



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE SOUTH WEST

21 December 2009

To: All Chief Executives

THOSS SHEARER

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Dear Chief Executive

**REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH WEST:
ADDITIONAL SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL WORK**

I thought it would be helpful to bring you up to date with progress on the Regional Spatial Strategy. I wrote to you on 25 June 2009 about the delay to the RSS and the implications for LDF core strategies and planning decisions. I wrote to you again on 25 September informing you of the Government's decision to carry out additional sustainability appraisal (SA) work.

Additional sustainability appraisal work

The judgement following the legal challenges to the East of England RSS pointed to a deficiency in the way the SA for that RSS had addressed the testing of reasonable alternatives. In the light of this judgement we have commissioned additional SA work for the South West RSS. The additional work will therefore identify and appraise reasonable alternatives to the Areas of Search in policies HMA1-13 which were added or amended in the Proposed Changes. The decision to carry out additional SA work does not affect the RSS Proposed Changes as a whole. Land Use Consultants have been commissioned to carry out the additional SA work.

SA is intended to be an objective assessment, which informs policies and proposals in the RSS, but does not itself set out policies and proposals. The scope and level of detail of the assessment will be the same as in previous SA reports.

The additional SA work is expected to report in March of next year. Ministers will then decide how to progress the RSS, which may include additional consultation.

Implications for planning decisions and LDFs

In relation to individual planning decisions, our advice remains that the Proposed Changes to the RSS are likely to be 'material considerations' for any planning decisions bearing on development envisaged in the Areas of Search, or otherwise covered by RSS policies. How much weight to give each policy or proposal is a matter for decision-makers, and this will need particular consideration in cases relating to an Area of Search proposal added or amended at the Proposed Changes stage.

For LDFs, our advice remains that there is no need for the RSS to be issued before progress on Core Strategies can be made. If you have identified particular policy risks in the relationship between the RSS and your Core Strategy, I suggest your planners speak to GOSW's Senior Planning Manager covering your area.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thom Shearer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

T M H SHEARER