

Our ref: General 40b – Planning Conformity/final responses/local development frameworks/City Centre Area Action Plan Incorporating Citywide Policies Jan 08

21 January 2008

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Dear Mark

**City Centre Area Action Plan Incorporating Citywide Policies
(Development Plan Document Pre-Submission Draft June 2006)**

The Yorkshire and Humber Assembly welcomes the opportunity to comment on the City Centre Area Action Plan incorporating Citywide Policies document for Hull City Council and to continue its involvement in the development of a coherent spatial planning framework for the region. The comments offered in this letter are intended to be within the spirit of continued and productive joint working.

At this stage, the Assembly's response to the consultation document is a set of officer comments. The aim is to highlight where issues related to general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy might arise. When the City Centre Area Action Plan Incorporating Citywide Policies is submitted to the Secretary of State a formal Assembly view on its general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy will need to be given.

The following officer comments are made in relation to the existing Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire & the Humber (based on the selective review of RPG12 issued in December 2004), the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy – the Yorkshire and Humber Plan (submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2005) and The Secretary of States Proposed Changes to the Yorkshire and Humber Plan (September 2007).

Government guidance (paragraph 4.19 in PPS12) states: "Where the regional spatial strategy...has been through an Examination in Public, and the proposed changes have been published, considerable weight may be attached to that strategy because of the strong possibility that it will be published in that form by the Secretary of State".

As the Proposed Changes are now published, Assembly responses to consultations on DPDs need to make it clear how the Proposed Changes impact on the policies quoted and to point out to local authorities that 'considerable weight' will need to be attached to them by the decision-making body and by Inspectors at Examinations of DPDs. At the same time, it will be important to note that the Assembly itself will be making comments on the Proposed Changes and that the final version of the new RSS is expected early in 2008.

As you will be aware the Assembly commented on the Hull City Centre Area Action Plan Pre-submission Draft on 6 September 2006, which concluded that the document was in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Assembly would like to reiterate our original comments made on 6 September 2006. However since the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) have now been published officer comments have been provided below to highlight any changes to the original response in light of the Proposed Changes. The Assembly's original comments are attached in Annex A.

General Comments

As you know, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced mechanisms to help ensure that Development Plan Documents (DPDs) drawn up by local authorities as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) are in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The intention is to ensure that DPDs are contributing to the delivery of the RSS and that the two strands of the Development Plan for an area (the RSS and DPDs) are mutually supportive and not in conflict.

We therefore welcome the references to the RSS from **paragraphs 4.78 – 4.83**, which identify relevant draft and current RSS policies. However, it will be important in the submitted version of the City Centre Area Action Plan to highlight the need for there to be 'general conformity' between the RSS and the City Centre Area Action Plan, to ensure that the two strands of the development plan are mutually supportive. At present this need for conformity is not highlighted anywhere in the document.

It would also be helpful if the dates and status of the current and draft RSS were explained in future drafts of the City Centre Area Action Plan. For clarification current RSS was published in December 2004 and draft RSS was published in December 2005. It will also be helpful to note that the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (September 2007) has now been published. The Yorkshire and Humber Plan should be published early in 2008.

Overall Comments in light of the Proposed Changes

The aim 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 YH8. 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 Principle 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. The overall aim is to reverse the trend of dispersal of development, encouraging a settlement pattern that helps to fulfil the RSS objectives.

It should be noted that the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) replaces the terms "Regional Centres" with "Regional Cities", "Sub Regional Centres" with "Sub Regional Cities and Towns" and "Principal Service Centres" with "Principal Towns". The Core Approach of draft RSS is not changed by the Proposed Changes. The new terminology is used in this response.

Hull is identified in the draft RSS (2005) as a Sub-Regional Centre. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) recommends that Hull is to be identified as a Regional City. The Assembly has supported this change in its response to the Proposed Changes. Policy HE1A provides for the transformation of the role of Hull as a Regional City, particularly through remodelling the city centre to provide more and better jobs, shops, services, public spaces and homes, and transforming residential areas to create a better mix of housing and quality environments.

Policy YH5 of the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) states that Regional Cities should be the prime focus for housing, employment, shopping, leisure, education, shopping, leisure, education, health and cultural activities and facilities in the region.

A63

The Assembly in response to the City Centre Area Action Plan Pre-submission Draft (June 2006) was encouraged that it was recognised that a major issue for the area is the A63 trunk road, which performs a nationally significant role in accessing the port and also servicing the City Centre. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) supports improvements to the A63 and other short-term measures. Policy T9 proposes that plans, strategies, investment decisions and programmes should take forward and secure delivery of the transport investment and management priorities of regional significance outlined in Table 16.24. Transport Management and Investment Priority A3 identified in Table 16.24A recognises the importance of the A63.

