SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
CABINET

REVOCATION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY AND THE FIVE-YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDERS FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS:
COUNCILLORS ROBIN DIGBY AND JOHN TOWNSEND

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that: Cabinet resolves as follows:

(i) Until a sound and robust revised housing target is agreed, the Council continues to use an annual housing requirement of 330 dwellings per annum for the purposes of its calculation of a 5 year supply of housing land.
(ii) That the Council uses the requirements set out in the GTAA for the purposes of considering proposals for Gypsy and Traveller sites.
(iii) The Draft Roade Masterplan agreed by Cabinet and Economic and Environmental Review and Development Committee be released for publication for public consultation of at least six weeks.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 There is an urgent need to establish the planning policy basis for deciding current and anticipated planning applications, and for preparing planning briefs for both residential development and traveller sites, in light of the recent announcement to revoke regional strategies including regional housing and gypsy and traveller site targets.

3. BACKGROUND

Ministerial Letter (May 27th 2010)

3.1 In a letter sent to Councils’ chief planners and Leaders on May 27th the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles MP said:

"I am writing to you today to highlight our commitment in the coalition agreements where we very clearly set out our intentions to rapidly abolish regional strategies and return decision making powers on housing and planning to local councils."
"Consequently decisions on housing supply (including the provision of travellers sites) will rest with Local Planning Authorities without the framework of regional numbers and plans.

"I will make a formal announcement on this matter soon. However, I expect Local Planning Authorities and the Planning Inspectorate to have regard to this letter as a material consideration in any decisions they are currently taking."

1.2 The letter had an immediate effect with a number of Local Planning Authorities announcing that work on core strategies was being reviewed or put on ice. In South Northamptonshire it was considered that the announcement meant that there was considerable uncertainty until the further guidance was made available, and that it was sensible to delay decisions on planning applications and a planning brief that included large scale developments in the villages. In consequence, a number of planning applications submitted under the Interim Rural Housing Policy were withdrawn from the schedule of applications due to be determined by Development Control Committee on 3 June until further clarification was received. It was also decided that consultation on the Roade Masterplan be deferred.

1.3 Since the letter was published there have been a number of views expressed and announcements culminating in a letter dated 6 July 2010 whereby the Minister announced that Regional Strategies were to be revoked with immediate effect, and the issuing of supplementary guidance from the Government’s Chief Planner to all Councils’ Chief Planning Officers. This letter and guidance is in Appendix 1.

4. THE REVOCATION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

The Development Plan

4.1 Regional Strategies are being revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. They will thus no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The guidance provides advice to local planning authorities as to the implications of this decision. The key advice relates to the determination of housing numbers.

4.2 The revocation of the Regional Strategy formally removes the Development Plan requirement for there to be 330 dwellings built per annum across South Northamptonshire, which is used to inform the calculation of the ‘five-year land supply’. However, there are a number of important areas of clarification set out in the announcement that provides guidance in deciding what might be an appropriate alternative requirement, discussed below.

4.3 The advice states that

‘In determining planning applications local planning authorities must continue to have regard to the development plan. This will now consist only of:

* Adopted Development Plan Documents;
* Saved Policies; and
* Any old style plans that have not been lapsed."
Local planning authorities should also have regard to other material considerations, including national policy. Evidence that informed the preparation of the revoked Regional Strategies may also be a material consideration, depending on the facts of the case.’

4.4 A key part of the evidence that underpinned the Northamptonshire part of the East Midlands Regional Plan (EMRP) was the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Study (MKSM). This included both the housing targets for the constituent areas of the County as well as the spatial strategy. This Report was incorporated into the final EMRP. Clarification has been sought from DCLG as to whether this MKSM Study remains in place and whether it remains a material consideration for use by both the Council and applicants alike.

Housing Numbers

4.5 The advice provides the following advice as to who will determine housing numbers in the absence of RSS targets. This states that

‘Local planning authorities will be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision in their area, and identifying a long term supply of housing land without the burden of regional housing targets. Some authorities may decide to retain their existing housing targets that were set out in the revoked Regional Strategies. Others may decide to review their housing targets. We would expect that those authorities should quickly signal their intention to undertake an early review so that communities and land owners know where they stand’.

