

core spatial strategy

Policy SS1: achieving sustainable development

The spatial strategy aims to achieve a sustainable relationship between jobs, homes and services at the strategic and local level. It requires a sequential approach to the location of major development as a core component of sustainable development. Conserving the region's environment, quality of life, local character and natural resources, whilst adapting to climate change, together with tackling the problems of social inclusion and deprivation are also key strands in achieving sustainable development.

In most instances development will be focused in or adjacent to major urban areas where there is good public transport accessibility and where strategic networks (rail, road, bus) connect. In more rural areas, development will be focused on market towns which have good public transport accessibility to key urban areas. By locating housing, jobs and services in close proximity the need for longdistance commuting will be reduced.

local development documents will first consider the reuse of land and buildings within urban areas, then extensions to those areas, and finally other locations where there is good accessibility to public transport, or where proposed development can contribute to improving public transport access. In some sub-regional circumstances development of new settlements may be required. Areas where this is most likely are identified in chapter 5 'sub-regional and sub-area policies'.

This approach will be complemented by measures to deliver an 'urban renaissance' to provide a high quality urban experience (some of which measures will not be land-use related). The demand for transport and other services will be managed to make the best use of existing infrastructure, rather than relying upon major new infrastructure investment. Despite this, there will still need to be significant investment in infrastructure because parts of the region already have deficits that need to be rectified. The key locations for growth are likely to need significant infrastructure investment, along with improving and maintaining the rail and road corridors that link these areas with each other and with key centres outside the region and the UK.

The core strategy sets out a framework within which the regional economy can grow in a sustainable way, in order to maintain and enhance prosperity. It is also committed to facilitating regeneration and social inclusion.

Policy SS2: overall approach to the spatial strategy

In order to achieve a close correlation between homes, jobs and community facilities, urban areas will be the main focus for development and redevelopment in the region. The key centres on which development and change will be focussed are (in alphabetical, not priority order):

Basildon, Bedford, Bury St Edmunds, Cambridge, Chelmsford, Colchester, Great Yarmouth, Harlow, Hemel Hempstead, Ipswich, King's Lynn, Lowestoft, Luton/Dunstable, Norwich, Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea, Stansted/M11 corridor towns (as set out in Stansted/M11 sub-regional strategy), Stevenage, Thurrock, Watford.

The nature of development and change in these areas will vary according to their capacity and policy situation, and differing balances will be struck between urban concentration and urban expansion according to sub-regional circumstances.

A sequential approach to the location of new development will be adopted to deliver the quality of life improvements set out in the vision. Certain locations have been identified for major development and/or regeneration. Specific guidance on these locations is set out in chapter 5 'sub-regional and sub-area policies'. Where required, these sub-regions set out a local interpretation of the sequential approach, taking into account the characteristics of the sub-region.

There are other areas where specific sub-regional policies are not proposed. The regional policy for those areas is set out in Policies SS3 (Development in and adjoining urban areas) and SS9 (Development in rural areas).

Other types of development not covered by Policies SS3 and SS9 will also follow the sequential approach, unless covered by specific policy in this RSS.

Local development documents will adopt an appropriate community strategy approach, and will be required to demonstrate how they have applied the sequential approach.

Local development documents will ensure a balanced and deliverable supply of land for employment, housing, and supporting services, by encouraging the change of use of land where alternative development would represent a more sustainable land-use and allow for proposals that would make more efficient use of vacant and underused land and property.

An early review of the RSS will be undertaken to investigate the longer-term need for a large new settlement within the region. The review will consider:

- the need for a large new settlement as a development of the urban concentration approach, including its timing in relation to development needs before 2021 and post-2021
- the role(s) such a settlement would need to perform in relation to spatial, economic, social, and environmental criteria
- the possible locations for a large new settlement
- implementation mechanisms.

Policy SS3: development in and adjoining urban areas

Local development documents may make provision for development in or adjacent to urban areas where the scale and location of the release:

1 will not adversely affect the need to make maximum use of previously developed land and buildings and efforts to deliver sub-regional urban renaissance in accordance with the sequential approach and phased release of land, and

- existing access to good quality public transport, or where the development can assist new public transport provision
- utilising existing physical and social infrastructure
- having good access to housing, jobs, schools, shopping and leisure facilities
- avoidance of adverse impact on environmental assets such as nature conservation and landscape character, historic features, mineral reserves, water resources and air quality.

