all three northern regions of England are being reviewed at this time.
9. A key feature of the Northern Way approach is the concept of city regions. There are three in the north west – Manchester, Liverpool and 'Central Lancashire'. The latter is very extensive – stretching from Blackpool, through Preston and Blackburn to Burnley. Your Officers have been working jointly with colleagues in South Ribble and Preston and with the help of consultants, to emphasise the key role the three authorities can play in enabling the growth envisaged by the Northern Way approach.
10. The RSS needs to reflect the Regional Economic Strategy which has recently been launched. It also has significant resonance with Chorley's newly produced Community Strategy and its first priority which is to 'put Chorley at the heart of regional economic developments in the Central Lancashire sub-region' – a priority that has become a Strategic Objective of the Council.

## **CONTENT OF SUBMITTED DRAFT**

11. The 'Submitted Draft' stage of the RSS is the step at which the Government, in the form of the North West Office, becomes involved. The current consultation period continues until 12 June 2006. The Regional Assembly will then become one of many parties taking part in the Examination in Public in the autumn.
12. The Interim Draft contains some 60 policies divided into the following topic areas:
  - Development Principles
  - Spatial Framework
  - Working
  - Living
  - Transport
  - Enjoying and Managing
  - Sub-Regional Policy Framework

## **DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES**

13. These are to:
  - Make more sustainable, transparent decisions
  - Make better use of land, buildings and infrastructure
  - Ensure quality in development
  - Tackle climate change
14. Sustainable development is of course a prime objective of draft RSS with the re-use of existing buildings and other previously developed land being the first and second choices respectively for development before greenfield sites, but all sites will only be acceptable if they are well located in respect of services etc.

## **SPATIAL FRAMEWORK**

15. The draft RSS states in Policy (RDF1) “to maximise the growth opportunities presented by the three city regions...”. Preston along with Blackburn, Blackpool and Burnley are identified as Regional Towns and Cities in “Central Lancashire”. Chorley and Adlington are among the list of Key Service Centres replicating the Lancashire Structure Plan approach but there is no mention of places such as Coppull and Euxton, instead only a reference to Local Development Frameworks defining the role of such settlements (Policy RDF2). A consistent set of criteria for the identification of Key Service Centres is left to a future review of RSS!
16. Key Service Centres are envisaged (in Policy RDF3) as locations to concentrate development in “rural areas”. However in many parts of the north west, Chorley Borough included, there are areas which are more sub-urban in character. However other than towns and cities RSS seems to recognise only rural and “sparse rural areas”. The latter does not apply to Chorley, those parts of the Borough that are genuinely rural are peppered with villages – such as Ecclestone and Croston. These act as local service centres – a role which is recognised by RSS but one which is unhelpfully left to Local Development Frameworks to define.
17. There is acknowledgement that after 2011 Green Belt boundaries in the region may need a strategic review although before then minor changes can be pursued in Local Development Frameworks.

## **WORKING**

18. This chapter provides the policy framework for economic growth, covering the spatial dimension of measures to strengthen the economy of the North West and the role to be played by the three city regions in building on their strengths (in Central Lancashire: advanced manufacturing and engineering, environmental technologies, biomedical, tourism and conferencing). Underlining the importance of promoting opportunities for economic development, the RSS supports the development of various regionally important site locations, including the former Royal Ordnance site in Chorley.
19. At a sub-regional and local level, reference is made to a need to maintain a 15 year forward supply (Policy W3) and the need for joint working in the calculation of supply is highlighted. However, although there is a shortfall of sites in Lancashire, deciding the quantity of employment land required at the District level would be very difficult to deduce from the draft RSS as presently written and could well lead to much debate in Local Development Framework preparation.
20. Usefully, policy (W4) seeks to protect employment allocated sites being used for other purposes, emphasising the importance of safeguarding land both from piecemeal development and development that could equally well be accommodated elsewhere, particularly in the City Regions, where such sites have an important role to play in driving the regional economy forward.
21. The retail policy (W5) indicates that plans and policies should promote retail investment where it will assist in regeneration and economic growth. Manchester and Liverpool are cited as the prime shopping locations in the north west and lists a series of other centres for comparison goods shopping. Preston, Carlisle and Chester are not separated out from a long list of other sub-regional centres, where most new floorspace will be accommodated (W5). Importantly, however, the RSS also seeks to maintain the contribution of lower order centres, such as Chorley, to maintain and enhance their vitality and viability, to underpin wider regeneration initiatives, to ensure that such centres meet the needs of the local community and to promote sustainable shopping patterns. These aims tie in, directly, with those of Chorley’s own Economic Regeneration Strategy and with

the policies and proposals in the emerging Town Centre Strategy. No need has been identified for new out-of-centre regional or sub-regional facilities.