4.6 The advice also makes clear that local authorities will still have to provide a five-year housing land supply. This should be based on any new housing targets produced by authorities. It is interesting to note that local authorities will also need to prepare plans that consider appropriate sites and areas for development for 15 years from adoption. The guidance states:

‘Although the overall ambition for housing growth may change, authorities should continue to identify viable land in their DPDs to meet that growth. Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments can help with this. Local planning authorities should continue to use their plans to identify sufficient sites and broad areas for development to deliver their housing ambitions for at least 15 years from the date the plan is adopted. Authorities should also have a five-year land supply of deliverable sites. This too will need to reflect any changes to the overall local housing ambition’.

4.7 The West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, in partnership with the four constituent local authorities, is currently preparing a set of revised housing figures for West Northamptonshire based on evidence of delivery reality, infrastructure constraints, market weaknesses and constraints on mortgage funding availability. It is possible that this work will result in a set of housing targets below the 330 target for South Northamptonshire. However, although this work is a priority and the outcome will inform future plan preparation, its conclusion remains several weeks away. Furthermore, it is also critical to note the advice set out below in respect of the need to justify any new housing numbers considered appropriate:
'It is important for the planning process to be transparent, and for people to be able to understand why decisions have been taken. Local authorities should continue to collect and use reliable information to justify their housing supply policies and defend them during the LDF examination process. They should do this in line with current policy in PPS3'.
affords to this matter is tempered by affording less weight to the housing figures set out in the EEP than formerly, it needs to be considered in the overall balance.

P23 The Secretary of State concludes that the appeal proposal would cause harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and that there would also be harm to the purposes of the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and loss of openness. However, recognising that there is a need for more land to be brought forward for housing in the Thurrock area, he gives significant weight to the quality of design of the proposed scheme and its sensitivity to its setting, and he concludes that these together amount to very special circumstances sufficient to justify allowing the appeal.

Provision for travellers

4.13 The abolition of regional strategies and therefore the targets for gypsy and traveller pitch provision means that local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand, and for bringing forward land in development plan documents. The advice states:

‘Local councils are in the best place to assess the needs of travellers who live in their area. The abolition of regional strategies means that local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand, and for bringing forward land in development plan documents. They should continue to do this in line with current policy. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA$s) have been undertaken by all local authorities and if local authorities decide to review the levels of provision in their Core Strategies these assessments will form a good starting point. However, local authorities are not bound by the methodology adopted by the Regional Planning Bodies in drawing up the GTAA$s. We will review relevant regulations and guidance on this matter in due course’.

Key conclusions

4.14 The Minister has now revoked the RSS. It is no longer a material consideration, neither in the determination of planning applications nor in the preparation of LDF documents. It is unclear as to whether the MKSM study remains or has also been revoked. The 6 July letter does state that ‘Evidence that informed the preparation of the revoked Regional Strategies may also be a material consideration depending on the facts of the case’. The Council is seeking urgent clarification as to the status of the MKSM Study.

4.15 While the revocation removes the current housing targets in the RSS the advice makes clear that the requirement for a five-year and 15 year housing land supply remains and that the calculation of revised housing targets should be evidence based. In addition The Government has made very firm statements that it expects local authorities to cater for housing growth which it considers to be an important national issue. In the Minister’s view the inability to demonstrate a five-year supply of land remains a relevant and important consideration in determining planning applications and appeals. The East Tilbury Decision demonstrates that the Minister is quite prepared to allow housing development (even on Green Belt land), if Local Authorities have not identified enough land to meet identified targets.
4.16 Local Planning Authorities are now able to identify an appropriate annual housing requirement; but this will need to be robust, evidenced and defensible at appeal. The advice considers that this should be achieved through the LDF examination process. The Joint Planning Unit is currently considering a revised set of housing targets but these will not have been tested until the Examination into the Joint Core Strategy in about 12 months time.

4.17 The overall effect is that the revocation of the RSS will make little difference to the way we deal with planning applications in the short term. However, in the longer term it will do so, once there is an up-to-date Core Strategy in place that takes account of whatever revised figures are agreed to replace the RSS targets. In the absence of robust revised housing targets for South Northamptonshire, and until such time that these revised figures have been prepared and agreed, it is therefore considered that this Council should continue to provide for a housing target of 330 dwellings per annum based on the ‘Option 1’ equivalent as set out in the MKSM Study (or should this be revoked then from the revoked RSS).

