

Our Ref: PB/EK/HambletonLocalDevelopmentFrameworkSubmissionofCoreStrategyDevelopmentPlanDocument

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Dear Graham

**Hambleton Local Development Framework
Submission of Core Strategy Development Plan Document**

Further to your letter of 15 February 2006, I am pleased to confirm the Assembly's opinion that the Hambleton Core Strategy Development Plan Document, as submitted to the Secretary of State on 17 February 2006, is in general conformity with the existing and draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). At this stage in the document's development, the Assembly would wish the following comments to be taken into account.

The Assembly can confirm that the Hambleton Core Strategy to a large extent reflects the spatial strategy set out in existing RSS (December 2004) and the Yorkshire and Humber Plan – draft RSS (December 2005). Annex 4 of the Core Strategy summarises draft RSS as it relates to Hambleton and considers the main layers of RSS policies, including the high level core approach (set out in policies YH1 – YH9), the more specific sub area focussed material and the main 'theme based' groups of policies around housing, employment, environment and transport. This is a good basis for establishing and ensuring the general conformity of the DPD with the RSS and its soundness in this regard. This positive approach of clearly articulating at a local level the relevant policies of the RSS should be commended as a model for all of the region's emerging Core Strategies.

One of the key aims of the existing RSS (December 2004) is to guide development to sustainable locations and to focus development in main urban areas, market and coalfield towns (Policy P1). This key strategic approach is reinforced in the Yorkshire and Humber Plan (Draft RSS December 2005), which is more specific about the desired location of development in Policies YH1 to 9. These clearly provide a policy context and direction that emphasises the need to concentrate development in Regional and Sub-Regional Centres, provide for sufficient development in Principal Service Centres for them to fulfil their important role and to allow limited development in Local Service Centres, primarily to meet local need for affordable housing and to enable economic diversification.

Draft RSS (December 2005) identifies two Principal Service Centres in the Hambleton District – Northallerton and Thirsk. In addition, the RSS refers to a number of Local Service Centres that were identified through the Regional Settlement Study, but it also makes it clear that this Study was a starting point from which local planning authorities would need to identify the Local Service Centres in their areas that should provide a focus for limited housing and economic development.

Hambleton's Core Strategy identifies its two Principal Service Centres and three other service centres – Bedale, Easingwold and Stokesley. It then goes on to identify 16 service villages and 30 secondary villages, within which limited development will be supported subject to local considerations. This broadly reflects the Core Approach of the RSS set out in Policies YH1-9.

However, the Assembly has some concerns about the extent to which the distinction between the role of the Principal Service Centres and the Local Service Centres is not as clear cut as it could be and with the numbers of service and secondary villages that are identified. Without this distinction being greater, and with the relatively high number of service and secondary villages that are identified, there is a concern that some of the key locational principles of the RSS could be undermined by dispersed development across the District rather than it being focused in the higher layers of the settlement hierarchy.

In light of the above, the Assembly would suggest that a clearer distinction is made between the Principal and Local Service Centres (and that housing and employment land targets and allocations are redistributed accordingly) and that consideration is given to applying Policy CP6.4 to all settlements below the service village level, rather than identifying the secondary village tier. A specific reference to supporting a focus on Catterick Garrison as a linked Principal Service Centre with Richmond would also be helpful (as part of the Spatial Principles section), as this Centre will provide a focus for development that, whilst outside the District, will play an important role in this part of the region.

The Assembly welcomes the reference in paragraph 4.1.12 to keeping the list of identified settlements under review and Annex 5 where monitoring arrangements are set out. At this stage, the Assembly would wish to see clear links made between the need to avoid dispersed development and the monitoring and implementation of the Core Strategy policies through other Development Plan Documents such as the Development Policies and Allocations DPDs. It needs to be made clearer that if any significant levels of dispersed development were to arise across the District, which would undermine the spatial location principles of the RSS and the Core Strategy, they would be readily identified to enable policy review – and a further tightening up of the settlement strategy - to take place at the first opportunity.

The Core Strategy contains a target to add 4.5 hectares per annum (75 hectares to 2021) of new employment land to the existing supply. Whilst there is justification given for this target in relation to creating new opportunities for economic development in the district, this figure could seem high in terms of the overall restraint approach set out for most of Hambleton. Almost 50% of all new employment land is proposed to areas other than Northallerton and Thirsk, which does not readily relate to the RSS overall approach of focusing the vast majority of new developments on well-connected larger settlements. These concerns are reinforced by additional allocations in the A1 corridor and at Airfields. The Assembly would not wish to see allocations encourage higher commuting levels, especially between the District and the Tees Valley to the north. Consideration should therefore be given to reviewing those allocations outside the Principal Service Centres.

The reference to specific highways improvements in the Core Strategy seem to be major schemes that will have to compete for Regional Funding Allocation. The Assembly suggests that consideration should therefore be given to the delivery of the overall strategy if these schemes were not to come to fruition.

The Assembly would wish to see the Core Strategy reflect the potential for Hambleton to help to deliver the region's renewable energy targets, as set out in Draft RSS (December 2005).

At this stage, the Assembly would be happy for the points made here to be dealt with by written representations at the Examination of the Hambleton Core Strategy DPD. As colleagues have already said, we are suggesting that further discussions take place if this would help to clarify any issues prior to the Examinations in Autumn 2006 of the draft RSS and the draft Hambleton Core Strategy DPD.

If you have any queries about these points, please do not hesitate to contact Jenny Poxon on 01924 331555.

Yours sincerely

Peter Box
Chair, Yorkshire and Humber Assembly

cc David Owen, Acting Director, Regional Affairs, Government Office for Yorkshire Humber
Isobel Mills, Director, People and Communities, Government Office for Yorkshire Humber