



**North East RSS Sustainability Appraisal  
Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement  
Prepared for the Government Office for the North East**

*ENVIRON UK Limited  
Swallow Court, Devonshire Gate,  
Tiverton, Devon , EX16 7EJ  
Tel: 01884 842 010*

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<i>Author (signature):</i> 	E Jones
<i>Reviewer (signature):</i> 	J Curran
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#### **VERSION CONTROL RECORD**

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## ***CONTENTS***

	<b><i>Page</i></b>
<b><i>1 INTRODUCTION</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b><i>2 THE RSS AND SUSTAINABILITY</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>
<b><i>3 CONSULTATION</i></b>	<b><i>10</i></b>
<b><i>4 ALTERNATIVES</i></b>	<b><i>15</i></b>
<b><i>5 MONITORING</i></b>	<b><i>18</i></b>



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This document is the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) adoption statement for the North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) published in July 2008. This adoption statement is published in accordance with the SEA Regulations (*Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633 on The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes*). These regulations state that as soon as reasonably practicable after the adoption of the plan a statement should be produced and published setting out how environmental considerations and opinions expressed through consultation have been taken into account in the planning process.

PPS11 gives further guidance specifically for Regional Spatial Strategies stating that “...*there should be a statement, agreed by the Secretary of State and the Regional Planning Body (RPB), summarising information on how the SA results and opinions received were taken into account, reasons for choice of alternatives and proposals for monitoring*”.

The SEA Regulations set out the particulars that should be covered by the statement as follows:

- How environmental (sustainability) considerations have been integrated into the RSS;
- How the Environmental (SA) Report has been taken into account;
- How opinions expressed in response to the consultation on the Draft RSS and Environmental (SA) Report have been taken into account;
- The reasons for choosing the RSS as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental (sustainability) effects of the implementation of the RSS.

To reflect these requirements, the format of this statement is as follows:

- Section 2, Background: A brief background to the SA process undertaken on the North East RSS and how environmental and sustainability considerations (and especially the results of the SA reports) were integrated into the process;
- Section 3, Consultation: How comments from the public and statutory consultees have been taken into account;
- Section 4, Alternatives: The RSS alternatives that were selected and how the sustainability appraisal of these alternatives was taken into account in the planning process; and
- Section 5, Monitoring: What measures will be taken to monitor the sustainability of the RSS.

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Please note that ENVIRON have only been responsible for the SA process from the Proposed Changes of the RSS onwards. Therefore, when reporting on the earlier stages of the SA, ENVIRON has had to rely on information made available by other parties and information which is currently in the public domain. Therefore ENVIRON cannot be held responsible for the accuracy or the comprehensiveness of this information.

## 2 THE RSS AND SUSTAINABILITY

### 2.1 THE RSS AND SA PROCESSES

The RSS and related SA processes have been set out below:

RSS Stages	SA Activity	SA Deliverable
Stage 1: Identify the issues for a revision and prepare a project plan, including a statement of public participation	SA scoping	<i>SA Scoping Report</i> (ERM, April 2004)
Stage 2: Develop options and policies, taking account of assessed effects, and develop the draft revision	RSS options and policies were assessed in a series of stages between April to October 2004 resulting in a formal report published for consultation alongside the Draft RSS in November 2004.	<i>Sustainability Appraisal of the Consultation Draft North East Regional Spatial Strategy – Sustainability Appraisal Report</i> (ERM, November 2004)
Stage 3: Publish and formally consult on the draft RSS revision (The RSS Submission Draft was published in June 2005)	The Submission Draft RSS was subject to an appraisal of its significant sustainability effects.	<i>Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East – Final Report of the Sustainability Appraisal</i> (ERM, June 2005).
Stage 4: Examination-in-Public <sup>1</sup>	NA	NA
Stage 5: Publication of the Panel Report <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA
Stage 6: Consultation on the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes	The Secretary of State's proposed changes were subject to an appraisal of their significant sustainability effects	<i>North East RSS Sustainability Appraisal. Sustainability Report on RSS Proposed Changes</i> (ENVIRON, May 2007).
Stage 6: Consultation on the Secretary of State's Further Proposed Changes	The Secretary of State's further proposed changes were subject to an appraisal of their significant sustainability effects	<i>North East RSS Sustainability Appraisal. Sustainability Report on RSS Further Proposed Changes</i> (ENVIRON, January 2008).
Stage 7: Issue of revised RSS	The final changes to the RSS were subject to an appraisal of their significant sustainability effects.	<i>North East RSS Sustainability Appraisal. Sustainability Report on Adopted North East RSS</i> (ENVIRON, June 2008).  <i>North East RSS Sustainability Appraisal. Consolidated Sustainability Report.</i> (ENVIRON, June 2008).
Stage 8: Implementation, monitoring and review.	The SA monitoring indicators suggested as part of the SA report of final changes will be monitored as the RSS is implemented.	Set out in this adoption statement and also <i>North East RSS Sustainability Appraisal. Sustainability Report on Adopted North East RSS</i> (ENVIRON, June 2008).

<sup>1</sup> The Examination in Public considered the Submission Draft RSS in relation to the RSS tests of soundness i.e. whether it had been subject to a satisfactory SA and whether options were correctly considered in relation to SA. The Examination found that the "criterion was generally met".

