



# The Future of Regional Planning Guidance

# Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions

## *The Future Of Regional Planning Guidance*

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The interests of the English regions have been neglected in recent years and this Government intends to reverse that neglect. The Government is committed to giving the regions a much greater voice in their own affairs and to making that voice effective. Two key ways of achieving this will be through establishing Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and by improving the arrangements for the co-ordination of land use, transport and economic development planning at the regional level.
- 1.2 Proposals for the establishment of RDAs have been set out in the White Paper "Building Partnerships for Prosperity" published on 3 December 1997. This consultation paper considers the options for improving strategic planning at the regional level taking account of the White Paper's proposals. It forms part of the wider review of planning policy being undertaken as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review and implements one element of the policy statement on "Modernising Planning" issued on 15 January.
- 1.3 **Comments are invited on the various issues discussed in this consultation paper, in particular, the proposals for reforming the procedure for producing Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) ([section 5](#)), the scope and form of RPG ([section 6](#)) and on the options for improving the content of RPG ([section 7](#)).** Comments should be sent to:

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by 17 April 1998.

- 1.4 At present the expression of strategic policies on land use and related planning matters at the regional level takes the form of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), issued by the Secretary of State. A description of the existing system, and an analysis of its weaknesses, is in [Section 3](#) below.

- 1.5 The Government believes it is necessary to make improvements to the system of regional strategic planning in order to facilitate the delivery of a sustainable pattern of development. It is also needed to assist the RDAs in delivering their programmes of economic development, to help deliver an integrated transport strategy at the regional level and to provide a more coherent context for decisions on major projects. An improved strategic framework will also help speed up the preparation and regular updating of statutory development plans.
- 1.6 This consultation paper focuses on questions related to the broad scope and content of strategic plans at the regional level, and the procedures which might be adopted for their preparation. The objective must be to put in place arrangements which bring greater openness to the procedures and which increase regional ownership of both the issues and of the policies which are adopted for their resolution.



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### **2. The new regional agenda**

2.1 In considering the future arrangements for planning at the regional level it is necessary to take account of the Government's proposals for institutional change at the regional level, developing policy on such issues as transport and housing and the wider European context. The creation of Regional Development Agencies and the development of an integrated transport policy at the regional level will have implications for the content of regional strategies and the way in which they are produced. It is also clear that regional and sub-regional spatial frameworks are playing an increasingly important role in European planning initiatives and in the distribution of EU Structural Funds.

#### **Regional Development Agencies**

2.2 The RDAs should facilitate a step change in the improvement of the economic and social wellbeing of their regions. In order to achieve this they will:

- foster economic development and regeneration;
- promote business efficiency, investment and competitiveness;
- enhance the development and application of skills;
- help maintain and safeguard employment, and
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

2.3 The RDAs will prepare economic strategies for their regions. A key issue is the relationship between those strategies and the wider regional strategic plans/guidance discussed in this paper. It is clear that the RDAs will be able to make a significant input to the preparation of such guidance and plans (see [para 7.3](#)). It will be important to ensure that proposals for the provision of housing, transport and other infrastructure have regard to and, where appropriate, support the RDAs' programmes of economic regeneration. Equally it will be important that the RDAs' economic strategies have due regard to RPG.

## **Regional Chambers**

- 2.4 The White Paper also refers to the way in which voluntary regional chambers can provide a distinctive voice for their regions. In many regions there already exist indirectly elected voluntary “assemblies” or similar bodies representing the regional view of local government. In some regions these assemblies are exploring how to involve non-local government interests, such as chambers of commerce, business leaders and a wide range of other organisations, directly in their work. This process is leading to the creation of voluntary regional chambers representing a wide range of regional stakeholders. The White Paper makes clear that Government intends to reinforce this development and proposes broad principles as to the composition of these chambers to ensure that their input to RDAs is properly representative.
- 2.5 Where voluntary chambers are established they may well want to express a view on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their regions. This regional viewpoint would provide a context for their input to the work of the RDAs, through the mechanisms described in the White Paper, and could inform the production of RPG. In some regions local government may wish to integrate the work of the regional planning conferences with that of the chambers. In other regions existing arrangements may continue. Future arrangements for the preparation of RPG will need to take account of diverse patterns of regional organisation. This issue is discussed further in [paragraphs 4.4 to 4.8](#).

## **Integrated transport**

- 2.6 The consultation paper on “Developing an Integrated Transport Policy” published in August 1997 emphasised the need for major developments to take place in locations and ways which facilitate and encourage the use of public transport rather than the car. It also referred to the need to generate more strategic thinking about the transport effects of urban and rural development policies.
- 2.7 The separate roads review consultation document for England “What role for trunk roads in England?” published in July 1997 referred to the need for improved co-ordination at the regional level of land-use, economic development and transport, including trunk roads. It also made clear that the proposal of the previous administration to extend the remit of regional planning guidance to include the review of the strategic management of the regional road network and improvement of trunk roads within each region would need to be considered in the context of the new regional agenda. This is discussed further in [paragraph 7.8](#) below.

## **Household growth**

2.8 Consideration is being given to the future direction of Government policy on how to deal with the projected growth in the number of households. However, it is clear that it will continue to be a function of strategic plans/guidance at the regional level to determine regional housing numbers and their allocation. These issues are discussed in [para 7.6](#). It is essential that future arrangements for the preparation of regional guidance have greater legitimacy, enabling these issues to be properly debated and decisions reached within the region that provide a clear framework for the allocation of land in development plans.

