

DRAFT REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE NORTH WEST

EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

NOTE OF THE PRELIMINARY MEETING

WIGAN INVESTMENT CENTRE

THURSDAY 27 JULY 2006

Panel Members

Chair - Chris Shepley

Inspector – Mike Hurley

Planning Officers – Chris White

- Mark Wilson

Panel Secretariat

Panel Secretary – Helen Wilson

Panel Assistant – Joanne Parr

135 interested parties attended

Introduction

Chris Shepley, the Panel Chair welcomed those present and introduced himself; the Inspector, Mike Hurley, Planning Officers Mark Wilson and Chris White, and the Panel Secretariat - Helen Wilson, (Panel Secretary) and Joanne Parr, (Panel Assistant). Mr Shepley stressed that the Panel and Secretariat are independent of all respondents to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

Mr Shepley stressed the importance of the meeting and indicated that the Panel do not currently intend to hold a further Preliminary Meeting, but reserve the right to do so should the need arise. If a further Meeting is required it will take place at some point during the 11-13 September, when Seminars are due to be held.

Mr Shepley outlined the duties of the Panel Secretariat and asked that any correspondence for the attention of the Panel be sent to the Panel Secretary. Any queries regarding the programme, attendance at the Examination, as well as all other general queries should be directed to the Panel Assistant.

Representatives of the Government Office of the North West (Gill Ayres and Ian Crosland) and the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA) (Duncan McCorquordale and Dave Colbert) introduced themselves.

The Panel Chair reported that the Panel had received 737 responses to the public consultation on the Draft RSS for the North West, comprising 4,090 representations.

Purpose of the Examination in Public:

The Chair advised that the Draft RSS has been prepared by the North West Regional Assembly., and that the Secretary of State has decided to hold an EiP of selected Matters, arising from the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy. The main purpose of the Examination is to provide an opportunity for a structured discussion and testing of the RSS before the Panel. This will be guided by a selection of Matters arising from consultation on the Draft RSS, providing the main basis on which the Secretary of State can decide whether any changes are required to the RSS before it is adopted.

The Chair explained that the Examination is not a review of all the proposals contained in the Draft RSS, nor is it a hearing of all objections. It will, however, ensure that there is public discussion of those major issues of concern, where it is considered an examination could usefully provide further information. Participants are selected to ensure a broad mix of viewpoints on each issue for debate. The Examination will address strategic issues rather than local issues.

Following the EiP, the panel will prepare a report which will include recommendations for amending the Draft RSS and which must be taken into account when the Secretary of State decides whether any changes need to be made to the Draft RSS. The broad questions selected by the Panel are designed to stimulate discussion about the main elements of the consultation draft, that have attracted public concern or where there may be conflict with other policies. Detailed guidance on the conduct of the Examination is also contained within PPS11.

The EiP – Dates and Venue

The Examination will start at **10.00 Tuesday, 31 October 2006** and will run for approximately 6 sitting weeks, in two 3 week blocks, with a recess in December, when the Panel will work on the report.

The venues for the Examination will be:

- The Investment Centre, Wigan from 31 October – 17 November 2006 and 6 – 18 January 2007, and;
- The Lake District National Park Authority Headquarters, Kendal - 23-26 January 2007

The Secretariat office will move to The Investment Centre shortly before the opening of the Examination. Contact details for The Investment Centre and the timing of the relocation will be posted on the EiP website in due course. The website – www.northwesteip.co.uk should be the first port of call for all information relating to the EiP

Preliminary Meeting

The Chair stated the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting was to provide an opportunity to clarify any procedural questions. The Meeting was held during the 28-day period that PPS11 requires for formal comments on the Draft List, which was published on 24 July 2006. The consultation period ends at **4pm on 21 August**. All comments will be considered by the Panel who will consult NWRA and Government Office before publishing the Final List of Matters and Participants on **4 September**. The decision whether to make any amendments prior to the issue of the Final List is one for the Panel alone. It should be noted that the questions are based on issues raised by respondents in the representations and do not imply any judgements on any Matters on the part of the Panel.