<sup>2</sup> RSS Examination in Public Panel (July 2006): *Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East. Examination in Public March-April 2006. Report of the Panel July 2006.*

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The SA process has ensured the integration of environmental and sustainability considerations into the development of the plan both through assessment at key stages (represented by the published reports in the table above) and through less formal integration See Section 2.3.2 for more details.

Please note that a Consolidated SA report has also been produced covering the whole RSS SA process. This report consists of a short report summarising the various stages of the SA that were conducted and what they concluded and a compendium of published SA reports from all previous stages of RSS. Because of the size of these documents they have not been amalgamated to form a single report. However, they will all be available on the GONE website and on a single CD available from GONE on request.

## **2.2 WHO CARRIED OUT THE SA?**

As can be seen from the table above two consultancy companies, ERM and ENVIRON, have been involved in carrying out the SA of the North East RSS. ERM were contracted by the North East Assembly (NEA) and were responsible for the sustainability appraisal process up to (and including) the Submission Draft stage. In an open tender process, ENVIRON were contracted by the Government Office for the North East (GONE) and the Planning Inspectorate to undertake the SA from the Proposed Changes stage onwards including the provision of this SA adoption statement.

## **2.3 THE RSS AND SUSTAINABILITY**

### **2.3.1 How sustainability issues have been integrated into the plan**

Regional Spatial Strategies have a statutory objective to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (as set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004) and the North East RSS has integrated sustainability issues in a number of ways.

A particular strength in the North East is the consensus that has developed around a regional vision on how to achieve sustainable development. This vision is shared by the North East RSS, the Regional Economic Strategy and the Integrated Regional Framework. According to this Vision:

*‘The North East will be a region where present and future generations have a high quality of life. It will be a vibrant, self reliant, ambitious and outward looking region featuring a dynamic economy, a healthy environment, and a distinctive culture. Everyone will have the opportunity to realise their full potential.’*

The RSS is also guided by a set of values which are firmly grounded in sustainability principles, as follows:

- Nurturing the human, cultural and environmental assets of the region;
- Accelerating the renaissance of communities in urban and rural areas;
- Recognising global responsibilities;
- Raising the aspirations and profile of the region; and
- Promoting leadership, good governance and corporate responsibility.

The RSS builds upon this regional vision by setting out a *spatial* vision for the RSS which includes (amongst others) the issues articulated in the table below.

Elements of the Vision	Main RSS policies which support the vision
<p><b>Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthier and more participative work force;</li> <li>• Less people leaving the region;</li> <li>• More people live in the urban areas; and</li> <li>• More balanced demand for housing.</li> </ul>	<p>Sequential Approach to Development            Locational Strategy            Tyne and Wear City Region            Tees Valley City Region            Rural Areas            Delivering Sustainable Communities            Urban and Rural Centres</p>
<p><b>Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GVA growth of 2.8% per annum;</li> <li>• Jobs focused in knowledge based industries;</li> <li>• Thriving universities provide the catalyst for emerging economies;</li> <li>• The region’s transport system is modern, effective and reliable;</li> <li>• No significant increase in car based commuting; and</li> <li>• Region’s ports and airports handle more passengers.</li> </ul>	<p>Locational Strategy            Connectivity and Accessibility            Tyne and Wear City Region            Tees Valley City Region            Rural Areas            RTS policies</p>
<p><b>Environmental / Resource Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New developments minimise the consumption of energy and natural resources;</li> <li>• Developments include climate mitigation and compensation measures;</li> <li>• Successful waste minimisation has decoupled economic growth from waste generation; and</li> <li>• New businesses are established in the environmental and renewable energy sector.</li> </ul>	<p>Climate Change            Locational Strategy            Protecting and Enhancing the Environment            Tyne and Wear City Region            Tees Valley City Region            Rural Areas            Environmental Protection policies</p>

Policy 1 of the RSS also aims to ensure that all strategies in the North East are working towards sustainable development through:

- Delivering sustainable and inclusive economic prosperity and growth;
- Delivering sustainable communities;
- Conserving, enhancing and capitalising upon the region’s diverse natural and built environment, heritage and culture; and
- Improving connectivity and accessibility within and beyond the region.

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Policy 2 builds upon this by setting out the environmental, social and economic objectives that strategies should achieve. These objectives are the ones set out in the Integrated Regional Framework.

The sustainability of the plan can also be judged by the strategy that has been chosen to implement the above vision. The locational strategy set out in the RSS is based on planning for two city-regions, the Tyne and Wear City Region and the Tees Valley City Region. A simple hierarchy of settlements is not appropriate for the North East as the region exhibits a polycentric pattern based on these two regions. The strategy has been based on research that indicates that the conurbations and main settlements will continue to be the main economic drivers for the city-regions. Therefore, a significant proportion of housing and employment will be focused in these areas through provision in the RSS. The RSS plans for other areas in the North East (such as those affected by major industrial changes and the decline of the coal mining industry) through policies dealing with rebalancing housing and employment. Rural areas are also addressed in policy that aims to regenerate Rural Service Centres and identify a sustainable level of growth in other rural areas. The Panel Report noted that the RSS strikes an appropriate balance between developing opportunities in the core areas of the City Regions and the remainder of the region.

