



## Partial Review of North West Regional Spatial Strategy

### Draft Project Plan and Statement of Public Participation

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North West Plan Partial Review  
Planning, Transport & Housing  
Directorate  
North West Regional Assembly  
Wigan Investment Centre  
Waterside Drive  
WIGAN  
WN3 5BA



## Contents

<b>The North West in Context.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Purpose of This Document.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What This Means For You.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What is a Project Plan? .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Objectives of the Partial Review .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Partial Review Tasks .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Who is Responsible? .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Partial Review Timetable.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitat Regulation Assessment and Rural Proofing.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Technical &amp; Research Work .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Alignment with Other Regional Strategies .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Risk.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Involvement of Community and Partnership Working .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>What does that Technical Jargon Mean? .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Contact Us.....</b>	<b>28</b>

## The North West in Context

A region of stark contrasts and striking landscapes, the North West is home to 6.8 million people and the scene of economic growth and urban renaissance to rival any in Europe. From the outstanding natural beauty of the Lake District, England's premier National Park, to the bustling, modern contemporary European City Region conurbations of Manchester and Liverpool, European Capital of Culture in 2008; from its extensive coastline and popular resorts like Blackpool and Southport, to great historic towns and cities such as Carlisle, Lancaster, Preston and Chester; and with World Heritage Sites as wide ranging as Liverpool City Centre and Hadrian's Wall, and superb landscapes including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the region is as distinctive as it is diverse. The North West is a hub of learning, research and development. Its traditional manufacturing base may have declined, but the region still contains world-leading industries such as aerospace. An excellent transport network provides first-rate links within the North West and with other UK regions and, thanks to Manchester Airport and the historic port of Liverpool, gateways to the rest of the world to match any in the country.

## Introduction

Within the context provide by the challenges of addressing climate change and sustainability, the region has collectively identified that as a priority, three key strategic spatial planning issues need addressing urgently in order to ensure that the challenges facing the North West are addressed in Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). These relate to:

- ~ tackling issues around housing demand, supply and affordability (including the implications of Government decisions on the location of additional growth points and eco towns);
- ~ identifying the broad locations for regionally significant waste management facilities; and
- ~ identifying the broad location of renewable energy generation facilities.

The Government aims to create prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities. Everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home at a price they can afford, in a place in which they want to live and work, now and in the future, that promotes opportunity and a better quality of life in a secure and attractive environment. More homes are needed to meet the rising demands and needs of a population that is increasing, ageing and tending to live in smaller households. However, high demand for housing, lack of supply, and consequent problems of affordability have become an issue for many parts of the country including the North West. Other areas have been affected by the challenges of housing market restructuring and low demand. Housing accounts for around a third of all carbon emissions in the North West. Therefore economically, socially, environmentally and politically housing issues are of critical national and regional importance.

In order to deal with the predicted future waste arisings for the various waste streams across different parts of the region, there will be a need for a number of regionally significant waste management facilities to be provided. To facilitate their provision, the Partial Review of RSS will need to provide a strategic planning context by identifying the broad locations that will be suitable for their development without causing environmental degradation.

As part of the agenda to tackle climate change, there is a clear need to set out a framework to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and secure clean and affordable energy supplies. This is addressed in part through the Regional Climate Change Action Plan and policies in RSS. However there is currently a gap in regional spatial planning policy concerning identification of broad areas suitable for renewable energy development. The

Partial Review will seek to address this issue by identifying the broad areas where the development of particular types of renewable energy may be appropriate.

The challenge is to ensure that we deliver a Partial Review of RSS in a timely and effective way. In doing so the North West needs to meet the Housing Green Paper target of completing RSS Partial Reviews by 2011. However given the scale and urgency of the need to tackle key priorities and also feed into potential development of a single regional strategy, the Assembly working with partners is keen to ensure a draft RSS is submitted to Government by mid 2009. It is then hoped that Government will efficiently progress the remaining stages of process, so that the final version of the strategy can be in place by end of 2010. In this respect working with partners in the region we will be using every opportunity in the future to simplify, speed things up and, most importantly, argue that Government needs to speed up its part of the process, while still ensuring that the process is inclusive, comprehensive and robust.

## **Background**

The North West Regional Assembly (NWRA), as Regional Planning Body, is legally responsible for preparing and reviewing the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RSS).

The current RSS for the North West, Regional Planning Guidance for the North West: RPG13, was published in March 2003. A full review of RSS commenced in July 2004 and included widespread consultation with interested parties (see the Assembly's website for more details<sup>1</sup>). The Draft RSS was submitted to the Secretary of State in January 2006. An Examination in Public on the Draft RSS was held between November 2006 and January 2007. Subsequently, the Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications to Draft RSS are due to be published for consultation at the end of February 2008. The final version of the RSS will be issued in July 2008.

At the time of the approval and submission of the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the Assembly identified a number of policy topics which would need to be addressed in a future review of RSS. The RSS Examination in Public (EiP) Panel Report<sup>2</sup> has endorsed this approach.

Subsequently the Sub-National Economic Review (SNR) has been published envisaging new governance arrangements for the regions, and the replacement of RSS and the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) with a Single Regional Strategy (see panel on page 17).

In this context, the Assembly as Regional Planning Body, agreed on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2007, to undertake a Partial Review of RSS, covering a number of issues (see Partial Review Tasks, see page 7). This Partial Review will focus (though not exclusively) on 3 key policy issues relating to housing, renewable energy and waste. The Partial Review will need to take place within the current legislative process for RSS, but will also need to be adaptable to fit within the emerging procedures for the preparation of a Single Regional Strategy (which will require primary legislation to take place).

This Draft Project Plan is the first stage in carrying out the Partial Review of RSS.

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.nwra.gov.uk/whatwedo/issues/environment/?page\\_id=223](http://www.nwra.gov.uk/whatwedo/issues/environment/?page_id=223).

<sup>2</sup> North West Draft Regional Spatial Strategy: Examination in Public - Report of the Panel, March 2007 ([http://www.gos.gov.uk/497468/docs/457370/2007\\_Panel\\_Report\\_Chapters.pdf](http://www.gos.gov.uk/497468/docs/457370/2007_Panel_Report_Chapters.pdf))

## The Purpose of This Document

This document explains how the issues in the Partial Review will be addressed and how people and other interested parties can get involved.

The first stage of the Partial Review process has involved the Assembly working with GONW and NWDA to identify the key issues for which revised or new policies might be needed. Following this, because there are a number of choices as to the nature and content of policies, an Options Report will be published that will show the consequences of adopting different approaches. At this stage policies will not be fixed and everybody will have a chance to say what they think during a 9 week consultation period before detailed policies are developed.

While working on policies and options, practical ways to make them happen will be thought about along with how they can be measured in the future: this way the success of the RSS revision can be tracked.

Overall there will be a number of chances for everyone to get involved and have their say (see the indicative timetable on page 12) and the section on the Involvement of Community and Partnership Working on page 20).

## What This Means For You

The first thing we would like you to do is to read this document to make sure you understand what is going on and are happy with the processes and procedures being put in place. We are aware that the document uses many technical words, so we have set out a Jargon Buster (see page 25) to help with this task.

We have also included a Statement of Involvement of Community and Partnership Working (see page 20) which sets out how the Regional Assembly will make sure the process is carried out in an open and inclusive manner.

The process which guides the Partial Review of RSS is set out in Planning Policy Statement 11 (PPS 11): Regional Strategies<sup>3</sup>. Existing and emerging national policy advice will also be used throughout this Partial Review. We will also build upon the experiences we have gained through the previous work on preparing and reviewing earlier versions of RSS (and its predecessor Regional Planning Guidance).

Lots of documents mentioned in this Project Plan are on the Assembly's website<sup>4</sup>, if you want a paper copy, please contact us and where possible we will post one to you.