The Chair stressed the Draft List is very much a draft and it is expected to change. The Chair advised parties not listed, who feel they ought to be included as participants, to complete the comment form on the website, setting out reasons for inclusion. The Panel should also be informed should any parties listed as participants decide not to attend. Comments regarding Matters are also welcomed and should be submitted on the Comment Form, again with reasons. Where “a community representative” or “2 developers” have been indicated the Panel do have names in mind but think it would be helpful to hear from people who feel they have a particular contribution to make before the list is finalised. Helen Wilson, Panel Secretary, advised attendees that the comment form was available to download from the website and that the Secretariat would appreciate electronic submissions.

It is intended to have 15-20 participants at each session – 20 is normally the maximum that can be accommodated without inhibiting the debate and a lower number is preferred. The draft list has been prepared to ensure that all points of view are represented. In light of this, the Chair advised that, due to the large number of Local Authorities in the region, it has been necessary to allocate one place for each County or former County area at each of the thematic debates. The Panel believe that the inclusion of more than 5 representatives from Local Authorities might unbalance the debate. This need not be the same representative each time so the representatives from Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria need not always be the County Councils. The Panel hope Participants will be able to agree this amongst themselves. If all District and Unitary Authorities indicate a wish to take part it may be necessary to “hot desk” to keep the numbers manageable.

The Panel recognise the importance of the District and Unitary Authorities and with this in mind have invited all those Local Authorities to participate in the relevant sub-regional debate. The Chair indicated it was likely that further guidance on this matter would be issued along with the Final List of Matters and Participants. Minutes of the meeting will be posted on the EIP website; anyone unable to access the website should contact the Secretariat for hard copies

Leading up to the EiP

The Chair requested Participants to meet in advance and seek to reach agreement, or at least to narrow down disagreement, especially in relation to technical issues. Wherever possible, the Panel will highlight such areas in advance. It is stressed that the EiP will be concerned with examining policy and strategy, rather than resolving detailed issues relating to data and methodology.

Seminars:

To facilitate this a number of seminars will be held, on 11-13 September , covering 6 topics, broadly as follows (this is not a detailed agenda):

- Transport – how the programmes have been developed; the relationship to funding allocations - 11 September PM
- Employment – how the land allocations have been calculated and distributed, the relationship between the different types of employment site - 12 September AM
- Housing – how the figures have been produced, what assumptions have been made, how they have been distributed - 12 September PM
- Waste – especially the relationship to PPS10 - 13 September AM
- Energy– the forecasts behind the policies and the relationship to the Energy White Paper - 13 September PM
- The SEA – how it has been developed, how it is tied in to the Strategy, how it complies with the legislation - 13 September PM

On 11 and 12 September the seminars will be held at the Wigan Investment Centre and on 13 September at the City of Manchester Stadium.

Attendees were asked to note that the seminars are designed to enable the Panel and others to understand the reasoning behind the policies and not to discuss the merits of the policies. The seminars will be chaired by the either the Chair or the Inspector who will ensure that this rule is adhered to. The NWRA, at the Panel's request, are organising the seminars, and details will be placed on the website. It is stressed that the seminars are open events and everybody is invited to attend – however anyone wishing to attend the seminars are asked to inform the Panel Assistant so appropriate arrangements can be made.

The Panel have been informed that some parties may be producing alternative methodologies, for example in relation to the forecast of housing need. The Chair emphasised that substantially different approaches which are likely to be canvassed, should be brought to the attention of the Panel and NWRA prior to the seminars. Such approaches should be explained at the seminars, and be the subject of questioning, to aid the Panel's understanding. Should such fundamental differences come forward any later in the timetable then it will be very difficult for the Panel to deal with them. These matters should be discussed with the Assembly in advance of the EIP with the aim of narrowing down any differences of approach, and may be the subject of briefing notes. All this is for the benefit of the Panel and Participants.