### ***2.3.2 How the sustainability appraisal has been taken into account***

The SA process has contributed to plan development by providing an independent assessment of the potential effects of proposed options and policies as they were developed. It demonstrates that sustainability considerations have been incorporated into the development of the RSS and provides a formal assessment of the sustainability of the plan at various stages. The plan has taken into account the results of the sustainability appraisal in the following ways:

**Testing of Spatial Options:** The SA tested a number of spatial development options which fed into the development of the preferred option. The RSS team selected a strategy which lies broadly between options 2 and 3 which seeks to concentrate development within the conurbations and regeneration priority areas, and provides for a limited amount of housing and employment land in rural areas, allowing for some development in the Rural Service Centres.

**Input into the Submission Draft:** As policies were being drafted for the RSS they were subject to an iterative SA process. Changes were made to the Submission Draft policies as a result of the SA. Many of the changes to the RSS that arose from the SA were subtle, changing the focus or wording of policies, or clarifying and strengthening the supporting text. While many of these changes appear minor, collectively they have helped to ensure that all of the IRF objectives and many other regional

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and national targets/objectives are addressed by the RSS. Some of the more obvious changes that were made to the Submission Draft as a result of the appraisal include:

- The introduction of a policy on sustainability statements which introduces a requirement for local planning authorities to require applicants for certain planning permissions to complete a ‘Sustainability Statement’ in support of their applications (however, this policy was subsequently removed on the recommendation of the RSS panel);
- The strengthening of the policy on Sustainable Communities to require that when land is assessed for its suitability for development, the potential is assessed for the development to address crime/community safety issues, health issues, and resource consumption;
- The addition of geodiversity issues to policy;
- The strengthening of the Aquatic Environment section to include more information on Integrated Coastal Zone Management, groundwater resources, SUDS, and improving degraded aquatic environments and water quality ;
- The strengthening of BREEAM requirements ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ ratings; and
- The requirement for a local threshold to be set for new developments to have embedded within them a minimum of 10% of energy supply from renewables.

**Assessment of Significant Changes:** (Please note: For ease of understanding, the appraisal of final changes to policy in the RSS is listed with reference to the policy numbering system used in the SoS's Further Proposed Changes (February 2008), and the final changes being made to RSS are explained in the Statement of Reasons accompanying final RSS. However, in presentational terms some of the policies may have been renumbered in the final publication version of RSS as part of final reformatting). At the Proposed Changes and Further Proposed Changes the focus of the assessment is on the significant changes made to the plan. This enabled the SA to summarise how the plan’s sustainability effects have been changed (both strengthened and weakened) from the Submission Draft to the Adopted Plan. Many of the amendments to the policies and additions of new policies helped to strengthen the sustainability of the plan. Some of the changes did this through strengthening the spatial strategy of the plan. Examples included:

- Policies 6 and 7 relating to the Tyne and Wear City Region and Tees Valley City Region respectively. These policies strengthened the spatial strategy by ensuring development is focused in the core of the city regions and by ensuring that development in smaller settlements will not adversely impact upon this strategy;
- Policies 18, 18a and 19 dealing with employment sites were all strengthened through encouraging regeneration of existing sites around transport hubs and on previously developed land, the de-allocation of peripheral employment sites and the concentration of development in core areas that will lead to the accelerated growth and improved competitiveness needed in the region. Policy 19 has also been strengthened through the additional encouragement given to reducing carbon

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emissions, improving energy conservation measures, the use of decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources and the cross reference to Policy 39 on sustainable construction.

- Policies 26 and 27 which seek to concentrate any additional retail and leisure development in existing urban and rural centres.

Several of the changes (in particular the new policies) helped the plan to deal more robustly with important environmental and sustainability issues. Examples included:

- New Policy 2a on climate change which presents policy on climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- New Policy 38 on air quality which helps to address the impact of pollution on sites designated under the Habitats Directive; and
- Policies 6 and 7 which outline a strategic approach to green infrastructure.

Several of the changes helped to address sustainable construction and development issues. Examples included:

- Policy 39 and the inclusion of a broad policy on sustainable construction which would support the sustainable regeneration of the region; and
- The support for the use of the regional checklist for development. However, this will only support development moving towards more sustainable methods of construction if it is implemented fully and supported by Local Authorities.

Several of the changes sought to strengthen the role of sustainable transport and link transport schemes to the aspects of the spatial strategy they support. Examples included:

- Policy 51 which included a long term focus for public transport which wasn't previously present in the policy;
- Policy 53a which will help to *lock in* the benefits of public transport (promoted by other policies within the RSS), through further investment in demand management; and
- The Transport Investment and Management Priorities Table which had an increased emphasis on public transport ensuring that the policy would help to provide a sustainable transport system to support the spatial strategy. The link of each scheme to the spatial strategy are now made more explicit, making the strategy seem more like a coherent whole.

### **Overall Conclusion and Statement of Residual Effects**

It is the role of the SA to provide an independent review of effects and propose changes to the plan that may strengthen its sustainability performance. The plan authors may decide not to implement a SA recommendation for many reasons. These include recommendations being outside the scope of what the plan can propose or recommendations that may not adhere to the strategy approach being

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taken. In the main the RSS authors have used the SA recommendations to good effect to improve the sustainability of the plan.