4.18 In this context, it is important to note that based on the 330 dwelling requirement the Council has made very significant steps over the past year towards securing a robust 5 year supply of housing land. Consents already granted under the Interim Rural Housing Policy (IRHP), together with applications currently under consideration in Brackley, Towcester and villages, combined with progress on the Radstone Fields proposal in Brackley and the Roade Masterplan, all suggest that the Council will have secured a robust 5 year housing land supply within a few months. At this point – as was always the intention when the IRHP was adopted – the Council can then re-consider its position in respect of the IRHP.

4.19 In due course, when a reduced housing target is agreed and is found to be robust and sound through the LDF preparation process, then the current housing land supply that the Council will have built up can be used to ensure a continuing supply of housing land for at least a 5 year period and indeed well towards the 15 years set out in the advice. It is important to note that consents granted between now and when any new housing target is agreed will not be lost and can be counted in the future against any revised target.

4.20 The GTAA requirements for gypsy/ traveller needs were those set out in the RSS. A decision needs to be made as to whether it is intended to review the levels of provision and if so how this would be done. In the interim it appears that the GTAA requirements remain valid and a ‘good starting point’. Therefore it is considered appropriate to continue to use these targets when considering current and future planning applications.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Not adopting a robust housing target that replaces that in the RSS is likely to lead to the need to defend planning appeals that are likely to be pursued if applications are refused in the absence of a robust policy background. This will result in substantial increased workloads and costs (probably including legal and possibly consultant costs). If appeals are upheld there may be a risk of award of costs, dependent on the specific circumstances of each case.
6. IMPACT ON EFFICIENCIES

6.1 Not adopting a robust housing target would lead to an increased workload in defending planning appeals as set out above. That would impact on the ability of the Council to deliver other priorities, both in terms of deciding other planning applications to meet the Council’s targets (which might then trigger further appeals for ‘non-determination’ and thus increased workload) and delivery of planning policy work.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS (INCLUDING REASONS FOR REJECTION)

7.1 The alternative options are to adopt a different housing from that in the former RSS or ‘Option 1’ Report prior to the adoption of the Core Strategy or to continue to defer consideration of applications until such time that revised housing figures are agreed. These options are rejected. The Government’s advice is clear in requiring revised housing figures to be robust and tested through the LDF process. To prepare revised figures outside this process, or to test their soundness at an early planning appeal, could result in a very high risk that planning decisions would end up being decided by a Planning Inspector and loss of control by the Council.

7.2 If the Council continues to defer consideration of applications until such time that revised housing figures are agreed through the LDF process, then there is a very high risk that planning appeals will be made for ‘non-determination’ and decisions will be decided by a planning inspector. This approach would potentially weaken the Council’s ability to successfully defend such appeals.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key decision (yes / no)</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact is more than £50,000 in revenue expenditure</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact is more than £250,000 in capital expenditure</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact is more than £5m Treasury Management investment of reserves</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will have a significant impact on communities, usually in two or more wards in the district</td>
<td>No</td>
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| Forward Plan/Urgency | No |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links to corporate priorities and policy framework</th>
<th>This report is relevant to the Council’s corporate priorities, in particular:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Priority 2 “To preserve what is special in South Northamptonshire” -- (Objective 1: to ensure the Local Development Framework respects our local communities and the character of our villages and countryside) and</td>
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<td>Priority 5: “To be known as a Council that protects the vulnerable” -- (Objective 1: To provide high quality local housing appropriate to the needs of all groups and supporting</td>
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<td><strong>Risk management implications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consultation undertaken</strong></td>
<td>Discussions between Council Divisions, the Joint Planning Unit and Portfolio Holders</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Equalities and diversity implications</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
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<td><strong>Human rights implications</strong></td>
<td>None at this stage. Any specific implications arising from individual developments will be considered as part of the determination of applications</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Crime and disorder implications</strong></td>
<td>None at this stage. Any specific implications arising from individual developments will be considered as part of the determination of applications</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Biodiversity implications</strong></td>
<td>None at this stage. Any specific implications arising from individual developments will be considered as part of the determination of applications</td>
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### 8. FORWARD PLAN/URGENCY (KEY DECISIONS ONLY)

8.1 Not applicable

**Name**  
Andy D’Arcy

**Title**  
Lead Officer: Planning Policy

**Date**  
7th July 2010

**Background Papers:**  
Letter and Guidance from the Government Chief Planner “Revocation of Regional Strategies” (6 July 2010)

**Contact Officer(s):**  
Andy D’Arcy – Lead Officer Planning Policy
APPENDIX 1:
GOVERNMENT LETTER, GUIDANCE AND PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT ON THE
REVOCATION OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES

(1) LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT’S CHIEF PLANNER

The Chief Planning Officer
Local Planning Authorities in England 6 July 2010

REVOCATION OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Today the Secretary of State announced the revocation of Regional Strategies with immediate effect.