If you have any comments on this document or about the Partial Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy please fill in the feedback form at <http://www.northwestplanpartialreview.org.uk/> or contact us on 0800 389 4246 . Alternatively you can write to:

North West Plan Partial Review  
Planning, Transport & Housing Directorate  
North West Regional Assembly  
Wigan Investment Centre  
Waterside Drive  
WIGAN  
WN3 5BA

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps11>.

<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.nwra.gov.uk/documents/?page\\_id=4&category\\_id=10](http://www.nwra.gov.uk/documents/?page_id=4&category_id=10)

## What is a Project Plan?

A Project Plan sets out for interested parties how the Partial Review process will be carried out and what topic areas will be considered. The contents of the Project Plan are dictated by national guidance set out in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 11: Regional Spatial Strategies.

The Project Plan deals with the following.

- The objectives of the Partial Review and why they were chosen; see RSS objectives, see page 7.
- Issues being considered and the timetable for preparing the Partial Review, including key milestones; see Partial Review Timetable, see page 12 and Partial Review Tasks, see page 7.
- Identification of relevant research and technical studies; see Technical Work and Research, see page 14.
- Staff resources needed to prepare the Partial Review; see Who is Responsible, see page 10.
- How the Partial Review is aligned with other Regional Strategies; see Alignment with Other Regional Strategies, see page 17.
- Involvement of interested parties; see the Involvement of Community and Partnership Working, see page 20.
- Risks to delivery of Project Plan; see page 18.

In preparing the Project Plan, we have drawn upon government guidance; and opportunities for innovation, based on lessons learnt from previous Assembly experience of preparing RSS [and its predecessor Regional Planning Guidance (RPG)], and best practice from elsewhere.

In this respect we will be doing a number of things differently from previous cycles of RPG \ RSS preparation.

- ~ Focus will be on a smaller number of key policy issues.
- ~ Make more use of a shared evidence base to underpin and inform policy.
- ~ Closer working with the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and other key stakeholders.
- ~ Earlier and more active involvement of the Assembly's Executive Board (and its successor body) in key decision making, in order to provide regional leadership and sub regional 'buy in'.
- ~ Refinement and further improvement to engagement approaches using specialist external consultancy expertise and support from CAG Consultants.
- ~ Establishing a small representative group of local authorities and other key stakeholders together to work together with Assembly officers to develop the options and policy.

## Objectives of the Partial Review

This is only a Partial Review of selected elements of the RSS – not a full review.

The Partial Review will update specific policy areas in response to recommendations of the RSS Examination in Public Panel report and recent developments in Government policy. In doing so, it will take account of the context provided by existing RSS, Government policy and other regional strategies.

The overall strategy and vision of RSS has only been recently formulated. This was endorsed by the Examination in Public Panel Report published in March 2007. This is due to be followed by the publication of the Secretary of State's proposed Modifications at end of February 2008 and the final version of RSS in July 2008. Therefore it is not felt necessary to reconsider the overall strategy and vision that RSS seeks to achieve. These are agreed and will remain the backbone of RSS.

The overall strategy and those elements of the RSS not included in the Partial Review are not subject to revision and will continue to be in place as a statutory part of the development plan system.

## Partial Review Tasks

The Partial Review of RSS will lead to the further development of policies to support the underlying strategy. The proposed scope of the Partial Review is subject to the outcome of the Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications to Draft RSS and finalised RSS document. In late 2007, the Assembly and its Executive Board both agreed that the Partial review should focus on key policy issues relating to:

- ~ Sub-regional Housing Market Areas;
- ~ Revision of District Housing Figures;
- ~ Growth Points and Eco-towns;
- ~ Renewable Energy; and
- ~ Waste.

In addition in the context of research we have recently completed, the Assembly and its Executive Board also agreed to take the opportunity of the Partial Review to 'tidy up' a number of policy areas covering:

- ~ Gypsies & Travellers;
- ~ Travelling Showpeople;
- ~ Update of Regional Parking Standards; and
- ~ Key Service Centres.

A review of regional transport investment priorities will not take place as part of the RSS Partial Review. The Partial Review may however, provide the opportunity to update how information on transport schemes is presented in the RSS (dependant on how this is done in the final RSS document to be published in July 2008). If a review of transport investment priorities is undertaken as a result of the next Regional Funding Allocations (RFA) exercise, which is due to take place during the next Comprehensive Spending Review period (2008/09 to 2010/11), the Partial Review submission to the Secretary of State will need to reflect this accordingly.

Each stream is being led by an Assembly officer who acts as a “policy lead”, (contact information can be found in the ‘Contact Us’ section, see page 28). Throughout the timetable, there will be a need to ensure that the Partial review remains focused on these key issues.

### ***Sub-regional Housing Market Areas***

Planning Policy Statement 3<sup>5</sup> indicates that Regional Spatial Strategies should define sub-regional Housing Market Areas; identify which local planning authorities those areas include; and specify the proposed housing provision for each of them, and the districts within them. This was acknowledged in the Examination in Public Report of the Panel, and identified as an area where a review was needed to address this issue.

The North West Regional Assembly commissioned research work in September 2007 to identify Housing Market Areas in the North West<sup>6</sup>. This work will inform the Partial Review and will enable the Assembly to develop policies based on a better understanding of the nature and extent of housing markets across the region.

### ***Revision of District Housing Figures***

Since the North West Regional Assembly submitted Draft RSS to the Government in January 2006, and the Panel published their report in March 2007 the national housing agenda has changed dramatically. The Housing Green Paper<sup>7</sup> published in July 2007 has set out a range of challenges to be met across the country. This set out a national target for the delivery of 240,000 net additional houses a year by 2016 in order to address increasing housing affordability problems. Subsequently the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit<sup>8</sup> (NHPAU) has responded to the Housing Green Paper and advised the Government that potentially up to 270,000 to 280,000 new homes are needed nationally each year by 2016<sup>9</sup>, in order to keep affordability at the current situation. This could imply that potentially the region would have to significantly increase new house building in the North West to accommodate between 28,000 and 32,000 new homes each year (compared to 23,111 each year that was recommended in the Examination in Public Report of the Panel published in March 2007).

The Assembly will be preparing a revised set of housing figures as part of the Partial Review. These will need to take on board the agenda set out in the Housing Green Paper, the latest household projections produced by Government and the advice of the NHPAU. However this will need to be set within the context of a range of issues including the capacity of the environment to accommodate increased levels of house building, the supply of suitable available land<sup>10</sup>, and the housing needs in each market area, and the likely impact of increased supply on affordability. The Assembly will be asking all Local Authorities to provide existing information on the amount of available land for housing in their district.

This work will also include the development of affordable housing targets for the region, as recommended in the Examination in Public Report of the Panel (paragraph 6.108). The development of the target will draw on the information gathered through Strategic Housing Market Assessments which are currently being undertaken across the region by local

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<sup>5</sup> Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, CLG, November 2006 (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing>)

<sup>6</sup> See [http://www.nwra.gov.uk/whatwedo/issues/environment/?page\\_id=283#marker6](http://www.nwra.gov.uk/whatwedo/issues/environment/?page_id=283#marker6)

<sup>7</sup> Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable, CLG, July 2007 (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homesforfuture>)

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/nhpau/>

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/supplynewhomes>

<sup>10</sup> PPS3 requires local authorities to produce Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments which will assess the land available for housing over a 15 year period (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/landavailabilityassessment>)

authorities and sub regional partners<sup>11</sup>. In addition we will seek to ensure that affordability in rural areas is given full consideration, in line with the Affordable Rural Housing Commission<sup>12</sup> \ Commission for Rural Communities recommendations<sup>13</sup>.

### **Growth Points and Eco-towns**

The Housing Green Paper included provisions for the expansion of the Growth Points Initiative to include the northern regions and the creation of eco-towns across the country.

In late 2007, Expressions of Interest were submitted to Government by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA), Halton and St Helens, Warrington, Liverpool and Wirral, Blackpool and Central Lancashire, and West Cheshire. In addition, a bid was submitted by Carlisle. Eco-town proposals were submitted from East Cheshire, West Cumbria and Carrington in Greater Manchester.