The only residual negative sustainability effect relates mainly to policies 6 and 7 (Tyne and Wear City Region and Tees Valley City Region) (N.B. the SA also notes that the transport priorities of the plan also support the spatial strategy emphasis on airports). These policies have a negative sustainability effect because of their emphasis on airport growth as an economic driver. The RSS Panel were of the opinion that the Submission Draft emphasis on airports as key economic drivers should be tempered and have recommended that the RSS should reflect the uncertainty over the future role of aviation and the growth forecasts. It is recognised that the RSS has no direct influence on airport growth and only has direct influence over surface access (and we note that Policy 21 has been strengthened in regard to sustainable modes for surface access). However, in line with the RSS panel the SA concludes that a tempering of the emphasis on airport growth would lead to a more sustainable plan and at the least the RSS should recognise the uncertainty over growth forecasts. If the policies did reflect the uncertainty over growth forecasts then they would have a neutral score.

Notwithstanding this residual effect, the SA that ENVIRON has undertaken has demonstrated that in the main, the later stages of the North East RSS have moved the spatial strategy for the region towards a stronger model of sustainability which embraces environmental, social and economic facets of sustainable development.

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### 3 CONSULTATION

The SA adoption statement should set out how responses from the consultation bodies and the public have been taken into account. The consultation requirements of the SEA Regulations are as follows:

- Authorities with environmental responsibility (Environment Agency, Natural England (previously Countryside Agency and English Nature) and English Heritage), herein referred to as the statutory consultees) shall be consulted when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the Environmental Report; and
- Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before adoption of the plan or programme.

This section discusses the consultation that was undertaken on each stage of the RSS (and related SA reports) and how these responses have been taken into account in both the RSS and the SA. Because of the sheer number of representations made on the RSS and the SA this section is necessarily a summary of these responses.

**SA Scoping Stage:** The SEA Regulations state that authorities with environmental responsibility should be consulted on the scope and level of detail that should be included in the SA Reports. This was achieved through the production of and consultation on a SA scoping report that was produced by ERM in April 2004 “*SA Scoping Report*” (ERM, April 2004). Stakeholder consultation was carried out on SA objectives, data sources, the development of options (known as ‘reasonable alternatives’) and the Scoping Report itself. Consultees included the ‘relevant authorities’ (i.e. the Environment Agency, English Nature, English Heritage and Countryside Agency), Sustaine (the North East Sustainable Development Forum), and the North East Environment Forum. Through these organisations, a wider range of stakeholders and experts have also participated in the SA process (e.g. One NorthEast, local authorities, academic institutions). The stakeholders particularly assisted in developing the SA framework. During the scoping phase, it was agreed that the SA of the draft RSS would be based on the ‘Integrated Regional Framework’, which sets out 17 economic, social and environmental sustainability objectives for the North East and which articulates the sustainable development agenda for the Region. Consultees assisted in developing these 17 objectives into the 42 appraisal criteria used in the earlier stages of the appraisal.

**RSS Submission Draft:** A public consultation was held on the Submission Draft RSS and related SA Report from July to October 2005. 254 written responses were received from the public and

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consultees. A statement of public consultation was published by the North East Assembly that covered the RSS process up until the Submission Draft<sup>3</sup>. There were a number of significant issues raised from the written responses, those relating to the Draft RSS are described below (produced by ENVIRON from publicly available information) and those relating specifically to the SA are discussed within the following text:

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<sup>3</sup> North East Assembly (June 2005): *Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East: Statement of Public Participation*.

<p><b>Section 1: Shaping our Region</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of respondents supported the RSS vision and values. Many requested a policy related to climate change which has been subsequently added.</li> <li>• Many responses highlighted tensions between protecting the environment and promoting the region's airports. The potential conflicts have been reflected in revisions to the relevant areas although the SA has suggested that more on this needs to be done.</li> <li>• The growth assumptions have been welcomed as a positive basis for the strategy.</li> </ul>		<p><b>Section 2: Development Principles and Locational Strategy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents suggested that it would be more appropriate if the crucial phasing and plan, monitor, manage policies were amalgamated. Revisions to the RSS have incorporated these comments.</li> <li>• The majority of respondents supported the locational strategy. However, based on comments it was apparent that the locational strategy and city regions sections needed greater clarity and explanation. As a result, the city regions text and policy were significantly expanded and inset maps have been incorporated, providing greater clarity of priorities and strategy within each city region.</li> <li>• Comments were also received urging that the importance of rural communities is recognised. The rural areas section of the RSS has been significantly revised to reflect these comments and align the format and approach taken with the city regions.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Section 3: Delivering an Urban and Rural Renaissance</b></p>			
<p><b>3A: Delivering Economic Prosperity and Growth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of respondents supported the approach to achieving prosperity and growth.</li> <li>• Some respondents felt that other employment sites should be added to the RSS. The list has not been altered but the reason for site selection has been explained.</li> <li>• Consultees requested a clearer explanation of patterns of employment and economic development and the integration of transport provision. Changes have been made to reflect comments, particularly to highlight the city and town centres as main employment locations within the city regions.</li> <li>• Many comments supported the intention to reduce the over-provision of employment land. However, many other comments have stated that de-allocating sites is premature. The RSS has maintained the breakdown of the employment land portfolio at the district level, as it is considered an appropriate approach to provide guidance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3B: Delivering Sustainable Communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The focus of retail and leisure development within the urban and rural centres, particularly in the city regions was supported by the majority of respondents. Further elaboration has been made in the RSS related to the conclusions of the regional retail and leisure need assessment.</li> <li>• Many respondents commented on the housing provision and the subsequent distribution at the district level, suggesting that their respective provision was inadequate to meet their regeneration objectives.</li> <li>• Respondents also highlighted the importance of the rural areas and market towns. It was commented that the plan should be sufficiently flexible to meet the demands of more remote areas. The housing provision has been revised taking into consideration these comments.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3C Conserving, Enhancing and Capitalising on the Region's Diverse Natural and Built Environment, Heritage and Culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of comments were supportive, with many suggestions for improving and strengthening policy wording. The objectives were supported; but it was felt that more recognition was needed on the importance of high quality design.</li> <li>• Respondents felt that there was a need to identify the region's geodiversity priorities. These comments have been absorbed through the addition of a geodiversity policy.</li> <li>• The inclusion of renewable energy targets was supported. Some felt targets were too low and that the RSS should include targets for sustainable energy use and for the generation of electricity from combined heat and power schemes. Few changes have been made to the RSS but it is recognised that further research on this issue is required.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3D Improving Connectivity Within and Beyond the Region</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responses have been varied. The majority have welcomed the focus on reducing the need to travel, particularly by private motor vehicle.</li> <li>• Respondents felt that the section should be updated so that the implications of the Northern Way are given greater emphasis, particularly the emerging city region concept. This comment has been taken on board.</li> <li>• The table of priorities received many comments. Respondents have suggested that the table would be improved if it included outcomes that the proposed schemes could bring about. This comment has been incorporated into the revisions of the document to provide a clear reference to the methodology for prioritisation set out in the accompanying transport technical paper.</li> </ul>

