

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY: EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

Penwith District Council (591)

West Cornwall HMA sub-regional strategy 4/9

Matter

In setting out policies and proposals for the HMA sub-region, does the draft RSS adequately deal with the following questions:-

a) to g)

Response

1. Introduction

1.1 Penwith District Council is deeply concerned that given the RSS covers the same 20 year period as Penwith's recently adopted Vision (Community Strategy) it is essential that the positive outcomes expressed in the Vision are not put at risk by the RSS which, in the absence of any Principal Urban Areas (PUA) in Cornwall, concentrates development on the 'collective' Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCT) of Truro, Camborne/Pool/Redruth and Falmouth/Penryn. This scenario does not reflect the initial submission to the Regional Assembly from the Council that the overall vision should be one that recognises the collective roles of all the main towns (including Hayle and St Ives) to the achievement of more sustainable development in Cornwall.

1.2 Other than Penzance (identified as a 'Market Town'), the absence in the draft RSS of any references to other towns (for example, Hayle) in Penwith runs the risk of all major funding for infrastructure and investment being diverted to the SSCT's and therefore it is realistic to expect that in 20 years time the district will suffer from greater deprivation and rurality than at present – completely at odds with the aforementioned Penwith Vision Penwith is the most deprived district in the region - (56th worst in England compared to Kerrier ranked 87th, and Carrick ranked 149th). Clearly, the Council cannot afford to put the growing sense of optimism in respect of Penwith, and specifically Hayle, at risk by its exclusion from the RSS.

1.3 The draft RSS acknowledges Cornwall's essential difference in its pattern of smaller settlements which do not relate to a large urban hub. However the policies which relate to Cornwall, including Penwith, do not on the whole, address the sustainability of existing distinct settlements within Cornwall and so fail to protect "*the quality and diversity of environmental and cultural assets*" which is a stated aim of the RSS. Given the nature of the district, the Council is concerned that the role of small towns and villages is not addressed adequately enough in the RSS. Policies are needed which enable diverse economic activity of appropriate scale to sustain rural communities in the distinct socio-cultural and economic pattern of Cornish towns, villages and hamlets in relation to the market towns.

1.4 The Council is also concerned about the concentration of development on the 'collective' SSCT of Truro, Camborne/Pool/Redruth and Falmouth/Penryn and the conflict that this presents with other objectives in the RSS, for example reducing car travel to work. Clear policies are needed which address the realistic and sustainable development of infrastructure, including medical services, and various methods of transport, throughout Cornwall. The Council is of the view that the distinct difference of Cornwall cannot be

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successfully addressed by an adaptation of the PUA model of urban influence. The Council reiterates its support for Cornwall to be treated as a coherent region within the RSS. However, with this in mind if this model is to be pursued then there is a strong case to 'promote' the role of towns such as Penzance as an effective SSCT for west Cornwall.

1.5 With regards to the questions posed Penwith District Council would wish to highlight the importance to include specific enhanced roles for both Penzance/ Newlyn and Hayle. Thus, the roles of CPR, Truro and Falmouth – Penryn, are effectively questioned as being negative in terms of the regeneration and sustainability of the Penwith Community, and as such a more balanced approach in terms of spatial outcomes and distribution is required to avoid this. The following statement will seek to firstly highlight the emerging case for special consideration to be given to coastal towns and then to seek to clarify the need to reconsider the role of Penzance/ Newlyn and Hayle in terms of their true potential.

2. The Need for the SWRSS to respond to the challenges of Coastal Towns

2.1 The Select Committee on Communities and Local Government Committee Second report concerning coastal towns prepared 7th March 2007 is timely and sets out many issues applicable to the response the RSS will need to take into account in respect of the coastal towns in the west of Cornwall including Penzance/ Newlyn and indeed Hayle. The analysis of this report identified a number of common characteristics shared by coastal towns including their physical isolation, deprivation levels, the inward migration of older people, the high level of transience, the outward migration of young people, poor quality housing and the nature of the coastal economy. Whilst the report acknowledges that such factors are not all unique to coastal towns it advises that the combination of these characteristics, however, with the environmental challenges that coastal towns face, does lead to a conclusion that they are in need of focused, specific government attention. It is therefore contended that the effective promotion of SSCT which exclude Penzance/ Newlyn will fail to acknowledge the problems identified in relation to the Coastal towns report and will potentially serve to downgrade their role and potential to compete against the identified SSCT's.

3. The Role of Penzance/ Newlyn

3.1 It must be acknowledged that given the current proposed 'Market town' designation in the Draft RSS, Penzance will be the most disadvantaged in its capability to tackle deprivation and economic growth by its nature of being the furthest town west, whereas the other market towns in Cornwall can benefit from proximity and relationship both to Truro, Camborne/Pool/Redruth and Falmouth/Penryn and also to Plymouth. There is a very real risk that the distribution of development will lead to Penzance/ Newlyn stagnating as it will not be in a realistic position to compete with the proposed SSTC's.

