

Appendix A: Extract from Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to Draft Revision to Regional Spatial Strategy (2006)

Policy SS4: Development in Towns other than Key Centres and in Rural Areas

Local development documents should define the approach to development in towns other than those listed in policy SS3, and in rural areas. Such towns will include selected market towns and other towns with the potential to increase their economic and social sustainability through measures to:

- i) support urban and rural renaissance;
- ii) secure appropriate amounts of new housing, including affordable housing, and
- iii) local employment and other facilities; and
- iv) improve the town's accessibility, especially by public transport.

They should also consider the potential of other key service centres to accommodate development which is sympathetic to local character and of an appropriate scale and nature in relation to local housing and employment needs. For other rural settlements they should seek to support the continued viability of agriculture and other economic activities such as tourism, the diversification of the economy, the provision of housing for local needs and the sustainability of local services.

The RSS seeks to locate the majority of new development in and adjacent to the Key Centres for Development and Change, and to protect the quality and character of the region's rural areas. However, within that broad approach, policy SS4 recognises the role of market towns and larger villages in providing employment and services to their rural hinterlands and meeting housing needs.

Key service centres are large villages with a good level of services, which might include:

- a primary school within the settlement and a secondary school within the settlement or easily
- accessible by public transport;
- primary health care facilities;
- a range of retail and service provision capable of meeting day-to-day needs, in particular for
- convenience shopping;
- local employment opportunities; and
- frequent public transport to higher order settlements.

Many villages have very limited local services and are dependent on key service centres, market towns and main urban areas for everyday needs. The main challenges are securing smallscale local employment opportunities and

supporting the needs of agriculture, improving public transport access to higher order settlements, providing housing for the full range of local needs and supporting the sustainability of local services. The growth of villages has been unable to halt the closure of village services and commuting has increased dramatically. Careful examination of how a settlement or groups of settlements function is required, as well as analysis of the service base, to determine the best solutions for each area.

There is an acute shortage of affordable housing in many rural areas. Responding to this challenge is a priority if significant sectors of the community are not to be excluded by high house prices. The provision of new homes in market and other towns can increase support for services such as schools, health facilities and shops. In the context of maintaining and improving the self sufficiency of such towns, local authorities should seek to achieve an improved housing-employment balance to minimise commuting. Other rural settlements, including small villages, may have local housing needs that can best be met at those settlements rather than concentrating all housing at towns and key service centres, but care should be taken to ensure new development is directed to locations where it will have the greatest benefits for rural sustainability.