Government will then decide which bids have the potential to deliver sustainable growth and will identify the further work needed to turn the Expression of Interest into a programme of development. Early in 2008, the successful bidders will be invited to produce their programme of development.

Potentially we will need to explore, through the Partial Review, the implications of Growth Points and Eco-towns for the Spatial Strategy. These may impact on a range of key issues covered by the RSS, particularly the review of the housing figures.

### **Renewable Energy**

The Government's draft Climate Change Bill and Energy White Paper set out a framework to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and secure clean and affordable energy supplies. PPS22 guidance states that bringing together resource assessments and criteria-based policies will help to establish targets for regions, and possibly sub-regions, leading to identification of broad areas suitable for renewable energy development.

Draft RSS policies EM15 and EM16 already set out criteria-based policies and targets for the region for renewable energy development. However, RSS needs to include maps of broad areas where the development of particular types of renewable energy may be appropriate, in line with the EiP Panel recommendations.

### **Waste**

The Partial Review will predict the future waste arisings for the various waste streams and apportion by waste planning authority area or sub-region where appropriate, using the recently updated evidence base. PPS10 notes that these figures should provide a 15 to 20 year projection, meaning predictions and associated policy should consider the period up until 2030.

The predicted waste arisings will be used, alongside national government policy on reducing and managing waste, to identify the number and types of facilities required up

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<sup>11</sup> PPS3 requires local authorities to produce, either jointly, or using a consistent methodology, a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/strategichousingmarket>)

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/housing/commission/affordable-housing.pdf> for details of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission.

<sup>13</sup> "Assessing the Rural Content of Regional Spatial and Housing Strategies" Commission for Rural Communities, November 2007. (<http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/assessingtheruralcontentofregionalspatialandhousingstrategies>)

until 2030 and the broad location for their accommodation will be shown. Further work on localities within the broad locations is to be undertaken where necessary at District level.

### ***Gypsies & Travellers and Travelling Showpeople***

The Government has made clear that it views this issue as an integral part of the wider housing agenda to tackle affordability and homelessness issues. The Housing Act 2004 coupled with Planning Circulars 01/2006 and 04/2007, put in place a framework for identifying and providing sites to meet the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community (which includes Travelling Showpeople). In light of this the Partial review will set out separate figures for Gypsy & Travellers and Travelling Showpeople for each district, on the required provision (number of pitches).

### ***Update of Regional Parking Standards***

An undertaking was given during the development of RPG13 to review regional parking standards. Based on research a new set of standards will be set out - intended to be a direct replacement for those in submitted draft of RSS.

### ***Key Service Centres***

The Draft RSS submitted to Government in January 2006 identified Key Service Centres as part of the settlement hierarchy in the North West. This was based primarily on evidence developed by the three County Councils (Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire) as part of the preparation of their respective Structure Plans. Draft RSS did not include the identification of Key Service Centres in Greater Manchester or Merseyside.

The North West Key Service Centres – Roles and Functions report completed for the Assembly in September 2006 provided useful evidence on the way that smaller places within the North West function and interact. The study's focus on functional data was a new approach in the region, and was broadly welcomed. But it was recognised that it only showed how places are used, rather than what facilities were located in each place.

The Examination in Public Report of the Panel recommended that further work should be urgently carried out on this issue to bring together the functional approach and the existing evidence base. The inclusion of this policy issue in the Partial review will implement this recommendation.

### **Who is Responsible?**

The preparation of the Partial Review will make a considerable call on technical and political resources. A partnership approach will be essential for success, drawing on the resources of the Assembly's own staff, together with those of NWDA, GONW, other government agencies, local authorities and other key stakeholders in the Assembly.

The day to day management will be undertaken by Assembly staff as part of the organisation's Regional Planning Body (RPB) and Regional Housing Board responsibilities in accordance with the agreed Business Plan for 2007-2010.

In addition specific aspects will require specialist expertise \ further work to be commissioned from partners or from consultants. The Assembly's contribution to the research identified below will be funded from the Assembly's budget in accordance with the agreed Business Plan for 2007-2010.

In addition the Assembly will seek to work with key stakeholders including the NWDA, Environment Agency, sub regional partners and local authorities, to develop and use a common evidence base. We intend to draw on the useful work that will be underway in parallel with the Partial Review of RSS, on other Regional strategies, notably the Regional Housing Strategy and initial work on the proposed single Regional Strategy (see panel).

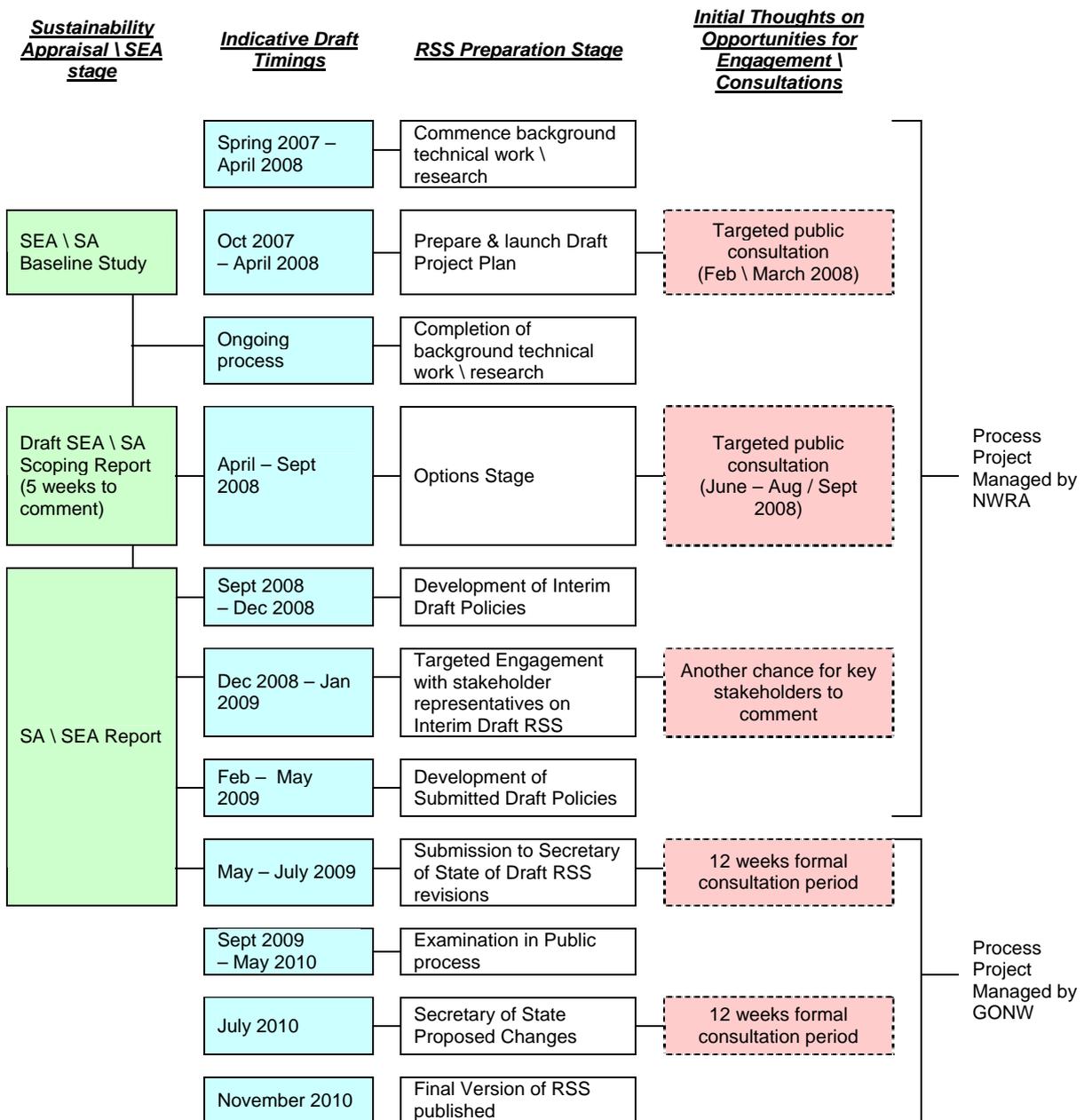
At various stages in the process, there will be a need to get formal member input to ensure regional and sub regional 'buy in'. This will take place within the content of changes to the Assembly governance structures which will take place during 2008. In late 2007, these comprised the full Assembly (which acts as Regional Planning Body), with delegation of most decision making resting with an Executive Board comprising of local authority representatives from each of the five sub-regional areas (Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside) and representatives from the Social, Economic and Environmental Partners (SEEP's). This Executive Board also operates as the Regional Housing Board and Regional Transport Board. This is supported by three member level advisory groups: Regional Planning Group, Regional Housing Group and Regional Transport Group. However the Assembly is currently reviewing its governance structures in light of Government proposals published in July 2007 in the *Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration*. As a consequence, it is anticipated that the Assembly will be replaced by a successor body later in 2008. In accordance with legislation, this successor body would take over the official responsibility for being the Regional Planning Body, Regional Transport Board and Regional Housing Board in the North West. It would use the same staff and other resources, currently available to the Assembly. This successor body would have a governance structure be based on a revised Executive Board, with the same supporting member level advisory groups covering planning, housing, transport and an additional group dealing with economic development.