22. In terms of tourism (W6) the emphasis is on the coastal resorts, the large cities, historic towns and regional parks (East Lancashire, Mersey Basin and North West Coast). For National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Beauty the emphasis is on environmental protection and management. There is no explicit mention of the role that substantial areas like the West Pennine Moors can have to reduce the visitor pressure on these top attractions, although part of the West Pennines is included in the East Lancashire Regional Park and the RSS does allow for tourism development in rural areas to support regeneration and diversification subject to infrastructure and environmental impact.

## LIVING

23. The RSS recognises that Chorley, Preston and South Ribble Districts experience similar housing demand and need characteristics. For short hand convenience only, the three authorities are called “Greater Preston” where RSS expects there to be:
- provision of sufficient new residential development to support the potential for economic growth and local regeneration strategies;
  - a wider range of general and high quality market housing, but also;
  - the ability to meet local needs and requirements for affordable housing.
24. Chorley, Preston and South Ribble do constitute a single sub-regional housing market area. The approach to housing provision advocated by draft RSS is to develop a better understanding of local and sub-regional markets through joint assessments of need and demand. This is in line with latest draft national housing planning guidance.
25. Policy L4 is the key one as it sets out the approach to housing provision across the region. It cross-refers to Table 9.1 which sets out the proposed number of housing units to be provided in various ways; total provision over the 18 year 2003 – 2021 RSS period, the equivalent annual rate and an indicative target for the proportion of properties to be provided on previously developed land.
26. Over the whole region the new draft RSS is proposing significantly more (75% higher) housing provision than the existing Strategy (Regional Planning Guidance - RPG) it is going to replace. Members will appreciate that the severe restrictions on new housing development currently in place in Chorley and many other parts of the north west have been imposed because of low regional housing provision figures. When the current RPG Strategy was approved the Government cut the provision figures to the present low level largely to help re-direct housing demand to the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas of inner Manchester, Liverpool and East Lancashire. Now the emphasis is changing to meet the Northern Way economic growth agenda and the recognition that this needs to be backed by sufficient housing development to enable the economic development to be achieved.
27. At this point Members need to appreciate that the Government have to date had no direct involvement in the preparation of the draft RSS. What has been published is the work of the North West Regional Assembly. There is still some recognition of the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas and there are some indications that these areas have benefited from re-directed housing demand but it is still early days to say these locations have “turned the corner”. So further “protection” of their interests may be required.
28. An additional factor is that the draft RSS has not yet been able to take account of the recent publication of new national household projections. Across the country and

regionally these predict a higher rate of household formation that was previously estimated. So the draft RSS figures may need to be further increased – there will be an opportunity to produce revised provision figures prior to consideration of housing issues at the Examination in Public in November.

29. The present housing provision proposals set out in the draft RSS groups individual local authority figures into sub-regions. The “Greater Preston” figures are shown below and compared to house building rates achieved so far (since 2003); current Structure Plan provision figures are given for comparison purposes.

