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Your Ref:

Our Ref: PINS/E2743/429/5

Date: 13 January 2009

Dear Mr Sampson

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004: The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 Core Strategy Development Plan Document

1 I was appointed by the Secretary of State to carry out an independent examination of your Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD), which was submitted on 7 September 2007, pursuant to section 20 of the above Act (the 2004 Act).

2 The purpose of the independent examination is set out in section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and falls into two parts. First, whether the submitted DPD has been prepared in accordance with certain statutory requirements under s19 & s24 (1) of the 2004 Act and the associated Regulations and second, whether the DPD is sound. In making an assessment of soundness, I have focused on the tests contained in Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12). PPS12(2004) *Local Development Frameworks* was in force when the DPD was submitted. During my examination, in June 2008, this was replaced by PPS12(2008) *Local Spatial Planning* in which the tests of soundness are presented in a different and simpler way, although they cover the same matters as before.

3 With this letter is a copy of my report on the submitted Core Strategy DPD which contains my recommendations and the reasons for them as required by section 20(7) of the 2004 Act. I am pleased to be able to inform you that, subject to the recommended changes set out in Schedule 1 of my report, the Core Strategy DPD satisfies the requirements of s20(5)(a) & (b) of the 2004 Act and the associated Regulations, and meets the tests of soundness set out in PPS12.

4 I held a Pre Examination Meeting (PEM) on 28 January 2008 to discuss procedural and administrative arrangements. I subsequently published a Schedule setting out the Matters & Issues to be considered at the Examination which I conducted by way of written exchanges and hearing sessions held between 22 April and 15 May 2008. Following an Exploratory Meeting on 26 March 2008 that part of the examination relating to the Areas of Search for



Growth around Harrogate and Knaresborough was suspended in order for further work to be carried out to underpin this part of the Core Strategy. After public consultation on this additional work I resumed examination of this aspect with written exchanges and a hearing session on 16, 17 and 20 October 2008.

5 In coming to my conclusions on the soundness of the DPD, I have taken into account all the representations made during the two formal 6-week consultation periods following submission of the DPD and publication of the additional work on the Areas of Search for Growth respectively, along with subsequent written statements and oral contributions made during the course of the Examination. It is not a requirement of the 2004 Act that I report on all the individual representations received, and consequently, my report does not list 'objections' or respond to all the points made. During the course of the Examination and as a result of the discussions at the hearing sessions, the Council suggested a number of changes to the submitted DPD. I have considered these changes as part of my assessment of soundness.

6 While preparing my report, Proposed Changes to Planning Policy Statement 6: *Planning for Town Centres* was published for consultation. Although emerging towards the end of the examination process, I am satisfied that, insofar as it is relevant to the content of this DPD, the Core Strategy is broadly consistent with its direction of travel.

7 In addition, the approved Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for Yorkshire and the Humber was published in May 2008. Having considered the implications of this final version of the RSS, and the views of the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly, I am satisfied that it does not lead to any fundamental changes being required to the spatial strategy for this District contained in the DPD. However some minor factual updating will be necessary to reflect the policies in the approved RSS.

8 May I express my appreciation to all your officers for the helpful, positive and professional manner they adopted during the hearings and throughout the Examination. I am particularly grateful for the thorough responses to my questions and issues made in their Examination Statements and for the comprehensive and well organised additional work underpinning the Areas of Search for Growth. These contributed significantly to the progress of my assessment and the efficiency of the Examination. Thanks are due also to the many stakeholders and residents of the District who contributed to the Examination both in writing and by attending the hearing sessions.

9 In addition I would like to record my sincere thanks to the Programme Officer, Mrs Jayne Wall, who worked diligently to keep the Examination on track. Jayne's hard work, good humour and organisational skills ensured that the Examination process, particularly the hearing sessions, ran smoothly. Unfortunately a broken shoulder meant that she could not assist with the latter part of the Examination and I am very grateful to Yvonne Parker for stepping into the breach and ensuring that Examination of the Areas of Search for Growth element ran to timetable. All the statements, representations, documents and other material submitted during the course of the Examination, including at the hearing sessions, are contained in the Examination library.

10 This is one of the earliest such DPDs to be prepared in response to the challenge of the new spatial planning system. While I have recommended a number of changes, these do not alter the basic vision and principles of the document, which provides a robust spatial strategy for the District. I hope that

my conclusions and recommendations in the accompanying report will enable the Council to adopt the Core Strategy DPD in an efficient manner to provide a sound framework for preparing subsequent Local Development Documents in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Karen McCabe

Inspector

Cc: Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber



Report to Harrogate Borough Council

by Karen McCabe BA(Hons) MTP
DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State
for Communities and Local Government

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PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004

SECTION 20

REPORT ON THE EXAMINATION INTO THE HARROGATE DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY

DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

Document submitted for examination on 7 September 2007

Examination hearings held between 22 April and 15 May 2008 and on 16, 17
and 20 October 2008

File Ref: LDF 000799

Contents

1	Introduction and Overall Conclusion	3
2	Procedural and Conformity Requirements	5
3	Justification, Effectiveness and Consistency	8
	Issue 1 Spatial Strategy	9
	Issue 2 Scale and Distribution new housing development	12
	Issue 3 Settlement Hierarchy	18
	Issue 4 Broad locations for urban extensions	23
	Issue 5 Rural Development	31
	Issue 6 Affordable Housing	32
	Issue 7 Economic Priorities and Employment Development	38
	Issue 8 Retail and Town Centre Development	41
	Issue 9 Travel and Transport Infrastructure	42
	Issue 10 Environment and Quality of Life	45
	Issue 11 Communities	47
	Issue 12 Community Sports Regeneration Area	48
	Issue 13 Implementation and Monitoring	52
4	Other Matters	54
5	Overall Conclusions	54

Annex 1 Glossary of Terms

Schedule 1 Changes Required to make this DPD Sound

Introduction and Overall Conclusion

- 1.1 Under the terms of Section 20(5) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the purpose of the independent examination of a development plan document (DPD) is to determine:
 - (a) whether it satisfies the requirements of s19 and s24(1) of the 2004 Act, the regulations under s17(7), and any regulations under s36 relating to the preparation of the document.
 - (b) whether it is sound.
- 1.2 This report contains my assessment of the Harrogate District Core Strategy (CS) Development Plan Document (DPD) in terms of the above matters, along with my recommendations and the reasons for them, as required by s20(7) of the 2004 Act.
- 1.3 I am satisfied that the submitted DPD meets the requirements of the Act and Regulations. My role is to consider the soundness of the submitted CS against the tests of soundness set out in Planning Policy Statement 12(PPS12). When the DPD was submitted PPS12(2004): *Local Development Frameworks* was in force, but in June 2008 this was replaced by PPS12(2008): *Local Spatial Planning*. Although the tests of soundness are now presented in a different and simpler way, they cover the same matters as before. The revised PPS12 requires that to be sound, a DPD should be justified, effective and consistent with national policy, along with a continuing requirement for the DPD to satisfy the legal/procedural requirements and to be in conformity with regional planning policy. PPS12(2008) also confirms that the rigour of the examination process remains unchanged and Inspectors will be looking for the same quality of evidence and content as before.
- 1.4 In line with national policy, the starting point for the examination is the assumption that the local authority has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan. Following an exploratory meeting part of the examination was suspended to allow the Council to carry out further work to underpin the Areas of Search for Growth (ASG) element of the spatial strategy. This additional work was the subject of public consultation before this part of the examination was resumed.
- 1.5 The changes I have specified in this binding report are made only where there is a clear need to amend the document in the light of the tests of soundness in PPS12. None of these changes should materially alter the substance of the overall plan and its policies, or undermine the sustainability appraisal and participatory processes already undertaken.
- 1.6 My report firstly considers procedural and conformity requirements, and then deals with the relevant matters and issues considered during the examination in terms of justification, effectiveness and consistency with national policy. My overall conclusion is that the CS is sound provided it is changed in the ways specified. Its vision for

the district is locally distinctive and supported by a robust spatial strategy that makes clear choices about where development should go in broad terms. It is capable of delivery and has clear monitoring and managing mechanisms in place.

- 1.7 The changes are required either to ensure the clarity and coherence of the plan and its consistency with national policy or where certain aspects of the spatial strategy are not fully justified by the evidence provided. The principal changes are, in summary:
- a) strengthening the links with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS);
 - b) providing a clear strategic framework for subsequent Local Development Documents (LDDs);
 - c) clarifying and amending the location and nature of greenfield land releases for housing in policy SG1;
 - d) the categorisation of certain villages within the settlement hierarchy in policy SG2;
 - e) clear mechanisms for managing housing delivery in policies SG1 and SG5 and Appendix 4;
 - f) placing the overall target for affordable housing in policy SG1 on an interim, indicative basis and deleting policies HLP1, HLP2 and HLP5;
 - g) amending policies SG3, EQ2 and C2 in line with national policy and removing the on site renewable energy targets in policy EQ1c);
 - h) deleting policy C3: Community Sports Regeneration Area;
 - i) ensuring coherence and coverage of the performance indicators in Table 2 and clarifying the triggers for reviewing the CS.
- 1.8 All the detailed changes required to ensure that the plan is sound are set out in **Schedule 1**. I have taken into account the changes suggested by the Council during the examination, both before, during and after the hearings [*ES18B, LCD101, HCD20 & HCD23*]. Although these changes did not have the same level of publicity as the submitted document, I am satisfied that they have been adequately publicised through publication on the website and circulation to representors for comment. I have recommended changes as the result of examination all of which were canvassed at hearing sessions.
- 1.9 A very considerable number of representations (over 5000 in total) covering a wide range of matters were submitted during the two periods of formal consultation (after submission of the CS and on the further work underpinning the ASG). Although not necessarily specifically referred to in my report, in considering soundness I have taken all these representations into account as well as all representations, both written and oral, received during the examination.
- 1.10 Some representations suggested improvements to the CS but it is not my role to make the document 'more sound'. A number included comments on specific policies and proposals in the Development Control Policies DPD (DCPD) Issues and Options and the Site Allocations (Homes and Jobs) DPD (SADPD) Preferred Options which

were out for consultation during the examination. However, these DPDs are not the subject of this examination, although I have taken such comments into account insofar as they have a bearing on the soundness of the CS.

2 Procedural and Conformity Requirements

Local Development Scheme

- 2.1 The CS is contained within the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS), the second review of which was approved in July 2007 [*LCD12*]. There, it is shown as having a submission date of September 2007, a target that has been met. The role, scope and function of the CS remains the same throughout the updates to the LDS [*LCD64, LCD63 and LCD12*], the only changes being to the milestones for preparation and to the DPDs for which the CS will provide the strategic framework. The submitted CS clearly sets out the vision, objectives and strategy for spatial development of the District as required by the LDS.
- 2.2 There is some ambiguity in *LCD12* regarding the time horizon of the CS, with stated end dates of both 2021 and 2023. The CS itself (para 1.6) indicates that it looks to 2021 and the Council's Soundness Self Assessment (SSA) [*LCD11*] confirms this timescale, except for housing provision which covers the period to 2023. I deal with the question of appropriate time horizon in Section 3 under Issue 1. However, subject to the CS being amended in accordance with the change that I recommend in that part of the report, I am satisfied that it has been prepared in accordance with the LDS.

Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.3 The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) [*LCD7*] has been found sound by the Secretary of State and was formally adopted by the Council in April 2006 prior to the Preferred Options stage of consultation on the CS. However, it is clear from the Pre – Submission Consultation Statement [*LCD3*] that the earlier stages of consultation closely followed the process set out in the SCI. I appreciate that during the relatively long process of preparing the CS the individuals involved may change and people move in and out of the district. Nevertheless, it is evident from the documents submitted by the Council, including *LCD3*, its SSA, and the Regulation 31 Statement [*LCD88*], that the Council has made considerable efforts to engage with the community throughout the process.
- 2.4 Particular concerns were expressed that there had been inadequate consultation on the options for the ASG identified in the submission CS. However, comments were invited on the additional work, including option evaluation, carried out by the Council to underpin this element. I note that this additional consultation period included the school holidays and that the Council did not organise public

meetings or distribute a newsletter to all households. However there was significant press coverage of the matter during the consultation period. In addition direct contact was made with all the organisations and individuals that had previously been involved in preparation of the CS.

- 2.5 Neither the SCI nor the 2004 Regulations contain specific requirements for publicity and consultation on such additional work. However, as this was done in order to underpin part of the submitted CS, it seems to me appropriate for the procedures in Stage 7 of the SCI to be applied. From the evidence provided in the Consultation Report and Statement [*LCD102/F & LCD103*], and having regard to the considerable volume and extent of the representations received, I am satisfied that the minimum requirements for this stage have been met.
- 2.6 Whether approval of this additional work by the relevant Council Cabinet Member contravened the Council's Standing Orders or customary processes is not a matter for me to determine. However this work was underpinning an element of the CS which had been approved by the full Council before submission to the Secretary of State. Thus it seems reasonable for the Council to take the same approach to representations received on this additional work as to those received following submission of the CS. I find therefore that preparation of the CS has broadly complied with the SCI and has met the minimum requirements set out in the 2004 Regulations.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 2.7 It is evident that sustainability appraisal (SA) has been integral to the preparation of the CS as clearly documented in the Submission Draft Sustainability Appraisal [*LCD2*] which sets out the baseline, process and outcomes. The ASG emerged following the Preferred Options stage and their SA did not initially share the same framework as that for the CS, nor was it integrated with the SA for the CS as a whole. However this has been rectified as part of the additional work carried out by the Council during the examination [*LCD102/A*].
- 2.8 While the SA began before the national guidelines for Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents [*NCD55*] were published in November 2005, I am satisfied that it broadly accords with the recommended approach. The SA forms part of the evidence base for the CS and it is for the Council to ensure that it complies with the requirements of the European Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive.
- 2.9 Despite criticisms of the scope of the SA objectives and its links to the RSS and other DPDs I am satisfied that overall the SA is sufficiently broad to enable the sustainability effects of the spatial strategy to be properly considered. Moreover, the approach to specific aspects such as travel and accessibility are consistent with

national and regional policy as well as the strategic vision for the district. I note also that the SA objectives align closely with the aims and objectives developed in the Regional Sustainability Development Framework [LCD2]. As regards general criticisms of aspects such as the layout, non technical summary, and scoring system, I am not convinced that these perceived shortcomings are so significant as to have seriously limited the involvement of stakeholders and the public in the SA process or to undermine its credibility.

