

Appendix 1

Shaping Our Future – Regional Development Strategy, 10 Year Review Consultation Document

The consultation document aims to build on the existing role of the RDS as the spatial strategy of the Executive. It aims to provide context and evidence, as well as a framework and guidance for where development should happen.

The Department recognise that the new RDS is being prepared in a very different economic context to its predecessor. The consultation document describes 'how cities and urban areas will come to the fore and will be the drivers for economic development. The main spatial considerations shaping future growth are the importance of Belfast and Derry with a network of key service centres...' (para 2.59)

Key Issues

The following issues are identified as important in shaping the strategic direction for the new RDS:

- The importance of Belfast City, as the heart of a Metropolitan Area, as the driver for regional economic growth; its population has declined but it remains the regional focus for administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities
- The significant role which Derry has to play as capital of an expanding North West region; its recognition as the UK City of Culture 2013 will add impetus to the integrated approach to regeneration being taken forward by ILEX
- The importance now placed on key centres well placed to benefit from and add value to regional economic growth...
- The need to build on the approach to urban renaissance of developing compact urban form by integrating key land uses with transportation measures with a focus on the use of land within existing urban footprints
- A new emphasis on how to reduce dependence on the car and change travel behaviour
- The importance in all aspects of forward planning to address the consequences of climate change; this means an even greater focus on where people live and work and how transport and energy needs are planned

Key Consultation Question: Have the most significant factors impacting on the region been identified?

Aims

The aims of the RDS are identified as being:

- Support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of the Region
- Strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver and Derry as the capital of the North West
- Support towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential
- Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities
- Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information between places
- Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake
- Take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate change
- Strengthen links between north and south, east and west, with Europe and the rest of the World

The Spatial Framework

Implementation of the aims and vision of the RDS requires a Spatial Framework. Promoting development in Belfast, Derry and in identified clusters of key settlements is identified as the preferred option (see chapter 4 for other options and more info).

Belfast and Derry are identified as the two principle cities of the North. The Spatial Framework identifies the Metropolitan Area centred on the City as the economic driver for the region. These two places are considered to be where major infrastructure should be located eg Higher education; Tourism signature projects; museums and galleries; wind farms; department stores, regional shopping centres (see page 46 for info)

Belfast is recognised as being the major Regional City Gateway with the principal sea port and a city airport.

Paragraph 4.26 recognises the pockets of deprivation within the city – 35% of the City's population experience deprivation.

Key Consultation Question: Do you agree that Belfast as the regional economic driver of the Region needs to be positioned as the regional centre for administration, commerce and specialised services?

Strategic Guidance

Strategic guidance provides long term policy directions to guide the public, private and community sectors. It is not, however, operational planning policy. The Strategic Guidance provides specific detail on the geographical areas of the Spatial Framework:

The Metropolitan Area Centred on Belfast:

SG 1: Promote urban economic development at key locations throughout the BMUA and ensure sufficient land is available for jobs

NB: amongst other things SG 1 describes Lisburn as an employment and commercial centre. It goes on to say that the scale and nature of retail development at Sprucefield , as the only out of town regional shopping centre, will continue to be controlled in accordance with relevant planning policies.

SG2: Manage the movement of people and goods within the BMUA

NB: specific mention of the development of a Rapid Transit system in Belfast.

SG 3: Protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the BMUA and its environmental assets.

Belfast City

A number of key developments are identified as opportunities to open up significant opportunities for rapid growth, including: TQ; Sirocco Quays, UU campus; Royal exchange and City Quays.

Some priorities are identified:

- Regenerating inner and middle city areas with a focus on urban villages and public hubs as places for community facilities and services, and opening up opportunities to benefit from investment
- Reinforcing the quality of the City centre shopping and business area and making it accessible to all by creating attractive and accessible links for inner city communities
- Ensuring all citizens of Belfast benefit from wealth creation

SG 4: Grow the population of the City of Belfast

NB – the aim is for the population of the City to be 300,000 by 2021. Key to this is provision of housing to meet need and an efficient public transport system. Potential for 22,000 jobs to be created between 2008 and 2028.

SG 5: Enhance the role of Belfast City Centre as the regional capital and focus of administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities

Belfast will continue as the primary office location...some business uses assist in regeneration initiatives, particularly in areas of deprivation.

NB: A precautionary approach needs to be taken in relation to future major retail development proposals based on the likely risk of out of centre shopping developments having undesirable impacts on city centre.

Key Consultation Question: *Do you agree that Sprucefield should continue to be classified as a regional out of town shopping centre?*

Other relevant Strategic Guidance

SG 16: Reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality

SG 17: Manage Waste Sustainably

SG 18: Conserve, protect and where possible, enhance our built heritage and natural environment

SG 20: Strengthen community cohesion

SG 21: Support urban and rural renaissance

SG 22: Manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development.

NB para 5.54 – it is considered that ‘brownfield’ should be defined as land and buildings which have an industrial or commercial use – including vacant or unused land with commercial/industrial previous use.

The Department is carrying out research to establish a new brownfield target.

Key Consultation Questions – see questions 22-24

SG 23: Ensure adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth.

Regionally Significant Economic Infrastructure

As the economic driver of the region an efficient transport system in Belfast is essential.

Meeting targets through diversion of waste from landfill will require the development of significant new waste management infrastructure.