

TORBAY COUNCIL

Report No: **Env/51/04**

Title: Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West - Consultation Report

To: Executive on 9th November 2004

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise and make recommendations on the strategic planning options which are currently out for public consultation as the first major consultation stage on the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy [RSS] for the South West, with particular reference as to how they potentially affect Torbay.
- 1.2 The report also looks at the reasons for undertaking a sub-regional planning study of the South Devon area and the scope of such work, and makes appropriate recommendations.

2. Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report primarily relates to Corporate Priority 2 [Jobs and Industry], 3 [Road Safety and Congestion], 5 [Affordable Housing] and 7 [Community], but also touches on the other priorities.

3. Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 That Torbay Council supports RSS Possible Development Strategy 3, for a differential approach recognising the varying needs and potential of different parts of the Region, for the reasons set out in paragraphs 7.4 and 7.5.
- 3.2 That Torbay Council participates in the South Devon Sub-Regional Study to provide input to the RSS, along the lines indicated in paragraph 7.5.
- 3.3 That the importance of a sustainable balance between homes and jobs, the promotion of sustainable transport and a respect for environmental and resource constraints [paragraphs 7.7 – 7.9] also need to be supported, whichever option is selected.
- 3.4 That the main provisions of the Barker Report are accepted, subject to the provisos set out in paragraph 7.10.

4. Reason for Recommendation(s)

- 4.1 The strategic choices outlined in the RSS Consultation Report will have a significant impact on the long-term future of Torbay and form a critical influence on the emerging Local Development Framework for Torbay.
- 4.2 It is considered that the recommended response to the RSS Consultation Report in this report is the one which assists Torbay the most and properly recognises the need or the RSS to reflect the varied urban and rural geography of the South West.

5. Key Risks associated with the Recommendation(s)

- 5.1 **Provision of service [P]** – Likelihood Risk – Option 3 is the most likely to enable the Council to deliver on its strategic priorities and Community Plan themes, especially in the long term. There is a risk, however, that Option 3 will not be the finally agreed Option by the

Regional Assembly, due to the nature of the democratic process. However, initial indications are that Option 3 stands a good chance of being adopted by the Regional Assembly, and the risk likelihood is therefore estimated at 2. The impact would be quite significant for Torbay if key strategic resources were diverted elsewhere on a significantly increased scale, especially if Option 2 were selected as the basis for the emerging RSS. This could result in minimum to serious adverse impact for the long-term future of Torbay, say 2, on the basis that Option 1 is more likely than Option 2. This yields a total score of 4.

- 5.2 **Legal [L]** – The likelihood and impact of Risk are both level – combined score 1.
- 5.3 **Reputation [R]** – The likelihood and impact of Risk are both level 1 – combined score 1.
- 5.4 **Financial [F]** - The likelihood and impact of Risk are both level 1 – combined score 1.
- 5.5 **Strategic [S]** – The likelihood of Option 3 not delivering an optimum strategic planning framework for Torbay is very low, subject to the considerations set out in para 5.1 above [score 2]. The impact of failing to secure Option 3 would result in a strategic planning framework which would be less likely to deliver on areas such as employment land and infrastructure, subject to the considerations set out in para 5.1 above [score 2] – combined score 4.
- 5.6 **Environmental [E]** – The likelihood of Option 3 causing environmental impact is very low [score 2] and the impact risk is marginal [score 2] – combined score 4.
- 5.7 **Final Risk Score**

Likelihood	6	6	12	18	24
	5	5	10	15	20
	4	4	8	12	16
	3	3	6	9	12
	2	2	4PSE	6	8
	1	1LRF	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		Impact			

Low risk Intermediate risk High risk

The capital letter in the above matrix denotes where the author has assessed the level of final risk to fall

6. **Alternative Options (if any)**

- 6.1 The alternative options to Option 3 have been considered in this report. It is the report's view that they do not benefit those area which are struggling economically to the same extent as Option 3, and that they do not reflect the varied potential of the South West and the opportunity for 'buy-in' as Option 3 does.