- 2.10 Furthermore I am satisfied from the assessment carried out after the Preferred Options Stage [LCD6] and consequent changes prior to submission that there is no need for an Appropriate Assessment of the CS under the Habitats Directive as it is unlikely to cause significant harm to Natura 2000 sites within and outside Harrogate District. The process undertaken by the Council in preparing this assessment is compliant with the Habitats Regulations, a view confirmed by Natural England [LCD81].

National Policy

- 2.11 I find that the CS is a *spatial plan* in that its approach, structure and content broadly accord with national guidance on spatial planning, in particular that contained in PPS1: *Delivering Sustainable Development* [NCD15] and PPS12.
- 2.12 I am satisfied that with some exceptions, the CS accords with national planning policy. These exceptions relate in particular to the application of PPS3, PPS7, PPS22 and Circular 01/06. I deal with these inconsistencies in Section 3 under the relevant Issue. Suffice to say here that, subject to the changes that I recommend in that part of my report, I find that the CS is consistent with the broad thrust of this national policy.

Regional Spatial Strategy

- 2.13 The *Yorkshire and Humber Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy to 2026)* [RCD2A] was published during the examination in May 2008. Previously the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly (YHRA) indicated that the CS was in general conformity with the draft RSS and the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the RSS [RCD23]. On the basis of the analysis prepared by the Council during the examination [LCD101] I consider that the CS remains broadly consistent with the RSS as now approved. The YHRA confirm that the submission CS and the Council's suggested potential changes [ES18B] are in general conformity with the published RSS [RCD36], and that the additional work underpinning the ASG accords with its overall aims and objectives [LCD102/F]. I deal with the YHRA's detailed points about particular aspects of the CS when considering justification, effectiveness and consistency below.

Sustainable Community Strategies

- 2.14 CS Appendix 2 clearly sets out how this DPD will assist in delivering the objectives of the *Harrogate District Community Plan 2004 [LCD14]* and the *North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership Community Strategy 2005 -2008 [RCD1]*. While the latter is currently being updated for the period 2008-2018 *[RCD21]*, I am not aware of any significant change to its overall priorities. I am therefore satisfied that the CS has had regard to the Community Strategies, and this is confirmed by the Harrogate District Strategic Partnership in respect of the Community Plan *[LCD85]*. In its view there is generally a good fit between the submitted CS and its own objectives and priorities, and the CS overarching policies are appropriate to the circumstances facing the District. I cover the Partnership's more detailed points when considering justification, effectiveness and consistency below.
- 2.15 To summarise my findings above, except for some inconsistency with national policy the CS has complied with legislation in terms of procedural and conformity requirements. My recommendations to rectify these inconsistencies and to make the DPD sound are set out in Section 3 and Schedule 1 of this report.

3 Justification, Effectiveness and Consistency

Coherence and Consistency

- 3.1 The evidence provided by the Council, in particular the SA and SSA, *LCD3*, and Appendix 4 to the Preferred Option Consultation *[LCD5]* indicates that preparation of the CS has had proper regard to relevant plans, policies and strategies, including those of North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) such as the Local Transport Plan (LTP). I am not aware of any significant gaps in this coverage.
- 3.2 In addition the CS is closely aligned with the Council's corporate priorities as contained in *Realising the Potential: A Strategic Plan for Harrogate Borough Council 2005 – 2008 [LCD18]*. This identifies the preparation and implementation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) as a strategic priority action to deliver these corporate priorities. The Council suggest a change to the submitted CS to explain its relationship to the Council's corporate plan which I recommend in the interests of clarity.
- 3.3 The CS is the first DPD to be prepared by the Council as part of the LDF and there are no obvious gaps in its coverage. Together with the RSS and the North Yorkshire Minerals and Waste CS it is intended to form the strategic framework for spatial development in the District. It contains the strategic objectives and policies with which future DPDs, notably the DCPDPD, SADPD and the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Plan DPD will be expected to conform.

- 3.4 However, this 'chain of conformity' is not clearly explained in the submitted CS. Moreover, from the evidence submitted by the Council (in particular *ES01*) there appears to be a degree of overlap and ambiguity between the CS and subsequent DPDs with regard to the location of certain strategic policies and proposals. As a consequence the CS fails to provide an adequate strategic framework for the Area Plan DPD, as well as creating uncertainty and confusion for developers and the public. In this respect it is unsound.
- 3.5 However, the Council have put forward suggested changes to clarify the linkages with other plans and strategies and the strategic framework for the Area Plan and other DPDs which I recommend in order to render the CS sound in this respect. I return to this matter of strategic linkages under Issue 1 below.
- 3.6 I am satisfied from my examination that relevant cross boundary issues have been taken into account and that in all significant respects the CS is broadly consistent with the existing and emerging plans of neighbouring authorities. I deal with detailed points made by adjoining authorities under the relevant Issue.
- 3.7 The remainder of this section of my report considers whether the various elements of the CS are consistent with national policy, the most appropriate when considered against the reasonable alternatives, are founded on robust and credible evidence, deliverable, flexible and capable of being monitored. I do so in terms of the key issues that I identified in this examination.

Issue 1 – Is the underpinning spatial strategy soundly based and appropriate for this district, consistent with national and regional guidance, reflecting community views and providing a sound basis for the strategic spatial policies in the Core Strategy?

Strategic Vision

- 3.8 The CS sets out the strategic vision for the District in 2021. This vision is firmly based on the spatial profile of the District and the outcome of community consultation about strategic issues and options. I find it to be a sound and coherent expression of the broad basis for the spatial strategy. However, the link between strategic vision, objectives and policies is not clearly drawn out in the submitted CS. I therefore recommend the Council's suggested change in this respect which overcomes unsoundness by strengthening overall coherence.
- 3.9 As regards the definition of 'community facilities' I consider it reasonable for this to include public open space and sports. The term is used consistently throughout the CS, which sets the framework for subsequent DPDs and SPDs. It is for these documents to reflect the approach to such facilities contained in the CS.

- 3.10 Harrogate District falls within four different sub areas as defined in the RSS. The strategic vision is not explicit about the role of Harrogate within the regional and sub regional context, nor does it identify strategic external linkages, such as with York and the Leeds City Region. Although such linkages are referred to in the supporting text to individual policies, for clarity and coherence the wider strategic context should also be brought together in one place and related to the strategic vision. This is achieved by the change suggested by the Council, which I recommend in order to render this element of the CS sound.

Strategic Objectives

- 3.11 The strategic objectives have been derived from consultation about issues and options and the SA process. They have attracted a high level of community support, align closely with the spatial aspirations of the community strategies, and support the strategic vision. They are spatial in content, appropriately expressed in broad terms and are consistent with the approach taken in the strategic policies to issues such as housing distribution and settlement growth. While there are a considerable number of objectives, tables at the beginning of each chapter of the CS clearly demonstrate how they will be delivered by the CS policies.
- 3.12 Objective 7 seeks to reduce the annual rate of house building compared to past levels. To my mind this is at odds with national guidance in PPS3: *Housing [NCD 16]*, which sets out a framework for managing housing delivery in accordance with RSS targets. Moreover, the housing target for Harrogate within the adopted RSS is a reflection of its role within the region as well as environmental and other constraints faced by the District. Given the remaining objectives, particularly objectives 6 and 9, it is not necessary to include objective 7 and it should be deleted (along with the reference in objective 3) to ensure consistency with national and regional policy.
- 3.13 Turning to objective 6, I am satisfied that this broadly accords with the approach to housing delivery contained in PPS3. As regards the use of previously developed land, I find the term 'maximise' to be inconsistent with the approach in PPS3 and RSS policy YH7 both of which refer to 'prioritising' its reuse. This should be amended. However, both objective 6 and objective 2 are couched in broad strategic terms in their focus on the efficient use of brownfield land and I see no need to include references to greenfield infill, urban extensions or possible Green Belt review here. Subject to the changes set out above, I find the strategic objectives to be soundly based and broadly appropriate for this District.

Spatial Strategy

- 3.14 The underpinning spatial strategy is not separately defined within the CS. However, it is clearly expressed through the strategic

vision, objectives and policies. Briefly, the main urban areas are to be the focus for development, with local service centres being maintained and growth being directed to those settlements with access to facilities and public transport. Although the level and type of growth in individual settlements and areas was challenged, I am not aware of any fundamental disagreement with this coherent approach which the SA demonstrates is an effective strategy for meeting the needs of the District sustainably.

- 3.15 As regards the proposal by representors for a new settlement at Deighton Grange to serve the wider needs of the region, I can find no support for such a major strategic development in the adopted RSS. I have been given no evidence that it is required in order to meet the housing, employment or shopping needs of Harrogate or nearby districts. In my view the introduction of a new settlement of the scale indicated in this relatively isolated location would seriously undermine the CS spatial strategy.
- 3.16 From the information provided the concept appears to have been subject to only limited public consultation or SA and it has not been formally considered as an option at any stage in the preparation of the CS. Taking all these factors into account, I do not consider that the omission of this proposed new settlement undermines the soundness of this DPD. It may be appropriate for such a proposal to be given further consideration in the light of recent initiatives to increase housing supply such as Eco-Towns. However this is a matter outwith the scope of this examination.

Time Horizon

- 3.17 The CS was initially prepared on the basis that it set out the spatial strategy for the district up to 2021 and beyond. This is at least 10 years from the date of adoption, in line with the advice in the, then current, version of PPS12. However in the light of PPS3 the housing element of the strategy has been modified to cover 15 years from the anticipated date of adoption, that is up until 2023. The Council has put forward a suggested change to explain this pragmatic response to emerging national policy.
- 3.18 I recognise that the strategic vision and much of the evidence base for the CS is based on a time horizon of 2021 and that its date of adoption is now expected to be in early 2009. However, as the CS sets out the broad locations for future development, I am confident that it provides sufficient strategic framework for a 15 year supply of housing land to be identified in the SADPD. Nevertheless, this dual end date somewhat weakens the coherence of the CS, especially as the planning of housing is best interrelated with other aspects of growth and development. It underlines the need for review of the CS well before it reaches the latter part of the plan period if the spatial strategy is to remain appropriate. This is reinforced by revised PPS12 which expects CSs to cover at least a 15 year period from the date of adoption.

- 3.19 Moreover the adopted RSS has a time frame of 2026. Although it would be unreasonable to expect the time horizon of the CS to be extended significantly at this late stage, this factor further reinforces the need to prepare for its review. This should be clearly explained in the submitted CS to ensure coherence and consistency with national and regional policy and I recommend a change to that effect.

Key Diagram

- 3.20 Although at first glance this diagram appears somewhat 'busy' I consider that it fulfils its purpose of being a diagrammatic interpretation of the spatial strategy. It is helpful to include the Golden Triangle in order to illustrate the area which is the focus of partnership working to deliver affordable housing. I recommend the Council's suggested changes which secure soundness by ensuring that all the key elements of the strategy are clear and included on the diagram. Other changes are required to reflect my recommendations in respect of ASG under Issue 4. However, it is a diagram and as such is not required to be on a map base.
- 3.21 **I conclude that the spatial strategy is soundly based and appropriate for this district, consistent with national and regional guidance, reflects community views and provides a sound basis for the strategic spatial policies of the CS, provided that the following changes are made:**

Changes Reference A, B, C, D, E, F, G set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 2 – Is the scale, distribution, type and phasing of new housing development appropriate to this district, consistent with national and regional policy, soundly based and fully justified?

Overall level of housing provision

- 3.22 This is set out in CS policy SG1. I recommend the Council's suggested change to 390 new homes per annum (net annual average) which ensures soundness by aligning this overall level of provision with that in adopted RSS policy H1B. There is a consequent amendment to the supporting text and the performance target in Table 2. While policy SG1 only covers the period to 2023, given that it sets out the broad distribution and strategic locations for housing development, I am satisfied that this will not prevent the CS from enabling continuous delivery of housing for a period of at least 15 years from the date of adoption of the CS (anticipated early 2009), as required by PPS3 para 53.
- 3.23 Within this strategic framework specific sites for housing will be identified in the SADPD, for which consultation has been completed

for the Preferred Options [*LCD75*]. A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) [*LCD77*] has also been prepared. This is still in draft and has certain acknowledged shortcomings, notably that there has been limited stakeholder involvement in its preparation and that in the main it includes only those sites identified as Preferred Options, rather than providing a database of all sites assessed as having development potential for housing. Detailed assumptions about the anticipated capacity and timescale for delivery of certain sites have also been challenged.

- 3.24 While criticisms have also been made of the completions and commitments data contained in the latest AMR and draft SHLAA, I am not convinced that the minor errors that are likely to arise with a database of this size are sufficient to undermine its credibility. Notwithstanding its limitations therefore, I regard the draft SHLAA as giving a general indication of deliverable commitments and potential housing sites, even though it was prepared after submission of the CS (as were the SADPD Preferred Options) and thus does not form part of its evidence base.
- 3.25 This broad analysis supports the view that there is sufficient available land to enable identification of both a 5 and 10 year supply of sites to at least meet RSS targets without making allowance for windfalls, as required by PPS3. Furthermore the amended Appendix C to the SADPD Preferred Options [*HCD08*] demonstrates that over the period to 2020 land could be identified through commitments or allocation in line with the overall provision and distribution contained in policy SG1, without relying on windfalls. The actual mix and timing of these allocated sites would be a matter for the SADPD.
- 3.26 A significant contribution to overall provision in the latter part of the plan period is expected to be made by the proposed urban extensions, the deliverability of which I examine under Issue 4. However, even if there are significant variations in the timing and rate of delivery of these extensions, given the broad range of locations indicated in policy SG1, I regard the CS as sufficiently flexible to enable delivery of the required level of housing for years 11 to 15 and beyond. In terms of housing land supply it is therefore consistent with national planning policy as contained in PPS3.
- 3.27 As policy SG1 distributes housing in broad terms, it is sufficiently robust and flexible to accommodate a degree of change in RSS housing targets, which might arise, for example, from the partial review of RSS that is now underway. However, given the range of settlements in the district and noticeable environmental constraints, significant changes in these targets could necessitate a review of this underlying development strategy, a point which should be clarified in the CS.
- 3.28 Other than a target for affordable housing (which is discussed under Issue 6), the CS does not specify the mix of housing types within

the overall provision. PPS3 advises that the proportions of households requiring particular types of housing should be based on the findings of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Given that such an assessment is not yet complete, it seems reasonable for details of housing mix, including the proportion and distribution of low cost market housing, to be included in the DCPDPD and SADPD for which the CS provides the strategic framework. I recommend the Council's suggested change to clarify this point which renders the CS sound in this respect.

