

REPORT TO: Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 17 September 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment

SUBJECT: Emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Policy and Performance Board of recent developments in relation to emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the content of this report be acknowledged and a further report be produced for the PPB detailing the implications of Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West once it is adopted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West was adopted in 2003 and is currently in the process of being replaced. The emerging document that will replace it has to go through various stages of drafting before it can be finalised, which are detailed in the table below. An advanced stage in this process has now been reached, with the Council formally commenting upon the Secretary of State's (SoS) own response to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in May. The SoS is obliged to consider all comments received at this stage before finally adopting the document.

3.2 The key stages of drafting emerging RSS were as follows:

September 2004	Publication of Issues Paper
March 2005	Publication of Options Paper
August 2005	Publication of Composite Draft
October 2005	Publication of Interim Draft
January 2006	Publication of Submission Draft followed by period of public consultation
31 October 2006 to 15 February 2007	Examination in Public (EIP)
March 2007	Publication of Panel Report regarding EIP followed by period of public consultation
March 2008	Publication of Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications followed by period of public consultation

Anticipated Imminently	Adoption
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* bold text indicates last completed stage.

- 3.3 Halton has played a full and active role at all stages of RSS production and has had some notable successes in influencing redrafting of the emerging document to reflect our priorities.
- 3.4 Emerging RSS was produced very rapidly, which has lead to deficiencies in its policy content. The Secretary of State has indicated that the content of the document is not satisfactory, and has therefore requested that it is subject to an early and wide ranging review. This covers matters of housing policy, Housing Market Areas, regional car parking standards, waste policies (specifically regionally significant waste management facilities), broad locations for renewable energy and accommodation for travelling showpeople, gypsies and travellers. The first stage in this process (Options) has already taken place in June/ July 08, with the Partial Review expected to be completed by the end of 2010. This means that presently two separate processes of adopting the emerging RSS and progression of the Partial Review are running concurrently.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As a consequence of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004, RSS now forms part of the 'development plan' for the area. The issues arising in emerging RSS are therefore of importance to Halton Borough Council in the production of the new Halton Borough Local Development Framework (LDF) and in making decisions regarding planning applications.
- 4.2 The content of emerging RSS can broadly be divided into six key areas in accordance with chapters of the document, these being 1) Spatial Development Principles and the Regional Spatial Framework; 2) Working in the North West; 3) Living in the North West; 4) Transport; 5) Environment, Minerals and Waste; 6) The Sub Regional Strategies, including the Liverpool City Region. Some of the main headlines from the Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications are detailed at Appendix A, which represents an officer/ member briefing note.
- 4.3 As indicated at 3.1 above, the Council has formally commented on several matters in relation to the latest stage of emerging RSS drafting and awaits the SoS's response to those. Full details of these comments were detailed in a report to Executive Board dated 19th June 2008. A further report will be produced for the PPB describing the implications of the document for Halton once emerging RSS is adopted.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 According to the Government Office for the North West web site, emerging RSS is predicted to be adopted in summer 2008. Once adopted it will form part of the 'Development Plan' as described at paragraph 4.1 above.

- 5.2 Emerging RSS also has implications for the production of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and in particular for the Halton Core Strategy. As the key document within the LDF, the Core Strategy is currently being produced and covers the period to 2026. The implications of RSS will have to be considered within the Core Strategy and, where appropriate, changes will have to be made. This will need to be done to ensure that the Core Strategy remains in general conformity with the RSS, as required by PPS 12.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

As part of the Development Plan, RSS would support key objectives a) ensure that children and young people in Halton enjoy a healthy lifestyle; b) to ensure that all children and young people in Halton grow up and thrive in safe environments; and e) to ensure that all children and young people in Halton have positive futures after school by embracing life long learning, employment opportunities.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

RSS would support key objectives a) to foster a culture of enterprise and make Halton an ideal place to start and grow economic activity and d) to develop a strong, diverse, competitive and sustainable knowledge based local economy.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Most fundamentally, RSS would support key objective c) to promote a healthy living environment.

6.4 A Safer Halton

RSS would support key objective c) to create and sustain better neighbourhoods that are well designed, well built, well maintained, safe and valued by the people that live in them, reflecting the priorities of residents.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

RSS would support all key objectives a) – e).

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 At this stage it is not possible to determine the exact content of the RSS, as the document has still to be finalised. Therefore there will continue to be risks associated with the use of the emerging draft RSS within planning policy production. However, given that the existing RSS (March 2003) will be superseded upon adoption of the emerging RSS, there is little option but to work with this risk.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues contained in the report.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
The Planning and Compulsory Act 2004	Planning & Policy Division, Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
Submission Draft RSS	Planning & Policy Division, Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
Panel Report	Planning & Policy Division, Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
SoS's Response to Panel Report	Planning & Policy Division, Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
Partial Review of RSS Options Stage	Planning & Policy Division, Rutland House	Tim Gibbs