I have attached some ‘questions and answer’ advice on immediate issues that may arise from this announcement. It will be important for local planning authorities to carry on delivering local development frameworks and making decisions on applications and the attached document focuses on how to continue taking these forward.

Please address any queries to Eamon Mythen at CLG in the first instance (Eamon.Mythen@communities.gsi.gov.uk).

STEVE QUARTERMAIN
Chief Planner

Department for Communities and Local Government Eland House Bressenden Place London SW1E 5DU

(2) GUIDANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT’S CHIEF PLANNER

Guidance for Local Planning Authorities following the revocation of Regional Strategies

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government confirmed today that Regional Strategies will be revoked (see the attached copy of the Parliamentary Written Statement). In the longer term the legal basis for Regional Strategies will be abolished through the “Localism Bill” that we are introducing in the current Parliamentary session. New ways for local authorities to address strategic planning and infrastructure issues based on cooperation will be introduced. This guidance provides some clarification on the impact of the revocation; how local planning authorities can continue to bring forward their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs); and make planning decisions in the transitional period.

1. Under what powers are Regional Strategies being revoked?
Regional Strategies have been revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This guidance covers the period between revocation of Regional Strategies and legislation to abolish them altogether.

2. Do Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) remain in force?
Yes. The Policy Statement on Regional Strategies (February 2010) is cancelled, and references to Regional Strategies in other Policy Statements are no longer valid. But all
other PPSs will continue to apply until they are replaced by the National Planning Framework.

3. Will this affect the London Plan?
The London Plan will continue to provide the planning framework for London boroughs. As part of a wider process of decentralisation in London, we are reviewing how powers and discretion can be shifted downwards from central government to the Mayor and Assembly, to London Boroughs and to local neighbourhoods. This will include reviewing the scope for devolving power from the Greater London Authority down to the Boroughs and below.

The following sections provide advice on some of the issues likely to arise following revocation of Regional Strategies, until the “Localism Bill” and the new National Planning Framework are in place. This guidance should be regarded as a material consideration by local planning authorities and the Planning Inspectorate in their decisions.

4. How will this affect planning applications?
In determining planning applications local planning authorities must continue to have regard to the development plan. This will now consist only of:

- Adopted DPDs;
- Saved policies; and
- Any old style plans that have not lapsed.

Local planning authorities should also have regard to other material considerations, including national policy. Evidence that informed the preparation of the revoked Regional Strategies may also be a material consideration, depending on the facts of the case. Where local planning authorities have not yet issued decisions on planning applications in the pipeline, they may wish to review those decisions in light of the new freedoms following the revocation of Regional Strategies. The revocation of the Regional Strategy may also be a material consideration.

5. Should we continue preparing LDF documents?
Yes – the revocation of Regional Strategies is not a signal for local authorities to stop making plans for their area.

Local planning authorities should continue to develop LDF core strategies and other DPDs, reflecting local people’s aspirations and decisions on important issues such as climate change, housing and economic development.

These local plans will guide development in their areas and provide certainty for investors and communities. Local authorities may wish to review their plans following the revocation of Regional Strategies. We recommend reviews should be undertaken as quickly as possible.

6. How does this affect adopted local plans / LDFs?
Adopted DPDs and saved policies will continue to provide the statutory planning framework. Local authorities may decide to review these now that Regional Strategies have been revoked. There is no need to review the whole LDF, only those issues or policies which local authorities wish to revisit. When undertaking consultation and sustainability appraisal on their draft policies, authorities should take an approach that considers the stage reached, the extent of work already undertaken and the scope of the policy changes they are making.
7. What if my LDF document is still being prepared?
Where local planning authorities are currently bringing forward development plan documents they should continue to do so. Authorities may decide to review and/or revise their emerging policies in the light of the revocation of Regional Strategies. Where authorities decide to do this they will need to ensure they meet the requirements for soundness under the current legislation. When undertaking consultation and sustainability appraisal on their draft policies, authorities should take an approach that considers the stage reached, the extent of work already undertaken and the scope of the policy changes they are making.

