

Panel Question (i)

Will the draft RSS help to secure mixed cohesive sustainable communities?

and

Panel Question (ii)

Are health and education issues adequately addressed in Draft RSS?

1.1 The RSS will help to secure mixed cohesive and sustainable communities via an overall strategic policy context for development and implementation at sub-regional, local and neighbourhood level¹. Identifying the key issues and spatial locations for policy intervention on various topics, provides strategic policy “hooks” for appropriate solutions to reflect local circumstances.

1.2 By providing a clear and concise strategy, the Assembly has sought to avoid repetition of national or local policy; ensure the policy ‘adds value’ and is not a series of platitudes / aspirations². As part of the engagement on Draft RSS³, there was little feedback, to indicate that RSS would not achieve this. Any changes to Policy L1 and supporting paragraphs should reflect this⁴. A number of responses have sought additional cross references to other policies within the Draft RSS. Whilst the Assembly have no objection to such cross references being included, it is important that the clarity and conciseness of policies is not lost⁵. It must be remembered that the plan should be “read as a whole” as stated in paragraph 1.3 of Draft RSS.

1.3 The policy has evolved following engagement with a wide range of stakeholders⁶ and seeks to address issues, traditionally poorly addressed in Planning. Sport is indirectly linked to improving health inequalities and addressing other health issues. During preparation of Draft RSS, discussions with Sport England concluded that there would be no “added value” in having a Regional Policy on Sport given the national policy context, although the Draft RSS recognises the important role that sport and recreation play in the region⁷.

1.4 In light of the responses made, Assembly Officers, accept that some minor changes to the policy could be considered by the Panel to ensure that as part of sustainable communities agenda, the policy addresses more than just health and education. Assembly Officer suggestions are set out in Briefing Paper 20⁸.

¹ such as LDF's, Community Strategies, LAA's, LTP's and regeneration initiatives

² Draft RSS has been subject to sustainability appraisal, including strategic environmental assessment and a health impact assessment

“RSS – Health – Notes for Policy Authors” Entec for North West Regional Assembly, 10th September 2005

³ Including engagement on Interim Draft RSS

⁴ It should be noted that many of the comments in the responses relating to Policy L1 and supporting paragraphs have not previously been raised in the engagement process to prepare RSS. In this respect if they had been there is not doubt that some concerns could easily have been incorporated into policies, whilst others are already covered in vision/objectives/regional development principles of Draft RSS

⁵ see paragraph 3.14 of “Partial Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West – Examination in Public – Report of the Panel” February 2005, which states “... in general terms, our view is that cross references should be used very sparingly, otherwise they tend to confuse rather than clarify the thrust of individual policies...”

⁶ See Paragraph 5.8 of “The North West Plan – Pre-submission Consultation Statement” North West Regional Assembly, 2006 and also “Technical Advisory Paper on The North West Regional Spatial Strategy and Health - Final Report” Pearl, University of Liverpool, 2004

⁷ for example referenced in Policy W7 and in the supporting text to Policy EM4 on Regional Parks (para 11.6)

⁸ The Assembly are unable to make major changes to Draft RSS, see paragraph 2.48 of PPS11

1.5 Additionally, the Panel may wish to consider whether the RSS should include a new Regional Development Principles policy addressing issues covered by the Sustainable Communities Agenda. A possible wording for such a policy could be based on the Welsh Assembly Government's approach⁹.

⁹ Paragraph 3.5 of Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement (DMIPPS 02/2006) "Planning , Health & Well-Being" Welsh Assembly Government, 2006, which states
"Development plan policies should facilitate the provision of well located, and designed housing, employment and social facilities, including those for sport, recreation and open space, in attractive, accessible, safe, secure sustainable environments which benefit people's physical and mental health and well – being. LDP's should provide guidance on types of applications the local planning authority would expect to be accompanied by a HIA (*sic Health Impact Assessment*)."