Greenfield land releases should be appropriate in scale to the adjoining urban area. Significant urban extensions should be large enough to provide a sustainable form of development, in relation to employment, public transport provision, and social, health, education, and community facilities provision.

Where urban areas adjoin local authority boundaries or are administered by more than one local development document, local authorities will need to co-operate to develop strategies, establish needs and ensure the sequential approach is implemented. Co-ordinated and complementary strategies should be considered where urban areas are closely clustered.

Policy SS4: use of previously developed land and buildings

At least 60% of all new development in the region will take place in or using previously used land or buildings. Local development documents will identify and allocate suitable previously developed land and buildings for new development with a view to contributing to this target.

EERA will co-ordinate a programme of urban capacity studies and maintain consistency of approach by keeping methodology under review.

Policy SS5: town centres

Thriving, vibrant and attractive town centres are fundamental to the sustainable development of the East of England and they will continue to be the focus for investment, environmental enhancement and regeneration.

Within the context of a community strategy approach, local development documents, supported by transport plans and economic, environmental and cultural strategies, will:

- include a strategy for each town centre to promote successful mixed use economies, manage change, refocus where necessary and support cultural heritage
- protect and enhance existing neighbourhood centres and, where a need is established, promote new provision of an appropriate scale and function to meet local day to day needs
- ensure land is allocated to meet the full range of identified needs.

Where urban areas are administered by more than one local development document, local authorities will co-operate to develop strategies, establish needs and ensure the sequential approach is implemented. Co-ordinated and complementary strategies should be considered where towns are closely clustered.

Policy SS6: transport strategy

Transport delivery agencies will improve accessibility and support the economic and spatial development of the region. This will be done through:

- reducing the need, and hence demand, for travel
- an improved range of public transport provision to, from and within the Regional Interchange Centres (Basildon, Bedford, Cambridge, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harlow, King's Lynn, Luton/Dunstable, Ipswich, Norwich, Peterborough, Stansted, Stevenage, Southend, Thurrock and Watford)
- small scale local improvements designed to encourage walking and cycling, improve public transport services and ease movement to and within local centres

- maintenance, management and improvement of a multi-modal strategic transport network (see map 8.2 in chapter 8).

Policy SS7: green belt

The broad extent of green belts in the East of England is considered to be appropriate, and will be maintained. Around some urban areas, however, reviews of green belt boundaries are needed as part of an appraisal to identify the most sustainable locations for new development in line with the sub-regional strategies (see chapter 5) and to respond to the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan. Reviews will therefore be undertaken in the following general locations:

- Thames Gateway South Essex
- Harlow, the Upper Lee Valley and Bishop's Stortford
- around Stevenage.

These reviews will have to satisfy the national criteria for green belt releases and accord with the spatial strategy as set out in this RSS. These reviews will identify and provide opportunities for a positive vision of the role of rural areas between settlements. Where the reviews cover more than one local authority area, the expectation is that they will be undertaken through a joint approach. Reviews will ensure that sufficient land is identified to avoid further green belt review before 2031.

No further review of the Cambridge Green Belt is needed up to 2021.

In order to maintain the broad extent of green belts in the region, reviews will consider if compensating additions to the green belts are needed. These will have to satisfy the national criteria for designation, and complement the delivery of the spatial strategy as set out in this RSS. Such extensions will be proposed in local development documents or in future reviews of the RSS. Authorities will prepare co-ordinated and complementary strategies for green belt additions where land removed from the green belt affects more than one administrative area or cannot be replaced within the same district.

Policy SS8: land in the urban fringe

Local authorities, developers and other agencies will work together to secure the enhancement, effective management and appropriate use of land in the urban fringe through formulating and implementing strategies for urban fringe areas, where appropriate, at sub-regional scale.

Local development documents will:

- ensure that new development contributes to enhancing the character, appearance, recreational and biodiversity value of the urban fringe
- seek to provide connected networks of accessible green space linking urban areas with the countryside
- set targets for the provision of green space for planned urban extensions.

Policy SS9: development in rural areas

Development in rural areas will be focused in market towns and thereafter in key service centres. Local development documents will identify market towns and other key service centres with the potential to support rural renaissance and should take account of community strategy appraisals.