Flood Risk

The Assembly in response to the City Centre Area Action Plan Pre-submission Draft (June 2006) stated that the preparation of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment would be an important tool in helping to determine how City Centre Area Action Plan will be delivered. The Hull Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has recently published therefore this will need to be considered in the delivery of the plan. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) Policy ENV1 provides for the Region to manage flood risk pro-actively by reducing the causes of flooding to existing and future development, especially in tidal areas, and to avoid development in high flood risk areas where possible. Flood management will be require to facilitate development in Hull, provided the sequential test has shown that there are no suitable lower risk sites available. It also provides for flood storage, habitat creation and managed realignment in areas around the Humber, and other river corridors as required.

I hope that these comments are helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if anything is not clear. We look forward to working with you further on your City Centre Action Plan Incorporating Citywide Policies.

Regards



Andy Haigh
Head of Planning Delivery and Conformity

Annex A

**YORKSHIRE
AND
HUMBER
ASSEMBLY**

Voice of the region

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Our ref: General 40b – Planning Conformity/final responses/local development frameworks/Hull CCAAP Pref Options Sept 06

6 September 2006

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Dear Keith

Hull City Centre Area Action Plan: Preferred Options

Thank you for consulting the Assembly on the Hull City Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options document. As you know, we are committed to working with local authorities in the preparation of their Development Plan Documents early on in the process, before we have to offer a formal opinion of general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) at submission stage. At this point in the process, the Assembly response to consultation is an informal officer response highlighting any key issues that we think might need further attention.

Because we are in a moment of time when there is an existing and an emerging RSS, the Assembly comments are based on both documents. The comments place emphasis on draft RSS, which reinforces and develops the general thrust of existing RSS; furthermore it is more up to date and has significant 'weight' in its own right. The weight attached to the draft RSS will increase as it passes through its Public Examination (September and October 2006) and once the Panel's Report is received (expected Spring 2007) before it is issued by the Secretary of State (expected Autumn 2007).

We have concentrated our comments on the Hull City Centre Area Action Plan (CCAAP) as a Development Plan Document and have not offered any comments on the Supplementary Planning Documents that are also out for consultation. Our

comments are related to the aspects of the CCAAP that we feel are more strategic than local.

Overall

It is clear that the CCAAP is a very thorough piece of work that has been in preparation for some years. It contains some important policy changes for Hull and some very ambitious proposals that are well justified and necessary to achieve the strategy for the City Centre. Furthermore it will help to achieve the strategies of the RSS, Northern Way and national policy aspirations.

We welcome the way in which the relevant RSS policies are identified and it is clear that the CCAAP has been drawn up within its wider spatial planning context.

Specific comments

Vision and objectives

The CCAAP identifies the unique capabilities of the City Centre to contribute to the wider area and makes a very convincing case for the City Centre locations to be prioritised based on the principles of concentration of development, mix of uses, critical mass and sustainability.

The Vision and Objectives demonstrate a close alignment with RSS. It is particularly important that the historic lack of focus on the city centre is now to be changed, ensuring that the CCAAP will help to deliver the Core Policies of Draft RSS.

A63

It is recognised in the CCAAP that a major constraining issue for the area is the A63 trunk road [Castle Street], which performs a nationally significant role in accessing the port but also in servicing the City Centre. Policy T7 of Draft RSS supports the A63 improvement programme and the scheme is a funding priority for the region.

Flood Risk

Flood Risk is clearly a major issue for Hull City Centre. The preparation of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will be an important tool in helping to determine how the CCAAP can be delivered. Policy ENV1 B of Draft RSS makes it clear that appropriate flood management will be needed to facilitate development in areas such as Hull.

Housing

The target of 3000 houses for the CCAAP (2003-2016) would appear to be in general conformity with the Draft RSS figures.

Concluding comments

In conclusion, the Preferred Options document appears to be in general conformity with RSS. At this stage, it might be worth noting some issues with regards to its relationship with other planning policy documents and the alignment of programmes through a coherent city-wide planning strategy.

Given the relatively recent date of issue for the Hull and East Riding Joint Structure Plan, it is appropriate that this is currently providing the strategic spatial plan - the 'Core Strategy' - for the area. It is essential, however, that the implementation of the CCAAP is enabled by policies of restraint on, for example, retail and leisure developments elsewhere. A city-wide planning strategy would clearly help in this regard. Such a strategy would also provide a planning context for the implementation of programmes such as the HMR. Until city-wide housing policies are established, it is perhaps difficult to judge whether the housing policies of the Draft RSS will be implemented.

Given the scale and complexity of the regeneration programmes needed in Hull, it is clearly essential that complementary programmes are well co-ordinated, especially on an area-by-area basis. It is hoped that the CCAAP will be one of the suite of documents that will provide the spatial context that helps these programmes to be successfully implemented.

I hope that these comments are helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if anything is not clear. We look forward to working with you further on your City Centre Action Plan.

Regards



Jenny Poxon
Head of Planning Delivery and Conformity