

RURAL PROOFING OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OPTIONS – Positive Uses of the Green Belt

1.1 Introduction

This paper presents the findings from rural proofing of the options for policy on the Quality of the Environment – Positive Uses of the Green Belt and is a key component for influencing the authors of the draft preferred RSS Spatial Option. In pro-actively assessing the development of the Policy Options for the RSS Phase Three Revision the following has been considered:

- Whether the various options are likely to have a potential different impact for rural areas/people or uncertainty from that elsewhere, because of the particular characteristics of rural areas; and
- Where necessary, exploring what adjustments or compensations might be made to reflect rural needs and circumstances and produce the desired outcomes in rural areas or avoid/mitigate any undesirable impacts. Where appropriate rural proofing may also highlight opportunities to maximise positive impacts in rural areas

The explanatory text has been appraised against the Commission for Rural Communities Guidance [published May 2009] and is designed to be used alongside other appraisal systems including the Sustainability Appraisal process.

Please note that the checklist is designed to complement and not substitute consultation with rural communities, businesses and organisations. It is meant to be applied from the early stages of policy making although it may also be used during implementation and evaluation.

1.2 Positive Uses of the Green Belt

The Phase Three Revision considers whether there is a need for a new regionally-specific policy for Green Belt which would define its regional and sub-regional roles, and define specific uses that should be encouraged within it.

The Options being considered are:

1. Apply PPG2 alone – status quo
2. Develop a Regionally Specific policy – to reinforce green infrastructure, landscape and historic assessment of development proposals in LDFs, identifying where positive improvement should take place

1.3 Analysis

In reviewing how rural issues relate to the policy options on Positive Uses of the Green Belt, i.e. setting out the questions to be explored by the Rural Proofing process, the suggestions have been considered. The table overleaf highlights which issues are likely to be relevant.

Table: Rural Proofing

RP Topic	Will the option/proposal.....	O1	O2	Comments
Availability & Provision				
RP1: Availability of services	Affect the availability of public and private services?	√	√	Option 2: More likely positive impact. More positive use mean that there might be less reliance/need for the centralisation of services and the needs of the rural communities can be better catered for in situ giving a boost to the rural economy providing some of them.
RP2: Service Delivery	Be delivered through existing service outlets and how will you ensure rural residents can access services in areas where outlets are few and far between?	√	√	Relevant. Either of these options may enhance the existing service provision better illustrating the rural-urban interdependence, Possibility of delivering more effective public and community transport solutions – green corridor, “slow” travel, cycle routes, etc.
RP3: Private sector involvement	Be delivered by the private sector or through a public-private partnership? Will the smaller and scattered population in rural areas provide a sufficient market to attract the private sector? Will there be similar opportunities for choice and competition? Does the private sector in rural areas have the capacity to deliver?	√	√	Positive impact. Highly likely that there will be a strong private sector involvement – particularly from land owners and managers in terms of implementing the Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Historic environment action plans

Delivery Costs				
RP4: Cost of delivery	Be more expensive to deliver in rural areas where people are more widely dispersed or economies of scale harder to achieve?	√	√	Allow for higher costs of implementation The encouragement of economies and efficiencies through supporting local supply chains/just-in-time deliveries would be welcomed in rural areas – supporting local employment too
RP5: Local delivery	Rely on local institutions for delivery? Will the policy be as effective in rural areas.	√	√	Specific support may be required in terms of capacity building and encouragement for private and voluntary sector input Clearly important to see policies embedded in county and district LDDs
Accessibility & Infrastructure				
RP6: Travel Needs	Affect travel needs or the ease and cost of travel? Will the impact be different in sparsely populated or remote rural areas, where typically journey times are longer, public transport is poor, and travel options are limited or expensive, especially for low income groups?			Not directly relevant. However, there will be the continuing need to carefully examine transport/access issues; minimising the impact on the rural road infrastructure and on road safety considerations
RP7: Infrastructure	Rely on infrastructure for delivery? How will the policy work in rural areas, where the existing infrastructure is typically weaker, some infrastructure doesn't exist and upgrading of infrastructure may be difficult or expensive?	√	√	Consider using regulation or licences to encourage development of improved green infrastructure and other activities within the Green Belt

RP8: Administrative Areas	Delivery of the policy be challenging at the edges of administrative areas? Many rural people find it easier to cross an administrative boundary to access facilities.	√	√	Encourage “postcode” blindness and reciprocal sharing of service provision across administrative borders where this makes sense.
RP9: New buildings or development sites	Depend on new buildings or development sites? Where will these be located in rural areas, given that there are few brownfield sites and fewer locations where housing or other development will be acceptable?	√	√	Clearly important to see policies embedded in county and district LDDs being mapped and defined ensuring any development is of high quality and will contribute to local character and distinctiveness with minimum environmental impacts
Communications				
RP10: Communication	Rely on communicating information to individuals and communities? How will they access information in rural areas, where there are fewer (formal) places to obtain advice and information?	√	√	A clear communications policy encouraging the support from rural communities is essential. Failure to properly manage the communications process will have implications for securing buy-in for planning proposals and the opportunity of promoting community engagement in rural areas
Economies				
RP11: Impact on rural businesses	Impact on rural businesses, including the self-employed? Will it have a different effect on smaller businesses (which employ a greater proportion of the workforce in rural areas) or those sectors which are typically more significant in rural areas - farming and construction? Will the higher proportion of self-employed people in rural areas be affected by the policy	√	√	Positive Impact. The green economy and, with it, green employment opportunities – creating jobs and economic value is very welcome particularly in rural areas and amongst rural communities

<p>RP12: Impact on land-based industries</p>	<p>Have a particular impact on land-based industries and therefore on rural economies and environments? How will the policy affect the agricultural sector and the mining, extraction and water industries, which have a particular importance in many rural areas? Will there be a knock-on effect on the environment. Conversely, if the policy affects the environment, what are the implications for businesses based on natural resources such as tourism, leisure, renewable energy and food production?</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>Positive Impact. Lots of opportunities to identify “win-win” solutions which will deliver economic and environmental benefits – promoting local supply chains where possible and allowing/encouraging a diverse range of rural enterprises.</p>
<p>RP13: Impact upon those on low income</p>	<p>Affect those on low wages or in part-time or seasonal employment? For those who work in rural areas, wages tend to be lower on average and a higher proportion of the workforce is engaged in part-time or seasonal employment</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>A probable positive impact. Additional employment opportunities could increase or extend the availability of employment opportunities. Consider measures to improve the choice of work (e.g. increasing skills, improving local childcare, improving transport to work).</p>
<p>Disadvantage</p>				
<p>RP14: Disadvantaged Groups</p>	<p>To be targeted at the disadvantaged? How will it target disadvantage in rural areas, which is not usually concentrated in neighbourhoods? Do the indicators to be used for identifying need measure deprivation issues that are particular rural features (e.g. access to services, access to job opportunities, low earnings and housing affordability)?</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>Not directly relevant but increased access to local greenspace may improve health & wellbeing – particularly for low income disadvantaged groups or families are likely to be welcomed.</p>