### **London**

2.9 The Green Paper “New Leadership for London”, published in July 1997, set out proposals for the creation of a new strategic authority for London, comprising a directly elected Mayor and Assembly, which would take the lead in strategic planning, economic development and integrated transport planning for the capital. That paper invited comments on possible models for a new planning framework for London, including replacement of the current Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities (RPG3) issued by the Secretary of State, and on the arrangements for consultation and testing. Since these proposals, if approved, would provide London with an elected authority with statutory powers, the new arrangements for planning guidance might be different from those in the rest of the country. They will, however, take account of the broad principles and objectives outlined in this paper. Whatever arrangements are adopted within London, the need to prepare RPG for the South East as a whole will remain. The issues discussed in the rest of this paper relate to regional planning and not strategic guidance for London.

### **European policy**

2.10 European policy - both in terms of spatial planning and other initiatives - provides an important context for regional planning. The emerging European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) will provide a non-binding reference for RPG on European issues. A particular issue for consideration is the relationship between plans required to access EU Structural Funds and RPG. The availability of EU Structural Funds has already led to the preparation in some areas of what are in effect regional or sub-regional spatial plans covering land use and transport, economic development and other matters as a basis for attracting funding. These are likely to be even more critical in future to securing community structural funding. These issues are discussed further below in [paragraphs 6.3 to 6.5](#).



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### **3. Existing arrangements**

- 3.1 As indicated above, at present strategic planning takes the form of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), issued by the Secretary of State. This provides the framework for the preparation, by local authorities, of statutory development plans. RPG itself does not have statutory force. However, the Secretary of State has formal powers to intervene in the development plans process if plans have insufficient regard to RPG. RPG is prepared for Government Office areas, except in the South East where RPG9 covers the areas of the Government Offices for the South East, London and part of Eastern Region. There is, in addition, more detailed strategic guidance for London and the Thames Gateway. [Annex A](#) summarises the current coverage of RPG in England, including proposals for future reviews.
- 3.2 RPG will generally cover those issues which need to be considered on a wider geographical basis than that of individual development plans. It sets out a broad development framework for the region over a period of 20 years or more and will normally identify the scale and distribution of provision for new housing and priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals and waste treatment and disposal.
- 3.3 The preparation of RPG is usually a two stage process. The first involves the local authorities in the region (through a regional planning conference or similar forum) undertaking an initial consideration of the issues and, following consultation with Government departments, business organisations, development interests, bodies representing agricultural and conservation interests and the general public, submitting advice to the Secretary of State. After considering the advice, the Secretary of State publishes RPG in draft and considers any representations he receives before it is finally issued. However, this model has varied between regions in its detailed application, including in the role which the Government Offices have had to play.

3.4 The main criticisms that have been made of the existing arrangements for the production of RPG and its content are that:

- it lacks regional focus and vision and spends too much time reiterating national policies;
- apart from housing provision, it lacks targets which can be monitored and reviewed;
- it is too narrowly land-use orientated;
- it lacks sufficient environmental objectives and appraisal;
- it takes too long to produce;
- it does not command commitment from regional stakeholders, and
- the process of producing it is insufficiently transparent.

Proposals to address these concerns are set out in the rest of this paper.



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### **4. Future arrangements for regional planning guidance - options and issues**

4.1 In considering the future arrangements for planning at the regional level there are three main groups of issues to consider:

- i. who should be responsible for regional planning and should the document produced have statutory status;
- ii. what should be the arrangements for its production, and how can we enhance legitimacy, transparency and ownership, and
- iii. what should be its scope and content?

#### **Status and responsibilities**

4.2 Under present arrangements the preparation of non-statutory Regional Planning Guidance is the responsibility of the Secretary of State, acting on the advice of the regional planning conference of local authorities (or similar body) in the region. Consultation with other interests takes place at various stages in the preparation of the guidance. Primary planning legislation would be required to make the production of regional plans/guidance the responsibility of someone other than the Secretary of State or to give any regional plan statutory status.

4.3 The Government considers that the preparation of planning guidance or plans which regulate the development and use of land in the public interest should be the responsibility of democratically accountable bodies. Furthermore, it is important that local authorities should play a central role in jointly determining RPG since they are the principal delivery mechanism through development plans. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for such guidance to be the responsibility of the business led Regional Development Agencies, though clearly those bodies will have an important input to make to its preparation. It is difficult to see how a statutory regional plan, which would form part of the statutory development plan system, could be introduced in the absence of a statutory and directly elected body to devise and implement it. Such a body would be needed to provide legitimacy and accountability. As the White Paper makes clear, the creation of directly elected regional assemblies is a matter for

longer term consideration. Alternatively, for the Secretary of State to impose a statutory regional plan, with which lower tier development plans would be required to be consistent, would be contrary to the aim of greater regional ownership and devolution which lies behind the Government's regional agenda.

4.4 In regions where voluntary regional chambers are established it may be appropriate for them to subsume the regional planning conferences, or similar fora of local planning authorities. This would certainly facilitate the desirable input of the business community and other regional stakeholders into preparing draft RPG. However, it would also be necessary to make suitable arrangements to ensure that anyone with a commercial interest in planning policies does not have undue influence. Since there is not yet a comprehensive coverage of voluntary regional chambers in England and it is unclear to what extent they will choose to subsume the regional planning conferences, the rest of this paper uses the term "regional planning conference" to refer to the central body in the production of draft RPG.