8. Will Examinations in Public continue for DPDs?
Yes – where local planning authorities are bringing forward new development plan documents or reviewing adopted plans they should present evidence to support their plans. The examination process will continue to assess the soundness of plans, and Inspectors will test evidence put forward by local authorities and others who make representations.

9. Will data and research currently held by Regional Local Authority Leaders’ Boards still be available?
Yes. The regional planning function of Regional LA Leaders’ Boards – the previous Regional Assemblies – is being wound up and their central government funding will end after September this year. The planning data and research they currently hold will still be available to local authorities for the preparation of their local plans whilst they put their own alternative arrangements in place for the collection and analysis of evidence. Notwithstanding, the new Government regards the Regional Leaders’ Boards as an unnecessary tier of bureaucracy.

Clarification on policy issues

There are a number of areas where Regional Strategies supplemented the national policy framework. Further clarification on these areas is set out below.

10. Who will determine housing numbers in the absence of Regional Strategy targets?
Local planning authorities will be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision in their area, and identifying a long term supply of housing land without the burden of regional housing targets. Some authorities may decide to retain their existing housing targets that were set out in the revoked Regional Strategies. Others may decide to review their housing targets. We would expect that those authorities should quickly signal their intention to undertake an early review so that communities and land owners know where they stand.

11. Will we still need to justify the housing numbers in our plans?
Yes – it is important for the planning process to be transparent, and for people to be able to understand why decisions have been taken. Local authorities should continue to collect and use reliable information to justify their housing supply policies and defend them during the LDF examination process. They should do this in line with current policy in PPS3.

12. Can I replace Regional Strategy targets with “option 1 numbers”?
Yes, if that is the right thing to do for your area. Authorities may base revised housing targets on the level of provision submitted to the original Regional Spatial Strategy examination (Option 1 targets), supplemented by more recent information as appropriate.
These figures are based on assessments undertaken by local authorities. However, any target selected may be tested during the examination process especially if challenged and authorities will need to be ready to defend them.

13. Do we still have to provide a 5 year land supply?
Yes. Although the overall ambition for housing growth may change, authorities should continue to identify enough viable land in their DPDs to meet that growth. Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments can help with this. Local planning authorities should continue to use their plans to identify sufficient sites and broad areas for development to deliver their housing ambitions for at least 15 years from the date the plan is adopted. Authorities should also have a five year land supply of deliverable sites. This too will need to reflect any changes to the overall local housing ambition.

14. How do we determine the level of provision for travellers’ sites?
Local councils are best placed to assess the needs of travellers. The abolition of Regional Strategies means that local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand, and for bringing forward land in DPDs. They should continue to do this in line with current policy. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs) have been undertaken by all local authorities and if local authorities decide to review the levels of provision these assessments will form a good starting point. However, local authorities are not bound by them. We will review relevant regulations and guidance on this matter in due course.

15. How do we establish the need for minerals and aggregates supply without Regional Strategy targets?
Minerals planning authorities will have responsibility for continuing to plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregate minerals to support economic growth. They should do this within the longstanding arrangements for minerals planning. Technical advice provided by the Aggregate Working Parties, including their current work in sub-apportioning the CLG guidelines for 2005-2020 to planning authority level will assist with this. Planning authorities in the South East should work from the apportionment set out in the "Proposed Changes" to the revision of Policy M3, published on 19 March 2010. Planning authorities can choose to use alternative figures for their planning purposes if they have new or different information and a robust evidence base. We will work with the minerals industry and local government to agree how minerals planning arrangements should operate in the longer term.

16. How do we establish the need for waste management without Regional Strategy targets?
Planning Authorities should continue to press ahead with their waste plans, and provide enough land for waste management facilities to support the sustainable management of waste (including the move away from disposal of waste by landfill). Data and information prepared by partners will continue to assist in this process. For the transitional period this will continue to be the data and information which has been collated by the local authority and industry and other public bodies who currently form the Regional Waste Technical Advisory Bodies. We intend for this function to be transferred to local authorities in due course.

