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From: John Shephard [jrs@jjdesign.org.uk]
Sent: Monday 2 October 2006
To: statement@northwesteip.co.uk
Subject: Brethren's Gospel Trusts/RESP530/Matter 1A

Please find attached our Written Statement for Matter 1A.

Kind regards
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RESPONDENT NO. 530
 MATTER 1A

DRAFT REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE NORTH WEST
EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC - PARTICIPANTS WRITTEN STATEMENT

MATTER 1A - VISION AND OBJECTIVES

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Brethren's Gospel Trusts represent charitable Gospel Hall Trusts and Education Trusts associated with long established Christian assemblies located in 7 towns and cities in the North West Region.

1.2 We seek to bring a faith based perspective to the EIP rather than take any sectarian stance, as part of the voluntary sector role acting as 'critical friends' to Government at all levels. We urge the Panel to reflect on the need for the RSS to provide for the people of the region as a whole and to make a positive contribution to 'social capital' in the North West Region.

1.3 While definitions of social capital vary widely, the main indicators generally include:

- social relationships and social support eg. volunteering;
- formal and informal social networks eg. football supporters clubs, women's institutes, sports leagues, playgroups etc;
- group memberships eg. local sports teams, parent-teacher associations;
- community and civic engagement eg. voting in elections;
- norms and values eg. faith groups;
- reciprocal arrangements eg. sharing childcare with friends and neighbours;
- levels of trust in others eg. a low level of social capital may manifest itself as fear of crime.

[Source: Social module of General Household Survey 2000]

1.4 A number of faith communities, including Brethren, are concerned that their needs are not overlooked at LDD level due to omissions in the draft RSS.

1.5 The overall economic contribution to the region from faith communities has been documented in:

- a. Faith in England's North West : NWDA : 2003;
- b. Faith in England's North West : Economic Impact Assessment : DTZ Piedad Consulting : NWDA : 2005.

Copies of both documents and a Summary leaflet have been deposited in the EIP Core Documents library.

1.6 Other large Christian charitable organisations such as National Children's Homes (Methodist), Nugent Care Society (Catholic), Church of England Children's Society and Barnardo's Homes were not included in the above studies. Church contribution to education was also excluded. In the North West churches are responsible for 46% of all primary schools and 28% of secondary schools.

1.7 Brethren are also private education providers, in several centres in the Region.

2. **ISSUE (i) Are the overall vision and objectives in the draft RSS appropriate and do they adequately cover the characteristics and issues of the whole region?**

2.1 National guidance requires that the RSS should:

- articulate a spatial vision for the region at the end of the plan period and show how this will contribute to achieving sustainable development objectives; and
- provide a concise spatial strategy for achieving that vision, defining its main aims and objectives.

(See PPS11 paragraph 1.7 CD:PP11)

2.2 The characteristics of the region may be summarised as:

- home to 6.7 million people - 13% of total population of England;
- a large and diverse region, containing two major conurbations, together with smaller manufacturing towns, historic market towns and coastal resorts, with large areas of open countryside including the Lake District National Park;
- a rich heritage from its industrial past.

(Source: Sustainable Communities in North West CD: GEN13)

2.3 The strategic challenges for the region include:

- significant areas of urban and rural deprivation;
- need to address better housing, urban regeneration, crime prevention, improved health and environmental enhancement;
- reinvigorate the regional economy, with more and better jobs to underpin sustainable communities, with improved infrastructure;
- restructure the rural economy and make the most of what the countryside has to offer;
- build on the regional tradition for innovation.

(Source: Sustainable Communities in North West CD: GEN13)

2.4 PPS1 [CD: PP1] paragraph 30 advises:

"Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they can function."

2.5 PPS1 [CD: PP1] paragraph 31 continues; inter alia:

"It is this spatial planning approach which provides the framework for delivering sustainable development. In preparing spatial plans, planning authorities should:

- i) Set a clear vision for the future pattern of development, with clear objectives for achieving that vision and strategies for delivery and implementation ...
- ii) Consider the needs and problems of the communities in their areas ... should set out also how social, economic and environmental objectives will be achieved through plan policies.
- iii) Seek to integrate the wide range of activities relating to development and regeneration ..."

2.6 It is in this context that we have submitted that the Vision for the plan is excessively long and is lacking in focus and clarity. The first two paragraphs are a factual current regional portrait of regional character but are not visionary. The third and fourth paragraphs summarise the challenges facing the region and the truly visionary elements are limited to the final three paragraphs. Furthermore, in part these contain aims and aspirations rather than a clear concise over-arching vision for the region at the end of the plan period.

2.7 We do, however, commend the location of the Vision at the opening of the Plan.

2.8 We urge the Panel to recommend a more concise, focused and clear Vision following the pattern set out in the RES and addressing the matters raised by GONW in their representations.

3. ISSUE (ii) Does the draft RSS provide an appropriate, realisable and sustainable strategy for the region, having regard to national objectives/policy, key strategic issues and factors influencing change?

3.1 Whilst the sub-headings in Chapter 2 of the draft RSS include "Objectives and Outcomes" and "An Overview of the Regional Spatial Strategy" thus according with the advice of PPS1 paragraph 31 [CD: PP1], and paragraph 4.2 of the draft Plan sets broad objectives which are supported; we submit that there is an underlying weakness due to the failure to commit to over-arching social progress which meets the needs of everyone (see PPS1 paragraph 4 CD: PP1) and to address the diversity and equality issues in urban, rural and coastal communities.

3.2 We submit that in order to deliver "truly sustainable communities" in accordance with policy priority C9 of the Northern Way Growth Strategy (NWGS) (CD: REG5) the draft RSS must explicitly acknowledge the needs of the people of the region, including their physical, mental and spiritual and moral needs. In this way the spatial strategy will contribute to enhanced social capital in addition to the physical needs for housing, employment and environmental protection and enhancement.

3.3 The omission of clear and comprehensive references to all eight key components of 'Sustainable Communities' (UK SDS Annex A CD: GEN10) and a clear commitment to address diversity and equality issues (see CD: GEN15) is a weakness of the draft RSS, which should be addressed.

- 3.4 The draft RSS should also include an explicit acknowledgement of the need to engage fully and effectively with all communities throughout the region in order to deliver national policies expressed at PPS1 paragraph 13 (vi) (CD: PP1) and UK SDS guiding principle "Promoting Good Governance" (CD: GEN10). We submit that this is an integral part of delivering the national objectives for "a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal wellbeing" (CD: GEN10).
- 3.5 We also submit that the draft RSS should acknowledge the special needs arising from an ageing population through the region, in order to reflect the key strategic issues and factors influencing change.
- 3.6 We urge the Panel to recommend provision of these over-arching strategic objectives as essential foundations needed to provide an appropriate, realisable and sustainable strategy for the region, both in the draft RSS and to provide a clear direction for LDD preparation.