4.5 In the short term, therefore, the options appear to be:

- a. a system based on that which exists now: the conferences would provide the advice on which RPG is based but formal responsibility for preparing and consulting on draft RPG and subsequently issuing the guidance would remain with the Secretary of State;
- b. a system under which the preparation of RPG is devolved completely to the conference, and
- c. a hybrid system between (a) and (b): this would go a long way towards achieving the objective of regional ownership, which lies behind (b), but without the need for primary legislation. Formal responsibility for the issue of RPG would still rest with the Secretary of State but responsibility for its preparation and content would rest very largely with the relevant regional planning conference. This would involve closer and more co-operative working between it and the Government Office.

4.6 Option (a) would not provide a sufficient degree of regional ownership. Option (b) would require legislation and as such a degree of prescription with regard to the way the regional planning conferences are established and operate. Changes to legislation would be required so that local authorities, in preparing their development plans, would be obliged to have regard to guidance issued by someone other than the Secretary of State. Legislative opportunities are likely to be limited in the short term and it makes sense to wait and see how the emerging voluntary regional chambers evolve and what their relationship will be with the planning conferences.

- 4.7 Option (c) provides a better balance between the need for RPG to reflect both national and local planning policy considerations, whilst delivering a significant degree of devolution to the regional level. The conference would not simply provide “advice” on which the RPG is produced by the Government Office (GO). Instead the emphasis would be on the production of the guidance itself through a co-operative process which includes Government as well as other interests. Apart from anything else, this would offer the potential for a significantly shorter timetable for the issuing of the final RPG. Furthermore, providing there was a sufficient degree of co-operative working between the conference and the GO to ensure that national policy was respected, the aim would be that the Secretary of State could endorse the draft guidance. He would, however, be able to intervene if necessary to ensure that the final RPG was strong and effective and adequately translated national planning policies to the local level.
- 4.8 Views are invited on the above options and in particular on whether option (c), involving a partnership between the regional planning conference and the Government Office for the Region, and the involvement of other regional interests, offers the best way forward, taking account of the other proposals for change outlined in the rest of this paper.**



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### **5. Reforming the procedure for the production of RPG**

5.1 This section outlines a possible new approach to the procedures for the production of Regional Planning Guidance, to give it greater legitimacy and ensure that it more closely reflects the aims and aspirations of the people concerned. The key stages and timetable are summarised in the table below.

#### **Preparation of Regional Planning Guidance**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Regional Planning Guidance prepared by regional planning conference in co-operation with Government Office (GO), issued by SoS</b>
1. Identifying the brief/issues	Conference and GO draw up the project brief for RPG, including likely issues, consulting regional stakeholders. 3 months.
2. Identifying the options	Conference in co-operation with GO and in consultation with regional stakeholders as appropriate, carries out technical/survey work, commences an environmental/ sustainability appraisal (EA/SA) of impacts of the initial proposals for development etc. and then develops and refines options into a draft strategy. 6 months.

3. Consultation on draft RPG After consulting GO, conference publishes draft RPG and EA/SA for written responses to GO (which GO copies to conference). 3 months.
4. Testing Following receipt of responses (also copied to conference), Chairman (and Inspector if there is one) in consultation with the GO and conference agree a list of issues and invite participants to EIP-type hearing. Draft RPG tested at hearing in front of independent Chairman appointed by the Secretary of State. Chairman reports to the SoS (copied to conference) and report is published. 4 months.
5. Amendments to RPG Following Chairman's report, RPG modified by GO in conjunction with conference before being cleared with other Government Departments and DETR Ministers. Then published by the SoS with a statement of reasons. Where modifications are made then 8 week consultation period before final RPG is issued. 4 to 7 months.
6. Who issues? RPG approved and issued by SoS. Total time: 20 months to approx 2 years.
7. Development plan conformity SoS (GO) with support of conference, ensures that development plans have regard to RPG.
8. Monitoring Conference, in liaison with GO, establishes monitoring machinery to check on achievement of RPG targets. Assumptions in RPG to be tested through development plans.

## **Consultation and ownership**

- 5.2 A key theme for the preparation of new RPG should be the involvement of regional stakeholders in its production. This should help produce a better and more representative product and will encourage a shared responsibility for implementation. It will be essential for the local planning authorities in the region to work together with representatives of the business community, environmental organisations and others. This will enable a collective view to be taken of the identification of issues, the studies which need to be undertaken and of the options for the future development of the region.
- 5.3 The Government Offices must continue to play an important role in the production of RPG, not least because of the need for RPG to translate national planning policies to the local level. However, given the need to increase regional ownership it is suggested that there should be a much greater degree of joint working of GOs and conferences in producing RPG, albeit that the GOs may have to safeguard their position by this being carried out on the basis of being active observers in working parties rather than co-authors.
- 5.4 A partnership approach to the production of RPG and the incorporation of procedures for the discussion and testing of draft advice (see below) would represent a transfer of responsibility for RPG away from central government to the bodies with a regional stake in its implementation.

#### **Legitimation and transparency**

- 5.5 Hitherto, RPG has not been subject to any formal public hearing to enable objections and representations to be considered by an independent Panel or Inspector, as is the case for a structure plan. It is for consideration whether a broadly similar arrangement should be introduced into the RPG process to enable the draft RPG to be tested by an independent person or panel and to provide the Secretary of State with better evidence on which to endorse the draft strategy. Such a process would help to increase the weight that could be given to RPG as a material consideration and make decisions based on RPG more secure in the event of appeals or legal challenge. Above all it would help to maximise the consensus for RPG by making the process more transparent. Regional stakeholders, including members of the public, would be able to make representations although, as with an Examination in Public, there would be no right to be heard. An approach similar to this was used in preparing RPG for the West Midlands with considerable success. Possible arrangements for an examination in public are outlined in [Annex B](#).