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A number of responses were also received on the related SA Report. One of the main comments received was that the timing of the SA was not ideal as it was started after the RSS process had begun and this comment was also highlighted at the Examination in Public. However, representations made at the EIP by the statutory consultees made it clear that they felt that the SA process had adequately influenced the development of the RSS. Other comments made by the Environment Agency include the opinion that the RSS does not score well against the environmental objectives. When considering the impacts on purely the environmental objectives, only one positive impact on the environment has been identified and 14 negative impacts have been identified, 8 of which are strong negative impacts. The EA make the point that a separate environmental report would have made this transparent and at least given the opportunity to suggest mitigation. A separate environmental report was not deemed necessary as this goes against the Government guidance on SA which states that SEA and SA should be integrated. However, the RSS has been strengthened in terms of environmental issues through the Proposed Changes stage which has introduced new policies on climate change and air quality plus integrated the results of the Appropriate Assessment.

**Consultation on updated SA methodology:** A limited consultation was undertaken with the statutory consultees in November 2006 to agree the SA methodology that would be used for the later stages of the RSS. The consultees agreed with the scope and the methodology proposed for the SA. However, consultees expressed the opinion that the SA framework should be reviewed and if possible further targets added to reflect the fact that new issues have become significant since the original IRF framework was devised. In response to this the SA team added further targets on climate change adaptation; amended targets on water quality and renewable energy and a further target on waste to reflect the Regional Waste Management Strategy.

**Proposed Changes and Further Proposed Changes:** Two rounds of consultation were undertaken on the Proposed Changes (between May and August 2007) and at Further Proposed Changes stage (between February and April 2008). In terms of the Proposed Changes document, consultees generally supported the overall spatial strategy, the climate change and green infrastructure policies, the recognition of the need for future employment land analysis and the recognition of the need to undertake retail revisions and review in the next RSS. The increase in housing numbers recommended by Panel was generally supported as was the 2.8% growth forecast and population growth figures. However, there was concern that these may be difficult to achieve. The main objections related to concerns over lack of ambition for region in terms of transport infrastructure and employment sites in particular, issues with consistency and presentation and in relation to the length of the RSS (the opinion being that it was too long) and the delivery mechanisms being unclear. Consultees also commented that there should be more explanation of why some recommendations of SA and AA have not been adopted.

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In terms of the Further Proposed Changes document, the general support for the overall spatial strategy continued, and the increase in housing numbers across the region to reflect the North East Assembly's suggestion was largely welcomed with some concern about the need to maintain delivery of higher numbers within the spatial strategy. The revised approach to key employment locations was welcomed by many respondents who viewed this as helping to achieve sustainable economic development whilst some consultees were concerned there should be an increased focus on delivering wider sustainability objectives in locations around the region. Consultees were generally disappointed at the removal of a 10% target for the delivery of sustainable energy within major new developments and there were also concerns that the RSS should set some further context for the procedure of planning for wind energy. A number of comments were also made on wider environmental matters many of which have relevance to the Appropriate Assessment of RSS.

Due to the late stage in the RSS cycle, it was felt that there were limitations as to the extent that some of the more complex issues such as concerns over lack of ambition for the region in terms of transport infrastructure and employment sites could be addressed. Some of the issues regarding presentation and delivery will be addressed by the RSS Implementation Strategy and monitoring programme. In addition to this, the next review of the RSS will seek to address any outstanding issues.

A small number of representations were received on the SA at both the Proposed Changes and the Further Proposed Changes stage. At this stage none of the comments were considered to be significant. At the Proposed Changes and Further Proposed Changes stage all of the consultees (this included all the statutory consultees) agreed with the recommendations made in the SA report and they recommended that the GONE action the SA recommendations. Some of the comments received are that consultees welcomed the use of the Integrated Regional Framework as the basis of the appraisal; welcomed the use of the expanded sustainability appraisal framework (as recommended by Natural England, Environment Agency and English Heritage); and the clear links between the SA and Appropriate Assessment. The only areas where action was needed by the appraisal team was to update and amend some areas of the baseline data that were out of date or missing and to make changes to the appraisal framework. The baseline data was updated however, because of the late stage in the SA process it was felt that it was inadvisable to make changes to the framework between the Proposed Changes and the Further Proposed Changes stages.

