

Public Consultation on the Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes to the Draft Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England

To: **Cambridgeshire Horizons Board**

Date: **2 March 2007**

From: **Director for Development**

Purpose: **To consider the consultation from Government on the Proposed Changes to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England**

Recommendation: **The Board is asked to:**

- i) Note the key points of the Proposed Changes to the RSS.**
- ii) Approve a proposed consultation response to Government relating to the Proposed Changes as set out in this report. (Draft response to be tabled)**

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Approve a proposed consultation response to Government relating to the Proposed Changes as set out in this report.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This response represents the views of Cambridgeshire Horizons, the Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV) for the Cambridge Sub-region. As a local delivery vehicle, Cambridgeshire Horizons has adopted the protocol of not seeking to intervene on matters of policy but rather concentrating upon issues of implementation.
- 1.2 It is in the context of how practical it will be to implement certain of the proposed changes put forward by the Government and the resulting associated infrastructure requirements, that the following views are submitted.

2 PROPOSED CHANGES

Additional 4,300 housing units allocated to Cambridge

- 2.1 The first proposed change that Cambridgeshire Horizons would wish to comment upon is the addition of 4,300 housing units allocated to Cambridge to be provided within the Plan period.
- 2.2 Others have commented upon how the additional numbers appear to have been chosen by the Inspector and we do not propose to add to those comments. Our concern is that the allocation of the 4,300 to Cambridge, without any real understanding of which sites are to accommodate these units, could divert much-needed resources away from the efforts to deliver the substantial number of units identified in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 for the Cambridge Fringe sites.
- 2.3 In terms of scale of increase, currently the City Council is committed to provide some 12,500 units as its share of the 47,500 units to be provided by 2016. The additional 4,300 units represents a further 9% and this when resources available to the City, the County Council, Cambridgeshire Horizons and the other partners are under severe pressure to deliver the existing commitment.
- 2.4 On the practicability of delivering such a large additional number within the Plan period, our experience is that developments of this scale have a lead-in time of many years, even if the planning policy position is clear. In this case, the City's Local Plan makes no allocation for these additional units and was adopted as recently as July 2006.

- 2.5 Perhaps of even greater concern is the fact that Cambridgeshire Horizons has identified the strategic and local infrastructure required to accommodate the growth agenda. The infrastructure requirement, associated with a significant additional number of units is likely to mean that our work will be compromised. At best this could lead to a discernible reduction in the quality of life of new and existing residents and at worst render the developments proposed unsustainable.

Targets being minima instead of maxima

- 2.6 We are concerned that the target numbers are now to be considered to be minima and not maxima. Rather like the problems set out in paragraph 2.5 above, it will be virtually impossible to identify the requisite infrastructure to support development if the numbers eventually constructed are significantly higher. Failure to provide adequate infrastructure will lead to further pressure on already over-stretched facilities to the detriment of the sub-region's growth agenda.