#### **Environmental/sustainability appraisal**

- 5.6 RPG must include an environmental appraisal. This should identify and analyse the environmental costs and benefits of implementing the proposals and policies and include a systematic consideration of policy options. The Government's guidance on carrying out environmental appraisals is set out in "Policy Appraisal and the Environment", first published in 1991 and which will be revised later this year. This looks at how best to take environmental effects into account as part of policy appraisals, alongside economic and social effects.

5.7 The Government is also considering the scope for moving towards broader “sustainability appraisal” (SA) in due course, which would integrate consideration of all environmental, social and economic impacts. GOs are required to promote sustainable development and, in that context, several are working with key regional partners towards producing Regional Sustainability Action Plans. Such documents may also be helpful to the environmental appraisal and, if introduced in due course, the SA of RPG and development plans. Although several of the regional planning conferences are developing their own SA methodologies, there is no accepted methodology at present and SA is in its infancy. The Department is to let a research project on the SA of RPG with the aim of assessing the practicability of such an appraisal, on the basis of experience so far in the UK and elsewhere, and how it can be made compatible with other appraisal requirements. In doing so it will need to have regard to the likely requirements of any Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment. If SA for RPG is shown to be practicable then the aim would be to produce good practice guidance.

### **Setting a timetable**

5.8 In the past the process of preparing RPG has been protracted. It needs to be speeded up. The formal adoption of a target timetable for the main stages in the process could provide a firmer basis for mutual commitment in the regions and reassurance that up-to-date strategic guidance will be available to inform development plans. A draft indicative timetable for the production of RPG under this scenario is set out in the table above. Because of the EIP stage and the extent of public consultation built into the process this timetable, although significantly quicker than in the past, could still take up to 2 years as the table above demonstrates.

### **Transitional arrangements**

5.9 Given that the process of reviewing RPG is a continuous one and that different regions are at different stages in this review process, it will not be possible for these new arrangements to be introduced all at once. Instead there will need to be transitional arrangements depending on what stage the relevant RPG review has reached. In the South East region, for example, it is proposed that there will a greater degree of co-operative working between SERPLAN and GOSE leading to public consultation on SERPLAN’s final advice to the Secretary of State next Autumn. This advice is to be debated at a public conference towards the end of the year before revised RPG9 is published in Spring 1999.

### **5.10 Views are invited on:**

- i. the proposals for achieving greater regional ownership;**
- ii. the process to be adopted, including the arrangements for holding an EIP type hearing, and**
- iii. the proposed timetable.**

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### **6. Future scope and form of RPG**

- 6.1 RPG has traditionally focused on land use issues. In recent years the scope and content of RPG has been widened and a key issue is what the scope of regional guidance should be in the future. RPG exists as a framework for local authority statutory land use development plans. The RDAs will develop economic strategies for their regions. Transport infrastructure and service providers will have their own strategies and development programmes. Where regional chambers are established on a voluntary basis there may be an opportunity to develop an agreed set of regional objectives and priorities which could form a framework for other strategies for functional areas. However, to make RPG perform this “over arching” function risks undermining its specific role in relation to the development plans system. It is also necessary to recognise a distinction between the long term, strategic, policies which are appropriate to RPG and the shorter term programme documents which may be needed in respect, for example, of transport and regeneration policy implementation. Nevertheless, to the extent that these various strategies and programmes have a spatial dimension they need to be linked through a common and consistent planning framework for the region which only RPG can provide.
- 6.2 A recent paper on regional planning produced by the RTPI (“Regional Planning in England” - October 1997) points out that there are dangers in drawing the brief for RPG too widely, or in too much detail. It suggests that revised RPG should concentrate primarily on the basic land use, transportation and environmental issues but also provide the context for the economic and regeneration programmes of the RDA. At the same time it should “recognise all the issues of policy which have significant spatial impacts in terms of land take, environmental impact or infrastructure requirements”.

#### **The European dimension**

- 6.3 Any consideration of the scope of RPG in the future needs to take account of the implications at regional level of EU policies on the environment, transport, agriculture, energy and waste, as well as the Structural Funds. Also specific initiatives relating to planning such as the proposal for an EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment will need to be taken into account.
- 6.4 Recognising the need to integrate sectoral policies, EU Member States have been working for several years on the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). The ESDP will provide a framework reference document for RPG on European issues. A consultation draft of the ESDP was issued in June 1997. The UK is working to complete the first ESDP in June 1998, during our Presidency of the EU.
- 6.5 As noted earlier the EU Structural Funds have already had an impact in some parts of the UK in encouraging the development of regional spatial plans. This trend is likely to continue, but may only be directly relevant for those areas which are eligible for EU mainstream structural funding. These are under review. Also of relevance, the European Commission has sought to promote regional contacts between Member States through its INTERREG initiative. INTERREG IIC is designed specifically to promote trans-national cooperation on spatial planning. INTERREG IIC programmes are likely to lead to trans-national planning frameworks for the areas they cover.

