



## **The new Draft Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4): Planning for Prosperous Communities**

### **What is it?**

A 12 week consultation on a [New Draft Statement](#) that brings together the Government's main planning policies relating to the economy. Responses are invited by **28<sup>th</sup> July 2009** with the Government's reply being published in the autumn.

PPS4 aims to streamline current planning policy and enable the economy to grow in a sustainable manner. It is a response to current economic challenges and the recognition that planning procedures need simplification to aid recovery and enhance economic development in general. The Draft Statement includes recommendations from the [Taylor Review of rural housing and the economy](#) and the 'thrust of' the [Rural Advocates report on the rural economy](#) (both 2008).

### **Intended purpose and outcomes**

The main purpose of Draft PPS 4 is to underline the need for regional planning bodies and local planning authorities (within the context of delivering sustainable communities) to plan for economic development in their areas.

It has three key outcomes:

- Update draft PPS 4: *Sustainable economic development*
- Update draft PPS 6: *Town centres* and
- Consolidate national planning policy on economic development into a streamlined policy statement

### **Background**

Since the [2007 Planning White Paper](#), the Government has been considering how it would review national planning policy framework. The Government also consulted on PPS4 in 2007 to replace Planning Policy Guidance 4 and on proposed changes to PPS 6 (on town centres) in 2008.

The main context of Draft PPS 4 is that:

- The planning system is a key tool to improve the twin drivers of economic performance (productivity & employment). It provides certainty about land use and infrastructure which will encourage investment. Well planned infrastructure improves productivity in for example cutting journey times and improving labour mobility.

- Economic growth in urban and rural areas generates wealth and can raise living standards.
- Cities and towns are key drivers for the local, regional and national economy for many reasons including their scale and density along with the markets they generate.
- Rural areas have an important role in the regional and national economy – they are not a poor relation to other areas.

## **Introduction**

PPS 4 sets out national planning policy in relation to the economy. Good practice guidance will be published separately. When it is finalised both local and regional planning bodies must take PPS 4 into account when compiling their local development documents and regional spatial strategies.

The Government requires that regional and local development plans are proactive and flexible so they support business start up and growth, attract inward investment and increase employment, particularly in deprived areas. Amongst many objectives, PPS 4 aims to achieve sustainable economic growth and raise the productivity rate of the economy, deliver more sustainable development to respond to climate change and improve the ‘vitality and viability’ of town and other centres because they drive their surrounding economies.

- The focus of the Statement is on town centres (‘the bedrock of our economic future’) but there is a strong emphasis on the needs of the rural economy, with recognition that rural and urban economies are ostensibly the same and co-dependent.
- Draft PPS4 implements several elements of the recommendations arising from the [Taylor Review of rural housing and the economy](#) and takes on the thrust of recommendations made in the [Rural Advocates report](#) last year.
- The final key aspect is the simplification and streamlining of planning policy as recommended by the [Killian Pretty Review of development control](#) which proposed that policies should be simpler and more concise and businesslike.

## **The key elements of PPS 4**

Note - part of the Statement comprises an Impact Assessment of the likely impact of the policy in terms of costs, benefits and risks (and is not considered here).

The main part of Draft PPS4 brings together 24 policies across the range of economic planning including the local planning approach to economic development and to rural areas.

Aspects that are most likely to be of interest to RCAN are set out below and include key statements identified in italics at the top of each section:

## Rural areas:

### Local planning approach:

*'Most' new development should continue to be located in or on the edge of existing settlements. Subject to the need to protect the countryside, the policies for economic development in the Draft Statement apply equally for rural as to urban areas. Additionally rural planning authorities should:*

- Identify local services centres (country town, large village or groups of villages) as the preferred location for new economic development.
- Focus most new development on the edge of local service centres
- Set criteria for farm diversification and support other forms of business diversification appropriate to their rural locations.
- Seek to remedy deficiencies in rural services and help address social exclusion.

### Village and local centre shops and services:

*Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should aim to protect and strengthen service outlets in rural locations including shops, post offices, pubs, petrol stations and village and church halls.*

- Protect existing facilities that meet people's day to day needs.
- Respond positively to proposal to convert/extend shops that will improve their viability.
- Consider the role of farm shops to meet demand for local produce but ensure that this does not take away from easily accessible convenience shopping available to communities.

### Tourism in rural areas:

*LPAs should support sustainable tourism and leisure in rural areas.*

- Support tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations
- Locate where possible facilities in existing buildings

### Decision making policies:

*Should support development enhancing market towns and other rural centres.*

- Support small-scale economic development where it provides the most sustainable option in villages and other locations remote from local service centres.
- Assess proposals involving the loss of economic activity in rural areas on the basis of the protection and enhancement of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Local planning:

*Authorities in rural areas take account of the need to protect the countryside.*

- Should encourage sustainable economic growth
- Should prioritise previously developed 'Brownfield land'
- Facilitate new working practices such as live/work units or use of residential properties for home working.

Regional Planning:

*Through Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), planners should encourage sustainable economic growth based on a clear vision for the region.*

- The RSS should set criteria or identify development sites and ensure that Greenfield sites are not released unnecessarily in competition between authorities.

### **The Consultation questions and RCAN's responses**

Draft PPS 4 asks 11 questions about the Statement. Several seek consideration of whether the new statement has accurately consolidated aspects of preceding policy and whether the new Statement is easier to understand. Initial key questions for RCAN are:

Q. 9. Do you agree that the policies do enough to protect small or rural shops and services including public houses? If no please explain what changes you would like to see.

Q. 10. In response to Matthew Taylor, we have altered the approach to issues such as farm diversification. What do you consider are the pros and cons of this approach?

**ACRE would encourage RCAN members to send submissions as individual organisations but would be pleased also to collate a joint Rural Community Action Network submission. In order to achieve this by the deadline, please email Martin Hawkins [m.hawkins@acre.org.uk](mailto:m.hawkins@acre.org.uk) by 15<sup>th</sup> July.**

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