

DRAFT REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE NORTH WEST EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

Statement on behalf of Persimmon Homes

Matter 1C Assumptions underpinning the draft RSS

Matter 1D Overall Approach

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Our comments on behalf of Persimmon in respect of matters 1C and 1D are necessarily presented from a market perspective. As one of the key parties charged with the implementation and delivery of RSS policies then Persimmon, alongside the rest of the market, will have no choice but to work with the Strategy in whatever form it emerges. The more detailed issues as to the key technical assumptions which underpin the draft strategy will be considered by others. Having said that however, and in adopting a market perspective, all that is required from the policy framework is that

- there is a consistency of approach between the individual elements.
- there is a transparency of approach.
- the policies framework is not overly prescriptive so as to allow for flexibility and market responsiveness over the life of the Strategy.

On this basis comments on the matters raised at 1C and 1D are set out below

1C i) Are the economic assumptions (including growth and activity rates) in the draft RSS appropriate and achievable?

Persimmon would wholeheartedly support the link between housing development and economic growth. Regard is had to the provisions of the RES and to some extent the Northern Way strategy both of which seek to achieve significant economic growth. It is considered that the provision of an appropriate housing stock (both qualitative and quantitative) is fundamental to the delivery of such growth. Persimmon are pleased therefore to see this echoed within draft Strategy.

1C ii) Are the assumptions as to population change within the draft RSS appropriate.

Persimmon Homes attended the EIP Housing seminar on 14th September from where it was made clear that:

- The draft RSS is based primarily on the North West Household Growth Estimates Study.
- The Household Growth Estimates Study had regard to what was at the time the latest data as set out in the 2002 based household projections and the 2003 based population projections which were in part based on 1996 household projections.

- The 2003 based projections as issued in march 2004 (i.e. post preparation of the draft RSS) show significant changes in trend from earlier assumptions, particularly in respect of a reduction in outward migration from the Region and an increase in inward migration, largely arising within eastern Europe

The 2003 based projections are surely fundamental to any current or ongoing assessment of future housing requirements, particularly ones contained within a Strategy which is to guide development for the next 15 – 20 years. Persimmon are concerned that in the light of the trends as identified within the 2003 based projections the housing figures as proposed in the current draft Strategy fail to support forecast housing growth. This is in itself of direct relevance to the market but also has wider implications for ongoing economic expansion, given the link between the two elements.

1C iv) Are the national and regional constraint on development clearly articulated. Are the development proposals consistent with Green Belt, flood risk policies and other constraints such as transport, water supply and sewerage infrastructure.

The draft Strategy broadly outlines the development constraints as are understood by Persimmon and the market generally. One issue however is in respect of the Green Belt and its forward review. The commitment to review the Green Belt boundary across the main development areas within the region by 2011 is welcomed – the areas cited are likely to be the focus of development and the drivers of economic growth and it would be of concern if this was to be potentially constrained by an overlay restrictive and outdated Green Belt boundary. One area of concern however is that the Strategy treats Warrington as an exception and anticipates no Green Belt boundary review before 2021. Warrington is likely to fulfil a strategic economic role over the next 15 years and regard should be had to its associated future growth. The maintenance of existing Green belt boundaries to at least 2021 potentially constrains this growth. No apparent clarification is provided.

1D i) Does the draft RSS align with the Regional Economic Strategy, the Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Funding Allocation advice.

Given the range of strategy documents which together are intended to guide development across the region, it is essential that they complement each other so as to avoid uncertainty which, from Persimmons perspective, is a bar to effective strategy making and investment decisions. Appropriate emphasis should be given within the paragraph to ensure that RES, RHS and RSS are aligned within a coherent spatial strategy within which economic growth is

supported by housing provision. One area which Persimmon do have a concern in this matter is in respect of Warrington. The RES identifies Warrington as a growth opportunity area and states that new housing should support this economic growth. The Omega opportunity is a strategic site in the RES and will add to Warrington's current position as one of the largest employment centres in the region and with associated employment rate. The housing figures as set out within RES however are not commensurate with the future economic role planning for the town. The mismatch could potentially create a tension between supply and demand and give rise to less sustainable travel to work patterns. In this instance an increase in the housing allocation for Warrington should be incorporated commensurate with its employment centre role and projected growth.