- 3.29 Park homes are one element within the overall housing mix, albeit one with particular characteristics and requirements. The appropriate place therefore to address their potential contribution to housing supply in Harrogate is within subsequent DPDs rather than the strategic policies of the CS.
- 3.30 The broad distribution of new housing between settlements contained in policy SG1 is to be achieved during the plan period as a whole. While it gives priority to brownfield land, greenfield sites are also envisaged within urban extensions and smaller scale land releases. Such an approach provides a clear yet flexible framework allowing a range of sites to be brought forward for development. Although it is anticipated that the actual mix of sites in terms of type, size and location will vary over the plan period, this is not unreasonable and does not in itself undermine the CS.

Distribution of housing growth

- 3.31 The distribution of new housing is firmly linked to the level of affordable housing need in each part of the district, while focussing growth in the larger and more accessible settlements. This approach has attracted strong community support, and scores positively in the SA. The 2006 Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) [LCD43] demonstrates the high levels of need for affordable housing throughout the district, meeting which is a priority of the community plan. Moreover, I am not aware that this approach to housing distribution would significantly alter the broad balance in the location of housing and jobs (both existing and planned) across the district. I therefore find it to be appropriate and soundly based.
- 3.32 Policy SG1 allocates nearly half of all new housing to the sub regional town of Harrogate, with 14% and 8% in the principal towns of Knaresborough and Ripon respectively and lower proportions in the three identified local service centres. I am satisfied that the resulting broad distribution between these individual settlements reflects their role and function within the hierarchy identified in the RSS Core Approach in policies YH4, YH5 and YH6. The levels of development identified would complement the various renaissance initiatives being undertaken in the market towns, while not detracting from the regeneration of the Leeds City Region.

- 3.33 I recognise that Ripon lies within a different sub area from Harrogate and Knaresborough and serves a distinct housing market. Nevertheless, the proportion of new housing directed to this settlement is not so significantly out of balance with existing or anticipated employment levels or affordable housing needs as to seriously undermine its effectiveness and sustainability as a principal town within the Vales and Tees Links sub area. Moreover, noticeably increasing the proportion of housing allocated to Ripon in response to strong housing demand and recent levels of housing growth would conflict with the managed approach to housing provision contained in RSS policy VTL1, which seeks to support regeneration and growth in the Leeds and Tees Valley City Regions and reduce long distance commuting.
- 3.34 Around 21.5% new housing will be directed to villages and the countryside. However, the majority of this development will be in those villages with best access to jobs, shops and services, which CS policy SG2 identifies as Group B settlements. Smaller villages with more limited access to jobs, shops and services (Group C settlements) will accommodate very limited growth, the only expansion of their built areas being for small scale 100% affordable housing schemes. Outside the settlements identified in policy SG2 new development will be strictly controlled.
- 3.35 Including all these smaller settlements within a global percentage is a robust approach that maintains flexibility in bringing forward land for housing and enables affordable housing needs to be met in all parts of the district. I consider the designation of Group B and C settlements under Issue 3. However, in general terms, given the size of the district and the focus on Group B settlements, I am satisfied that this level and distribution of housing is commensurate with the need to maintain a sustainable pattern of development in rural areas in line with the aims of PPS7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas [NCD18]* and RSS policy YH6.
- 3.36 In developing new housing, policy SG1 gives priority to the reuse of land and buildings. Urban extensions are planned for those towns with the highest proportions of growth (Harrogate and Knaresborough), with smaller scale land releases focussed around other settlements with the best access to jobs, shops and services. Given the wide range of these settlements in terms of form, function and character I recommend the Council's suggested change which strengthens the development strategy with regard to these land releases, thus ensuring soundness. In terms of the distribution of development, it is not significantly at odds with the priorities in RSS policy YH7 regarding the allocation of sites.
- 3.37 Identification of suitable housing sites in Ripon is constrained by the presence of underlying gypsum, as well as flood risk and local transport infrastructure. Deliverability of a number of the housing sites identified as Preferred Options in the SADPD has been strongly challenged for these reasons. Nevertheless, I have no evidence to

suggest that sufficient housing land cannot be identified in Ripon within the broad locations indicated in policy SG1, that is on brownfield sites or within smaller scale land releases.

- 3.38 I deal separately with the proposed urban extensions under Issue 4 below. However, nothing was put to me that would indicate that the planned levels of new housing would not be deliverable in the broad locations identified in the CS due to infrastructure or other constraints. Careful co-ordination of infrastructure and housing provision will be required to secure delivery. This is recognised in strategic objective 6, a point to which I return under Issue 13.
- 3.39 The provision of new homes is to be broadly distributed according to the proportions shown in policy SG1. I am satisfied that this approach is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changing circumstances such as relative changes in levels of housing need or unanticipated land releases, or indeed difficulty in identifying suitable sites in smaller settlements such as Pateley Bridge. Bringing these various threads together I conclude that the broad housing distribution in the CS helps to achieve a sustainable pattern of development.

Previously developed land

- 3.40 CS Table 2 includes a performance indicator relating to the percentage of new and converted dwellings completed on previously developed land. The Council suggests including the associated performance target in policy SG1, a change that, subject to minor rewording to reflect the performance indicator, I recommend in order to render this aspect of the CS sound by ensuring coherence. This target of 70% new and converted dwellings on previously developed land is above the respective national and regional targets of 60% (PPS3) and 65% (RSS policy H2). While it is an ambitious target, it is not in my view an unreasonable one. Although large vacant or derelict sites are not a feature of this district, the Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) [LCD13 & LCD73] show that housing completions on brownfield land in the recent past have generally been at or above this target level.
- 3.41 While I have reservations about the scope of the draft SHLAA, it does indicate that a considerable number of new dwellings in the next 5 years will arise from committed sites, nearly all of which are on previously developed land. It also identifies several unallocated brownfield sites over 10 dwellings in size (5 dwellings in villages). Even if these do not all come forward or deliver the dwelling numbers anticipated, it seems likely that there will also continue to be a supply of unidentified smaller housing sites and conversions on previously developed land. Although there is no evidence to suggest that this supply will continue at the recent very high level throughout the plan period, when coupled with the committed and identified sites it does indicate that the 70% target is likely to be achievable, at least in the early part of the plan period. Given that

this is an overall target for the whole district I regard it therefore as reasonably robust.

- 3.42 Moreover, setting a challenging, yet not unrealistic, target gives the CS a strong focus on making effective use of land appropriate for a district with significant environmental constraints. It supports a sustainable pattern of development and provides the basis for proactive strategies to identify and bring forward previously developed land for development through the AMR and the SADPD, consistent with the approach in PPS3. Having such a target does not in itself rule out greenfield land releases in the locations identified in CS policy SG1. I recommend therefore that the 70% target is included in policy SG1.
- 3.43 However, this approach to the reuse of previously developed land is at odds with seeking to maintain previous levels of windfall development as set out in CS Table 2. Such an indicator is inconsistent with the 'plan, monitor and manage' approach contained in PPS3. It weakens the coherent focus on managing housing delivery within the CS and should therefore be deleted.

Managing housing delivery

- 3.44 Policy SG5 contains the broad mechanisms for managing housing delivery. As submitted these are inconsistent with PPS3 in that they fail to maintain a five year supply of deliverable sites. The Council has suggested changes to the policy and supporting text. It has also updated the housing trajectory and text in Appendix 4 following preparation of the draft SHLAA and SADPD Preferred Options. These changes are required to clarify the CS and to render it sound in terms of consistency with national policy. In this respect a further minor amendment is necessary to clarify that housing land supply will be managed to ensure delivery of the annual average housing provision set out in policy SG1.
- 3.45 The updated trajectory is comprehensive in scope as it is based on the expected contribution from committed and identified sites. Although it also includes projected windfalls during the plan period, this is not being relied upon to deliver the 10 year supply of housing land. Despite my reservations about the scope of the draft SHLAA the trajectory is drawn from an up to date land availability monitoring and assessment. Given that it will continue to be updated through the AMR, SHLAA and SADPD, it provides a reasonably sound framework for managing housing delivery.
- 3.46 The CS trajectory indicates higher levels of provision in the early part of the plan period, the reasons for which are set out in the replacement CS para 3.19. Such a trajectory is consistent with the expectations of the RSS for this district and does not conflict with the flexible approach to delivery contained in RSS policy H2B. The revised supporting text to policy SG5 explains how a continuous 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites as required by PPS3 will be

maintained using the AMR and the SHLAA. The phasing and release of individual sites will be a matter for the SADPD within the CS strategic framework.

- 3.47 Consideration of altering the planned release of housing will be triggered by a forecast 10% under or over provision of housing completions by 2023 in the housing trajectory, which I regard as a reasonable range. It is appropriate for this district which experiences high housing demand but also has high levels of local housing need. Careful management of housing supply is therefore required, particularly given the context of local environmental constraints and wider regional regeneration needs.
- 3.48 Any alteration to the release of housing land that may be triggered will be handled through preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). I regard this as a robust and flexible approach, as it provides a reasonably speedy yet structured mechanism for involving stakeholders and the public in any planned changes. In addition, following monitoring through the AMR, sites already identified in the SADPD or the SHLAA will be released in order to maintain a 5 year supply. The broad mechanisms in the CS therefore provide a reasonable framework for managing housing delivery consistent with the approach in PPS3 and RSS policy H2B.
- 3.49 **I conclude that the scale, distribution, type and phasing of new housing development is appropriate to this district, consistent with national and regional policy, soundly based and fully justified provided the following changes are made:**

Changes Reference H, P, Q, R1, II and QQ set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 3 – Is the settlement hierarchy and associated approach to managing settlement growth soundly based? Does it recognise the sustainability, role, status, capacity, constraints and opportunities of each settlement, and reflect the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy?

Settlement Hierarchy

- 3.50 Policy SG2 identifies a hierarchy of settlements within the district categorised into Group A, B and C. Group A settlements are to be the focus for growth, with Group B settlements maintaining their role as local rural centres and only very limited growth in Group C villages. This principle has generally attracted community support and aligns with the RSS Core Approach which requires a more concentrated pattern of development across the region.
- 3.51 In broad terms the level of growth associated with each settlement category ensures that development is concentrated in those towns and villages with the best access to jobs, services and public

transport. A degree of limited development in some smaller, less accessible settlements helps to meet local needs and maintain the vitality of rural communities, thus contributing to a sustainable pattern of development. However, extending this approach to every small village and hamlet would undermine the CS spatial strategy which the settlement hierarchy is intended to support.

- 3.52 Group A encompasses the sub regional town and the two principal towns in this district identified in the RSS. It is clear from the strategic objectives, the housing distribution in policy SG1 and indeed throughout the CS that within this group Harrogate, the sub regional town, is to be the main focus for development. This element of the hierarchy is thus compatible with the respective roles of these 3 towns as set out in RSS policies YH4 and YH5.
- 3.53 Within the rural parts of the district development will be focussed on the local service centres in Group B. The number and distribution of designated Group B and Group C settlements is broadly reasonable given the size of the district and the existing pattern of rural development. Moreover, it allows some flexibility in the location of housing, employment and community development to meet particular local needs. However, the distribution is such that there is no need to identify locations for new settlements or indeed to introduce further settlement categories in order to meet rural needs. It is consistent with national and regional policy on the location of development in rural areas in PPS7 and RSS policy YH6.

Settlement Growth

- 3.54 Development limits will be established around all the settlements in the hierarchy, beyond which development will be strictly controlled. For villages wholly within the Green Belt infill limits will be established in accordance with national policy in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: *Green Belts* (PPG2) [NCD27]. This is a sound basis for managing settlement growth, particularly as CS policy SG3 offers a degree of flexibility by permitting certain development adjacent to such limits.
- 3.55 Within this strategic framework the principles for physically defining the limits for each settlement, and the actual boundaries, will be contained within the DCPDPD. It is in preparing this DPD therefore that detailed assessment of the environmental and infrastructure capacity of individual settlements and the constraints and opportunities for development will be made. Development sites associated with each settlement in the hierarchy will be identified in the SADPD. The Council has suggested changes to the supporting text to clarify the approach to development limits and the allocation of land which I recommend to ensure soundness in this respect.
- 3.56 Although this assessment may well lead to differing amounts of growth for settlements within the same category, this is appropriate given their very varied nature in terms of scale, character, form and

landscape setting. It is consistent with policy SG1, which only ascribes an individual percentage of housing growth to the housing sub areas associated with the 6 largest settlements, that is the 3 towns in Group A and the 3 biggest service centres in Group B. Moreover, the work carried out so far on the SADPD Preferred Options indicates, in very broad terms, that for the remaining Group B and C settlements housing sites of appropriate scale and distribution can be identified to support the settlement hierarchy and achieve the associated levels of growth [HCD04].

- 3.57 While there will be limited opportunities for housing development within the defined limits of Group C settlements, the only land allocations made here will be small scale rural exception sites for affordable housing. Although some of these villages do not have good public transport links this approach helps to ensure that local housing need is met throughout the rural areas, while continuing to limit development within the smaller, less accessible, settlements. The need for an allocation in any particular settlement, its scale and the type of affordable housing to be provided is, however, a matter to be determined in a subsequent DPD, as is the distribution of low cost market housing, including park homes.