	<b>Annual Rates of House Building (dwellings)</b>		
	<b>Draft RSS Provision</b>	<b>Average Recent Completions</b>	<b>Structure Plan Provision</b>
Chorley	361	549*	314
Preston	507	508	280
South Ribble	478	571	206

\*estimated

30. The draft RSS provision figures are intended to be maximums with any excess house building in early years to be offset by controls to limit future build rates. As the table above shows, in Chorley and South Ribble provision to date is already “ahead” of what draft RSS envisages. Whether this is significant for future levels of provision is not yet clear. It may be decided to “re-start” the provision requirements from say 2006. It may be that future national housing planning guidance will be less strict about over provision being corrected in the future.
31. What is significant is that the Chorley figure is quite modest and significantly lower than current build rates which have been achieved despite the present tight restrictions on new sites. What has been occurring is rapid development on large committed sites – especially at Buckshaw Village and Gillibrand. This shows there is strong demand in Chorley and rising house prices confirm this.
32. Clearly it would be preferable not to have to continue to severely control the release of new housing sites for a number of reasons as this:
- could run counter to the Council’s commitment to securing economic growth;
  - may leave well located sustainable potential development sites unused;
  - means opportunities to enable affordable housing cross-subsidised by market housing are missed;
  - frustrates better land-use planning, for example , the relocation of non-conforming uses from residential areas where the Council would otherwise be encouraging residential development to enable relocation to happen;
  - means that local builders would continue to be deprived of constructing on small plots in the Borough which has a disproportionate impact on smaller firms in the area.
33. Quite why Chorley’s housing provision figure as proposed in draft RSS is so much lower than those for Preston and South Ribble is not explained in the published documents. All planning authorities are expected to carry out urban potential studies to identify likely sources of future housing land and calculate the dwelling capacities of such sites. Such studies cannot accurately predict all future opportunities for residential development and can only estimate construction densities. Unforeseen sites can arise to be approved for housing. The Chorley study did not include any greenfield land, its main component was the Royal Ordnance Site including areas outside the present limit of Buckshaw Village.
34. Based on similar work in Preston and South Ribble, Chorley has less urban potential and current commitments capacity for residential development but a high proportion of these

sites are on previously developed land (89%). Percentages are less than 80% in Preston and South Ribble. The combined previously developed land target for “Greater Preston” in draft RSS is “at least 80%”. This ought to be reduced to 75% to reflect the range of sites across the three authorities – see table below.

### **2006 ONWARDS IDENTIFIED HOUSING LAND SUPPLY CENTRAL LANCASHIRE CITY AUTHORITIES**

	<b>Urban Potential (dwellings)</b>	<b>Current Commitments (dwellings)</b>	<b>Total (dwellings)</b>	<b>Future Supply<sup>^</sup> (years)</b>	<b>% on Previously Developed Land</b>
Chorley	1851	1969	3820	10.6	89
South Ribble	4502	946	5448	11.4	74*
Preston	4695	3048	7743	15.2	77

<sup>^</sup>Based on annual provision figures in submitted RSS.

\*Assumes all small sites are previously developed land.

35. Although Chorley has currently less identified housing land much of it is on Buckshaw Village where the trend to rising densities is already being seen. If this same trend was applied to the rest of the Royal Ordnance Site as a whole a significant increase in dwellings could be achieved. Also Chorley’s urban potential work was done only to 2016. The extra five years to 2021 covered by the RSS has not been fully accounted for. The majority of new housing is expected to occur in Preston and this accords with the District where the highest job growth of the three authorities is expected. Aside from Preston, Chorley and South Ribble could probably cope with equal shares of the remaining housing provision to be met.
36. There is a particular policy promoting more, affordable housing (Policy L5) which gives support for a number of initiatives in areas of greatest demand (which include the “southern part of Greater Preston”) including seeking contributions to affordable housing from residential developments of whatever size in settlements less than 3,000 population and allowing the conversion of under-used commercial premises.

### **TRANSPORT**

37. The draft RSS recognises the important role of transport in supporting economic growth potential and the significance of improving links to ports and airports. The main emphasis however is on managing demand rather than increasing transport capacity – this particularly refers to motorways and other principal roads. There is a list of schemes and proposals appended to the draft RSS which refers to numerous road and public transport improvements. Although there are some proposals which would have a local benefit – such as improving rail services to Manchester Airport, there are no listed schemes specific to Chorley or the wider sub-region such as improving motorway access. This could hinder future economic growth.