7. **Background**

- 7.1 The South West Regional Assembly is preparing the Regional Spatial Strategy [RSS] to guide the amount and distribution of development in the South West over the 20-year period to 2026. The RSS will determine the long-term strategic planning and transportation framework for Torbay. It will therefore be critical to both the emerging Local Development Framework [LDF] and the new Local Transport Plan [LTP] [both of which will set the scene for Torbay to 2011].
- 7.2 The RSS Consultation Report is the first opportunity for strategic planning authorities

and others to comment on the emerging RSS, and the broad direction adopted over this stage will influence fundamentally the way Torbay is likely to develop over the next two decades.

7.3 The Consultation Report outlines three key strategic choices for public comment. They can be summarised as follows:

□ **Option 1: No change in basic strategy – continue with RPG10**

Main Features:

- Most new development [over 50%] at 11 PUAs [includes Torbay]
- Some growth in other centres outside influence of PUAs to deter commuting
- In smaller towns and rural areas – development for local needs only
- Similar pattern of development to today
- Investment and transport priorities focused on dealing with urgent needs of PUAs
- Investment spread over several PUAs and other locations
- Sustainability strengths – Resource efficient; generally avoids wider landscape and biodiversity impacts
- Sustainability weaknesses – pressure on landscapes and habitats close to PUAs; quality of life in PUAs could decrease; possible loss of rural services and economic activity outside PUAs

□ **Option 2: Strengthen RPG10 and concentrate more growth on a smaller number of PUAs and immediate catchments**

Main Features:

- Fewer large urban centres [Bristol, Plymouth and Bournemouth/Poole] to accommodate significant new development
- Other PUAs [Exeter, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Swindon, but excluding Torbay] identified with strategic potential for growth
- Some provision for growth elsewhere
- Investment priorities focused on major PUAs
- Facilities in rural areas concentrated in fewer areas and increased difficulties for rural residents in general
- Higher overall development densities in major PUAs
- Sustainability strengths – Highest development densities overall and most resource efficient; greatest opportunities for environmental improvements and sustainable transport, with easy access to services and employment; concentration of economic activity in fewer PUAs
- Sustainability weaknesses – More pressure on habitats and landscapes close to main growth PUAs than Strategy 1; more pressure on quality of life within PUAs; greater likelihood of loss of rural services; reduced economic activity in deprived areas outside PUAs and increase in inequalities between north east and south west of the region

□ **Option 3: Differential approach recognising the varying needs and potential of different parts of the region**

Main Features:

- Most complex of 3 options
- Details will depend on joint sub regional study area work
- Most growth will remain at PUAs, plus some other strategically significant locations
- Important contribution to be made by some market towns
- Does not imply a return to previous patterns of development across rural areas
- Within the 'Far South West' or 'Peninsula' part of the Region, growth other

than for local needs would be focused at PUAs, with the greatest economic potential [Plymouth, Exeter and Taunton, although Torbay is not mentioned]

- More positive role for a larger number of smaller centres
- Care will be taken to match employment growth with housing development, especially in areas of social and economic disadvantage, such as Plymouth, Torbay and Cornwall
- Sustainability strengths – Recognises the differences within the region; more likely to lead to economic activity that matches local market strengths and delivers affordable housing; may help to reduce existing health inequalities between the east and west of the region
- Sustainability weaknesses – loss of more Greenfield land; environmental impacts more widespread but less concentrated; some diseconomies of scale; traffic could increase if greater self-containment is not achieved