### **Spatial strategy**

- 6.6 It is, therefore, considered that Regional Planning Guidance in the future could have a wider focus than previously, presenting a “spatial” strategy for the region, ie the range of public policies that are intended to influence the future distribution of activities within the region. RPG would provide a spatial framework not just for development plans but also relevant to other strategies including air quality, energy and waste and for the investment and operational plans of relevant infrastructure and public service providers. It will be fundamental to ensure that RPG:
  - provides an effective basis for deciding regional or sub-regional issues that are difficult to resolve if left to individual authorities;
  - is sufficiently prescriptive to determine the general location of regionally or sub-regionally significant development;
  - provides an overall framework that considers the environmental, economic and social consequences of a land-use strategy and is subject to a rigorous environmental/sustainability appraisal;
  - is capable of incorporating an integrated transport strategy at the regional level;
  - adequately supports and is reflected in the regional economic strategies and regeneration programmes of the RDAs, and
  - can provide a sufficiently broad framework to assist bids for EU Structural funds and is sufficiently in tune with EU developments in spatial planning.

- 6.7 By achieving all or at least most of these things it should also help to speed up the production of development plans and decision-taking at the local level.

### **Format of RPG**

- 6.8 It will continue to be necessary for RPG to have regard to broad planning policies established at the national level. However, this should not mean a simple repetition of the contents of Planning Policy Guidance notes although they will need to be cross-referred to as appropriate. The changes to the process outlined above should enable RPG to become more regionally specific. Within this regional focus RPG should set out a clearly articulated locational strategy in the form of policies and proposals supported by a reasoned justification, identify investment priorities and targets to measure the delivery of that strategy and illustrate the relevant constraints, opportunities and proposals in a key diagram. Suggestions for the future content of RPG are set out in [section 7](#) below.

### **Sub-regional strategies**

- 6.9 In some regions or parts of regions it will be appropriate for RPG to be expressed in the form of sub-regional strategies because of the specificity of the issues and relationships at that level that cannot be resolved if left to individual authorities but which are not general enough to be addressed at the regional level. There may also be instances where sub-regional solutions need to be developed to issues that cross regional boundaries.

### **Degree of locational specificity**

- 6.10 In general it should be possible to identify broad locations at the level of a key diagram, without being more site specific. A criteria based approach will help to define suitable locations for new development without identifying specific sites. This may be particularly helpful where regional guidance is required on the location of new settlements or major new inward investment sites, for example. It will then be for the development plan process to bring forward sites in line with these criteria, further refining the latter as appropriate. However, site specific proposals themselves should be avoided in RPG given its strategic guidance nature. Consideration of specific sites could dominate and delay the production of RPG. It would probably introduce a need for objections to be considered at an inquiry rather than a non-statutory EIP. Issues of blight could also be raised.
- 6.11 An issue for further consideration is whether there will be policies and proposals in RPG in the future, bearing in mind its wider spatial purpose proposed in this consultation paper, which cannot be delivered through the development plan system. These could include, for example, transport investment priorities and regeneration programmes. If so, they may need to be separately identified in RPG so that it is clear which elements of the guidance are directed at structure plans and Part I of unitary development plans.

### **Monitoring and review**

- 6.12 At present the only hard targets given in RPG tend to be housing requirements and hence monitoring and review tends to focus on objectives and issues which are expressed in general and unquantified terms. As a result it is very difficult to assess the extent to which RPG is being implemented through the development plan system. It is of crucial importance to monitoring the implementation of RPG that much more systematic use is made of regional and sub-regional targets that can be directly related to the achievement of land-use policies. These could range from town centre versus out-of-town retail floorspace to the regional contribution to the national guideline provision for the supply of construction aggregates. In some policy areas RPG is only capable of being one influence among many. In these cases it may be appropriate for RPG monitoring and review systems to have regard to any targets or indicators set at the national or regional levels and assess the impact which RPG has. These targets or indicators could, for example, include traffic levels, the split between use of private car and public transport and air quality.
- 6.13 Regular monitoring reports of progress in relation to these targets and indicators should be produced, possibly on a bi-annual basis, resources permitting. Rather than having a fixed and arbitrary 5 year review cycle for RPG it may be more appropriate, depending on the extent to which meaningful targets and indicators can be developed, for reviews to be triggered in part or in whole by the results of this monitoring.
- 6.14 Selective review of sections of the guidance, either in response to the findings of the monitoring report or for example in response to a new set of household projections, might be capable of being produced under a faster track process than that outlined in section 5 above. Most of the stages might have to be gone through, however, depending on the scale, complexity and degree of controversy of the revised sections.

### **Geographical boundaries**

- 6.15 The White Paper "Building Partnerships for Prosperity" makes clear that Regional Development Agencies will be based on the Government Office regional areas. For the purposes of RDAs, Merseyside will be included as part of the North West region. Within London it is proposed that there should be a new Greater London Authority, preparing either a structure plan or strategic guidance, and an RDA. Regional Planning Guidance is also prepared for the Government Office regions, with the exception of the North West (which already incorporates Merseyside) and the South East, where RPG covers the areas of the South East and London Government Offices, and three counties (Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex) which fall within the area of the Government Office for the Eastern Region. The close inter-relationship between London and the rest of the South East in relation to strategic planning and transport issues has led to the arrangement whereby this area is covered by SERPLAN. Ministers have already announced that the current review of RPG for the South East (to be completed in 1999) will relate to the SERPLAN area. It is probably sensible for these arrangements to continue for

the future. However, the Eastern Region needs a framework for sustainable regional development which is difficult to achieve with two separate sets of RPG, perhaps produced on different timescales. In this context it is for consideration whether there is a role for a sub-regional cross-boundary strategy (see [para 6.9](#)).