Settlement classification

- 3.58 The classification of the 6 largest settlements in the district is based on a settlement study for North Yorkshire prepared to inform the RSS [RCD4 & RCD34]. CS Appendix 5 explains that for the CS smaller rural settlements with a well defined built up area have also been identified, and classified as Group B or C based on available services, level of employment and relationship to public transport on a defined Key Bus & Rail Network (Appendix 7). Given that the only rail line is through the south eastern part of the district, it is reasonable for access to a good bus service to be included as a basis for classification. The definition of a good bus service is appropriate for a primarily rural area.
- 3.59 The detailed criteria for this classification have changed since the CS Preferred Options, with a greater focus on the level of services and cumulative employment. Although classification as a Group C village does not depend on good public transport links, the approach set out in Appendix 5 allows settlements with a degree of services and employment to be included in the hierarchy and thus attract limited growth. However most development in rural areas will be in Group B settlements, where good public transport links, employment and a higher level of services are expected. This may still mean that there is considerable variation in the scale and range of services provided above the required threshold level.
- 3.60 Moreover, this classification is based on an analysis of current service provision and the position in individual settlements may change over time. Nevertheless, it provides a reasonable basis for assessing, in broad terms, the relative roles of the many and varied

rural settlements found in the district and creates a robust framework for managing their future growth. The implications of any significant future changes in service provision within these rural settlements for the settlement hierarchy can be assessed as part of any CS review. I therefore find the classification to be soundly based on clear sustainability criteria, and compatible with the methodology underpinning the RSS settlement study.

Designation of individual settlements

- 3.61 The classification of any settlement in the hierarchy depends on meeting certain criteria and service levels. This provides a robust and consistent framework applicable to the variety of settlement types found in the district, without the need to introduce exceptions. There is no need to include MOD sites within the hierarchy in order to accommodate their operational requirements. A number of settlements have been put forward as candidates for Group C or for elevation from Group C to Group B. However, apart from the cases discussed below, from the evidence provided none of these villages appear to fully meet the required classification criteria. While each may physically be able to accommodate growth, it would therefore weaken the spatial strategy were the hierarchy to be altered to accommodate them.
- 3.62 The classification of Group B and C settlements in the submitted CS was based on a 2006 rural community services study [LCD42] which has been updated during the examination [LCD96]. This exercise has revealed some omissions in the 2006 survey, notably in relation to Great Ouseburn. Although in the same building as the Post Office, there is a separate food store here. I note also that the village hall is a substantial building capable of use for a range of indoor sports. Even if this is counted only as one community facility, given the number and range of such facilities, level of employment and degree of access by bus this settlement clearly qualifies as a Group B settlement and I recommend that it is so classified.
- 3.63 On the other hand Nun Monkton does not have sufficient facilities recorded to support its designation as a Group C settlement. As it is also not on the Key Bus and Rail Network I recommend that it is deleted from the list of such settlements in policy SG2. The 6 separate community facilities now identified in Skelton on Ure, indicate that it could be considered as a local service centre. However from what I saw these appear to be somewhat limited in nature. Despite having access to local employment and public transport, given the scale and form of this village and the frequency of its bus service I am not persuaded therefore that it is appropriate to amend its classification as a Group C settlement.
- 3.64 Concern was expressed that a village such as Bishop Monkton where the village hall is also used for some sports is not classified as having 2 community facilities – village hall and sports hall. I recognise that this building provides a range of services greater

than that provided by many village halls. It has been recently improved and extended in conjunction with outdoor sport and recreational facilities. However, this is still not the level of sport provision usually associated with a purpose built sports hall and does not warrant therefore as being recorded as two separate facilities. I have considered all the other factors put forward in support of the redesignation of Bishop Monkton as a local service centre. However, I am not convinced that the level of services and employment, accessibility, scale of the settlement or its location warrant amending its position in the settlement hierarchy.

- 3.65 Nevertheless, there appears to have been an inconsistent approach to sports use of village halls when classifying settlements. In the case of Kirk Hammerton and Long Marston this would reduce the number of recorded facilities to a level more akin to Group C settlements. Given the level of service provision in Kirk Hammerton, coupled with its scale, form and location I recommend that it is reclassified as Group C. Although Long Marston has a wider range of services, these are still fewer than expected in a local service centre. Having regard to its Green Belt location I therefore consider that it would be more appropriately classified as Group C.
- 3.66 I note the restrictions on village hall capacity and facilities in Green Hammerton, but even if this hall were to be excluded from the assessment the level of community services, employment and public transport would be such that this village qualifies as a Group B settlement. In the case of Melmerby, this Group C village is near a large business park. However, given the restricted range of services in the settlement and its limited accessibility by public transport, I am not persuaded that proximity to a high level of employment is a sufficient basis for designating it as a local service centre.
- 3.67 In terms of the distribution of new housing, CS policy SG1 includes the village of Pannal within the Harrogate area. This is a large village with an obvious centre. Despite sporadic development along the approach roads it is clearly separated by open countryside and topography from the built up area of Harrogate. There is no dispute that Pannal has the required level of services, employment and access to the Key Bus and Rail network for it to be classified as a separate Group B settlement. I do not regard this designation as inconsistent with the approach to housing distribution in policy SG1.
- 3.68 Similarly Scriven is included in the Knaresborough area for the purposes of housing distribution in CS policy SG1. However, while in a separate parish, the built area of Scriven is not clearly separated from that of the larger town of Knaresborough. Notwithstanding the community facilities it may contain, it does not therefore satisfy the criterion for a Group C settlement of having a well defined built area.

- 3.69 The recommended changes to the designation of individual settlements do not significantly alter the number or distribution of settlements within the hierarchy. They would not therefore undermine the spatial strategy or produce a less sustainable pattern of rural development.

Policy SG4

- 3.70 This policy sets out the general principles against which all development will be assessed, and is thus integral to the strategic framework. It assists the coherence of the CS for the criteria relating to the character and quality of development to be set out together in one place. They are generic in form, reasonable, consistent with national planning policy and clearly expressed. As they are general principles there is no need to include references to conservation of the historic environment, village design statements or protection of the AONB, all of which are matters covered by national planning policy or other policies in the CS.
- 3.71 As regards discouraging the loss of greenfield land, the supporting text makes clear that this extends to the protection of amenity and recreational open space. Both objectives are in line with national planning policy, in particular PPS7 and PPG17: *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation [NCD33]*. However, as drafted this criterion does not fully reflect the policy framework against which such proposals need to be assessed. Subject to the recommended change in this respect, I find this policy to be robust and soundly based.
- 3.72 **I conclude that the settlement hierarchy and associated approach to managing settlement growth is soundly based, provided that the following changes, which include changes in the categorisation of certain settlements, are made. It recognises the sustainability, role, status, capacity, constraints and opportunities of each settlement, and reflects the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy.**

Changes Reference J, K, L, O set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 4 – Do the broad locations for urban extensions represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and are they founded on robust and credible evidence? Is the range of development proposed in terms of scale and type sufficiently clear and flexible? Can it be delivered within the plan period?

- 3.73 The CS sets out the broad locations within which housing sites extending the built up areas of Harrogate and Knaresborough will be identified. Deeply felt concerns were expressed about the

environmental implications of specific urban extension sites, their integration with existing communities, access to facilities and effects on the local road network and other infrastructure. In addition promoters of particular sites supplied me with a considerable amount of information about their potential for development. Insofar as these matters have a bearing on the spatial strategy I have taken them into consideration when reaching my conclusions on the soundness of this aspect of the CS. However many of the detailed issues relating to specific sites are matters to be considered at that point in the preparation of the LDF when actual sites, rather than broad locations, are being identified.

Relevant Alternatives

- 3.74 From the findings of the Urban Housing Capacity Study [LCD39] and the draft SHLAA [LCD77] it is evident that the housing requirements for Harrogate and Knaresborough would not be fully met through the identification of development sites on previously developed land or suitable infill sites, particularly in the later years of the plan period. While more previously developed land could come forward within these urban areas than currently anticipated, for example through recycling of employment sites, I have no evidence that this would be of such a scale as to remove the need for urban expansion entirely. It is consistent therefore with the approach in PPS3 para 38 and RSS policy YH7A for the spatial strategy to include urban extensions to these two towns.
- 3.75 Policy SG1 identifies a need to develop greenfield land involving extensions to the existing built up areas of west Harrogate and east Knaresborough. These are very broad locations and to ensure clarity I recommend the Council's suggested change to the supporting text giving the extent of these areas of search. The Council has carried out a considerable amount of work to underpin this element of the spatial strategy, contained in Volumes 1 and 2 of the Harrogate and Knaresborough Urban Extension Study and its supporting technical studies [LCD40 & LCD102].
- 3.76 Volume 1 divided the area surrounding the built up areas of the two towns into six sectors. In Volume 2 these six sectors were further refined into 12 urban extension options. Although these options do not cover as broad an area as the sectors, they are a reasonable reflection of potentially developable land within each sector of sufficient scope to allow for a wide ranging analysis of the likely effects on different aspects of sustainability. Analysis of the impacts of these options was informed by 2 development scenarios, the first consisting of 3 large sites within the preferred locations of west Harrogate and east Knaresborough, while the second contained 12 smaller sites spread around the whole urban area.
- 3.77 I return to the question of option evaluation below. However, I am satisfied that, in broad terms, all relevant and reasonable options for urban extensions have been taken into account in these studies.

Other options that have been canvassed by representors such as a new settlement, extensions to towns other than Harrogate and Knaresborough or development alongside the southern bypass would not accord with the approach in RSS policy YH7A regarding the location of development.

Transport-oriented approach

- 3.78 RSS policy YH7B looks for a transport-oriented approach when identifying sites for development. Although the CS only contains broad locations within which urban extension sites will be identified I still regard this as a relevant policy framework. The traffic assessment [*LCD40 & LCD102/C*] uses an established traffic model developed for the Harrogate and Knaresborough Integrated Transport Study (HAKITS) and is thus based on reasonably comprehensive and up to date information. It is consistent with the LTP, which does not assume that there will be major new road construction in connection with any urban growth option.
- 3.79 The assessment covers the 6 broad sectors and the two development scenarios, although it does not include any assumptions about potential demand management in connection with site development. Nevertheless it provides a useful analysis which indicates that development in all sectors and both scenarios would have an impact on the highway network, although this would be capable of mitigation through demand management and local highway improvement works.
- 3.80 I recognise that parts of the network already experience significant levels of congestion and that traffic levels are likely to increase even without this planned housing growth. Traffic is likely to be displaced onto local roads which could have a noticeable environmental impact. However, despite the significant physical constraints on certain parts of the local network, I have no reason to believe that it would not be possible to implement appropriate highway improvements, especially given the integration of demand management with any new housing development.
- 3.81 As regards the impact on the strategic highway network, the evidence from the Highways Agency, based on their own independent modelling, indicates that in terms of new housing development, the impact of either development scenario would not be significantly different in terms of scale. Initial conclusions are that in both cases it would be possible to mitigate the effects on the capacity of junction 47 on A1(M). While further analysis would be required of the implications for both the local and the wider network beyond the confines of Harrogate and Knaresborough before allocating particular sites, in terms of transport the options considered are in line with the approach in RSS policy YHB.
- 3.82 Turning to the travel and accessibility study [*LCD102/B*], this covers a wide range of relevant issues. Criticism has been made of

the degree of overlap between the chosen criteria and the basis on which they have been assessed. Moreover, assumptions have been made about links to public transport, in particular provision of a new rail halt in east Knaresborough, which may prove to be over optimistic. Despite these limitations the study provides a broad brush analysis of the urban extension options generally in line with the approach to accessibility in CS policy TRA1 and the criteria contained in the RSS.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 3.83 Opportunities and constraints for each urban extension option and development scenario are appraised through the SA [*LCD102/A*], drawing on the various technical studies. It uses a scoring system capable of giving a broad indication of the relative sustainability of the various options. The approach adopted is in line with best practice guidance, using objectives that reflect relevant social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainability and is appropriate to a rigorous desk top study.
- 3.84 The technical studies use a traffic light system to record benefits and disbenefits against the chosen criteria. While this is a simple expression of what may have been a complicated assessment, it does not in itself weaken the credibility of that assessment. Concern was also expressed that within the individual studies options have been ranked. However, I am satisfied that the overall sustainability appraisal has been based on the study findings for each option irrespective of ranking or weighting.
- 3.85 For certain criteria within both the individual studies and the SA assessment is perforce qualitative rather than based on quantifiable evidence, which introduces a degree of subjectivity. However, I do not consider that this necessarily blights the appraisal. I have no evidence to suggest that these assessments were other than balanced professional judgements applied equally to all options.
- 3.86 It is reasonable in my view for the landscape assessment [*LCD102/E*] to focus on the sensitivity of the landscape to built development. While it acknowledges the Green Belt boundaries and local landscape designations within the saved policies of the adopted Local Plan (LP), I am satisfied that the assessment concentrates on the reasons behind these current designations. It is therefore a robust assessment of the impact of new housing development within the various options on the surrounding landscape, based upon recognised best practice.
- 3.87 As regards the findings of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment [*RCD7*], I note that this was prepared before the publication of PPS25: *Development and Flood Risk* [*NCD26*]. However, it is still reasonably up to date and I do not consider that its approach departs substantially from current national guidance. The biodiversity study [*LCD102/D*] is based on expert assessment of

local habitats and species. Despite the perceived shortcomings with certain aspects of the supporting studies, notably travel and accessibility, I conclude therefore that the overall SA provides a reasonably robust foundation for evaluating the relevant alternatives for urban expansion around Harrogate and Knaresborough.

Option Evaluation

- 3.88 The SA indicates that, of the 12 urban extension options, there are 5 where the number of opportunities is equal to, or higher than, the number of constraints. These 12 options are then evaluated against the need for more affordable housing, reduction in traffic congestion and caring for the environment, priorities which reflect some of the strategic objectives within the Community Plans, the Council's Corporate Plan and the CS. I accept that it is reasonable to use the SA findings to make an informed judgment of how the various options perform against chosen priorities. What is not entirely clear from the evidence provided is how that balance was struck between the competing alternatives.
- 3.89 For example, landscape impact/setting of Harrogate is given as a reason for not pursuing one of the 5 options that score positively in overall sustainability terms (S2), yet an option that would have little landscape impact (N1) is not selected. One reason given is that it would lead to loss of a unique opportunity for sport and recreation. It is not clear how this factor relates to the chosen priorities. In addition, as I explain later under Issue 12, I consider the selection of this area for community sports regeneration within the CS to be unsound.
- 3.90 Of particular concern however is that, in evaluating relevant alternatives, the focus on broad sectors and options has tended to mask sub areas within the larger options that score positively in sustainability terms. Taken together such sub areas could well meet identified housing requirements equally or possibly more sustainably than any one of the options identified. In my view this option of growth within a range of smaller sub areas has not been adequately explored and appraised.
- 3.91 I recognise that the second development scenario included an element of growth in all sectors around Harrogate and Knaresborough. However the evaluation process did not appraise this option on an equal basis alongside the analysis of individual sectors. Moreover, it was based on a particular package of sites. Although some of these scored positively in sustainability terms, it is evident from the preparatory work for the SADPD that there are other potential combinations of sites, both large and small, that could have formed the basis for this option, and which might have performed even better.