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## 4 ALTERNATIVES

As part of the process of developing a broad approach to spatial development for the North East RSS, three spatial development scenarios were developed by regional planners and appraised by the SA, so that their relative strengths/weaknesses and implications for sustainable development could be understood. The three options were as follows:

### **Option 1: Continuation of past economic and demographic trends:**

- 1.8% annual average growth in GVA (rate from 1997-2001).
- Population decline of 35,246 across the region as a whole.
- Trend of migration away from the urban sub-regions towards rural communities in County Durham and Northumberland. Low housing demand and decline in urban areas, high demand for housing in County Durham and Northumberland, with greenfield land being released for housing development in these areas.
- Region-wide requirement for 78,963 houses.

### **Option 2: Reducing economic disparities, with development focus in the conurbations:**

- 2.8% annual average growth in GVA, over the RSS plan period. Population growth of 31,600 focused in Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley, supporting the regeneration of these areas. Employment sites also concentrated in these areas.
- Region-wide requirement for 110,560 houses.

### **Option 3. Reducing economic disparities, through a more dispersed growth pattern:**

- 2.8% annual average growth in GVA, over the RSS plan period.
- Population growth of 32,200 spread across the region, with greenfield sites being used in rural areas.
- Region-wide requirement for 110,550 houses, distributed across the region in line with RPG1.

Table 5.1 in the ERM SA Report (ERM, June 2005) sets out the results of the appraisal of the three broad spatial development options. Please refer to this report for further detail. The appraisal of the three broad spatial options highlighted the implications of each approach, their strengths and weaknesses, and the extent to which each option could promote the achievement of IRF objectives. The likely implications of each option can be summarised as follows:

Option 1 - with a low economic growth rate, the development of housing in rural areas and a weak housing market in urban areas, current problems within the region would persist. Population would

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continue to decline, particularly in urban areas. New housing in rural areas would impact on greenfield sites (and potentially on biodiversity and environmental assets), and increased need for populations to travel to employment sites and services would heighten pressure on the road network, affect air quality and tranquillity, and ensure that emissions of greenhouse gases from transport increase. There would also be less scope for the development of effective public transport services.

Option 2 - the focus of economic development and provision of housing in the conurbations is more likely to promote urban regeneration and renaissance. Access to employment and services would be improved for more people, public transport infrastructure could provide an alternative for many car journeys, and larger scale, compact, mixed use developments could be developed. Development needs could, to a much larger extent, be met on previously-developed land. Opportunities would also be focused closer to areas of greatest need, with better homes, new jobs and improved services provided in or near to some of the region's most deprived communities.

Option 3 - a more dispersed growth option would provide houses in both rural and urban communities, as well as benefiting regeneration areas outside the conurbations. While this would clearly bring some benefits to rural areas, the provision of new housing in these areas would hamper the process of housing market restructuring and regeneration in the region's conurbations. Further development in rural towns would also impact on greenfield sites (and potentially on biodiversity and environmental/ heritage assets), and the need for populations to travel to employment sites and services would increase pressure on the road network, affect air quality and tranquillity, and ensure that emissions of greenhouse gases from transport increase.

The appraisal suggested that option 2 was more likely to address structural socio-economic problems and promote a balance of economic, social and environmental benefits for the region. However, the report noted that all of the development options are likely to have some negative environmental impacts. All will increase:

- Pressure on water resource infrastructure (e.g. wastewater treatment);
- Waste arisings; and
- Energy use and emissions of greenhouse gases.

Furthermore, all of the spatial options could result in development being located in areas under threat from increasing flood risk, unless sited away from these areas.

The spatial development approach chosen lies broadly between options 2 and 3. This was chosen in the light of the alternative options as it was an option that seeks to concentrate development within the conurbations and regeneration priority areas, and provides for a limited amount of housing and employment land in rural areas, allowing for some development in the Rural Service Centres. The

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approach is likely to promote a balance of broadly positive economic, social and environmental trends within the North East as a whole. It focuses on delivering employment opportunities and housing accessible to the most deprived communities, areas of socio-economic need and potential (e.g. urban areas and Rural Service Centres). The preferred option is designed to promote more sustainable transport patterns, promote the development of sustainable communities, and to protect and enhance environmental/historic assets. Options were not rejected, in so much as the positive aspects of options were combined to form the preferred option.

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## 5 MONITORING

The SA adoption statement should set out the measures to be taken to monitor the significant effects of the implementation of the plan or programme. The purpose of this monitoring is to identify unforeseen effects of the implementation of the plan. It is the responsibility of the North East Assembly as the Regional Planning Body to carry out this monitoring and review in liaison with Government Office North East and other partners. The latter, which among others include One NorthEast, the Regional Observatory and the statutory agencies, have important roles to play in monitoring the progress of the RSS. Their roles should be co-ordinated by the Assembly in order that, where possible, a common evidential base is created and duplication avoided.

The North East Assembly will publish an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), which will be submitted to the Secretary of State by the end of February each year. The Annual Monitoring Report, together with Government's headline and good practice guide indicators will provide the context for measuring progress towards the key objectives of the RSS.