**6.16 Views are invited on the above and in particular on:**

- i. how RPG should be made more regionally focused;**
- ii. the extent to which RPG should be aligned with the policy framework of the ESDP, providing a context for bids for structural funds, and the relationship between RPG and the trans-national planning frameworks to be drawn up under INTERREG IIC programmes;**
- iii. the concept of a spatial framework integrating land-use, transport and economic development and regeneration;**
- iv. the use of a key diagram in RPG to set out the main proposals and identify constraints and opportunities;**
- v. the scope and need for RPG to incorporate sub-regional strategies;**
- vi. whether there are exceptional circumstances where RPG should be more site specific and if so how this could be handled in the RPG process;**
- vii. the scope for extending the use of targets and indicators in RPG, and**
- viii. how RPG can address issues which cross regional boundaries. Is there a need for new arrangements (eg to deal with the issues outlined in [para 6.15](#))?**



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### **7. The content of RPG**

7.1 This section of the paper considers the main issues which it might be appropriate for revised Regional Planning Guidance to cover and invites views on whether the role of RPG has been correctly identified in relation to them. It is not a purpose of this consultation paper to invite views on the relevant national policy advice set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes and other advice but rather to ensure that the core strategic matters which RPG needs to address have been correctly identified. Beyond this core there are likely to be strategic issues which are specific to each region and which cannot readily be left to individual authorities to resolve. These should, for example, include tourism and sport and recreation issues which are not covered in this paper. Although the majority of requirements for, and provision of recreational, sport and tourism facilities occur at the local level, there may be sub-regional or regional implications or issues which need to be addressed in RPG, particularly if these facilities represent a major element in RDAs' regional economic strategies. However, it is important that RPG concentrates on that which genuinely needs to be addressed at the regional and sub-regional level rather than covering all the topics that may be covered

in development plans. In setting out the focus of future RPG, this paper has had regard to the Local Government Association/English Regional Associations proposals in their paper “Regional Strategic Planning - The New Local Government Agenda”. The rest of this section builds on the key components of RPG suggested by the LGA/ERA in support of a regional locational strategy and having regard to the general scope of RPG discussed in [section 6](#) above.

### **Sustainable development and environmental understanding**

7.2 A sustainability appraisal will be central to the development of RPG options as has been discussed in [section 5](#) above. Environmental understanding is a key feature of sustainable development and should be based on a clear analysis of natural resources and the open and built environment. RPG could set out principles at the regional or sub-regional level for environmental management and the enhancement of environmental assets which are of strategic importance having regard to national policy. Here, as elsewhere, it is not the task of RPG to summarise relevant national policies or provide a detailed descriptive account of the region’s environmental resources but rather to address regional or sub-regional issues taking account of those policies and the relevant constraints and opportunities. For example, it could be considered appropriate for RPG to assess whether there are positive measures that can be taken at the regional or sub-regional level to promote biodiversity and improve air quality.

### **Economic development and regeneration strategy**

7.3 The RDAs’ regional economic strategies will analyse the economic strengths and weaknesses of the regions and assess economic development needs encompassing the regeneration of urban and rural areas. With the benefit of this understanding of regional economic change, need and sectoral potential, RPG should set out clear guidance on strategic economic development land-use requirements and how these relate to associated policies and infrastructure investment programmes. The RDAs’ strategies will not just consider economic development requirements but also regeneration needs. In relation to both economic development and regeneration RPG may need to identify general locations and criteria for strategic site selection. Working with the RDAs, it should be possible to ensure through the RPG process that the land is genuinely needed and that major “greenfield” sites are not released unnecessarily as part of a process of competition between nearby authorities for scarce inward investment. This joint working between the RDAs and the regional planning conferences would be assisted not just by their common interest in economic regeneration but also by the proposed duties on the RDAs to have regard to sustainable development and improve the environment in their regions.

- 7.4 The wider spatial framework provided by RPG together with the RDAs' economic strategy would provide much of the basis for the bidding documents required to access EU Structural Funds referred to above. All three documents would, therefore, share inter-related objectives and investment priorities.
- 7.5 **Views are invited on the above. What should the relationship be between RPG and the RDAs?**

#### **Assessment of housing requirements and land availability**

- 7.6 A central purpose of RPG will continue to be to assess the region's housing requirements. In doing so the regional planning conferences will need to work in conjunction with the Government Offices on a collaborative basis examining both demand and supply considerations. The consequences for sustainability, including the economic, environmental and transport implications, of meeting assessed demand and unmet need should be assessed at the regional level as part of the sustainability appraisal which is referred to in section 5 above. This appraisal would be central to the distribution of housing requirements, including the distribution between different types of area such as urban areas, extensions of urban areas and even new settlements. It is essential that RPG retains credibility in this area by neither ducking the need to assess housing demand and unmet need nor abrogating its responsibility to take proper account of sustainable development considerations. Having done so it could then advise on the nature of any further "testing" of the figures that needed to be carried out at the county and unitary authority level.
- 7.7 **Views are invited on:**
- i. how RPG should test housing requirements, and**
  - ii. whether RPG should advise on the nature of any "testing" of the housing figures that needs to be carried out at the county and unitary authority level.**

#### **The interaction between development and transport**

- 7.8 [Section 3](#) has already referred to the Government's commitment to develop an integrated transport strategy which it intends to set out in a White Paper later this year. To help ensure that land use planning is integrated more effectively with transport at the strategic level it makes sense for RPG to incorporate a regional sustainable transport strategy based upon the promotion of environmentally friendly modes. RPG could also set out priorities for transport investment, taking due account of regeneration and sustainable economic development objectives. In this context, the proposals of the previous administration to extend the remit of RPG to include the review of the strategy for the management and improvement of trunk roads in each region are being looked at afresh. Any RPG review of possible improvements to the trunk road network would need to include examination of non-road scheme alternatives having regard to sustainable development principles.