- 3.92 Although claims were made as to the advantages of developing larger sites, I find that insufficient evidence was provided to enable firm conclusions to be drawn that would clearly support a strategy of concentrating urban extensions in a limited number of locations. In terms of traffic congestion, a stated priority for option evaluation, the traffic assessment indicates that, despite differing levels of impact on key routes, within the context of overall anticipated traffic growth the difference between the two development scenarios (which are based on particular packages of sites) is not greatly significant. No evidence was presented regarding the implications of any urban extension option or development scenario for the other stated priority: provision of affordable housing.
- 3.93 I note that the areas of search for urban extensions in policy SG1 are very widely defined and encompass all but one of the options identified in the SA as most sustainable. While this lends some support to these locations being the preferred areas for growth, for the reasons set out above I am not convinced that the identification of west Harrogate and east Knaresborough as the only locations for urban extensions is fully justified by robust and credible evidence. This element of the spatial strategy is not therefore the most appropriate when considered against the reasonable alternatives and is unsound.
- 3.94 The Council has suggested a change to clarify that the focus on west Harrogate and east Knaresborough is not intended to preclude smaller scale sustainable land releases elsewhere around the built up area of the two towns. This seems to me to be a reasonable and appropriate approach that is supported by the findings of the SA and associated studies. It would allow the most sustainable mix of sites to come forward, rather than concentrating all greenfield housing development in areas which, while relatively more sustainable, still have recognised environmental and accessibility constraints. Such an approach would not prevent suitable development sites being identified around Pannal appropriate to this Group B settlement that contribute to the overall housing requirement for Harrogate.
- 3.95 To my mind this approach provides sufficient strategic direction and framework for the identification of suitable development sites. It is not therefore necessary for the CS to go further and identify strategic sites for urban extensions in order to be found sound. In conjunction with CS policy SG5 it provides a flexible framework capable of responding to changing circumstances such as unanticipated releases of brownfield land within the built up areas. However, this approach needs to be clearly spelled out within policy SG1 and I recommend a change to this effect in order to render the CS sound. It follows that the ASG should be removed from the Key Diagram.

Development framework

- 3.96 There are recognised constraints on development within the urban extension options and scenarios such as impacts on protected species and habitats, the presence of national grid power lines and localised risk of flooding. Moreover lower housing densities and additional landscaping may be required to integrate development into the landscape. However, from the information provided I do not regard any of these factors as being so extensive or significant that sufficient land to meet the housing requirements for Harrogate and Knaresborough to 2023 could not feasibly be identified within the locations contained in CS policy SG1 (as recommended to be modified).
- 3.97 From the appraisal of the options and scenarios I am satisfied that sufficient land could be identified in sustainable locations outside the Green Belt to accommodate the anticipated growth of Harrogate and Knaresborough during the plan period. In broad terms these locations would not be significantly less sustainable than alternative sites within the Green Belt. A localised review of the Green Belt boundary in this district in line with RSS policy YH9B is not therefore necessary to deliver the RSS Core Approach.
- 3.98 The level of housing growth required in Harrogate and Knaresborough would need to be supported by a range of services such as open space, public transport, shops and schools. The CS policies, in particular TRA1 and C1, provide an adequate strategic framework for this provision. However the place for specifically identifying what is required in each location is primarily within the SADPD, supported by the Area Plan DPD.
- 3.99 The Council has suggested in its examination statements [*ES01, ES02 & ES20*] that most new employment development for Harrogate and Knaresborough would be located within the ASG. I am concerned that such an assumption could pre-empt the sequential search process contained within the CS employment policies, notably policy JB3. Moreover, I do not consider that the various technical studies appraising the urban extension options have examined the implications of employment development in sufficient depth for firm conclusions to be drawn about suitable and sustainable locations. I therefore regard this implied change to the submitted CS as unsound and it should not proceed.

Delivery

- 3.100 There is a considerable amount of information from service providers regarding infrastructure to support the urban extension options and scenarios [*LCD102 Appendices 6 & 7*]. Major upgrades will be required to water treatment facilities and electricity supply, as well as a new primary sub station, in order to accommodate the anticipated level of growth. The costs of improving transport infrastructure, such as the capacity of major road junctions and a new rail halt, could also be significant. Mechanisms may therefore

need to be established for sharing the costs of such improvements. There are also concerns about water supply and that local schools and health facilities are already operating near capacity.

- 3.101 Despite infrastructure costs not having been subject to any overall viability modelling, nothing has been put before me to indicate that necessary infrastructure could not be funded through a mix of public funding and developer contributions within the framework of CS policies TRA1, TRA3 and C1. While still at the stage of broad locations, relevant agencies and partners have started to identify requirements in their programmes, and establish commitments to implementation. Although careful planning, phasing and inter-agency working will be required to ensure housing delivery is maintained, I find therefore that in strategic terms infrastructure provision is unlikely to be a significant risk to delivery.
- 3.102 The actual services and infrastructure required for any particular development site would be specified within the SADPD, as would the appropriate delivery mechanisms. It is at this point that the effect on the viability of a specific site would need to be assessed in the context of CS aspirations for provision of affordable housing and on site renewable energy, (matters to which I return under Issues 6 and 10). However, given the relatively high land values and high demand in the Harrogate area, I do not anticipate that infrastructure provision would necessarily prevent delivery of an appropriate mix of housing, including affordable housing, within the broad locations for urban extensions.
- 3.103 Given the scale of housing growth required, it is possible that large sites requiring master planning will form part of the mix identified within the SADPD. From the information provided by the Council and developers I am satisfied that if necessary an appropriate master planning process could be undertaken in consultation with the community while allowing delivery of development within the timescales required by the CS. Site development and infrastructure provision would be supported through the preparation of the Area Plan DPD and review of the LTP as discussed in relation to policy TRA3 under Issue 9.
- 3.104 The urban extensions to Harrogate and Knaresborough are expected to make a significant contribution to meeting the housing requirement for the district. Differing views have been presented as to the lead in times for development of greenfield housing sites. The Council has indicated building rates for large sites which experience elsewhere suggests may be optimistic in terms of sustained performance during the plan period. However, these factors do not undermine the prospect of delivery in the broad locations in policy SG1, although they may influence the range and phasing of sites identified in the SADPD in order to maintain a 5 and 10 year supply and to deliver the RSS housing requirement. Furthermore actual delivery on the ground would be monitored and managed through the AMR and the mechanisms in CS policy SG5.

Bringing all these threads together I consider therefore that there is unlikely to be a significant risk to delivery of this element of the spatial strategy.

- 3.105 **In conclusion I find that the identification of west Harrogate and east Knaresborough as the only locations for urban extensions in policy SG1 does not represent the most appropriate option in all the circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and is not fully justified by robust and credible evidence. The following changes are required to rectify this failure of soundness. As regards the location and mix of extensions on greenfield land these include the broad locations of west Harrogate and east Knaresborough and within smaller scale land releases in sustainable locations elsewhere around the built up areas of the two towns. Provided these changes are made then the range of development proposed in terms of scale and type is sufficiently clear and flexible. It can be delivered within the plan period.**

Changes Reference H2 and I set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 5 – Does policy SG3 promote a sustainable pattern of rural development consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy?

- 3.106 Within an overall approach of development restraint in the countryside, Policy SG3 encourages certain types of development that support the rural economy and essential local services and meet local affordable housing needs. It therefore complements the underlying CS spatial strategy of seeking to focus growth in the local service centres with limited development to meet local needs in other villages with access to jobs and services, and has attracted considerable community support. In broad terms it is consistent with the thrust of national planning policy, particularly PPS7, and RSS policies YH6 and E7 for sustainable rural areas and economy.
- 3.107 Allowing market housing, including low cost market housing, to be built outside defined development limits as a general principle within the policy would lead to dispersed development contrary to the aims of national and regional policy and undermining the spatial strategy. This is a strategic policy and it is not appropriate for it to include detailed criteria relating to every potential type of development in rural areas. Nor is it necessary to repeat national policy, for example with respect to isolated houses in the countryside. To my mind the policy provides a clear and balanced framework for assessing the variety of individual proposals that may arise, such as from the restructuring of a particular farm business.

- 3.108 However, the encouragement of rural building conversions for housing conflicts with national guidance in PPS7, which advises that reuse for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, and with RSS policy E7 which gives priority to the reuse of existing buildings to facilitate the development of rural enterprises. I acknowledge that demand for rural buildings for employment uses may be relatively low in this district, that some buildings and locations may be unsuitable for such conversion, and that allowing a conversion to housing may bring with it some contribution to local affordable housing.
- 3.109 Nevertheless, given relative use values, it seems to me that a policy that encourages residential use will serve to discourage reuse for rural business. I am not convinced that such an approach contributes to a sustainable pattern of rural development, a weakness recognised in the SA. This clause and its supporting text in para 3.37 should therefore be redrafted to render the CS sound. It follows that the performance indicator associated with this policy in CS Table 2 should be deleted.
- 3.110 As regards affordable housing in the Green Belt, the final paragraph in policy SG3 seems to pre-empt assessment of such proposals in accordance with national planning policy in PPG2. I recommend that it, together with its supporting text in para 3.36, is redrafted in the interests of clarity and consistency with national policy. I have dealt with the question of Green Belt review during preparation of the CS and to meet longer term housing growth in West Yorkshire under Issues 4 and 10. However, to include ongoing review of Green Belt boundaries in this policy would be contrary to PPG2 which expects the general extent and boundaries of Green Belts to be altered only exceptionally.
- 3.111 **I find that policy SG3 promotes a sustainable pattern of rural development consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy provided that the following changes are made:**

Changes Reference M, N and JJ set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 6 – Is the approach to the provision of affordable housing for local people appropriate to this district, soundly based and fully justified, and consistent with national and regional policy?

Overall Target and Affordable Housing Proportion

- 3.112 Policy SG1 seeks to ensure that about 160 of the annual provision of new homes will be homes for local people at affordable prices, which amounts to an overall target for affordable housing of around 41% RSS housing requirement. This level of provision is supported by the very high level of housing need throughout the district

identified in the 2006 HNA [*LCD43*]. This indicates that in the period to 2011 the need for affordable housing will greatly exceed the total planned annual average housing provision.

- 3.113 While criticisms have been made of the detailed methodology and definitions used in the HNA it seems to me to be broadly reasonable and in line with good practice guidance. Although the findings for certain sub areas have been questioned, this does not undermine the credibility or robustness of its overall approach or conclusions. However, the HNA itself does not indicate any particular overall affordable housing target for the district. Whilst it contains some analysis of local housing markets and housing demand, it is accepted that it does not amount to a SHMA, which is still under preparation. The 41% affordable housing provision has not therefore been set within the context of a full assessment of likely market housing requirements as expected by PPS3 para 22.
- 3.114 The Council consider this overall target to be achievable because of the high residential land values across the district. While I do not doubt that recent values have been high, the information in support of this assessment contained in CS Appendix 6, in particular Table 7, relates largely to single or small building plots on former agricultural or garden land in different parts of the district. I note the high relative value differential between housing and other uses [*ES18B*]. However, there is little detailed analysis of relative land values or likely development costs across the full mix of potential housing sites in terms of the type, size and location envisaged by CS policy SG1. For example the assessment does not appear to take account of the CS objective of 70% housing being delivered on previously developed land or the infrastructure requirements associated with greenfield land releases and urban extensions.
- 3.115 Nor does it include any overall analysis of the probable levels of finance available for affordable housing. Furthermore, there has been no assessment of the risks to delivery arising from landowners' reluctance to bring sites forward or changing circumstances such as a downturn in housing demand. For all these reasons the justification stops well short of being a robust viability assessment in support of the overall target. I recognise that matters such as site development costs and available public subsidy would be taken into account when appraising the contribution required on any particular site. Nevertheless, despite the Council having established procedures and resources for such site appraisal, this is not in itself a substitute for an overall target supported by an assessment of the likely economic viability of land for housing within the area, as required by PPS3 para 29.
- 3.116 Policy HLP2 seeks 50% affordable housing on sites of 2 or more dwellings, with a broadly similar contribution from single dwelling developments through the operation of policy HLP1. Fixing the affordable housing proportion above the overall target allows a degree of flexibility in negotiation on individual sites without undue

risk to the delivery of the overall target. This is illustrated by CS Appendix 6 Table 8, which shows that the overall proportion of affordable housing delivered through planning permissions between 2002 and 2007 amounted to about 40% of the total permitted dwellings.

- 3.117 However, this table does not include all the housing sites above the relevant site size thresholds that were granted planning permission in this period. Moreover, the site size thresholds in the adopted LP are higher than those put forward in the CS. In addition, the operation of LP policy HX during most of this period restricted the number of sites of over 10 dwellings that came forward. This table therefore offers little indication that the overall target, and the 50% site proportion that supports it, would be unlikely to have a significant impact on housing delivery.
- 3.118 Furthermore, I am concerned that this 50% site proportion has not been informed by any assessment of the need for, and delivery of, low cost market housing as part of the overall housing mix as expected by PPS3 para 29. Given the high levels of housing need and demand in this district it is likely that this will be a significant part of total provision, the need for which is to be assessed in the emerging SHMA. It is unclear therefore what the likely impact of this site proportion would be for the maintenance of sustainable and mixed communities.
- 3.119 In the absence of a SHMA, and given the shortcomings of the economic viability assessment underpinning the overall target and supporting affordable housing proportion, I do not consider these elements of the CS to be the most appropriate when considered against the reasonable alternatives or consistent with national policy in PPS3. In this respect the CS is unsound.