The SA Report of the Submission Draft RSS (ERM, June 2005) set out the Sustainable Development Indicators that were required to monitor the effects of the Submission Draft of the plan. This is shown in Table 1. ENVIRON have added additional indicators to this to reflect the residual effects and uncertain effects of the changes made after the Submission Draft. These additional indicators are shown in *red italic*.

**Table 1: Monitoring Indicators**

IRF objective	Relevant IRF indicators	Existing RSS Monitoring Framework Indicators		Additional Indicators
		Policy	Indicator	
To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can share and contribute to greater prosperity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate of economic inactivity</li> <li>Percentage of people in workless households</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IMD Overall Index of Deprivation</li> <li>IMD Employment deprivation</li> <li><i>Growth in air passenger miles (and comparison to growth forecasts).</i></li> </ul>
To achieve high and sustainable levels of economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GVA per head</li> </ul>	1.	Gross Value Added growth rate	
To raise educational achievement across the region	It is not proposed that any indicators be proposed for education, as the RSS will have little or no influence over trends or the achievement of objectives.			
To ensure everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent and affordable home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of housing stock unfit</li> <li>Provision of affordable housing</li> <li>Homelessness</li> <li>Households in fuel poverty</li> </ul>	1.	Volume of housing property sales	
		28.	Dwelling completions over a five year period or since the start of the RSS period, whichever is the longer	
		28.	Dwelling completions for the current year	
		28.	Projected dwelling completions up to the end of 2021	
		28.	The annual dwelling requirement	
		28.	Annual average number of completions needed to meet overall housing requirements having regard to previous years performances	
		29.	% of total number of dwellings vacant, and those vacant for more than 6 months	
		30.	Percentage of new dwellings completed at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than 30 dwellings per hectare (net)</li> <li>Between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare (net), and</li> <li>Above 50 dwellings per hectare (net by local authority area)</li> </ul>	
32.	% of local authority areas with affordable housing provision targets			
To ensure good local air quality for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Days when air pollution is moderate or high</li> <li>Levels of road traffic</li> </ul>	1.	Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambient air quality – SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub></li> </ul>
To protect and enhance the quality of the region's ground, river and sea waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incidents of water pollution</li> <li>Percentage of river length of good quality</li> <li>Number of beaches meeting</li> </ul>	1.	Water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chemical and biological quality assessment of rivers</li> </ul>
		35.	Number of planning applications permitted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency where the objection was made on flood risk grounds and water quality grounds.	

IRF objective	Relevant IRF indicators	Existing RSS Monitoring Framework Indicators		Additional Indicators
		Policy	Indicator	
	bathing water guideline standards	35.	Number of planning permissions, by local authority area granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on grounds of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flood defence; and</li> <li>• water quality</li> </ul>	
To reduce the causes and the impacts of climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installed capacity for energy produced from renewable sources</li> <li>• Estimate of principal greenhouse gas emissions</li> </ul>	39.	Regional energy consumption. [MW]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development in flood zone</li> <li>• <i>Progress towards the targets contained in the Draft Climate Change Bill including the 2020 target.</i></li> <li>• <i>Inclusion of energy policies and targets in LDFs</i></li> </ul>
		39.	Number of planning permissions granted for developments that embed renewables in the development and MW installed.	
		39.	Capacity, by sub region, of Combined Heat and Power and District Heating installed.	
		39.	Number of planning permissions granted for developments that exceed building regulation requirements on insulation for energy efficiency.	
To protect and enhance the region's biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of wild birds</li> <li>• Area of land designated as SSSIs in favourable condition</li> <li>• Progress towards meeting Regional BAP targets</li> <li>• Changes to the condition of local wildlife sites</li> </ul>	35.	Progress on reducing habitat fragmentation and species isolation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Monitoring of air quality and its effects on key sensitive nature conservation sites alongside the A66 and A19</i></li> </ul>
		35.	Number of landscape scale habitat creation projects, and number taking place within the habitat creation and enhancement areas.	
		35.	Proportion of the region's area of SSSIs in an unfavourable condition but recovering.	
		35.	Change in areas of biodiversity importance, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority Habitats and Species (by type); and</li> <li>• Areas designated for their intrinsic environmental value including sites of international, national, regional or sub regional importance.</li> </ul>	
		38.	% of development plans/ local development frameworks that inclusive of policies maximising the public benefits of trees woodland and forests. (Process Indicator)	
		38.	Area (ha) of woodland covered created in environmental regeneration initiative areas - the Great North Community, the Tees Community Forest and the Greening for Growth area.	
		38.	Total area of woodland cover in the Region.	
		38.	Area of ancient and semi natural woodland in the North East Region.	
		38.	Amount of woodland created on derelict land or brown field land.	
		To reduce the amount of waste produced and increase the amount recycled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of household waste recycled or composted</li> <li>• Volume of municipal waste going to landfill</li> </ul>	
46.	Amount of household waste collected per head of population			
46.	% of construction and demolition waste landfilled			
46.	% of industrial and commercial waste landfilled			