17. Does the abolition of the hierarchy of strategic centres mean the end of policies on town centres?
No. Local authorities must continue to have regard to PPS 4: *Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth* in preparing LDFs and, where relevant, take it into account in determining planning applications for retail, leisure and other main town centre uses.

In assessing any planning applications proposing unplanned growth in out of town shopping centres, particularly those over 50,000 sqm gross retail floor area, local authorities should take account of the potential impacts of the development on centres in the catchment area of the proposal.

18. What about regional policies on the natural environment?
Local authorities should continue to work together, and with communities, on conservation, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment – including biodiversity, geo-diversity and landscape interests. Authorities should continue to draw on available information, including data from partners, to address cross boundary issues such as the provision of green infrastructure and wildlife corridors.

19. What about regional policies on Flooding and Coastal Change?
Local authorities should continue to work together across administrative boundaries to plan development that addresses flooding and coastal change. For flooding matters local authorities already have a duty to co-operate under the Floods and Water Management Act. The Environment Agency will continue to work with local authorities individually and/or jointly to provide technical support on these matters. The Coalition agreement is clear that we should prevent unnecessary building in areas of high flood risk.

20. What about regional policies on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy?
Through their local plans, authorities should contribute to the move to a low carbon economy, cut greenhouse gas emissions, help secure more renewable and low carbon energy to meet national targets, and to adapt to the impacts arising from climate change. In doing so, planning authorities may find it useful to draw on data that was collected by the Regional Local Authority Leaders’ Boards (which will be made available) and more recent work, including assessments of the potential for renewable and low carbon energy.

21. What about regional policies on Transport?
Local authorities should continue to ensure their land use and local transport plans are mutually consistent, and deliver the most effective and sustainable development for their area. Local authorities should work with each other and with businesses and communities to consider strategic transport priorities and cross boundary issues.

22. Does the end of Regional Strategies mean changes to Green Belt?
No. The Government is committed to the protection of the Green Belt and the revocation of Regional Strategies will prevent top-down pressure to reduce the Green Belt protection. Local planning authorities should continue to apply policies in PPG2. As part of their preparation or revision of DPDs, planning authorities should consider the desirability of new Green Belt or adjustment of an existing Green Belt boundary, working with other local planning authorities as appropriate.

(3) PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Today I am making the first step to deliver our commitment in the coalition agreement to “rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and return decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils”, by revoking Regional Strategies.
Regional Strategies added unnecessary bureaucracy to the planning system. They were a failure. They were expensive and time-consuming. They alienated people, pitting them against development instead of encouraging people to build in their local area.

The revocation of Regional Strategies will make local spatial plans, drawn up in conformity with national policy, the basis for local planning decisions. The new planning system will be clear, efficient and will put greater power in the hands of local people, rather than regional bodies.

Imposed central targets will be replaced with powerful incentives so that people see the benefits of building. The coalition agreement makes a clear commitment to providing local authorities with real incentives to build new homes. I can confirm that this will ensure that those local authorities which take action now to consent and support the construction of new homes will receive direct and substantial benefit from their actions. Because we are committed to housing growth, introducing these incentives will be a priority and we aim to do so early in the spending review period. We will consult on the detail of this later this year. These incentives will encourage local authorities and communities to increase their aspirations for housing and economic growth, and to deliver sustainable development in a way that allows them to control the way in which their villages, towns and cities change. Our revisions to the planning system will also support renewable energy and a low carbon economy.

The abolition of Regional Strategies will provide a clear signal of the importance attached to the development and application of local spatial plans, in the form of Local Development Framework Core Strategies and other Development Plan Documents. Future reform in this area will make it easier for local councils, working with their communities, to agree and amend local plans in a way that maximises the involvement of neighbourhoods.

The abolition of Regional Strategies will require legislation in the “Localism Bill” which we are introducing this session. However, given the clear coalition commitment, it is important to avoid a period of uncertainty over planning policy, until the legislation is enacted. So I am revoking Regional Strategies today in order to give clarity to builders, developers and planners.

Regional Strategies are being revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and will thus no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Revoking, and then abolishing, Regional Strategies will mean that the planning system is simpler, more efficient and easier for people to understand. It will be firmly rooted in the local community. And it will encourage the investment, economic growth and housing that Britain needs.

We will be providing advice for local planning authorities today and a copy has been placed in the house library.