Site size thresholds

- 3.120 The effect of policy HLP1 is to establish a minimum site size threshold for affordable housing contributions of a single dwelling throughout the district. This is a considerable reduction from the thresholds in the adopted LP of 15 dwellings (or 0.5ha) within Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon and 3 dwellings (or 0.1ha) elsewhere in the district. The evidence presented [HCD13] to demonstrate that the introduction of the latter threshold did not unduly affect housing delivery does not necessarily indicate that the same will be true of a reduction to a single dwelling threshold in all parts the district.
- 3.121 Moreover, an assessment of residential land values for small plots as in CS Appendix 6 does not in itself amount to an analysis of the potential risks to delivery across the range of such plots in terms of type, location and likely development costs. I am not therefore convinced that this site size threshold is practicable without

jeopardising delivery of overall housing provision and thus potentially the amount of affordable housing.

- 3.122 I appreciate that the purpose of this site size threshold is to maximise the opportunities for securing affordable housing contributions. In support of this approach CS Appendix 6 Table 6 and supporting text as revised [*HCD15*] show the large number of single and small site developments granted permission between 2002 and 2006, a trend that has continued into 2007 [*LCD77*]. However, there is no evidence to suggest that all these sites would have come forward if the proposed site threshold had been in operation. Moreover, this table illustrates a period of exceptional restraint on sites of over 10 dwellings across the district imposed by LP policy HX. Such a policy context will not continue in the future, when a range of sites will be coming forward within the broad locations identified in the CS to meet both 5 and 10 year supply.
- 3.123 The draft SHLAA [*LCD77*] indicates a high number of completions and commitments on small and individual dwelling plots since 2004. However, the introduction of a low site size threshold as in the CS would not capture potential affordable housing contributions from these sites as planning permission has already been granted for their development. While such windfall development is likely to continue in the future there is no evidence to suggest that this will be at the same high level, or form such a noticeable proportion of overall housing supply.
- 3.124 While further work remains to be done in preparation of the SADPD, the Preferred Options give an indication of the type and distribution of sites likely to be brought forward for development. Applying the thresholds in the adopted LP to these sites with an assumed affordable housing yield of between 40% and 50% (and 100% provision on the rural exception sites) suggests that the overall target of around 160 dwellings per annum is capable of being met in the period to 2020, while providing for affordable housing needs in all parts of the district [*HCD16*].
- 3.125 I recognise that this can only be a very broad brush analysis, as the actual sites, and their likely delivery of affordable housing have not yet been fully assessed. Nevertheless, it strongly suggests that it is not necessary to reduce the thresholds to the level proposed in the CS, which is well below both the national indicative minimum site size threshold of 15 dwellings in PPS3 and minimum thresholds in other areas of high demand, both urban and rural. Bringing together all these threads, I find that this aspect of the CS is not fully justified and is unsound.

Policies HLP1 and HLP2

- 3.126 The high level of housing need and high residential land values across all parts of the district are not seriously disputed. The RSS recognises that the greatest challenge to affordable housing is in

rural areas and towns such as Harrogate where the housing market is strong. Nevertheless, policies HLP1 and HLP2 are unsound as regards both thresholds and proportions and should be deleted from the CS. This would allow saved LP policy H5 to continue to operate using the Council's established procedures for delivering affordable housing through the planning system.

- 3.127 However, the 41% overall target in policy SG1 is in line with the provisional estimate of the proportion of new housing that may need to be affordable in North Yorkshire districts in RSS policy H4 which itself is based on a regional housing market assessment. This is an interim, indicative estimate which RSS para 12.32 explains will need to be reviewed in the light of findings from emerging SHMAs. Retaining this target in the CS on an interim basis until the SHMA and economic viability assessment is complete would therefore be consistent with the approach in RSS. It would also be in line with the targets of neighbouring districts within their rural areas and areas of high housing demand [*HCD14*]. I regard these changes to affordable housing provision in the CS as consistent with strategic objective 9 and the priorities of the Community Plan. They would not undermine the underpinning participatory and sustainability processes.
- 3.128 Subject to deletion of these policies and their supporting text I recommend the Council's suggested changes clarifying the role of the Homes for Local People SPD, the SADPD and the DCPDPD in delivering affordable housing to ensure clarity, coherence and consistency with PPS3 and render the CS sound. It is reasonable for the detailed definition of local need and other aspects of affordable housing to be contained in the SPD. The application of these policies in particular circumstances such as park homes is not necessarily a matter for the CS.
- 3.129 Consequential changes are required to the CS monitoring indicators and targets for the Homes for Local People policies. I note that these set separate targets for the provision of intermediate and social rented housing. As these targets are clearly based on the findings of the 2006 HNA, I regard them as reasonable and appropriate, although it should be made clear that they will need to be reviewed as the HNA is updated.

Rural Exception Sites

- 3.130 Policy HLP3 sets out the basis for allocating rural exception sites through the SADPD and also the criteria for assessing applications for such sites. These are clear and reasonable, and seek to address affordable housing need throughout the rural area in a manner consistent with the underlying spatial strategy and a sustainable pattern of rural development. The supporting text explains how these sites will be delivered and there is a related monitoring indicator and target in Chapter 9 Table 2. Given the high level of housing need found throughout the rural parts of the district this is

an appropriate approach consistent with PPS3 and its daughter document *Delivering Affordable Housing [NCD40]*, the RSS and other CS policies, notably SG3 (as modified by the recommended change).

- 3.131 However, the purpose of these sites is to meet identified local need. For this reason they are exceptions to the national policy of restraint within the countryside and expected to provide affordable housing in perpetuity. In addition open market housing sites will come forward within the Group B and C settlements, thus contributing to sustainable and mixed rural communities. It would not therefore be appropriate for the exception sites to include an element of market housing, including low cost market housing. I have dealt with the provision of this aspect of rural housing under Issue 2 above.

Policy HLP4

- 3.132 Policy HLP4 may permit new build affordable housing as part of schemes to convert existing rural buildings. Such scattered new building away from established settlements would seem to be contrary to the objective of national policy, in particular PPS7, to protect the countryside. However, there are some parts of this district with few or no obvious settlements where there is still a need for affordable housing. This policy could therefore provide a useful adjunct to rural exception sites in helping to meet local need in such areas. My attention was drawn to some innovative schemes that have already been implemented in this regard.
- 3.133 I consider therefore that the approach in policy HLP4 is appropriate to this district and is an example of the positive and proactive approach towards delivery of affordable housing in rural areas sought by PPS3. Given the criteria set out in this policy and in CS policy SG4, and subject to the minor change suggested by the Council to clarify the affordable housing provision, I am satisfied that policy HLP4 is consistent with national and regional policy for a sustainable countryside. It does not conflict with the recommended approach to the reuse of rural buildings in CS policy SG3.

Policy HLP5

- 3.134 The Council's suggested revisions to this policy show that it is clearly directed at ensuring that where planning permission is granted to relax a restricted occupancy condition the future occupancy of the dwelling is limited to a household with a connection to the local area [*ES18B*]. However, at Preferred Options stage it was resolved not to apply such a local occupancy condition to all new rural market housing [*LCD5*]. There does not therefore appear to be a reasonable policy basis for applying such a condition to one particular element of such housing.

3.135 Furthermore, I am not convinced that all the countryside within this district is so remote, or that housing demand is so great and the means of meeting it so limited, that the imposition of such a local occupancy condition throughout the rural area is appropriate. Policy HLP5 therefore appears at odds with the advice in Circular 11/95 para 96 that such conditions should only be imposed in exceptional circumstances. Without strong evidence for its necessity I find it unsound. It should be deleted to render the CS sound.

3.136 **I conclude that, with the exception of policies HLP3 and HLP4, the approach to the provision of affordable housing for local people is not appropriate to this district, soundly based and fully justified, and consistent with national and regional policy. To overcome the unsoundness of this element of the CS the following changes are required. These include deletion of policies HLP1, HLP2 and HLP5 and placing the overall target for affordable housing in policy SG1 on an interim, indicative basis, together with amendment and clarification of the supporting text.**

Changes Reference H1, H3, R, S, T, U, V and KK set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 7 – Are the economic priorities expressed appropriate to this district and consistent with national and regional policy? Is the scale, distribution and type of employment development envisaged consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, soundly based and justified?

Economic Priorities

3.137 The economic spatial priorities expressed in the CS, in particular policies JB1 and JB2, align closely with the objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy [RCD18], the Sub regional Investment Plan [RCD5 and RCD5A] and Leeds City Region development programme [RCD3] insofar as these relate to this district. They have attracted widespread community support; reflect the priorities of the Community Plan and the Council's corporate plan; are consistent with the CS strategic vision and objectives; and are thus appropriate to this district. Subject to the Council's suggested changes clarifying the economic linkages with the Leeds City Region and the approach to office development, they are also consistent with national planning policy, in particular PPS6: *Planning for Town Centres* [NCD17].

3.138 Through its jobs and business policies the CS recognises the potential of the 'non-business class' sector of employment as economic generators. The sub regional economic role of Harrogate is brought out clearly in CS policies JB2 and JB4. In these and other respects the CS is therefore consistent with the spatial framework for the regional economy set out in RSS policy E1. However, as

these are broad strategic policies specific references to particular uses such as caravans and holiday parks or creative industries are not appropriate here. The transport implications of new development are considered elsewhere in the CS.

- 3.139 Economic priorities are clearly expressed within CS policies JB1 and JB2 and amplified in the supporting text, which identifies the key partners in their delivery. I have no evidence to suggest that significant progress towards their achievement cannot be made within the plan period. The monitoring indicators proposed for all the jobs and business policies focus on spatial outcomes. I note that job growth is not included, although mechanisms for monitoring this are being developed to support the RSS. Given that these are not yet complete, I am satisfied that the inclusion of employment land take up and loss amounts to a sufficient measure of progress with the economic aspects of the CS that accords with good practice guidance [NCD6].

Employment land

- 3.140 The approach to new employment development in CS policy JB3 is clearly derived from the findings of the 2006 Employment Land Review (ELR) [LCD51] which looks ahead to 2021. Although the ELR is based on a sample of existing sites across the district, this does not seriously weaken its analysis of the structure of the local economy and the implications for employment land provision. While it does not cover the full range of potential job growth highlighted in the RSS, I am satisfied that its focus on office, manufacturing and warehousing uses provides a robust basis for planning future employment development.
- 3.141 The ELR found that there is an adequate overall supply of existing and committed sites for these types of employment uses within the district, although there are local shortages, notably for small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) within Harrogate. These conclusions are broadly endorsed by the experience of the Council's own Economic Development Unit [LCD67], despite their more optimistic assessment, based on particular local factors, for future manufacturing employment in the district. They therefore underpin the estimated requirement for new employment land set out in CS policy JB3.
- 3.142 The provision of some 45 hectares of employment land on committed and new sites within CS policy JB3 is intended to give some 'headroom' to allow for restructuring and expansion of existing businesses, as well as to support the formation of new SMEs. While only covering office, industrial and warehousing uses, such an approach is consistent with RSS policy E3A and the underpinning update on job growth and employment land figures [RCD35]. Other uses contributing to job growth such as retail are dealt with in other CS policies.

- 3.143 Bearing in mind that this 45 hectares only represents new employment development, I find its scale and distribution to be consistent with the settlement hierarchy and the underlying spatial strategy. Within this strategic framework new employment sites will be identified within the SADPD. Assessment of the impact of such development on existing infrastructure forms part of this allocation process. However, matters such as the rural economy and developer contributions are covered elsewhere in the CS. The Council's suggested changes to the supporting text clarify the basis for making provision for employment land and premises, as well as helping to strengthen the linkages to the monitoring indicators. I recommend these changes to ensure that the CS is sound by being consistent with national and regional planning policy in this respect.
- 3.144 In addition to existing commitments, 5 hectares of new employment land is to be provided in Harrogate town and Knaresborough to meet the short term needs identified in the ELR. Given that these two towns are in close proximity and effectively operate as one labour market sub area, it is reasonable for such sites to be identified in both locations. A further 3 hectares is to be provided in Boroughbridge in addition to existing employment land commitments. No evidence was presented to indicate that this would not be achievable, nor that it was insufficient to allow for the maintenance of existing businesses and expansion of employment levels.
- 3.145 The provision of this new employment land serves to plug the gaps in supply identified by the ELR. Given the differing assessments of the future prospects for manufacturing, together with the likely opportunities for redevelopment of existing employment sites to meet business needs, it seems reasonable for the need for any further new employment sites to be kept under review. This approach provides the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances rather than risking significant overprovision within the CS.

Existing employment sites

- 3.146 An integral part of overall employment land provision in the CS is the protection of certain existing employment sites. The Council's suggested footnote to CS policy JB3 and changes to the supporting text (which I recommend insofar as they clarify this strategic policy) explain that this applies only to office, industrial and warehousing uses. The degree of protection, and thus the potential for development for alternative and mixed uses, will be related to the classification of the site, using categories drawn from the ELR. The classification of individual sites and the detailed policy criteria to be applied are to be set out in the DCPDPD.
- 3.147 Given the high level of competing demand for housing and other uses in all parts of the district, there is likely to be considerable pressure to redevelop existing employment sites. Unchecked this

would lead to a need to identify more new employment land, possibly in less sustainable locations, thus weakening the spatial strategy. This approach allows a degree of flexibility in responding to new uses for employment sites, while safeguarding those that continue to meet business needs. It is soundly based on the findings of the ELR regarding the amount, quality and distribution of employment land provision required to meet predicted needs to 2021. I find that it provides an appropriate and sustainable strategic framework for safeguarding employment sites consistent with RSS policy E5.

3.148 Provided the following changes are made I conclude that the economic priorities expressed in the CS are appropriate to this district and consistent with national and regional policy. Furthermore, the scale, distribution and type of employment development envisaged is consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, soundly based and justified.

Changes Reference W and X set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 8 – Is policy JB4 consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy, and is it soundly based and justified?

3.149 This policy provides the framework for retail uses and also town centre development in the district's 6 largest settlements. Given the scale of the other existing service centres (that is, the remaining Group B settlements) this approach is appropriate for this district. With the suggested change regarding additional shopping floor space in Harrogate, the policy covers all relevant aspects of town centre functions. It is consistent with the strategic vision, strategic objectives and settlement hierarchy, thus reinforcing the spatial strategy.