Panel Tour

The Panel will be undertaking tours of the Region before the EIP - details of these will be placed on the website.

Arrangements for the EiP

The EiP will sit Tuesday – Thursday 10.00 am – 5.00 pm and on Fridays 9.30 am to 1.00 pm. The Panel will not sit on Mondays to allow for travelling attendees, but reserve the right to do so should this be to the overall advantage of the Examination process. It may also be necessary to hold an afternoon session between 14.00 and 15.30 on Friday afternoons to ensure that the business of the Examination is concluded in a timely fashion. Please note that the EiP will not be sitting on Tuesday 14 November. Every effort will be made to keep to the programme, however last minute changes may be unavoidable. Participants will be informed by the Panel Assistant of any changes to the timetable, although it is stressed that it remains the responsibility of Participants to ensure that they keep themselves up to date.

The Inspector explained that the Examination will take the form of a series of topic discussions led by a Panel member and based on the selected Matters. The Chair or Inspector will introduce each topic, highlighting the issues that need to be explored. Participants are expected to have read all the documents relevant to a particular session. The reading out of prepared statements or the formal presentation of evidence already submitted will not normally be appropriate.

Mr Hurley outlined the arrangements for Participants and advised that each organisation or individual participating in a particular session will have one speaking point at the table, occupied by one spokesperson at a time. Except for a short presentation by a representative of the Regional Assembly on the first day, there will be no formal speeches at the opening and close of the sessions, although the Assembly will be invited to make a final comment at the end of each debate. Written copies of any opening presentation will be posted on the EiP website and placed in the Examination Library.

In order to facilitate a meaningful discussion the Panel will curtail any contributions that are excessively long or go into irrelevant matters or inappropriate detail. Time limits for individual contributions may be imposed if necessary. The informal nature of the sessions means that it should not be necessary for Participants to have legal representation. There will be no formal cross-examination of Participants, as is the case at public inquiries. Any questions concerning statements made by other Participants should be raised through the Chair or Inspector.

It is stressed that the Notes for Participants should be referred to as they contain all relevant guidance for participants. All EiP proceedings will be recorded - anyone wishing to purchase copies of the recordings should contact the Panel Assistant. All sessions will be open to the public to observe. It is stressed that whilst Participants may attend, as observers, any session to which they have not been invited, they will not be able to take part in the discussion.

Documentation

Leading up to and during the Examination, Joanne will maintain an Examination Library, which will include:

- Core Documents;
- the RSS and supporting documents,
- copies of all representations submitted on the Draft RSS

Before the start of the EiP the library will be available for inspection at the Secretariat Office, in GONW offices, (contact the Panel Assistant to make an appointment). A list of the contents of the library will be available from the Panel Assistant, and will be posted on the EiP website. Photocopying facilities will be available upon request.

The need for brevity was stressed by the Chair; submissions should not exceed 2,000 words in length, should be in plain English and should avoid as far as possible the use of technical language or jargon. The Panel will be pleased if submissions are less than 2000 words – experience indicates most submissions in other cases have been longer than necessary, and this has not helped the case of the party.

Such submissions must be specifically directed to the Matters referred to in the Final List of Matters and Participants. The deadline for the delivery of Written Submissions to the Panel Secretariat is **no later than 4pm on Monday 2 October 2006**. This deadline must be strictly adhered to – late submissions and additional

papers submitted on the day of the relevant session will not be accepted. Detailed instructions for the preparation of submissions are in the Notes for Participants.

Expenses

The Inspector advised that travel and subsistence claims from any private individuals invited and appearing on their own behalf in the Examination will be met, as will such claims from representatives of voluntary organisations who can demonstrate that they are unpaid volunteers. Participants from public bodies or private companies will not be eligible for expenses, nor will Participants' advisers. Claims for reasonable expenses incurred in meeting the Panel's requirements for producing written submissions will also be considered, although it is advisable to consult the Panel Secretariat before incurring such expenses.