3.2 The case for the elevation of Penzance/Newlyn as a SSCT for the West of Cornwall is also strengthened by its link to the Isles of Scilly. In the Council's view, along with Hayle, Penzance/Newlyn will allow the planned economic benefit to extend to the most deprived areas of Cornwall. It is important to emphasise that in terms of critical mass Penzance does not sit alone but includes the settlement of Newlyn which plays a complimentary role, not least in terms of the value of Newlyn Harbour. Newlyn harbour is one of the UK's premier fishing harbours and provides significant employment and on average lands

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£15.832 million of fish per annum at first point of sale. Penzance South ward (which covers Newlyn) is the nineteenth most deprived ward in Cornwall (out of 135). This is caused by unemployment, low incomes, poor housing, child poverty, poor health, low educational achievement, residents' disability and poor access to services. Again it has to be questioned whether the proposed distribution of development in the draft RSS will address this, however, it is suggested that by seeking to target development and investment in the proposed SSCT's the result will be one of negative impact upon Penzance/ Newlyn.

3.3 In terms of accessing the proposed SSCT's nearest to the Penwith Town's in order to benefit for the level of services and facilities they are intended to provide, including employment opportunities, it must be appreciated that for example to commute by bus to work in Truro from Penzance there is only one bus that will get you into Truro before 9.00 and this leaves Penzance at 7.05 and arrives at the station at 8.13. This provides for what is realistically an unsustainable journey of about 2 hours 20 minutes daily without considering the cost of travel. The rail journeys between Penzance and Truro are quicker but at a cost – the cheapest day return fare indicated on the rail website for a return on the 13th March 2007 was £8.00. Furthermore, account has to be taken of the villages and towns located to the west of Penzance such as St. Buryan and St. Just where access to the proposed SSCT's by public transport is simply unviable.

3.4 The West Cornwall Business Survey results 2006 shows that a majority of employees working in the Penzance economy travel less than 2 miles to their place of work, which highlights a local workforce and could suggest that businesses only recruit locally. It is contended that such a pattern is healthy in terms of both sustainable communities and minimising carbon emissions. The risk with the RSS proposals is that the SSCT's will draw trade and potential employment prospects away from Penzance.

Recommendation

It is the Council's view that Penzance/ Newlyn meets the criteria for selection as an addition to the 'collective' SSCT and should be included in Development Policy A.

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4. The Role of Hayle

4.1 Despite being on the verge of benefitting from a £175 million redevelopment scheme on the largest previously developed brownfield site in Cornwall, the fact that the draft RSS omits Hayle could result in it being wrongly construed as within the 'small town and village' category. This could have serious implications for the redevelopment of Hayle and could affect funding for critical services such as health, public transport and rural facilities. In light of the criteria outlined for 'Market Towns' (Development Policy B) the Council requests that Hayle is recognised and referenced in paragraph 4.4.19. The complementary development relationship between Hayle and Camborne/Pool/Redruth should also be recognised, especially given that Regional Development Agency view Hayle in that light and have chosen Hayle as the base for Wave Hub. It should also be highlighted that a considerable level of research has been carried out in respect of the Hayle harbour proposal with regard to flood risk mitigation and work is ongoing in respect of the production of a master plan which seeks to provide environmental asset protection.

4.4 Account must be taken of the potential role of the town of Hayle. Recent developments which include a small retail park accommodating the likes of Next, Boots and shortly M&S, has raised the profile of the town. In addition, the long awaited Hayle harbour development, a major scheme of regeneration by ING involving a considerable predominantly brownfield site, is nearing application stage. It is now anticipated that the Harbour development plans will be likely to include circa 950 dwelling units in order to make the scheme viable and minimise the need for public subsidy. With regard to the question concerning additional greenfield development, the experience with Hayle harbour is that in order to provide a suitable mixed development and sustainable community a significant element of greenfield development is required in order to produce a viable scheme and minimise the need for public funding.

4.5 SWRDA has also committed considerable resources and finance in respect of the Hayle Harbour scheme in relation to Wave Hub the wave energy scheme which is located off Hayle in the St. Ives Bay. Thus, there are considerable potential benefits, not least from the potential location of R&D and support business related to wave energy development. Hayle is well placed in terms of the A30 Trunk Road network, has a rail station, and will benefit from a new park and ride facility (both rail and bus) to be located at St. Erth funded through the LTP. The rail link accounting for both Hayle and St. Erth Stations, in particular makes Penzance, CPR and Truro. Whilst road access is restricted in the far west of the Penwith District in terms of the ability to provide a reasonably sustainable transport service within the district Penwith is reasonably well placed to be able to serve its own needs, subject to suitable inward investment.

Recommendation: The Council strongly advocates that given its strategic importance geographically and its regeneration potential, Hayle is specifically mentioned in the RSS, and referenced in paragraph 4.4.19.