Therefore the Executive Board will play a pivotal role in the Partial Review to ensure regional and sub regional 'buy in' to the process and the emerging policy. It is recognised that the Executive Board will need to provide regional leadership and make some potentially difficult and hard decisions at key stages in the Partial Review – if the challenges facing the region are to be addressed. Ideally contentious issues will be resolved at an early stage helping to avoid the need for a lengthy Examination in Public and minimise the issues which have to be addressed at the Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications to Draft RSS stage. To do this officers will need to engage with members throughout the Partial Review timetable to get their input into policy development and their endorsement of the principles which underpin the policy.

In addition a supporting RSS Steering Group has been set up. This comprises a small representative group of local authorities and other key stakeholders They will work together with assembly officers to provide a broader reference / sounding board to strategically assist and guide the development and drafting of the RSS options and policy. This will comprise senior officers from local authorities, the Environment Agency, GONW, the NWDA, North West Environment Link, North West Business Leadership Team and North West Rural Affairs Forum.

Under current planning legislation, the Assembly is responsible for managing the process until the Partial Review is sent to the Secretary of State. After this the Government led by the Government Office for the North West (GONW), takes over responsibility [working in partnership with the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on the Examination in Public Stage]. This includes organising and programming the Examination in Public through to the final version of RSS being published.

## Partial Review Timetable



## Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitat Regulation Assessment and Rural Proofing

In undertaking the Partial Review of RSS, the Assembly will take into account a series of appraisals, including a Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a Habitat Regulation Assessment and Rural Proofing.

An important element of the Partial Review process is the **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** incorporating a **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**. The SA \ SEA is required by European and UK law. The aim of the SA \ SEA is to promote better quality of life through sustainable development and assess the likely impact of the strategy. To do this requires the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the Partial Review. It makes sure the National Sustainable Development Strategy and the Regional Sustainable Development

Framework are incorporated from the beginning. The SA \ SEA's purpose is to influence the shape and direction of the Partial Review as it is developing. This includes avoiding the least sustainable options and choices, setting out mitigation measures where adverse

### Summary of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Process

#### Stage A: The production of an SA Scoping Report

This includes:

- setting the context and objectives of the sustainability framework, used to assess the Partial Review;
- gathering of baseline data at a regional level and describing the current and likely future state of the North West; and
- identifying the key sustainability issues and problems.

There is a minimum five week statutory consultation period with sustainability bodies. Following the consultation, a final SA \ SEA Scoping Report is prepared and agreed for use in the Partial Review process.

#### Stage B: Developing and refining options

This includes:

- to appraise the plan and modify the Options as they are developed;
- predicting the social, environmental and economic effects of the Options under consideration using the baseline information. This will be done via one to one discussions with Assembly officer policy leads together with structured appraisal workshops.

As each Option is refined a commentary on the key sustainability issues and problems arising has to be prepared. The focus is on recommendations on how each of the Options could be improved.

#### Stage C: Preparation of the SA \ SEA Report

Subsequently a detailed assessment of the detailed policies will be undertaken in the SA \ SEA Report. This will form an integral part of the Draft RSS revisions submitted to the Secretary of State. It must also clearly show that the SEA Directive requirements have been met.

#### Stage D: Consultation on the Revision and SA \ SEA Report, led by GONW

Following submission to the Secretary of State, subsequent stages of the SA \ SEA are carried out by GONW.

#### Stage E:

This is concerned with monitoring and responding to adverse effects which is the responsibility of the Assembly

impacts will be caused, and proposing monitoring of the significant effects in implementing the RSS. Integral within this process will be an equality and diversity audit.

A framework for how the SA \ SEA will be undertaken will be published, as a first step, to ensure that all partners can see how the process will be undertaken.

Under a Directive of the European Union, the Assembly is required to undertake a **Habitat Regulation Assessment** (HRA). The purpose of the HRA is to assess the impacts of the Partial Review against the conservation objectives of the European habitat sites within the North West and beyond, and to ascertain that the Partial Review does not adversely affect the integrity of any of these sites. The HRA for the Partial Review will build on the HRA which was undertaken as part of the full review of RSS.

**Rural Proofing** is the process by which strategies, plans and policies are evaluated for their impact on rural areas and those who live and work in the countryside, to ensure that rural needs and issues are not overlooked. It also assesses the different impacts that a strategy or policy might have in rural areas compared to elsewhere. The Rural Proofing will be undertaken as an integral part of the Sustainability Appraisal \ Strategic Environmental Assessment.

In addition the SA \ SEA will also take account of best practice and include an **Equality Impact Assessment** and a **Health Impact Assessment**.

### Technical & Research Work

Once the issues were identified for the Partial Review, a series of technical studies were commissioned to help provide background analysis to assist their consideration. These studies were intended to supplement technical material already available.

#### ***Identification of Sub-Regional Housing Market Areas Research***

In September 2007 the North West Regional Assembly commissioned Nevin Leather Associates, in partnership with Inner City Solutions and University of Sheffield, to identify sub-regional Housing Market Areas across the North West.

The work will be completed in early 2008 and will provide the Assembly with a regional understanding of the Housing Market Areas in the North West, based on evidence related to travel to work patterns, migration and housing market outcomes (house prices)<sup>14</sup>. In doing so it builds upon the existing work being done across the North West by sub regional partners.

#### ***Strategic Housing Market Assessments<sup>15</sup>***

Building on the identification of Housing Market Areas, the Assembly will commission work in early 2008 to undertake Assessments for each of the Housing Market Areas in the region. The Assessments will provide the Assembly with an understanding of the housing needs within each market area, covering a range of issues including estimates of total future number of households, current number of households, future households requiring affordable housing, the size of affordable housing and an estimate of the household groups who have particular housing requirements.

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/identifyingsubregionalhousing>

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/strategichousingmarket>

The methodology for the assessments will follow the guidance published by CLG in August 2007. The work will be completed in May 2008. This work will take into account existing work being undertaken by sub regional partners.

### ***Housing and Economic Growth in the North West Study***

This is joint study being undertaken in partnership with NWDA. It will explore the relationship between economic growth and the need and demand for housing. Methodologies for determining levels of housing provision have traditionally used forecasts or scenarios of economic growth to calculate the scale of housing required. This research will aim to complete that circle by understanding the implications of growing and changing housing markets on economic growth. This will help us to develop a more rounded understanding of how the economy and housing impact on each other. The work will be completed in February 2008.