### **ENJOYING AND MANAGING**

38. The draft RSS emphasises that the conservation and enhancement of the north west’s environmental and cultural assets is of utmost importance but promotes the need to link environmental objectives with those of successful communities. More specifically, the RSS seeks the development of green infrastructure, sustainable design and construction methods and better use of derelict land. A step change increase is sought in biodiversity resources, the maintenance of landscape and heritage assets (both natural and manmade), the role of woodland and the use of sustainable remediation technologies in

order to maintain the distinctiveness of places within the north west. Policies also promote green space networks, regional parks (East Lancashire, Mersey Basin and North West Coast) and the integrated and environmentally friendly management of water, including flood defences. It is notable that, as currently drawn, the boundaries of the East Lancashire Regional Park fail to build on initiatives across the West Pennines by excluding areas within Chorley.

39. The mineral policies are very much in line with national and existing regional guidance. The sub-regional apportionment for Lancashire for sand and gravel is 8.2 million tonnes out of a total 2001-2016 need for the region of 55 million tonnes. There are measures aimed at increasing the use of secondary and recycled aggregates.
40. Similarly, in terms of waste, reference is made to the national and existing regional strategies that seek to manage this and promote recycling. This is carried forward into seeking to maximise the opportunities for using recycled materials in new development as well as minimising construction waste (Policy EM10).
41. Policy EM17 on renewable energy does propose progressively higher targets for electricity supply although these are not matched by contributions from new developments.

## **SUB-REGIONAL**

42. There are policies for each of the city regions of which Manchester is by far the largest in output (Gross Value Added) terms (nearly 50% of the region) with Central Lancashire second at 20% and Liverpool with 17%. Chorley is of course on the edge of the Manchester City Region and there is some, but not much, recognition of such links with adjoining areas. The Central Lancashire approach does refer to the Preston City Vision Initiative, now re-titled Central Lancashire City Vision, as well as Elevate in East Lancashire and the Blackpool Masterplan. Preston's City Region gateway role is also recognised but the main theme is to 'balance improved economic growth with the need to regenerate the poorer performing parts of the City Region' (para 14.6). Policy CLCR2 goes on to say 'Development in the Central Lancashire City Region will be located primarily in the regional city of Preston and the three regional towns of Blackburn, Blackpool and Burnley...'.
43. The key deficiency of the draft RSS report in respect of its sub-regional policies is that it fails to recognise that the key driver of economic growth in the Central Lancashire City Region is the combined economies of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble.
44. The text under Policy CLCR2 – para 14.8 states “Preston is strongly linked to suburbs to the south or the River Ribble consisting of Penwortham, Lostock Hall, Walton-le-Dale, Bamber Bridge, Clayton Brook and Whittle-le-Woods”. These are all communities in their own right and the degree to which they are economically as well as spatially linked with Preston City diminishes the further south you come. What is not clear from the draft RSS is what scale of development is envisaged in these settlements.

## **COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

45. There are no Human Resources implications to this report.

## **COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

46. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **CONCLUSION**

47. Throughout the RSS preparation process to date Officers from Chorley, Preston and South Ribble have been collaborating on producing joint comments. These have had

some effect in improving policies particularly in terms of the economic growth potential of the three authorities. However as this report shows there are a number of ongoing deficiencies with the submitted draft RSS. Many of these concerns are applicable across the three authorities so again the respective officers have drafted a combined response for consideration by each Council Cabinet. A united approach in this way adds weight to our voice and greatly increase the chances of securing a seat at the Examination in Public which is by invitation only. Appendix A presents the joint comments. Each Cabinet may wish to make additions or deletions to these comments. If these are minor and only have relevance to one District it is not proposed to report these back to the other Councils. If the changes are more major then Executive Members/Leaders will be asked to approve the final content of the joint response.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

48. That the comments set out in Appendix A to this report are approved as the Council's representations on the draft RSS subject to any major changes proposed by either Preston or South Ribble Councils being approved by an Executive Member Decision.

## **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) (If the recommendations are accepted)**

49. To influence the final content of the RSS it is necessary to make formal representations at this time.

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

50. Comments separate from Preston and South Ribble Councils could be made but they would carry less weight.

JANE E MEEK  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

<b>Background Papers</b>			
<b>Document</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>File</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>
The North West Plan Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England	January 2006		Gillibrand Street Offices

<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Ext</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Doc ID</b>
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