IRF objective	Relevant IRF indicators	Existing RSS Monitoring Framework Indicators		Additional Indicators
		Policy	Indicator	
		46.	Capacity of new waste management facilities, by type and by waste planning authority. (Regional Core Indicator)	
To make better use of our resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water usage</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Per capita consumption of water</li> <li>Water supply headroom</li> </ul>
To protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the region's rural and urban land and landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of new homes built on PDL</li> <li>Extent of contaminated land</li> <li>Extent of dereliction</li> <li>Greenbelt additions/deletions</li> <li>Number/area of designated sites</li> <li>Loss or damage to designated sites</li> <li>Accessibility to open space</li> </ul>	2.	% of dwellings and amount of land developed for housing within existing settlements, (with brownfield/Greenfield split).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IMD Living Environment</li> </ul>
		3.	% of development plans/ local development frameworks adopting the sequential approach to land identification.	
		3.	Amount of Previously Developed Land identified for all development.	
		30.	Total number of houses with planning permission per development on Greenfield and previously developed land	
		31.	% of development plans with policies on the managed release of land for housing in accordance with the locational strategy and sequential approach	
To protect and enhance the region's cultural heritage and diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Grade I and II buildings at risk</li> </ul>	16.	% of development plans/ local development frameworks that include policies that seek the promotion of appropriate cultural and tourism facilities	
		34.	% of the region's World Heritage Sites with management plans	
To reduce crime and the fear of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of crime</li> <li>Incidents of theft of/from a vehicle, burglary, violent crimes</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IMD Crime and Disorder</li> </ul>
To improve health and reduce inequalities in health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life expectancy at birth</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IMD Health Deprivation</li> </ul>
To ensure good accessibility for all to jobs, facilities, goods and services in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of rural households within 13 minutes walk of an hourly or better bus service</li> <li>Number of cycling trips</li> <li>Bus passenger journeys</li> </ul>	1.	Businesses connected to internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IMD Barriers to Housing and Services</li> <li>Average daily traffic flow</li> </ul>
		1.	Households connected to the internet	
		1.	Distance travelled by person by mode of transport	
		12.	% of all residential areas to have full broadband coverage	
		12.	% of employment sites to have full broadband coverage	
		50.	Amount of congestion and number of accidents along the A1 north of Newcastle.	
		51.	Number of passengers on buses, trains and the Tyne & Wear Metro. (Output Indicator)	

IRF objective	Relevant IRF indicators	Existing RSS Monitoring Framework Indicators		Additional Indicators
		Policy	Indicator	
		51.	Number of new public transport services by mode. (Output Indicator)	
		51.	% of overall trips made by public transport. (Output Indicator)	
		51.	Progress on developing a region-wide ticketing system.	
		51.	% of households within 13 minutes walk of an hourly or better bus service, rail or Metro service.	
		52.	% of development plans/ local development frameworks incorporating policies to support the development of a core and feeder Public Transport Interchanges, sub regional and local interchanges in the main towns, main towns in regeneration areas and main rural service centres.	
		53.	Progress on study of pricing measures	
		53.	Number of Park and Ride Schemes and patronage.	
		53.	Number of Car Sharing Schemes	
		53.	% of development plans/ local development	
		53.	frameworks incorporating car parking standards	
		53.	Number of workplace parking levies	
		53.	Number of road user charging schemes	
		53.	Annual rate of increase in total person miles travelled by car in the Region.	
		54.	% of development plans/ local development frameworks setting maximum parking standards by non-residential use, per local authority	
		54.	% of completed non-residential development by type complying with the car parking standards set out in the Regional Transport Strategy; by local authority area.	
		54.	% by total trips to work and school in the Region made by walking, cycling and public transport.	
		54.	Number of school travel plans implemented.	
		54.	Number of business existing and new, with Travel Plans	
		55.	Extent of road space reprioritisation, by mode, per local authority, by the following measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of new no car lanes</li> <li>• Length of new bus lanes; and</li> <li>• Length of new cycle lanes.</li> </ul>	

IRF objective	Relevant IRF indicators	Existing RSS Monitoring Framework Indicators		Additional Indicators
		Policy	Indicator	
		55.	Total level of congestion on primary road networks in the Region.	
		55.	Extent of improvements to the public transport service on the following corridors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newcastle – Sunderland</li> <li>• Sunderland – Durham Coast Regeneration Area – Tees Valley</li> <li>• Tees Valley – East Cleveland Regeneration Area</li> <li>• SW Durham Regeneration Area – Darlington</li> <li>• Tyne Valley – Newcastle</li> <li>• Durham – Tees Valley</li> <li>• Wear Valley Regeneration Area – Durham</li> <li>• SE Northumberland Regeneration Area – Tyne &amp; Wear.</li> </ul>	
		56.	Extent of public transport services between the region’s rural service centres and the rural hinterlands.	
		56.	% of households within a 13 minute walk of an hourly or better bus service.	
		56.	Progress on the development of existing and implementation of new demand responsive public transport schemes in remote rural areas.	
		57.	Amount of freight carried by road, rail and water.	
To increase public involvement in decision-making and civic activity	It is not proposed that any indicators be proposed for public involvement in decision-making, as the RSS will have little or no influence over trends or the achievement of objectives.			
To reduce adverse impacts on global communities	This objective relates primarily to fair trade, local trade and links to global communities (eg through volunteering). It is not proposed that any indicators be proposed for this issue, as the RSS will have little or no influence over trends or the achievement of objectives.			
Additional issues		2.	% of development plans/ local development frameworks prepared integrating independent sustainability appraisals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Sustainability Statements submitted</li> <li>• Population size, distribution, change etc</li> <li>• <i>Implementation of the North East checklist for developments</i></li> </ul>
		25.	Number of development plans reviewed integrating independent sustainability appraisals.	