Questions/Any Other Business

The Inspector invited questions from the floor:

Roger Parkin, Cheshire Association of Local Councils:

Town and Parish Councils are not mentioned in the list of Matters and Participants, except for one instance, but a large number of Local Authorities are. How could those parties not invited to participate continue to be involved in the process?

Mr Shepley gave assurance that all representations had been considered and a list of participants drawn from the submissions. There was only limited space at the EiP. Those parties not included in the Draft List of Matters and Participants who felt they should be listed were invited to complete the comment form on the website, stating reasons for inclusion. Non invited parties are able to submit written statements on the Matters, however no verbal contributions could be made.

Christine Ford, Parkside Action Group

Queried how people who cannot access the internet could submit comments, and how would the Panel treat written comments?

Helen Wilson stated that whilst it was helpful to the Secretariat to receive comments electronically all forms of correspondence were acceptable and would be taken into account.

David Proctor, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

If new Matters are introduced as a result of the consultation on the Draft List of Matters and Participants, will further consultation take place?

Mr Hurley responded that if a new Matter is introduced it will appear on the Final List of Matters and Participants but due to the short timescales involved, it will not go out to further consultation.

David Penney, Skipton and East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership

Do the Panel require further information, in addition to the response already submitted?

Mr Shepley advised that it is not a requirement for respondents to submit additional information.

Henry Wild, British Holiday and Home Parks Association

The British Holiday and Home Parks Association is not included in list of Matters and Participants and, as they contribute over £200m annually to the regional economy, believe the omission is an oversight.

Mr Shepley repeated that if any respondent feels that they should be a Participant that they should complete a comment form providing reasons for their inclusion.

Cedric Knipe, Macclesfield Borough Council

The role of District Councils is not well recognised in the Draft List of Matters and Participants. Given that the Districts are charged with implementing the RSS, should there not be greater representation at the EIP?

Mr Shepley hoped that the number of District Councils wishing to taking part will be manageable, however this will need to be reviewed once comments have been received. The Draft List of Matters and Participants needs to strike a balance between public and private sector, and also recognise the size limitations of the venue. The Panel do not rule out inviting a District Council where the Council has a strong case for inclusion.

Ian Gill, West Lancashire District Council

Will interested parties receive an email alert when any new information is added to the website?

Helen Wilson said the Secretariat will need to check the feasibility of this. However the website is frequently updated and any new information is listed under the section 'What's New'.

Andy Yuille, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England

1) How will the 2000 word limit for statements be broken down, for example, will it be 2000 words per matter, or per sub matter?

Mr Hurley indicated that this will be made clear in the Final List of Matters and Participants

2) Will Respondents/Participants be able to develop responses in relation to other submissions?

Mr Hurley advised that all responses will be available for viewing at the Secretariat Office in Manchester, however an appointment should be made with the Panel Assistant beforehand. It is intended for all summaries of responses to be added to the website – this information should be available by 4 August 2006, technology permitted.

Richard Evans, Cumbria County Council

The RSS is over a year old, how will changes in policy which came into affect after the publication of the RSS be taken into account? It may be that additional comments would have been received had policies issued between the publication of the RSS and now have been included in the EiP – can representations be made on 'new' policies?

Mr Shepley advised that respondents can refer to all policies in the public domain up to and including the EiP. However, no new representation can be submitted as the deadline for responses has passed. The Panel should be informed if it is believed that the Draft List of Matters and Participants does not fully represent all issues and parties concerned.

Joanna Pugh, National Trust

How has the itinerary for the Panel Tour been developed?

Mr Shepley explained that the Government Office North West had provided a draft list of sites which NWRA were consulted upon. A final list will be drawn up and will cover as much of the region as possible. As the RSS deals with strategic issues, the purpose of the tour is to gain an overview of the region – Mr Shepley is familiar with some parts of the region but not the Inspector. Details of the Panel Tour will be published on the EiP website, however it is not intended that Respondents/Participants meet the Panel at any of the sites.

Mr Shepley thanked everyone for attending the Preliminary Meeting and reminded attendees to regularly check the website for updates on the EiP process.