In order to sustain the viability and secure revitalisation of the region's market towns, local authorities will consider the need to:

- accommodate additional housing, employment growth and economic diversification
- enhance the environment of the town centre
- improve the accessibility of the town by public transport from surrounding rural areas
- extend provision for shopping facilities and services in the town centre
- improve access to high-speed communications technology to assist economic diversification.

In key service centres, local authorities should consider the potential to accommodate new development, sympathetic to local character and of an appropriate scale and nature, to accommodate local employment and housing needs.

In all other rural settlements and related communities, local authorities should seek to assist the continued viability of agriculture and other rural economic activities, such as tourism, the diversification of the rural economy and the provision of housing for local needs, and support the sustainability of local services.

Local development documents will provide for a range of rural needs including:

- the need to manage development pressures in rural settlements under the influence of urban areas which display characteristics of good service provision, relative prosperity, disproportionately high house prices, high income urban population, and/or high levels of out-commuting. Under these circumstances, local development documents should seek to protect local character and secure local needs housing
- the need to encourage change and enable diversification of the economy, usually in remote areas with poor access to jobs and services, and pockets of deprivation.

Policy SS10: the regional economy

The regional economy will be supported and developed to ensure that it contributes fully to national, regional and local prosperity in order to improve quality of life for those who live and work in the Region. Opportunities provided by the relationship with the European economy, the London economy and other neighbouring economies will be exploited and will follow the principles of sustainable development.

Local development documents will take account of, and facilitate the delivery of, the Regional Economic Strategy in line with the statement of synergy between RES and RSS, included within the RES. This will include promoting those key sectors identified in the Regional Economic Strategy and developing complementary sustainable land use policies and proposals.

In the East of England as a whole provision will be made for 421,500 additional jobs. See Policy E2 in chapter 6.

Regional and sub-regional monitoring of economic and employment trends will be undertaken to track delivery of regional economic objectives and to ensure early identification of any intervention required.

Policy SS11: priority areas for regeneration

The spatial strategy aims to secure sustainable economic, social and environmental development across the whole of the East of England, in both urban and rural areas. The priority areas for regeneration are:

- areas with weak economic performance and high deprivation: Thames Gateway South Essex sub-region; Great

Yarmouth and Waveney; Kings Lynn and West Norfolk; the remote rural areas of Norfolk and Suffolk, and the Fens transitional EU objective 5b areas see map 11.1 in chapter 11 'implementation and delivery').

- areas with high deprivation: Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis sub-region; Bedford/Kempston; Harlow and the Lee Valley; Haven Gateway (Ipswich/Harwich/Clacton); Peterborough; Norwich; Colchester; Stevenage; and parts of Cambridge (King's Hedges and Arbury wards) and St Edmundsbury (Clements and Northgate wards).

Local development documents will set out policies to tackle the problems of economic, social and environmental deprivation in these areas together with policies for other areas with locally significant need for regeneration.

The priority areas are therefore concentrated on some of the larger urban areas and on the more peripheral north and east of the region.

Policy SS12: health, education and social inclusion

EERA will work with regional partners, including organisations in the health, education, and social sectors to ensure that regional and local strategies give due priority to health, education and social inclusion needs. This will be achieved by

- seeking early provision of services and facilities closely coordinated with development, particularly in the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan growth areas and in the priority areas for regeneration
- support for centres of excellence in health, education and social inclusion sectors
- support for enhanced further and higher education provision in the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan growth areas and in the priority areas for regeneration.

Local development documents will make provision for the land use needs of health, education, and social services providers in coordination with development.

Policy SS13: overall housing provision

In the East of England as a whole, provision will be made for an annual average rate of completion of 23,900 net additional dwellings over the period 2001-2021, a total of 478,000 dwellings.

Within the regional provision for 23,900 units, social rented housing should be provided at a regional annual average rate of at least 7,200 net additional dwellings, or 30% of overall provision. In addition to this, at least 760 net additional units per year should be provided for key worker housing. The region will also aspire to provide higher provision in the period up to 2015 to reduce the level of unmet housing need and address intermediate housing needs.

Affordable housing must constitute at least 30% of housing supply in all local authority areas, though the overall aspiration is to secure at least 40% where housing stress warrants higher provision. Provision in excess of 30% will be defined and justified in local development documents and housing strategies, informed by local housing assessments.

The scale of development of new affordable housing will be monitored and rates adjusted in reviews of this RSS on the basis of local assessments and periodic regional studies. Development plan documents and local housing strategies will also seek to ensure that an adequate pool of social housing remains available to meet local needs.