- 7.4 Option 3 appears to recognise that there are parts of the South West that have fundamental and significant needs for regeneration, compounded by peripherality, a mismatch between homes and jobs, and also a serious problem of shortages of affordable housing. This strategy therefore seems the most relevant to places such as Torbay, and is the most likely to bring about a degree of convergence in prosperity throughout the South West. In particular, Option 3 is considered to be the one which is the most likely to secure major regeneration, including the development of employment areas and investment in strategic infrastructure, such as the Kingskerswell Bypass.
- 7.5 Furthermore, Option 3 seems to enable the greatest amount of 'buy-in' throughout the Region. It recognises that the South West is extremely diverse with a range of different geographic solutions, and takes us away from a couple of 'super urban areas', which could threaten to dominate the provision of infrastructure and limited resources of the entire Region. In essence, Option 3 appears to be a fairer strategy than the other two on offer.
- 7.6 How Option 3 would translate into the reality of built development will depend on the more detailed sub regional studies. These studies are essential building blocks, and it is important to recognise that Torbay sits within a complex sub-region, which needs to be understood and planned for as a whole, in a similar way to other large urban areas that are considering their future with adjacent areas on a joint basis. Torbay, with a 'winter' population of 130,000, lies within a Torbay/South Devon sub-region of around 200,000. It is now recognised by independent consultants that Torbay is the focus of a separate housing market, and that the sub-region is also based on the South Devon Health Care Trust Area. Map1 gives an indication of the extent of this area, including the main urban areas. Appendix 1 sets out the terms of reference for a study of South Devon, and it is a recommendation of this report that such a joint study be endorsed and work be carried out jointly with our neighbouring authorities of South Hams and Teignbridge, the RDA and GOSW. Any conclusions from such a study would not be binding on any of the authorities, but would form a part of the sub-regional input into RSS.
- 7.7 Whichever option is eventually chosen by the Regional Assembly needs to make provision for the delivery of a sustainable balance between housing and jobs. It should be an important aim to make the South Devon sub-region as self contained as possible.
- 7.8 It is important that all the options need to provide a strong emphasis on improving transport links, and especially sustainable transport, and perhaps take tough decisions on which schemes have priority – these transport schemes should be seen to reinforce the preferred option and not lead to counter urbanisation.
- 7.9 It is also important that the economic and resource constraints in South Devon are respected, and again it is considered that a joint sub-regional approach can be more successful in safeguarding these important strategic assets than in a more disjointed

approach.

- 7.10 Finally, it is accepted that the Region needs to try and accommodate the main policy recommendations of the Barker Report, both in terms of the provision of a significant increase in the provision of affordable housing and linking housing to economic growth. However, it is important to retain the system of 'plan, monitor and manage' and highlight the very real environmental and resource constraints operative around our main urban areas.

Mike Yeo
Strategic Director Environment Services

Contact Officer: Mike Fox
Telephone no. 8810

IMPLICATIONS, CONSULTATION AND OTHER INFORMATION

Part 1

These sections may have been completed by the Report author but must have been agreed by the named officers in the Legal, Finance, Human Resources and Property Divisions.

Does the proposal have implications for the following issues? If "Yes" - give details. <i>delete as appropriate</i>		Name of responsible officer
Legal	No	
Financial – Revenue	No	
Financial – Capital Plan	No	
Human resources	Yes	Clare Armour
Property	No	

Part 2

The author of the report must complete these sections.

Could this proposal realistically be achieved in a manner that would more effectively: <i>delete as appropriate</i>		
(i)	promote environmental sustainability?	No
(ii)	reduce crime and disorder?	No
(iii)	promote good community relations?	No
(iv)	promote equality of opportunity on grounds of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief?	No
(v)	reduce (or eliminate) unlawful discrimination (including indirect discrimination)?	No

If the answer to any of the above questions is "Yes" the author must have addressed the relevant issue/s in the main report and have included a full justification and, where appropriate, an impact assessment.

Part 3

The author of the report must complete this section.

	<i>delete as appropriate</i>	If "Yes", give details
Does the proposal have implications for any other Directorates?	Yes	Possible regeneration implications for the TDA

Part 4

Is this proposal in accordance with (i.e. not contrary to) the Council's budget or its Policy Framework?		<i>delete as appropriate</i>
		Yes
1.	If "No" - give details of the nature and extent of consultation with stakeholders and the relevant overview and scrutiny body.	
2.	If "Yes" - details and outcome of consultation, if appropriate. The regional Assembly is currently consulting on the options which are the subject of this report	

Part 5

Is the proposal a Key Decision in relation to an Executive function?	<i>delete as appropriate</i>	If "Yes" - give Reference Number
	Yes	X49/2004

Part 6

Wards

All wards

Appendices

None

Documents available in Members' Room

Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006 to 2026: Possible Development Strategies for the Region

Background Papers:

The following documents/files were used to compile this report:

Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006 to 2026: Possible Development Strategies for the Region