3.150 The Council's suggested changes clearly place this policy within the context of national and regional planning policy for retailing and town centres, especially PPS6 and RSS policy E2, without unnecessary repetition of their provisions. However, as drafted the policy cannot be clearly related to the typology of centres within this national and regional policy framework. I recommend minor changes in terminology to render the CS sound in this respect. With these changes in place, and taking account of policy JB3, the CS provides a clear strategic framework for retail and other town centre developments in the district consistent with PPS6.

3.151 The retail aspects of policy JB4 are based on the 2004 Harrogate District Retail Study [LCD50] and 2007 Review [LCD72] as the Council's suggested change makes clear. Despite this only being a partial review of the study its scope is such as to provide a robust basis for predicting retail needs in the district up to 2015. Although

differing conclusions have been drawn as to the precise level of this need I do not regard these as being at such variance as to undermine the study findings in strategic terms. However, in the interests of clarity quantification of likely retail capacity should be removed from the supporting text, as suggested by the Council.

- 3.152 There is no convincing evidence of need for new shopping centres within the district or that retail provision is required to meet the needs of settlements in adjoining districts. Given the rapid pace of change in the retail environment, it is reasonable for the Retail Study only to look forward to 2015, allowing this aspect of the CS to be reviewed and rolled forward later in the plan period.
- 3.153 The supporting text to policy JB4 indicates the likely locations for new retail development and other town centre uses. This reflects the outcome of community consultation, although the Council has suggested changes to up date and strengthen this aspect in relation to the brownfield land at Station Parade, opportunities for residential uses and developer contributions. I recommend these changes to ensure soundness and consistency with the sequential approach in PPS6.
- 3.154 With these changes the policy provides a clear and coherent basis for subsequent DPDs, which is where appropriate development sites will be identified and shopping centre boundaries defined. Performance is measured by the indicators in CS Table 2 where the Council has suggested a minor change to the vacancy rate target to bring it in line with that in the corporate plan. With this adjustment I consider that the indicators and targets provide adequate measures of town centre vitality and viability in line with good practice guidance.
- 3.155 **I therefore find that policy JB4 is consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy, and is soundly based and justified, provided the following changes are made:**

Changes Reference Y and MM in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 9 – Are the travel and transport infrastructure policies appropriate to this district, consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy, soundly based and justified? Do they provide a clear and robust spatial planning framework in relation to travel and access, capable of delivering the relevant elements of the spatial strategy?

- 3.156 This suite of policies sets out a coherent strategic framework and clear priorities for the transport elements of the CS and scored positively in the SA. In broad terms the policies are consistent with, and support, the spatial strategy and are capable of delivery

through subsequent DPDs, the LTP and related programmes and strategies.

- 3.157 A number of specific major transport schemes were put forward by representors for inclusion in the CS, although from the evidence provided it is not clear that they are likely to be delivered within the timescale of this plan. However, I am not persuaded that these proposals are so integral to the delivery of the spatial strategy that failure to specifically identify them renders the CS unsound. Moreover some of them are clearly intended to support development in locations that do not form part of the spatial strategy, such as sizeable urban extensions at Ripon and a new settlement near Kirk Deighton.

Policy TRA1

- 3.158 This policy sets out reasonable yet robust measures for ensuring that the location and design of new development helps to reduce the need to travel and improves accessibility to jobs and services by means other than the car. However, the criteria are flexible and framed in such a way as to recognise the continuing role of the car, particularly for access in the rural parts of the district. The policy therefore contributes to a sustainable pattern of development and is consistent with the thrust of national planning policy, in particular PPG13: *Transport [NCD30]* and the Supplement to PPS1: *Planning and Climate Change [NCD44]*. By ensuring that the majority of future development is well related to the Key Bus and Rail Network that underpins the settlement hierarchy it also supports the underlying spatial strategy.
- 3.159 The local accessibility criteria in CS Appendix 8 to be applied when considering new housing development have been developed through community consultation. They are clear, straightforward and locally appropriate measures that align with the criteria contained in RSS policy T3. However it is not entirely clear what criteria are to be applied to non-residential developments, nor the circumstances under which a Transport Assessment will be required, the scope of such an assessment and how its findings may be implemented. The Council has suggested changes to the policy and supporting text to clarify these matters which I recommend in order to render the policy sound. With these changes the policy provides clear reinforcement at a district level for the Regional Transport Strategy [*RCD2A*].

Policy TRA2

- 3.160 The principle of safeguarding routes and sites that widen travel choice supports sustainable development and the spatial strategy. This principle is soundly expressed in this CS policy, which seeks only to safeguard routes or sites where there is a reasonable prospect of their accommodating transport infrastructure before the end of the plan period, and which are derived from a relevant

transport strategy, plan or programme. It is thus consistent with RSS policy T3 and the guidance in PPS12. While different, there is no serious conflict with the approach to transport infrastructure contained in the Hambleton CS [RCD30].

- 3.161 Within the strategic framework provided by this CS policy it is reasonable for the actual routes or sites for safeguarding to be defined on the Proposals Map through subsequent DPDs. It is not therefore necessary to list all the individual transport proposals that may be included in the LDF within the CS. However, this linkage between DPDs is not clear from the policy as framed, although the Council has suggested a change to ensure that the CS is sound in this respect.
- 3.162 Nevertheless, identification of a strategic site for a transport interchange within the policy is justified, as this is a key element within the LTP. It helps to reinforce the sub regional role of Harrogate and is consistent with RSS policy T3. I therefore recommend the Council's suggested change to the supporting text that serves to ensure soundness by strengthening and clarifying this linkage. As regards the reference to the Harrogate and Knaresborough Northern Relief Road and the Killinghall Bypass, I am satisfied that this is consistent with the approach to these schemes within the HAKITS, which forms part of the LTP.

Policy TRA3

- 3.163 The strategic framework for travel management measures provided by this policy is clear and covers all relevant aspects. It is consistent with the approach in national planning policy, RSS, the LTP and its supporting studies and strategies and integrates with the underlying spatial strategy. It seeks to manage continued use of cars in a manner appropriate to the needs of this district, whilst improving travel choice. Matters such as specific park and ride schemes, detailed parking standards and town centre waste and traffic management are issues to be addressed in subsequent DPDs based on this strategic framework.
- 3.164 Although the policy does not contain specific spatial outcomes, it does identify implementation mechanisms, likely timescales for relevant actions and the partners and agencies responsible for implementing this aspect of the CS. It is therefore an appropriate policy, to which the Council have suggested changes to clarify the links to the Service Centre Transportation Strategies being prepared as part of the LTP. I recommend these to ensure soundness by strengthening and clarifying the link between this spatial planning policy and the LTP.
- 3.165 However the final part of this policy provides the strategic framework for the transportation element of the Area Plan DPD. As drafted this is not sufficiently clear or coherent to be sound. The Council's suggested changes clarify the principles of this strategic

framework, its linkage to the LTP and Area Plan, implementation mechanisms and monitoring indicator. I recommend them in order to render the CS sound.

- 3.166 **Provided the following changes are made I conclude that the travel and transport infrastructure policies are appropriate to this district, consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy, soundly based and justified. They provide a clear and robust spatial planning framework in relation to travel and access, capable of delivering the relevant elements of the spatial strategy.**

Changes Reference Z, AA, BB, LL and RR set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 10 – Will the environment and quality of life policies promote and maintain a quality environment consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy? Are they appropriate to this district, soundly based and justified?

- 3.167 The baseline information for the SA indicates the high quality of the district's natural and built environment, but also its relatively poor record in terms of potential environmental damage through contributing to climate change. In seeking to address both issues positively these CS policies are thus locally distinctive. They have attracted considerable community support and align with the priorities of the community plan and the Council's own corporate plan. Moreover they reinforce, at a local level, the aims and objectives of the RSS as regards tackling climate change and protecting and improving the environment. Monitoring the performance of these policies is adequately covered by a range of appropriate indicators and targets.

Policy EQ1

- 3.168 The approach to reducing the contribution to climate change arising locally set out in part a) of this policy is reasonable and covers all relevant matters. No convincing evidence was presented that seeking to minimise these various factors in new development would seriously undermine delivery of the spatial strategy, the aim of which is to achieve a more sustainable development pattern.
- 3.169 Parts b) and c) of the policy set out requirements for sustainable construction and on site renewable energy. Although the Council provided some useful information about the costs and benefits of fitting renewable energy in parts of the existing housing stock, this does not in itself amount to an assessment of the viability of these local requirements as expected by para 33 PPS1 Supplement.
- 3.170 Nevertheless, the standards set for sustainable construction in part b) do reflect national ambitions for reducing carbon emissions from

domestic and non-domestic buildings as referenced in para 8 and para 30 PPS1 Supplement. Moreover it is clear from the supporting text that the standards will be applied robustly but flexibly, should their achievement jeopardise the viability of a particular development. I consider therefore that the inclusion of these standards is justified, despite the absence of a robust underpinning viability assessment.

- 3.171 As regards provision of on site renewable energy, I recognise that high land values can be achieved for residential and commercial developments on greenfield sites in the district. However, this is not sufficient justification for a local target of 15% provision on new employment sites and greenfield residential sites of 10 or more dwellings. I am concerned that the viability of this target has not been assessed in the context of projected housing and employment land supply and CS aspirations for the provision of affordable housing, infrastructure and community facilities. It is not therefore consistent with PPS22: *Renewable Energy [NCD23]* para 8, PPS1 Supplement para 33 and RSS policy ENV5 all of which seek viable local requirements. It is not soundly based and should be deleted.
- 3.172 In my view this change does not substantially undermine the SA: firstly because on site renewable energy may well be provided to achieve the required standard for sustainable construction, and secondly because in advance of local targets being set in DPDs RSS policy ENV5 contains a target to be applied to development above certain thresholds. I recommend adding a reference to this RSS requirement in the supporting text. However, the approach to stand alone renewable energy projects in part d) of the policy is reasonable and consistent with the RSS and national guidance. The related performance indicator in CS Table 2 should be amended to reflect the targets for installed renewable energy capacity in the adopted RSS.

Policy EQ2

- 3.173 The framework for protecting and enhancing relevant aspects of the natural and built environment within this policy is robust and consistent with the strategic vision and objectives. The failure to give priority to the compilation of a local list of buildings of architectural or historical interest does not significantly affect its soundness. Nor is it necessary to list all aspects of the natural or built environment within the policy.
- 3.174 However, as drafted the policy implies that local landscape designations will be carried forward from the adopted LP, without necessarily receiving the rigorous consideration of their justification required by PPS7 para 25. In addition it is unclear how green spaces within settlements will be protected and enhanced. The Council's suggested changes help to clarify this aspect of the policy consistent with national guidance, and I therefore recommend and reinforce them.

- 3.175 Furthermore, as drafted the approach to conservation area appraisal is unclear and has given rise to concerns about its intention and application. I am satisfied that the Council's suggested changes in this respect clarify that appraisal is to be a positive, participatory process. This approach is consistent with national planning guidance, in particular PPG15: *Planning and the Historic Environment [NCD37]*, and I recommend the change to ensure soundness.
- 3.176 I have dealt with the question of a localised review of the Green Belt around Harrogate and Knaresborough under Issue 4. There is no evidence to suggest that a localised review of the York Green Belt within the district is necessary (other than to establish infill limits for Group B and C settlements). Adopted RSS policy YH9D states that a strategic review of the West Yorkshire Green Belt may be required to deliver longer term housing growth in West Yorkshire. The possibility of change to Green Belt boundaries arising from such a review should be recognised in the CS. However, continuous review of Green Belt boundaries would not be consistent with their permanence as required by PPG2.
- 3.177 **Provided the following changes are made I conclude that the environment and quality of life policies promote and maintain a quality environment consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy. They are appropriate to this district, soundly based and justified.**

Changes Reference CC, DD and NN set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 11 – Will the communities policies contribute to sustainable and inclusive communities, consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy? Are they appropriate to this district, soundly based and justified?

Policy C1

- 3.178 In seeking to ensure that new development contributes to meeting local community needs and helps to maintain inclusive and sustainable communities, this policy is consistent with the thrust of national planning policy, in particular PPS1. Whilst commendably wide ranging in scope, its priorities are locally distinctive, being derived from community consultation and aligning with those of the community plan. Despite some of the evidence base such as the SHMA still being in preparation, the policy is soundly based on relevant and up to date analysis and strategies addressing local circumstances. It also provides a broad framework within which planning obligations will be sought that is consistent with the principles in Circular 05/2005.

3.179 However, as drafted the policy is unsound as it is not sufficiently clear as to what is required of developers, the definition of community facilities, implementation mechanisms and appropriate monitoring indicators. The Council's suggested changes plus my factual amendments provide the necessary clarity to render the policy sound in these respects. These recommended changes ensure that it is consistent with the strategic vision and forms an integral part of the spatial strategy. There is no need for specific reference to accessibility as this is covered by CS policy TRA1.

Policy C2

3.180 RSS policy H6 identifies a need for additional provision to meet the housing needs of gypsies and travellers at both a regional and sub regional level. However, while a local Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is underway, this is not yet complete. Against this background I consider that the criteria based approach to the provision of gypsy and traveller sites contained in this policy is justified and reasonable. It gives an effective strategic framework for the future allocation of sites in the SADPD and for considering unexpected needs that may arise. The Council has suggested changes to clarify certain policy criteria and to ensure consistency with the advice in Circular 01/06 which I recommend to render this aspect of the CS sound.

3.181 Provided the following changes are made I conclude that the communities policies will contribute to sustainable and inclusive communities, consistent with the underlying spatial strategy, national and regional policy. They are appropriate to this district, soundly based and justified.

Changes Reference FF, GG and OO set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 12 – Does the location for the Community Sports Regeneration Area represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered community needs and the relevant alternatives, and is it founded on robust and credible evidence? Does this policy provide an appropriate and deliverable strategic framework for the proposed Area Action Plan consistent with national and regional policy?

3.182 Consultation on the CS highlighted a desire for sports and leisure facilities for young people, with strong support for provision of a single multi purpose sports facility [LCD5]. This was taken forward in the Preferred Option to promote the principle of a major combined sports facility in the town of Harrogate centred on the Claro Road Harrogate Rugby Union Football Club (RUFC) and Harrogate High School and to prepare a Community Sports

Regeneration Area Action Plan (AAP) for the 'Inner Bilton Triangle' off Claro Road and Kingsley Drive. This is the basis for policy C3.