Policy H1 provides the district-level distribution of dwelling provision for the region. An early focused review of the RSS will be undertaken within a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach, to consider long term pressures and evaluate options for a large new settlement (see policy SS2), taking into account:

- the outcomes of the Government's Spending Review 2006 and subsequent reviews
- the provision of strategic infrastructure by Government, particularly via investment in affordable housing provision, the strategic road network, or up-grading of the East Coast or West Anglia Main Lines
- expansion of Stansted Airport beyond maximum use of the capacity of the existing runway
- the delivery of jobs growth, especially if in excess of policy E2 provisions, and particularly in the Peterborough area if triggered by the Lyons Review
- evidence of increased housing need identified by monitoring of regional and national demographic, housing, or social conditions.

Policy SS14: development and flood risk

Coastal and river flood risk is a significant factor in the East of the England. The priority is to defend existing properties from flooding, and where possible locate new development in locations with little or no risk of flooding.

Local development documents will:

- promote the use of strategic flood risk assessments to guide development away from floodplains, areas at risk or likely to be at risk in future from flooding, or where development would increase the risk of flooding elsewhere
- include policies to protect flood plains and land liable to tidal or coastal flooding from development, based on the Environment Agency's flood zone maps, supplemented where necessary by historical and modelled flood data (e.g. Section 105 maps) and indications as to other areas which could be at risk in future (including proposals for 'managed retreat' where appropriate)
- require that all developments and, where subject to planning control, all land uses (including agricultural activities and changes to drainage in existing settlements) should not add to the risk of flooding elsewhere and should reduce flooding pressures by using appropriate sustainable drainage systems
- only propose development in floodplains, areas at flood risk or at risk of flooding in future, or where development would increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, where land at lower risk of flooding is not available, where there is a significant overriding need for the development, and the risk can be fully mitigated by design or engineering measures.

Policy SS15: the coast

The strategy for the coast is to ensure a balanced policy that recognises the economic and social role of coastal ports and tourism areas, and the need for environmental protection and enhancement of the coast.

Local planning authorities and other agencies will adopt an integrated approach to the future management of coastal areas to achieve:

- the regeneration of coastal towns and communities, reinforcing their economic and social role in coastal areas and the wider region
- the conservation of the environment of the coast and coastal waters, particularly the natural character, historic environment and tranquillity of undeveloped areas.

Local development documents will:

- adopt policies which support the restructuring of the coastal economies and the provision of jobs to satisfy local needs
- make provision for strategic employment sites in Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Ipswich and Harwich in accordance with policy E4
- ensure that in the region's coastal resorts:
 - town centres continue to provide for local and visitor needs
 - the inter-relationships and linkages between town centres and leisure areas are facilitated to the benefit of the vitality and viability of both
 - retailing in leisure areas facilitates the vitality and viability of leisure and tourism functions without adversely affecting town centres
- ensure that the location of new development is compatible with shoreline management plans (shown in table 4.1), so as to avoid constraining effective future flood management or increasing the need for expensive new sea defences
- adopt the principle that important environmental assets on the coast will be protected if it is practicable and sustainable to do so without causing adverse impacts elsewhere. If it is not practicable to protect such sites and habitats in situ, shoreline management plans and development plans will be prepared that include proposals for their long-term replacement or the recording of historic assets
- investigate and pursue opportunities for creation of new salt marsh and mudflat by managed realignment in areas identified for 'retreat the line' policies through shoreline management plans and strategies. Such areas will be safeguarded from development.

Policy SS16: quality in the built environment

Local development documents will deliver new development of high quality in urban and rural areas. They will ensure that new built development:

- maximises its contribution to the attractiveness and character of the local area
- makes efficient use of land
- for housing development
 - is built at the highest possible net density commensurate with an assessment of the character of the locality, and no less than 30 dwellings per hectare
 - delivers greater intensity and density of development in places with good public transport accessibility, while
 - respecting local building styles, character and identity
- provides a mix of uses and building types where appropriate
- has regard to the needs of all sectors of the community
- addresses crime prevention, community safety and public health
- promotes resource efficiency, and more sustainable construction, including maximum use of re-used or recycled materials and of local and traditional materials
- reduces pollution

- maximises opportunities for the built heritage to contribute to physical, economic and community regeneration
- maximises opportunities for access by a choice of travel modes.