

Panel Question (i)

Does the City region approach adequately address the different pressures and needs of the various parts of the region or are there alternative sub-regional approaches, which better reflect these needs and pressures?

Should there be greater clarity about:

- a) The geographic extent of the three city regions;**
- b) The broad scale of development they should accommodate; and**
- c) Their role in relation to each other and to towns beyond the city regions such as Carlisle and Crewe?**

1.1 The development of the 'city region approach' in the submitted Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) has been undertaken in partnership with stakeholders in each of the city regions – the detail of the approach is set out in Section 2 of the Technical Appendix. The rationale for adopting a city region approach has been outlined in the Assembly's statement for Matter 1D (ii) including alignment with the Northern Way and subsequent City Region Development Programmes.

1.2 It needs to be emphasised that the sub-regional policy frameworks in Part 4 of the Draft RSS should be read in conjunction with other parts of the plan to ensure that the whole framework that sets out the quantum and location of development in the city regions is understood.

1.3 The city region approach provides a spatial planning geography that reflects the diverse socio-economic patterns that exist on the ground within the region. The extent of the geography in each case can be viewed in a number of ways depending on the issue that is under consideration. Thus, the interaction between places apparent from travel to work patterns¹ differs to that observed in terms of housing market areas². The geographical boundary for each city region is therefore not fixed and will need to be viewed as flexible depending on the policy issue that is being dealt with. However, certainty needs to be in place in terms of policy where particular boundaries are required. This has been done in the case of each city region, for example, policies LCR2, MCR2 and CLCR2.

1.4 The most substantive alternative sub-regional approach is suggested by Cheshire County Council which puts forward alternative sub-regions within Cheshire. The Assembly considers that the city region approach for Liverpool and Manchester provides a framework that incorporates most of the detail required to direct development within the parts of Cheshire included in each city region. However, Assembly officers acknowledge there is potential for some modification to the policies to accommodate elements of the additional policy content that Cheshire County Council and others³ have suggested⁴.

1.5 The broad scale of development to be accommodated in each city region is clearly set out in terms of housing and economic needs in the Draft RSS. Policy W2 provides broad locations for regionally significant economic development noting which sub-region each falls within. Policy L4 sets out housing provision figures by local authority area, which can then be summed together into the relevant city region.

¹ Briefing Note 1 – Travel to Work Pattern (2001 Census), NWRA, July 2006

² See Ecotec research for Government Office North West on possible housing market areas for the region.

³ Including Cheshire County Council, Chester City Council, Macclesfield Borough Council, Vale Royal Borough Council

⁴ Briefing Paper 20 - Suggested Wording Changes to Draft RSS, NWRA, September 2006

The sub-regional policies for each city region then provide a framework to guide the location of development.

1.6 The relationships between the city regions is set out in the introductory sections for each of the city region policy frameworks in the Draft RSS. It is acknowledged that the text provides a brief reference to the relationships that exist. Moreover, the public consultation response highlighted a number of concerns about the level of detail provided in the Draft RSS regarding the relationship between the city regions and in turn with other sub-regions⁵. Recent work undertaken for the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA)⁶ provides substantive evidence of the relationships that exist between the city regions and with other sub-regional areas. Accordingly, the Assembly officers acknowledge that additional explanatory text could be added to the introductory section of each city region policy framework.

1.7 The Draft RSS recognises the interrelationship between the city regions and towns and cities in other sub-regions in stating ‘...***the complementary need for strong and vibrant cities and towns helping to meet the needs of the whole region***’ (paragraph 5.16). Policy RDF1 includes specific clauses that deal with the roles of the city regions, and regional towns and cities in the other sub-regions. Moreover, the sub-regional policy frameworks for Cumbria and North Lancashire, and South Cheshire provide further detail on the roles for identified regional towns and cities.

Panel Question (ii)

Are the City Regions to be treated as being equal or is there a hierarchy?

2.1 Draft RSS does not set out a hierarchy for the city regions although it does identify the particular importance of the regional centres of Liverpool and Manchester/Salford in RDF1. The Assembly note that the public consultation response highlighted a number of differing views on the need for a hierarchy⁷ that illustrates there is no clear view from organisations in the region on the appropriateness of applying a hierarchy to the city regions.

⁵ AGMA, GONW, CPRE, Cheshire Association of Local Councils, NWDA, Blackburn with Darwen BC, Blackpool BC, East Lancashire Chief Executives’ Group, Lancashire County Council.

⁶ Strengthening the Evidence Base of Key Economic and Spatial Strategies in the North West, SURF/CUPS/IPEG (Universities of Salford and Manchester) for NWDA 2006

⁷ Including AGMA, Merseyside Policy Unit and Preston/South Ribble/Chorley Councils.