### ***Housing Need and Demand Study 2008***

The North West Regional Assembly will commission work to generate estimates of future household need and demand across the region based on economic growth forecasts. [In doing so we will build upon and use the common evidence base on economic growth forecasts that the NWDA is currently developing with sub regional partnerships.] This will provide one part of a wider evidence base for the revision of housing figures as part of the Partial Review. We anticipate commissioning this work in March 2008.

As part of the review of the Regional Housing Strategy the Assembly is commissioning work on a model to estimate the need for supported housing services across the region. Assembly officers are considering how that work can be tied into the modelling work for district based housing figures to develop a more sophisticated approach to housing provision across the region. This work is due to be completed in early summer 2008.

### ***Household Projections and Formal Guidance from Government on the ranges of housing provision required over the next 15 to 20 year period, which will need to be tested during the RSS Partial Review process***

It is anticipated that a revised set of 2004 based sub national household projections will be published by the Government in early Spring 2008. Subsequently, the Government in line with the proposals in the Housing Green Paper, will provide formal guidance at the start of the RSS preparation process on the ranges of housing provision required over the next 15 to 20 year period, which will need to be tested during the RSS Partial Review process. This formal guidance will be based on advice from the National Housing & Planning Advice Unit<sup>16</sup>.

### ***Renewable Energy***

The Assembly is commissioning research (due to be completed in May 2008) to identify broad areas at the regional and sub-regional level where development of particular types of renewable energy may be considered appropriate incorporating the following core tasks:

- assessment of the existing capacity, broad potential and constraints for renewable energy resources;
- assessment of the future energy demand and the progress against draft and recommended renewable energy targets;
- produce a clear set of criteria for the development of renewable energy;

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<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/nhpau/>

- identify broad areas for the development of renewable energy resources; and
- undertake a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment of the study findings.

### **Waste**

PPS10 requires RSS to consider the need for additional waste management capacity of regional or sub-regional significance and identify the broad locations where the pattern of waste management facilities should be accommodated. To address this requirement the Assembly commissioned a study to identify the pattern of waste management facilities and broad locations for sites of national, regional and sub-regional significance in the North West.

The NWRTAB prepared (and the NWRA published) the 3<sup>rd</sup> Waste Management Monitoring Report in August 2007<sup>17</sup>. It provides the latest overview of the implementation of key actions and progress towards the objectives and targets in the Regional Waste Strategy. The RTAB 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report will provide the latest data for inclusion in the evidence base to inform the partial review.

### **Gypsies & Travellers and Travelling Showpeople**

In July 2006, the Assembly commissioned SHUSU from the University of Salford, to undertake a major research project into assessing Gypsy & Travellers accommodation and other service requirements & provision in the North West in the period up to 2016. This was complemented by two more detailed sub regional studies in Cheshire & Lancashire which were commissioned concurrently in partnership with local authorities in both those areas. These three studies were published in July 2007 and can be accessed on the Assembly website<sup>18</sup>.

The overarching objective of all three studies was to inform the future reviews of Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), Regional Housing Strategy (RHS), Supporting People Strategies, Local Development Frameworks (LDF) and Local Housing Strategies across the North West. This research will inform planners and other officers working in a range of regional and local stakeholder organisations in the North West, about the current and future accommodation needs and demands of Gypsy and Travellers, and the need for the provision of other services to support Gypsy and Travellers.

The studies also made use of the findings of regional research commissioned by the Showman's Guild into the specific needs of the Travelling Showpeople community in the North West.

In Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, work is currently underway on more detailed sub regional studies. These have been commissioned by the relevant Local Authorities, to provide information to build upon and complement the North West, Cheshire and Lancashire studies. These studies are due to be completed by March 2008.

### **Update of Regional Parking Standards**

During 2007, Mouchel Parkman (now Mouchel) carried out research for the Assembly to develop a new, updated set of standards supported by an evidence base. This was completed December 2007<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> See [http://www.nwra.gov.uk/downloads/documents/aug\\_07/nwra\\_1187877520\\_3rd\\_Waste\\_Management\\_Monitorin.pdf](http://www.nwra.gov.uk/downloads/documents/aug_07/nwra_1187877520_3rd_Waste_Management_Monitorin.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> See [http://www.nwra.gov.uk/documents/?page\\_id=4&category\\_id=78](http://www.nwra.gov.uk/documents/?page_id=4&category_id=78)

<sup>19</sup> See [http://www.nwra.gov.uk/documents/?page\\_id=4&category\\_id=205](http://www.nwra.gov.uk/documents/?page_id=4&category_id=205)

## Key Service Centres

The North West Key Service Centres – Roles and Functions report<sup>20</sup> completed for the Assembly in September 2006 provided useful evidence on the way that smaller places within the North West function and interact. The study's focus on functional data was a new approach in the region, and was broadly welcomed, but it was recognised that it doesn't provide a comprehensive evidence base. Because the study focused on functional data there were limitations to the topics which could be covered. For example public services (schools, health care facilities, post offices and so on) have no readily available related functional data which show how people use those services.

Subsequently work has been done to identify spatial data relating to these other services, which will be followed up by sub-regional workshops to work towards a more comprehensive definition of key service centres in the North West.

## Contextual Information on Environmental Capacity

In addition in developing the various policy themes, the Assembly will take account of various pieces of ongoing work being undertaken by other stakeholders which provides contextual information on environmental capacity, flood risk assessment and infrastructure capacity.

## Alignment with Other Regional Strategies

The North West RSS is one of a range of strategies and programmes that aim to shape the future of the North West and, as such, affect the life of people in the Region. The role of the RSS is to provide a long term spatial planning framework for these other strategies and programmes. It is essential that all these strategies and programmes, including the RSS, match each other and pull in the same direction. Otherwise resources may be wasted and the Region's ability to deliver sustainable development will be compromised.

Therefore, in revising the RSS, consideration needs to be given to other regional strategies and programmes. It is important that the Partial Review, both shapes and is shaped by those strategies and programmes. Working in partnership is key to this, and details of how we propose to work with partners are set out below (see Involvement of Community and Partnership Working, see page 20).

### Proposal to develop a Single Regional Strategy

In July 2007, the Government published a *Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration*. Among other things, the Government proposes to bring together the RSS and the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) into a single integrated Regional Strategy for each of the English regions. It is also proposed to give the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) the responsibility for developing the single integrated Regional Strategy, working closely with local authorities and other partners. The statutory functions of Regional Assemblies with respect to the RSS would be transferred to the RDAs.

However, until these proposals are implemented (which will require primary legislation), the responsibilities in respect of the RSS will stay with the Assembly which will continue with bringing forward the Partial Review of RSS. The Assembly will work closely with GONW, Northwest Regional Development Agency (the RDA for the North West) and others to ensure that any changes in responsibilities occur in a smooth and orderly way and continue to allow regional partners and communities a strong input into the Partial Review of RSS.

<sup>20</sup> See [http://www.nwra.gov.uk/documents/?page\\_id=4&category\\_id=172](http://www.nwra.gov.uk/documents/?page_id=4&category_id=172)

## Risk

The key risk to delivery is slippage in the project timetable. In this respect there will need to be some degree of flexibility and revision to the timetable and project plan to reflect changing situations during the process. However significant slippage in the timetable is not tenable, given the Governments deadlines set out in the Housing Green Paper for the delivery of the Partial Review by 2011, and the knock on effects on Local Development Framework timetables. Progress against the work programme set out in this draft project plan will be subject to Assembly Director level review on an ongoing basis. By focusing on a limited number of issues and using external consultancy expertise to support and project manage the engagement process including the use of e-governance techniques, should ensure that the stages up to the submission of the draft RSS are managed by the Assembly in accordance with the timetable set out. To support this, as identified earlier, we will use the Executive Board to provide the necessary regional leadership

The timetable for the Partial Review of RSS is founded on the need for RSS to be based on solid evidence and to be prepared with effective input from key stakeholders. The timetable proposed will enable a better product to be delivered and is more likely to engender more widespread support for the draft RSS. The RSS is founded on an inclusive and consensus building preparation process. Time invested upfront on getting a better and shared evidence base alongside engagement with stakeholders, should reduce disputes later and will help to achieve better alignment with other regional strategies. However there is a need to maintain separation between the preparation of the evidence base and the development of policy. Policy considerations and disputes about minor details should not be allowed to delay the publication of research, although it is of course vital to ensure that the evidence base is robust. The Assembly officers will need to manage stakeholder expectations and engagement to ensure research is delivered on time as planned. There is also the danger that other stakeholders may not agree with the evidence base being used by the Assembly and may commission / use an alternative evidence base to underpin their input into the RSS process and their own strategy development at a sub regional or local level, which then may not conform with RSS or other regional strategies.