- 3.183 Neither the term 'single multi purpose sports facility' nor 'major combined sports facility' are defined in the Preferred Options, although it is clear from the supporting text to the Preferred Option and to CS policy C3 that the focus is on the provision of sports pitches of various types. The policy does not therefore seek to address the full range of sports and other recreational facilities that may be required to meet needs arising during the plan period. Its evidence base is provided by a Playing Pitch Assessment (PPA) [LCD59], carried out in 2004 broadly in accordance with best practice guidance.
- 3.184 Despite criticisms of the survey coverage and the assumptions about participation rates, I do not consider the credibility of the assessment to be noticeably undermined. Its finding that within the context of an overall surplus of pitches in the district there are noticeable deficits in terms of quality and pitch type (especially junior pitches) is not seriously disputed. Following submission of the CS a draft area based analysis has been drawn from the PPA. This indicates that the shortage of suitable playing pitches across the district by 2018 will be most significant in Harrogate [LCD91].
- 3.185 While supporting the need for improved sports pitch provision, the PPA does not itself propose a combined facility nor evaluate possible locations for new sports pitches. It puts forward a number of ways in which need can be met, in particular dual use of existing school provision, improving the quality of existing pitches and remodelling of senior pitches to meet junior needs. These options are being pursued by the Council. However limitations such as soil conditions in large parts of the district, the difficulties attendant on organising community use of educational facilities and the legal and other constraints attached to use of the Stray suggest that, however vigorously pursued, they are unlikely to meet all the needs identified in the PPA.
- 3.186 Nevertheless, in terms of meeting sports needs no options other than a single combined sports facility or locations other than Claro Road were generated or evaluated during the preparation of the CS. I regard this as a very serious weakness. I note that an evaluation of alternative locations is included in the AAP Preferred Options Report and SA [LCD78 & LCD92]. However, as this was prepared after submission of the CS it cannot have informed the choice of strategic location for the Community Sports Regeneration Area.
- 3.187 Moreover, the evaluation seems to be based largely on assumptions about the requirements for the RUFC drawn from the club's aspirations for a new and expanded site. It does not appear to include other potential ways of meeting identified playing pitch needs. It does not, for example, seek to address the needs and aspirations of other successful clubs that were drawn to my

attention, such as Pannal Sports FC [*LCD95*] or Ripon AFC. I am also aware that at the time of preparing the LP and subsequently, sites have been sought for the relocation of the RUFC, and that in examining these previous Inspectors have concluded that expansion at the existing site is the optimum solution [*NCD13 & NCD14*]. This is clearly an important factor in considering future sports provision.

- 3.188 However, these conclusions are specific to the RUFC. They do not amount to an evaluation of appropriate locations for a combined sports facility or how best to meet the range of sports needs identified in the CS consultation and the PPA. Moreover, it does not appear that the alternative locations previously canvassed on behalf of the RUFC have been revisited in the context of identified sports needs and the underpinning spatial strategy of this CS.
- 3.189 The Council acknowledges that the choice of location for a combined sports facility in the CS was opportunity led, based on the presence of the RUFC, the emerging Sports College, the existing hockey pitch and adjoining open land within a designated 'green wedge' in the adopted LP. Although these are all positive factors in favour of this location, I am not persuaded that they are so compelling as to rule out consideration of other options and locations for meeting identified need.
- 3.190 Moreover, I am not convinced that all the synergies claimed for this location will necessarily materialise. For example, no evidence was presented that Harrogate FC is actively seeking relocation to this site, and in any event some doubt was cast on the extent of the potential for dual use of facilities by rugby and football clubs. On the other hand, development of the Sports College, possibly with an indoor tennis centre, is likely to go ahead whether or not this location is earmarked as a community sports regeneration area.
- 3.191 Although not necessarily excluding other types of development, the purpose of CS policy C3 is to establish the primary land use in the area as sport and recreation. By including a specific location for community sports in the CS, this land has in effect been allocated separately, and in advance of, consideration of site allocations for housing and employment development. This seems to me to put the cart before the horse. I recognise that the area identified in CS policy C3 already contains some sports pitches and facilities, is in a reasonably accessible location on the urban fringe of Harrogate and within one of its most disadvantaged wards. To this extent the location is consistent with PPG17 and RSS policy ENV11.
- 3.192 Nevertheless, the existing RUFC ground is allocated for housing under saved LP policy H4 and nearby land has been put forward for consideration as development sites in consultation on the SADPD. I am concerned that prior allocation for sports use pre-empts proper consideration of potentially suitable sites for housing and employment development against the sequential priorities contained in RSS policy YH7 to the possible detriment of a

sustainable pattern of development. I note that SA of these potential housing sites was carried out for the SADPD Preferred Options [*LCD76*] (and included in the SA for the AAP [*LCD79*]), while the AAP transport assessment includes scenarios with an element of residential use [*LCD86*]. However, these appraisals were published subsequent to submission of the CS and therefore cannot have informed the land allocation made in policy C3.

- 3.193 Doubts have been expressed as to whether the maintenance and enhancement of community sports in this location amounts to such significant change as to warrant preparation of an AAP. Be that as it may, in seeking to identify a specific location for the AAP, rather than setting out criteria for identifying locations and priorities for the preparation of AAPs the CS goes beyond the strategic framework for the preparation of AAPs envisaged by PPS12 para 5.5. While PPS12 does support the identification of strategic sites within a CS, for the reasons set out above I find that the location for the Community Sports Regeneration Area does not represent the most appropriate having considered all reasonable alternatives. Policy C3 is not fully justified and is therefore unsound.
- 3.194 On the basis of the work done in preparing the AAP, it seems likely that a range of sports and recreational facilities could be provided in this location without significant detriment to residential amenity or biodiversity or noticeable increase in traffic congestion [*LCD61, LCD78, LCD79 & LCD86*]. However, the actual mix of sports uses and funding sources has not yet been fully identified. Moreover, it is not entirely clear whether all the sports uses under consideration could practically be accommodated in this location.
- 3.195 My main concern in terms of deliverability, however, is the apparent lack of commitment from key landowners. In particular as regards the important element of the RUFC ground developers have given the strongest indication that they will exercise their option to acquire this site in 2009. Indeed the Council suggests that the AAP may require a Compulsory Purchase Order in order to secure delivery. Apart from the uncertainty and delay this would introduce into the delivery process, it underlines the apparent lack of 'front loading' in the selection of this particular location for meeting community sports needs. Against this background I am not convinced that this element of the CS is deliverable.
- 3.196 I have considerable sympathy with the predicament in which the RUFC finds itself, with their ground about to be acquired and no new site as yet identified. This situation is clearly a significant driver in the identification of Claro Road in policy C3. Nevertheless, this cannot override my finding that this element of the CS is unsound. It should therefore be deleted, along with any supporting text and cross references within the CS. I do not consider that this change undermines the CS participatory process or SA, both of which supported the principle of a major combined sports facility in the town of Harrogate. This can still be pursued through CS policies

EQ2 and C1 which provide the necessary strategic framework for addressing, among other matters, the sport and leisure needs of young people.

3.197 I find that CS policy C3 is founded on robust and credible evidence primarily in the PPA. However, it is not clear that all reasonable options and alternatives have been considered in preparing this policy. For these reasons I conclude that the location for the Community Sports Regeneration Area does not represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered community needs and the relevant alternatives. Policy C3 does not provide an appropriate and deliverable strategic framework for the proposed AAP consistent with national and regional policy. It is therefore unsound and should be deleted.

Changes Reference EE, HH and PP set out in Schedule 1 are required in order to make the CS sound.

Issue 13 - Are clear mechanisms in place for implementation and monitoring of the Core Strategy? Are they reasonably flexible to enable them to deal with changing circumstances?

3.198 CS Table 2 sets out a range of indicators and targets to be used in measuring performance in terms of delivering the key aspects of the CS. These reflect the core outputs in national guidance [NCD6] supplemented by relevant local outputs. In considering the issues above I have recommended certain changes to individual performance indicators in order to ensure clarity, coherence and coverage of all aspects of the CS. With these changes I am satisfied that the CS contains an appropriate and robust framework for measuring delivery in accordance with PPS12.

3.199 CS chapter 9 states clearly that monitoring progress in implementing the CS policies will be carried out primarily in the AMR, and this process is amplified in the latest AMR [LCD73]. It includes monitoring of both contextual and output indicators, the SA framework and housing trajectory, together with consideration of corrective steps where necessary. Such monitoring has already begun and I am confident therefore that clear monitoring mechanisms are in place for the CS.

3.200 The CS contains strategic policies and few are linked to specific time frames. Nevertheless, in broad terms they focus on achieving spatial outcomes. Table 2 clearly identifies the agencies responsible for delivery of each of the CS policies. Key partners have been consulted throughout the preparation of the CS and I have no evidence that their commitment to implementation is seriously lacking [LCD3]. Inter agency communication has thus begun, allowing the CS to inform investment plans and strategies.

- 3.201 As these are strategic policies delivery will largely be through the implementation of subsequent DPDs and other plans and strategies of the Council and its partners. With the recommended changes to clarify the relationship between the CS, other parts of the LDF and other key strategies, I am satisfied that clear delivery mechanisms are in place.
- 3.202 Implementation of the spatial strategy as a whole does not rely on decisions regarding major investment. From the evidence available there is a reasonable prospect of provision of the necessary infrastructure to support delivery of the CS housing and employment requirements throughout the plan period. Strategic objective 6 integrates infrastructure provision with housing delivery, a process that will be implemented through the SADPD and Area Plan DPD within the strategic framework of the CS. Policies TRA1 and C1 provide a robust framework for securing necessary developer contributions to infrastructure provision. Together with monitoring through CS policy SG5 and the AMR I consider that adequate mechanisms are in place to ensure that the spatial strategy is capable of delivery by the Council and its partners.
- 3.203 From my consideration of the issues above I find that the CS provides a robust but flexible strategic framework able to accommodate unforeseen changes, such as in house building rates or infrastructure implementation or from unexpected land releases. Such factors could impinge on the delivery of individual elements of the CS, in particular development within the proposed urban extensions. However, the monitoring mechanisms in place would allow for corrective action to be taken in these circumstances without seriously undermining the overall spatial strategy.
- 3.204 Where there are significant uncertainties, such as from the dual end date for the CS and possibly from the partial review of the RSS, these can be addressed through review. With the recommended commitment to review I am satisfied therefore that the CS is not at significant risk from changing circumstances.
- 3.205 The CS contains strategic, generic policies that contain broad criteria and priorities for guiding activities with a spatial dimension. With the recommended changes to ensure clarity and consistency with national policy they provide a robust and consistent framework capable of sufficient flexibility to cope with a wide range of developments and circumstances. They strike broadly the right balance between certainty and flexibility.
- 3.206 **I conclude that the CS is effective in that it is deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored. There are clear mechanisms in place for implementation and monitoring of the CS that are reasonably flexible to enable them to deal with changing circumstances, provided the changes set out in Schedule 1 are made.**

4 Other Matters

Regulation 13(5)

- 4.1 CS Appendix 9 sets out which policies of the adopted LP are superseded by the policies in this DPD. However, only certain LP policies have been saved by direction of the Secretary of State under Paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the 2004 Act. The Appendix therefore needs amending to reflect the up to date position [ES03]. With these changes the CS complies with Regulation 13(5).

Change Reference SS set out in Schedule 1 is required in order to make the CS sound.

Adopted RSS

- 4.2 References to the RSS throughout the CS need to be updated to reflect the fact that the RSS is now adopted and that there have been minor changes to relevant RSS policies. I have identified certain references in the supporting text and incorporated corrections in **Schedule 1**, but there may be others that require updating in the interests of clarity. I am content for the Council to complete this factual updating of references to RSS policies within the CS.

5 Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 I have found the CS wanting in some respects in terms of soundness. However, these deficiencies are not so great that they cannot be rectified by amendments, in order to bring the CS in line with national and regional policy and to provide a clear, coherent and soundly based strategic framework capable of delivering the spatial vision. These amendments are based on the Council's suggested changes, although there are some other changes, largely deletions of all or part of policies, which I consider to be necessary.
- 5.2 None of these changes alter the fundamental themes and principles of the spatial strategy, raise new matters, or require further SA or community involvement. In coming to my conclusions I have considered all the points made in the representations, even though they might not relate directly to the tests of soundness in PPS12, but I find no justification for any further changes to this DPD.
- 5.3 I conclude that, with the amendments I recommend, the Harrogate District Core Strategy DPD satisfies the requirements of s20(5) of the 2004 Act and the associated Regulations, is sound in terms of s20(5)(b) of the 2004 Act, and meets the tests of soundness in PPS12.

Karen McCabe

INSPECTOR

HARROGATE DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY DPD

ANNEX 1

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AAP	Area Action Plan
AMR	Annual Monitoring Report
Area Plan DPD	Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Plan Development Plan Document
ASG	Areas of Search for Growth
CS	Harrogate District Core Strategy
DCPPDP	Development Control Policies Development Plan Document
DPD	Development Plan Document
ELR	Harrogate District Employment Land Review (2006)
FC	Football Club
GOYH	Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber
GTAA	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
HAKITS	Harrogate and Knaresborough Integrated Transport Study
HNA	Harrogate District 2006 Housing Needs Assessment
LDD	Local Development Document
LDF	Local Development Framework
LDS	Local Development Scheme
LP	Harrogate District Local Plan (2001) with Selective Alteration (2004)
LTP	North Yorkshire County Council Local Transport Plan for 2006 - 2011
NYCC	North Yorkshire County Council
PPA	Harrogate District Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy (2004)
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance Note
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SADPD	Site Allocations (Homes and Jobs) Development Plan Document
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SME	Small to Medium Sized Enterprise
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SSA	Soundness Self Assessment
YHRA	Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly
2004 Act	Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
2004 Regulations	Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

Circular 05/05 ODPM Circular 05/2005 *Planning Obligations*
Circular 01/06 ODPM Circular 01/2006 *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites*
Circular 11/95 DoE Circular 11/95 *The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions*

References to Documents in the Examination Library are shown thus []