7.9 RPG could set broad objectives for the use and future development of major transport corridors in the region, including the trunk road network, taking account of national policy considerations. In doing so, RPG might, for example, suggest for regionally or sub-regionally significant volumes or types of development the public transport accessibility criteria, to be expressed in development plan policies, which would guide the location of new development. A clear statement of objectives for these corridors, backed up by accessibility criteria, could inform decisions on future transport investment priorities. These objectives and accessibility criteria could be supported by complementary traffic management measures proposed in RPG, which would be sub-regional where appropriate, including a strategic approach to off-street parking standards.

**7.10 Views are invited on the above and in particular on:**

- i. whether RPG should set broad objectives for the use and future development of major transport corridors in the region, including the trunk road network;**
- ii. how best to involve the relevant transport bodies in the public and private sectors in the production of RPG and ensure that RPG is carried forward in their transport planning and investment decisions, and**
- iii. what the role of RPG should be in relation to traffic management measures.**

### **Countryside and coastal issues**

7.11 RPG has a role both in providing guidance on the positive management of the coast and countryside at the regional and sub-regional level and in ensuring that where the cumulative impact of proposed development threatens these particularly sensitive locations alternative approaches are considered through the development plan process. RPG may be able to advise on new initiatives to enhance designated areas that cut across county or unitary local authority boundaries.

**7.12 Views are invited on how RPG can be more effective in the planning and management of the above resources.**

**A broad supply and demand framework for minerals, waste and water**

- 7.13 Regional Aggregates Working Parties (RAWPs - working groups of officers, industry representatives and the statutory conservation bodies) advise the Government on trends in demand, supply and movement of aggregates. They also advise the regional planning conferences and individual mineral planning authorities in their regions on the sub-regional apportionment of the national planning guidelines for the provision of aggregates. It may be appropriate for RPG, advised by the RAWPs, to take on a more formal role in this process. Following the next review of aggregates planning policy, due in 1998/99, RPG could include indicative figures by minerals planning authorities for the volume of aggregate production to be provided for in development plans. This guidance would need to take into account a consistent set of regional forecasts, within a national forecasting framework, of imbalances of supply and demand between regions. The joint technical teams from minerals planning authorities, who are at present represented on the RAWPs, could also provide the expertise for the preparation of strategic minerals guidance within RPG.
- 7.14 Views are invited on whether RPG should play the more formal role in minerals planning outlined above.**
- 7.15 Although waste disposal and management is essentially the responsibility of waste planning authorities and the private sector, there are development consequences some of which may be regional in significance and scale. Furthermore, the production of waste and opportunities for its treatment or disposal do not occur uniformly within or between regions. RPG, therefore, has an important role to play. It could reinforce national policy by encouraging more sustainable practice by, for example, discouraging land raising given the environmental impact. It could contain guidance on the general provision to be made for major waste disposal and management facilities to meet regional needs having regard to the desirability for regional self sufficiency and the proximity principle. Waste planning authorities will need to take account of RPG in the preparation of their waste development plans since they will be making provision for regional waste requirements as well as local requirements.
- 7.16 Views are invited on what the role of RPG should be in relation to waste.**
- 7.17 RPG has a potentially key role in helping to co-ordinate planning for regionally significant proposals for infrastructure and other new development with water resources taking into account for example the regional water resource and groundwater strategies produced by the Environment Agency. It can foster co-operation between local planning authorities, water companies and the Environment Agency to ensure that water supply sources are protected and that rates of development do not exceed the capacities of existing or planned water supply systems to meet projected demand.
- 7.18 Views are invited on how best RPG should advise on the location and level of new development in relation to water supply.**

**7.19 Finally, views are invited on whether there are other core strategic regional matters which will need to be addressed in all future RPG which have not been outlined above.**



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### **8. Next steps**

8.1 Comments on this document are invited by 17 April. Comments received on the two transport consultation documents and the consultation document on a Greater London Authority, referred to in [Section 1](#), will also be taken into account in considering the proposals for the reform of regional planning. The next stage will be to consult later in the year on the detailed guidance for RPG to set out in a draft Planning Policy Guidance Note 11.

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### ANNEX A

#### Regional Planning Guidance Notes

No	Title	96	97	98
RPG1	Tyne and Wear ( <b>1989</b> ) (to be incorporated into new Northern RPG)			
RPG3	London ( <b>issued 1996</b> )			
RPG3A	London - Strategic Views ( <b>issued 1991</b> )	#		
RPG3B/9B	Thames ( <b>issued 1997</b> )			
RPG6	East Anglia ( <b>issued 1991</b> )	#		0
RPG7	Northern ( <b>issued 1993</b> )	#		0
RPG8	East Midlands ( <b>issued 1994</b> )	#		
RPG9	South East ( <b>issued 1994</b> )			
RPG9A	Thames Gateway ( <b>issued 1995</b> )	#		0
RPG10	South West ( <b>issued 1994</b> )	#		0
RPG11	West Midlands ( <b>issued 1995</b> )	#		
RPG12	Yorkshire and Humberside ( <b>issued 1996</b> )		#	
RPG13	North West ( <b>issued 1996</b> )	#		

# Began work on full or partial (housing) RPG revision

0 Consultation Draft RPG expected

RPG 2 (West Yorkshire) and RPG 5 (South Yorkshire) have been superseded by RPG12 (Yorkshire and Humberside), and RPG4 (Greater Manchester) by RPG13 (North West).