One of the key inputs into the evidence base on developing district housing numbers will be the publication of the revised 2004 based sub national household projections which are due to be published by Government in Spring 2008. Subsequent to this the National Housing & Planning Advice Unit will be producing further advice to the Government and the region concerning market housing affordability. Any delays by the Government in publishing these projections will have a consequential knock-on effect to the delivery of the critical path of the Partial Review process. In such circumstances Assembly officers will need to enter into dialogue with GONW and NWDA to ensure that the timetable is revised accordingly.

The audience for the Partial Review will be diverse – ranging from: Gypsies and Travellers; Travelling Showpeople; planning, housing, transport, energy and waste practitioners; elected members, key stakeholders, implementation agencies and all those interested in the future of the North West. A particular challenge will be to thoroughly engage with the Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople communities and to encourage their active participation in the Partial Review. This will require the use of specialist engagement techniques (see below).

However, it may well not be possible to achieve full consensus on all issues. It will be important for stakeholders to acknowledge this and recognise that there are a number of opportunities to input into the preparation of RSS and influence its final content including the Examination in Public process. In order to ensure the efficient preparation of the RSS, we will maximise the opportunities to make effective use of focused engagement via

existing key stakeholder groupings and sub regional partnerships in a variety of appropriate ways.

As set out earlier, it should be noted that the Assembly is currently reviewing its governance structures in light of Government proposals published in July 2007 in the *Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration*. Under this, it is proposed to ultimately give the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) the responsibility for developing a single integrated Regional Strategy (which will replace RSS and RES), working closely with local authorities and other partners. As part of this the statutory functions of Regional Assemblies with respect to the RSS would be transferred to the RDAs. However, until these proposals are implemented (which will require primary legislation), the responsibilities in respect of the RSS will stay with the Assembly (or its successor body) which will continue with bringing forward the Partial Review of RSS. The key risk that the Partial Review faces from this is twofold:

- inertia in political decision making \ governance structure during transfer of functions between organisations or restructuring of organisations;
- loss of professional staff expertise \ resource as NWRA staff may decide to leave the organisation during this transitional period.

*(Nb the Government is proposing an amendment to the Planning Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, aimed at encouraging closer working between the Regional Assembly and RDA. This interim enabling measure will allow the Regional Planning Body to delegate all or part of its functions to the RDA, where both parties agree. Hence this should provide an alternative practical solution, in the event that there is loss of key Assembly personnel during the transition).*

Even now in the run up to primary legislation being brought forward to facilitate the Government proposals, the Assembly are working closely with NWDA on preliminary work to create a single regional strategy for the North West and to ensure that any work undertaken on the partial Review will complement and feed into this process. If there is a loss of professional expertise and resource within the Assembly it will be important for other key stakeholders for example NWDA, sub regions and GONW to provide additional resources to make up any shortfall in capacity, for example by establishing joint working arrangements, considering use of secondments of staff etc.

In addition the Government are proposing to reorganise Local Government in Cheshire to create two unitary authorities by 2009, which would replace a current 2 tier system of local authorities. Inevitably there will be some uncertainty during the next few years which may impact on the ability for Cheshire local authorities to fully participate in the process.

As noted above, the Assembly is only responsible for project managing part of the process. It is, hoped that Government can then efficiently progress the remaining stages of process, so that the final version of the strategy can be in place by end of 2010. In this respect working with partners in the region we will be using every opportunity in the future to simplify, speed things up and, most importantly, argue that Government needs to speed up its part of the process, while still ensuring that the process is inclusive, comprehensive and robust. GONW and the Planning Inspectorate must ensure adequate staff and other resources are put in place to facilitate this. To help achieve this we will seek the early and ongoing involvement of both the Planning Inspectorate and GONW in the process, so that there is continuity throughout the timetable.

The timetable for the post submission stages of the process are based on guidance in PPS11. However the volume and complexity of the formal responses made during the these stages are currently unknown and potentially could cause slippage in the process. GONW and the Planning Inspectorate will need to ensure that sufficient resource capacity, procedures and support facilities including ICT resources are put in place to deal with such situations.

## Involvement of Community and Partnership Working

The aim of consultation and participation is to ensure that the preparation and drafting of the RSS will be informed by as many key stakeholders as possible, so that the final Submitted Draft RSS reflects the needs of the region, is technically robust, based on sound information, and has wide support. To effectively do so it will be necessary to ensure engagement is targeted to key stakeholders, maximising the use of stakeholder forums where appropriate

Some guiding principles underpin the Assembly's approach to consultation and participation (see box). These principles will run through all consultation and participation carried out during the RSS process. They show that while the Assembly is planning to meet

national guidelines for consultation and participation, it is also striving to make the process even more open and inclusive. In addition the Assembly has sought to embrace the Government's initiative to roll out e-planning using Information Communications and Technology (ICT).

### *Partnership Working*

Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1)<sup>21</sup> sets out the Government's key principles and objectives for delivering sustainable development within the planning system. It highlights the importance of community involvement in the development plan process. Moreover, PPS1 refers to the Government's overall approach to community involvement, which is set out in *Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's Objectives* (ODPM 2004)<sup>22</sup>.

#### Participation and consultation principles

- Maximise the opportunity for as many stakeholders as possible to inform the preparation of the RSS, including those who would not normally have their voices heard;
- Focus our resources on the existing networks and forums that are in place at the regional and sub-regional level and particularly those with whom the Assembly is already working, ensuring that the networking links of those regional and sub-regional groups are used to connect to the local level;
- Recognise the difference between sharing **information**, carrying out **consultation** and supporting **participation**;
- Provide good quality, accessible and relevant information throughout the preparation of the RSS;
- Provide identifiable opportunities for consultation at regular intervals in which clear questions are asked and after which consultees who respond are told how their responses have been taken into account and what are the next steps;
- Provide opportunities for meaningful and active participation in the drafting of RSS which are followed up so that participants are clear about the difference that their participation has made;
- Reflect the guidance in Planning Policy Statements 1 (PPS1) and 11 (PPS11) and in doing so seek to move towards more participatory planning at a regional level;
- Meet the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA) with regards to consultation; and
- Manage the process of preparing the RSS and the implementation of this consultation and participation plan carefully so that we can meet the expectations of the stakeholders in the time period that we have been given by Government for preparing the draft RSS.

<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147393>

<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/communityinvolvement>

In accordance with legislation, the Assembly will consult with the ‘Specific Consultation Bodies’<sup>23</sup> which are, in the opinion of the Assembly, likely to be affected by the development of the RSS. They include:

- Local Planning Authorities, both those within and adjoining the region;
- County Councils, both those within and adjoining the region;
- Parish & Town Councils, within and adjoining the region – individually and via the County Associations;
- Regional Planning Bodies for the adjoining regions;
- Natural England;
- English Heritage;
- Environment Agency;
- DfT Rail;
- Regional Development Agencies, both within and adjoining the region;
- Regional Strategic Health Authorities;
- Utilities suppliers – telecoms, water, sewerage, electricity, gas.

In addition, the Assembly will consult the ‘general consultation bodies’ who are considered to be to be appropriate. Annex D of PPS11, sets out a list of such bodies, including community groups, and environmental, social and economic organisations. The Assembly will endeavour to engage with hard to reach groups, ensuring that the development of the RSS is an open and inclusive process. Engaging with hard to reach groups, including racial, ethnic or national groups, disabled persons, religious groups and the business and voluntary sectors, is one of the key targets outlined by the government for any consultation and participation process<sup>24</sup>.

