

**Matter 4b / Government Office for the South East of
England (7447)**

Draft RSS for The South East of England -The South East Plan
Examination in Public - November 2006 to March 2007
Written Statement on behalf of HM Government - October 2006

4B.1 Does the draft RSS provide appropriate guidance on the type and size of new housing (Policy H6)?

1. The draft RSS reflects the importance of good evidence of local housing needs and providing a mix of new housing. In addition to assessing those currently in housing need, these decisions need to be informed by how the demand for housing is likely to change over time, ie rather than simply looking to address current needs decisions on new housing should be influenced by the type and mix of housing needed to deliver a thriving sustainable community over the long-term. The Panel might like to consider whether the draft RSS might say more on the need for a strategic approach to provision of housing for older households which can free up family housing. This can be advantageous in terms of land use/density as well as being an effective way of providing a range of support needs. They may be similar possibilities in relation to areas with high student populations where provision of more purpose built high density student accommodation could free up existing housing.
2. How are mixed communities defined in the South East context and how should strategic priorities for achieving mixed communities vary across the sub-regions? Is the evidence base capable of supporting meaningful local or sub-regional policies on mix of housing? In-particular, the RSS should set out its approach to achieving a mix of housing types (including for specific groups), but should not set out specific guidance on size and type for either market or affordable housing.
3. It is important to establish how the identified sub-regions will work together to identify and assess housing markets. The Panel may wish to clarify the relationship between the identified sub-regions and identified housing market areas. In-particular does the RSS set out an approach and an achievable target for meeting affordable housing needs, both for the region and for sub-regional housing market areas?

4B.2 Does the draft RSS provide appropriate guidance on densities in the light of recent Government guidance (Policy H5)? Will this provide the right type of housing?

1. Decisions on density will, again, be taken locally drawing on local evidence on housing needs and the area's housing market(s), land supply and scheme viability and the central guidance on density in PPG3/PPS3
2. The draft RSS refers to an overall regional target of 40 dwellings per hectare. This very much at the bottom end of the densities in the draft of PPS3 and the Panel may like to consider, in the light of the pressures on land and environmental considerations, whether a higher target would be appropriate for the South East. It may also want to look at the scope for giving a stronger steer on higher level density developments in urban areas.
3. It is important that delivering higher densities is addressed in innovative ways with high quality design rather than simply responding by providing lots of small flats, which may not reflect current needs or long-term requirements.
4. We would also ask the Panel to consider if the strategy is sufficiently rural proofed? Are the levels and distributions of housing considered in the context of achieving sustainable rural communities? Does the strategy and the proposed housing distribution place sufficient emphasis upon 100% affordable housing *and* mixed housing schemes in rural areas?

4B.3 Does the draft RSS give a sufficiently strong steer to the adoption of higher sustainability standards in the region's house building (Policies CC4, EN1, NRM1)?

1. The draft recognises the importance of minimising the initial and long-term environmental impact of new housing, particularly in terms of water, waste and energy usage. This is an essential element of the strategy for reducing overall demands, although they are largely driven by population numbers and the nature of the existing housing stock.
2. The sustainability standards for new housebuilding are largely driven by the national frameworks, particularly building regulations. The ECOHOMES system and the planned Code for Sustainable Homes set out higher standards which are/will be used for new affordable housing. ECOHOMES and the Code will be voluntary for private sector housing and the Panel might like to consider whether, particularly in the light of the major pressures on waste and water in the region, whether the RSS should promote/give a stronger steer to the private sector to adopt these higher standards.