

**ENVIRONMENT  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**27 February 2007  
10.00am – 10.31am

**PRESENT:** Councillors Ward (Chair), Baker, Durrant, Holland, and Holness.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Executive Councillor Reid (Planning and Transport)  
Councillor Bradnack

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL****07/ENV/14 Apologies For Absence**

Councillors Durrant, Herbert and Newbold.

**07/ENV/15 Declarations Of Interest**

None.

**07/ENV/16 Public Questions**

None.

**07/ENV/17 Regional Spatial Strategy**

The Director of Environment and Planning introduced the item, explaining that the report consisted of a covering report and two appendices: Appendix A summarised the key proposed changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), and Appendix B contained the proposed response from Council.

There were three particularly important points:

1. The Government report spoke of minimum housing targets, which meant there was no upper limit. 4,300 more homes by 2021 was considered.
2. The removal of the word 'compact' from the description of the city was significant as it would impact on the current spatial strategy which focused on minimising the need to travel.
3. The overall affordable housing target would be set at 35% rather than 40%.

It was noted that South Cambridgeshire District Council's cabinet had met on 8<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the RSS, and their objections were consistent with the Council's, as were the objections of Cambridgeshire County Council's cabinet, who were meeting today.

The Executive Councillor said that the issue had been raised with the Chair of Cambridge Horizons, and its board was meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March to discuss the item. The Executive Councillor commented that analysis should be made to assess the impact of the RSS on infrastructure. It would be necessary to have a stable framework in the city as growth over the next 15 years would be phenomenal. The next Lead Members meeting would be discussing the RSS with a view to drafting a joint response from

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Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. The Executive Councillor offered to make a draft copy of the response available to other members.

The Chair asked members if they had any questions, which the officer and other members responded to (A):

- What would happen if the Council did not do what Government requested?  
A: The Government's intention was to have more housing in sustainable communities. The RSS provided a statutory framework for further development. The infrastructure would need to be able to support the strategy. The pressure from the construction industry would increase so it would be necessary to develop a strategy very robustly. It was also necessary to be robust in enforcing the existing strategy in the short-term. The evidence in the Council's report sought to show that a target of 4,300 more homes by 2021 was unsound.
- Policy SS1, of Appendix B p.12, emphasised a precautionary approach to climate change, why was this?  
A: A precautionary approach was the safest option in terms of being as robust as possible in addressing climate change in accordance with Council policy.
- Why did Policy SS5, as above, with regards to Priority Areas for Regeneration, no longer make reference to particular wards?  
A: Although no specific wards were referred to, it was acknowledged that there would be areas of need in the city. This was a strategic document.
- The Council's objection arguments needed to be stronger with more supporting evidence.  
A: Pages 16-20 of the report provided technical evidence. It was important to take every opportunity to stress the Council's position.
- Could the Council request Government funding to finance the necessary infrastructure?  
A: The Government would test any bids made for infrastructure funding, so the Council would make its case robustly.
- The policy on carbon emissions should be strengthened. The Council should be allowed by Government to impose measures to address climate change and have higher standards. The standard would also need to be flexible as climate change issues were changing all the time.  
A: The Director of Environment and Planning agreed to amend the comments in Appendix B concerning climate change in order to strengthen the Council's position. **Action: Director of Environment and Planning.**

The Scrutiny Committee agreed (by 4 votes to 0) the recommendations, with the amendments by the officer as mentioned in the above paragraph, for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

The meeting ended at 10.31am.

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**CHAIR**

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