

WRITTEN STATEMENT TO NORTH WEST REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY  
EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC  
ON BEHALF OF PENSYCOR LIMITED

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MATTER 2D

**MATTER 2D: RURAL ISSUES**

- 1) **Are rural issues, including the development needs of small towns, adequately addressed in the draft RSS?**

The North West region is a diverse area containing major conurbations and sparse rural communities. The rural areas of the region are equally varied, including outlying areas to the main towns and cities (eg Cheshire) and remote rural areas, including Cumbria and High Peak.

The draft RSS seeks to provide a framework for development in all rural areas through a single Policy: RDF3. The policy directs development to Key Service Centres, but makes no provision for new development at smaller towns which may also serve an important role within rural areas, particularly those located within the more urbanised areas of Cheshire, for example.

The purpose of the Rural Areas Policy should be to define the development opportunities outside settlements identified in Table 7.1 (ie Regional Centres, Regional Towns and Cities and Key Service Centres). The RSS should recognise the diversity of the region and the importance of small towns to act as focal points for local communities with the capacity to accommodate new housing and employment development in a sustainable manner. This is particularly important in terms of town locations in close proximity to major transport hubs such as Manchester Airport who's function is especially important to the regions economy.

In particular, within rural areas on the outskirts of the Regional Centres, the RSS should recognise the importance of inter-relationships between towns and the Regional Centre.

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The Northern Way highlighted the functional relationships between the Regional Centre and the wider rural economy through supportive and complementary functions, supply chain associations, local employment, cultural facilities and a distinctive quality of life and environment. The strength of surrounding towns is critical to these interrelationships.

In this respect, we support the provisions of Policy RDF3 for rural areas to take advantage of proximity to Regional Centres to provide services, employment and a more diverse economic base. However, the policy wording should be expanded to provide for appropriate levels of development in towns within the rural areas throughout the region. The following revisions to the text are recommended:

***“Development in rural areas should be concentrated within Key Service Centres with modest development permitted in other towns of a scale and nature appropriate to fulfil the needs of local communities for housing, employment and services, and to enhance the quality of rural life”.***