Partnership working is seen as an ongoing process, and although it is important to highlight the need for it during the RSS review, the Assembly has been working closely with the key stakeholders prior to the launch of the RSS process, and will continue to do so throughout the development of RSS.

#### *Political Decision Making Arrangements*

At various stages in the process, there will be a need to get formal member input. This will take place within the current Assembly governance structures (for more details, see Who is Responsible section, page 10).

It should be noted that the Assembly is currently reviewing its governance structures in light of Government proposals published in July 2007 in the *Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration*. Under this, it is proposed to ultimately give the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) the responsibility for developing a single integrated Regional Strategy (which will replace RSS and RES), working closely with local authorities and other partners. As part of this the statutory functions of Regional Assemblies with respect to the RSS would be transferred to the RDAs. However, until these proposals are implemented (which will require primary legislation), the responsibilities in respect of the RSS will stay with the Assembly (or its successor body) which will continue with bringing forward the Partial Review of RSS.

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<sup>23</sup> Regulation 2 & 11 of Statutory Instrument No.2203; Town and Country Planning, England: The Town and Country Planning (Regional Planning) (England) Regulations 2004

<sup>24</sup> See paragraph 1.2 in Community Involvement in Planning: The Government’s Objectives (ODPM 2004) and paragraph 30 of Annex D of PPS11

## Planning Aid

Planning Aid provides free, independent and professional town planning advice and support to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to pay planning consultant fees. Planning Aid also works with communities to help them understand and play a role in the planning process. Planning Aid is not part of central or local government, but is an independent source of advice and information. It complements the work of the Assembly, but is wholly independent of the Assembly.

North West Planning Aid works with people and communities to help them influence changes to their local areas. This support includes helping people to:

- ~ Understand and use the planning system
- ~ Participate in preparing plans
- ~ Prepare their own plans for the future of their community
- ~ Comment on planning applications
- ~ Apply for planning permission or appeal against refusal of permission
- ~ Represent themselves at public inquiries \ Examinations in Public.

With Planning Aid's help, community groups will be in a better position to positively influence the areas in which they live.

Planning Aid has a helpline staffed by a qualified Planner is available three days a week for people needing planning advice in the North West. Initial advice will be given to all callers but those who can afford to pay or who will benefit financially from their planning application will be referred on to a planning consultant. A list of Planning Consultants can be found on the RTPI website at: [www.rtpiconsultants.co.uk](http://www.rtpiconsultants.co.uk). If you are eligible for further help, they will then pass your case over to one of Planning Aid's national network of volunteers who will work with you.

To find out if you are eligible for Planning Aid assistance, please contact the North West Planning Aid Planning Advice Helpline: 0870 850 9804. (9am to 5pm - Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, answerphone available at other times). Email: [nwcw@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:nwcw@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk).

## Engagement Methodologies

We will endeavour to conduct the RSS process in an open and inclusive manner, which encourages feedback through comments and suggestions, and promotes active participation in the drafting of the strategy, as outlined in the consultation and participation principles. To assist in this process, the Assembly have employed specialist consultant expertise and support from CAG Consultants.

The Assembly will largely engage with the region's key stakeholders using a combination of an innovative on-line web based consultation and complementary workshops. Although there is a perception that an online consultation is biased against those without a computer or those who cannot use a computer, the Assembly feels this is the most effective way of collecting and collating responses. Special arrangements will be put in place for those who do not have access to the Internet to receive and make responses via paper copies. Please contact us for further details.

In addition special arrangements will be put in place to ensure appropriate methods are used to engage with representatives of both the Gypsy & Traveller community and the Travelling Showpeople community.

*Website* - <http://www.northwestplanpartialreview.org.uk/>

The online consultation will be run by consultants on behalf of the Assembly. A dedicated Partial Review website will be set up to handle all the consultation right through the development process, which will be accessible from the Assembly's own website. As well as hosting the consultation questionnaires,, the website will be a key tool in providing information on the development of the RSS process. Stakeholders will be able to register at the beginning of the process and then download and submit information at the appropriate times throughout the development of the RSS. Once registered, stakeholders

will also be able to opt into a feedback process, through which they will receive newsletters and reminders at key stages in the process. Use of the website should ensure speedy collation and dissemination of the full text of all responses made. The full text of responses, that will be available on the web site, will include responses from all elements of the consultation.

Although the process will be open to anyone to take part, we will focus upon and encourage the participation of a range of individuals and organisations with a specific interest in the topics being covered. They will be invited by letter to register to participate in the ongoing web based consultation exercise, and will receive regular newsletters and updates throughout the process. In addition the Assembly's regional planning directorate website will be used to provide background information, links to the partial review website and updates on current progress with the preparation of RSS.

### *Workshops*

During the development process of the RSS a number of workshops and stakeholder events will take place. Workshops are an effective way to encourage active engagement, enabling the Assembly to bring together a number of stakeholders from varying technical backgrounds, fostering a more holistic and overarching discussion and comments to complement the written representations. Workshops will also enable the Assembly to consult hard to reach groups and provide opportunities for mediation. The facilitation of all workshops and events will be organised and conducted by specialist consultants in conjunction with the Assembly.

To ensure that the workshops are accessible and inclusive we will ensure that a range of venues and locations are used across the region and encourage stakeholders who register to inform us of any special needs.

### *Media*

The Assembly plans to use a variety of media, including regional and local press and planning journals to publicise work on the RSS, particularly during formal consultation periods. To compliment these formal routes and to increase our reach into community level organisations we will also work towards using a variety of more community based media including local authority newspapers and Council of Voluntary Service newsletters.

### *Providing Feedback*

As defined in the Assembly's consultation and participation principles, the Assembly is committed to providing feedback on how comments will be considered, including formal reports on consultations. At each stage, the formal reports will be summarised in a more informal newsletter that includes the key points on the development of the RSS. These newsletters will be available electronically and in paper formats.

These reports, and other information, will be available on the Assembly website or via the Assembly directly, for each of the major stages of consultation during the development of the RSS. Paper copies of reports and newsletters will also be available in local libraries and stakeholders who have registered on the partial review website will receive electronic newsletters directly.

### *Stakeholder meetings, seminars and events*

The Assembly will make use of additional meetings with the key stakeholders in the North West to help develop the RSS. These will include those arranged and organised by the

Assembly, as well as those organised by third parties who have an interest in the RSS process.

As part of ensuring specific groups have the opportunity to comment consultants will work with the communities to develop a peer interviewing programme. Through which trained community members will use the consultation questionnaires with other community members to ensure their views are captured.

### *Sustainability Appraisal*

As well as focusing on consultation and participation, the Assembly will also take account of the feedback made on sustainability issues surrounding the RSS via a sustainability appraisal and strategic environmental assessment. The Assembly will commission independent consultants to carry out the appraisal as an integrated part of the RSS process, with feedback given at every stage of the development.

### *Free phone line – tel. 0800 389 4246*

A dedicated free phone number will be available to stakeholders throughout the partial review. The phone line can be used to seek out information, request copies of forms, reports and other paper information. If stakeholder cannot access any of the other more detailed consultation methods the free phone line can also be used to input comments.

### *Opportunities for Consultation*

There will be a number of opportunities to submit representation during the development of the RSS, as seen in the table below and outlined in the following sections.