Regional Planning Guidance:

Current position by region

**LONDON (STRATEGIC GUIDANCE) - RPG3**

RPG3 was issued in May 1996 for the period 1992-2006.

Strategic Planning Guidance for the Thames (RPG 3B/9B) published for consultation in June 1996. Final Thames Guidance issued in February 1997. Work has begun on a review of RPG3A (issued 1991) on the protection of strategic views in London.

### **EASTERN - RPG6**

Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia (RPG6) was issued in July 1991 for the period 1986-2006. SCEALA have reviewed the regional strategy and submitted advice to the Secretary of State in September 1997. GOER expect to issue draft guidance for consultation about May 1998. This would roll forward the housing period from 2006 to 2016.

### **NORTHERN - RPG7 (revised guidance to be North-East)**

RPG7 was issued in September 1993 for the period 1991-2006. Tyne and Wear is covered by separate strategic guidance which was issued in June 1989 (RPG1). In August 1995 the previous administration invited the local planning authorities to begin the review of both RPGs with the intention of combining both sets of guidance and rolling the guidance forward to 2016. The first review of RPG for the North East is in progress and the North of England Assembly of Local Authorities is currently preparing advice to the Secretary of State.

### **EAST MIDLANDS - RPG8**

RPG8 was issued in March 1994 for the period 1991-2011. As the increases for the region indicated by the 1992-based Household Projections were moderate the Secretary of State decided in January 1997 not to proceed with an interim review of the housing provision figures, preferring to wait until the full review and roll forward to 2016, expected in 1999. The East Midlands Regional Planning Forum have started on a review of their Regional Strategy which will constitute their advice to the Secretary of State for the review of RPG8. A consultation draft of this advice is expected in early 1998.

### **SOUTH EAST - RPG9**

RPG 9 was issued in March 1994 for the period 1991-2006. SERPLAN, the regional planning conference for the SE, is preparing a Regional Strategy as the basis for its advice to Secretary of State. This is expected to be submitted as a consultation draft in March/April 1998. SERPLAN would then aim to produce revised final advice to the Secretary of State, in consultation with the GOs, in September 1998 which would inform a public conference in November 1998. The Secretary of State would aim to issue revised RPG in the light of the conference in April 1999.

### **SOUTH WEST - RPG 10**

RPG 10 was issued in July 1994 for the period 1991-2011. The South West Regional Planning Conference has started a full review which will roll the guidance forward to 2016. Advice is expected to be submitted in late 1998. Consultation and issue of a revised RPG10 will follow in 1999.

### **WEST MIDLANDS - RPG 11**

RPG11 was issued in September 1995 for the period 1991-2011. New housing guidance was announced by the Secretary of State in December 1997. The revised guidance itself will be issued early this year. A full revision is possibly three or four years away.

### **YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER - RPG12**

RPG12 was issued in March 1996 for the period 1991-2006. The Regional Conference produced further evidence in March 1997 on housing provision, rolling the figures forward to 2016, based on the 1992 household projections. The Conference has begun work on a full review of RPG and is aiming to submit advice towards the end of 1998.

### **NORTH WEST - RPG13**

RPG13 was issued in May 1996 for the period 1991-2011. The North West Regional Association will provide further advice as soon as possible on the overall level of housing provision and separate figures for each metropolitan district to 2011. Until this time, regard should be had to district level housing figures in Strategic Planning Guidance for the metropolitan areas (PPG11 for Merseyside and RPG4 for Greater Manchester, which are otherwise superseded). A first monitoring report is in the course of preparation. A full revision of RPG 13 will commence shortly.



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### **ANNEX B**

#### **EIP ARRANGEMENTS**

##### **Why an EIP-type Hearing?**

RPG is akin to a structure plan in that it provides a broad strategic framework with the precise locations of proposals for development to be determined through the development plan process. For that reason a hearing run along EIP lines seems appropriate where selected issues are examined in depth with selected participants. This enables issues to be examined thoroughly within a reasonable time-scale. It has been rare for a structure plan EIP to last for as much as four weeks and it would be reasonable to assume that the RPG hearing should need no more than 2 weeks on average.

An independent Chairman would be appointed by the Secretary of State assisted if necessary by an Inspector.

##### **At What Stage in the RPG Process?**

Given that it is proposed that there should be closer working between the planning conference and GO, it is considered that the most appropriate stage to test the emerging RPG is following publication of the draft RPG by the conference (stage 4 of the table under para 5.1).

##### **Organisation**

The GO would be responsible for organising the EIP in conjunction with the conference.

The Chairman and Inspector would be appointed by the SoS under the same conditions as for a structure plan EIP. Appointments should be made at least 6 months in advance of the hearing.

##### **Selection of Issues and Participants**

The Chairman and Inspector would be copied all responses to the draft RPG and in consultation with the GO and conference agree a list of issues and select participants. These would be published 6 weeks before the hearing.

##### **Panel Report**

Following the hearing/EIP the Chairman would submit his report (in accord with a previously agreed timetable), to the SoS and copied to the conference, with a list of recommendations.

##### **Final Guidance**

Following Chairman's report, draft RPG modified by GO in conjunction with conference before being cleared with other Government Departments and DETR Ministers. The SoS would publish the revised draft RPG with a statement of reasons for his decisions including the recommendations in the Panel Report which would be made publicly available. There would be an eight week period of public consultation on these draft modifications.



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