Awareness raising, preparation of information, issues consultation and discussions with identified groups, forums and partnerships	Ongoing
Project and other Reference Groups set up, technical work commissioned and undertaken	Spring 2007 – April 2008
Drafting of options for key elements of RSS	January - June 2008
Consultation on options for key strategic elements of RSS	June - August 2008
Drafting of RSS	September 2008 – December 2008
Informal consultation on interim draft of RSS	December 2008 – June 2009
Formal consultation on Draft RSS (following submission of the Draft to Government)	July – September 2009
Examination in Public	Spring 2010
Formal consultation on proposed changes arising from the Panel Report	Summer \ Autumn 2010

## What does that Technical Jargon Mean?

<b>CLG – Department for Communities &amp; Local Government</b>	Central Government department responsible for planning, including RSS's.
<b>Development Plan</b>	Statutory planning documents for the development and use of land and buildings in an area, consisting of the RSS and the policies and proposals prepared by local planning authorities, see <i>Local Development Framework</i> .
<b>Draft Project Plan</b>	The Draft Project Plan sets out how the Assembly proposes to conduct the Partial review of the North West RSS, see <i>Project Plan</i> .
<b>EiP – Examination in Public</b>	Planning regulations require an Examination in Public following the submission of the Draft RSS to the Secretary of State. The purpose of an EiP is to provide an opportunity for public discussion and testing of the Draft RSS policies before a panel of inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State.
<b>GONW – Government Office for the North West</b>	Based in Liverpool and Manchester, the Government body representing a range of central Government departments and responsible for delivering government policy in the Region. It aims to help people understand how government policy affects them and informs Ministers on the Region's needs.  It is responsible for project managing the later stages of the Partial Review after the submission of the Draft RSS to the Secretary of State.
<b>HRA – Habitat Regulation Assessment</b>	Formal process of assessing the impacts of the Partial Review of the RSS Revision against the conservation objectives of the European habitat sites within the North West and beyond, and to ascertain that the Partial Review does not adversely affect the integrity of any of these sites.
<b>Local Development Framework</b>	Planning documents prepared by local planning authorities which have to be in general conformity with the North West RSS.
<b>Mitigate</b>	To make sure the possible negative impacts of development are reduced.
<b>NHPAU - National Housing &amp; Planning Advice Unit</b>	A Government body of housing experts to give advice on future housing needs across the country.
<b>North West Regional Assembly (NWRA)</b>	Responsible for developing and co-ordinating a strategic vision for the Region. It is made up of 80 members drawn from all local authorities across the Region along with business and other sector representatives. It is the Regional Planning Body.  It is currently reviewing its governance structures in light of Government proposals published in July 2007 in the <i>Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration</i> .
<b>North West RSS</b>	RSS for the North West prepared by the Assembly and published by the Secretary of State.
<b>NWDA – Northwest Regional Development Agency</b>	The Regional Development Agency for the North West. NWDA's role is to lead the sustainable economic development of the Region, working alongside a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector partners. NWDA is responsible for preparing the North West Regional Economic Strategy (RES).

<b>Options</b>	Different choices about possible new or revised RSS policies that are proposed to guide development across the North West. The Options are for public consultation and, the comments and suggestions received by stakeholders will inform the development of the detailed policies in the Draft RSS submitted to the Secretary of State .
<b>Partial Review of RSS</b>	The process of preparing revised or new policies in the North West RSS to develop and improve the strategy.
<b>Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004</b>	Law which sets out the legal framework for the statutory planning system, including RSS's. This Act updates elements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
<b>PPS3 - Planning Policy Statement 3</b>	Issued by central Government, this document sets out the national planning policies for housing, which regional planning bodies and local authorities should take into account in developing regional spatial strategies and local development frameworks.
<b>PPS11 – Planning Policy Statement 11</b>	Issued by central Government, this document provides policy and guidance for developing, implementing, monitoring and revising RSS's. It also contains advice on the arrangements for revising RSS's, including public consultation.
<b>Project Plan</b>	The Project Plan describes to stakeholders and the public how the Partial Review of RSS will be carried out and what topics will be considered. It guides the Partial Review process and the development of revised or new policies in the RSS.
<b>RES - Regional Economic Strategy</b>	Document prepared by Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) that sets out what the Region needs to do to improve its economic performance.
<b>RHS – Regional Housing Strategy</b>	Strategy providing a framework for housing investment in the Region and aims to reinforce the principles of Urban and Rural Regeneration as set out in the RSS.
<b>RPB – Regional Planning Body</b>	The North West Regional Assembly is the Regional Planning Body for the North West and as such charged with revising, implementing and monitoring the North West RSS.
<b>RPG – Regional Planning Guidance</b>	A forerunner to the Regional Spatial Strategy <i>see below</i> .
<b>RSS – Regional Spatial Strategy</b>	A statutory planning framework to show how the Region should develop over the next 20 years or so. Among other things, it identifies the scale and distribution of new housing, indicates areas for regeneration and specifies priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals and waste management.
<b>Rural Proofing</b>	The process by which strategies, plans and policies are evaluated for their impact on those who live and work in the countryside, to ensure that rural needs are not overlooked. It also assesses the different impacts that a strategy or policy might have in rural areas compared to elsewhere.
<b>SA – Sustainability Appraisal</b>	A formal assessment to consider the social, environmental and economic impacts of the Partial Review of RSS. The SA is carried out in a way so that it also incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment, assessing the potential impact of the Partial Review of RSS on the environment.
<b>SEA – Strategic Environmental Assessment</b>	The process of assessing plans, programmes and strategies for their environmental impact.

<b>Secretary of State</b>	The Government Minister responsible for all policies relating to Town and Country Planning, including the publications of the Regional Spatial Strategy. Currently this is the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.
<b>Spatial Planning</b>	Spatial Planning brings together, and integrates, policies on land use with other guidance designed to influence the nature of places and how they function.
<b>Stakeholders</b>	Organisations and representative bodies who have an involvement or interest in the development of the Region, including the Regional Spatial Strategy.
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	This is about meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the needs of future generations. Aims to find a balance between social, economic and environmental objectives.

## Contact Us

North West Plan Partial Review  
 Planning, Transport & Housing Directorate  
 North West Regional Assembly  
 Wigan Investment Centre  
 Waterside Drive  
 WIGAN  
 WN3 5BA

Website: <http://www.northwestplanpartialreview.org.uk/>

Director of Planning, Transport & Housing - Michael Gallagher

Overall the Partial Review will be project managed by Michael Gallagher, Director of Planning, Transport & Housing and Duncan McCorquodale, Regional Spatial Planning Manager

Each stream is being led by an Assembly officer who acts as a “policy lead”

<p><b>Sub-regional Housing Market Areas Revision of District Housing Figures Growth Points and Eco-towns</b></p>	<p><b>Renewable Energy</b></p>
<p>Rebecca Rutter                      Tel: 01942 776722                      Email: <a href="mailto:Rebecca.rutter@nwra.gov.uk">Rebecca.rutter@nwra.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Duncan McCorquodale                      Tel: 01942 776729                      Email: <a href="mailto:duncan.mccorquodale@nwra.gov.uk">duncan.mccorquodale@nwra.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Waste</b></p>	<p><b>Gypsies &amp; Travellers Travelling Showpeople</b></p>
<p>Paul Entwistle                      Tel: 01942 776746                      Email: <a href="mailto:paul.entwistle@nwra.gov.uk">paul.entwistle@nwra.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Michael Gallagher                      Tel: 01942 737 921                      Email: <a href="mailto:michael.gallagher@nwra.gov.uk">michael.gallagher@nwra.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Regional Transport Priorities</b></p>	<p><b>Update of Regional Car Parking Standards</b></p>
<p>Dave Colbert                      Tel: 01942 776721                      Email: <a href="mailto:david.colbert@nwra.gov.uk">david.colbert@nwra.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Dave Whyte                      Tel: 01942 776720                      Email: <a href="mailto:dave.whyte@nwra.gov.uk">dave.whyte@nwra.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Key Service Centres</b></p>	<p><b>Sustainability Appraisal \ Strategic Environmental Assessment</b></p>
<p>Andrew Ashall                      Tel: 01942 776932                      Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.ashall@nwra.gov.uk">andrew.ashall@nwra.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Debra Holroyd                      Tel: 01942 737917                      Email: <a href="mailto:debra.holroyd@nwra.gov.uk">debra.holroyd@nwra.gov.uk</a></p>