

To: The Secretary of State for
Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU



From:

Date:

To The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government,

Concerns about the South West Regional Spatial Strategy

I am writing to express my concern about the future of the South West region, as set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). I understand that the final document is due to be published shortly. I would like you to ensure that the levels of economic growth and house building set out in the document will not threaten the quality and character of the countryside in the region.

The South West's green spaces and open countryside are a precious, finite resource. They produce our food, support wild animals and plants, give us sports facilities and public rights of way, add to our quality of life and provide clean air, peace and tranquillity. Protecting them from inappropriate development must be a top priority.

As I am sure you are aware from the 35,000 responses you received regarding the Proposed Changes, people are very worried about this Strategy and the impact it will have. While I recognise that there is a need for more houses, in particular homes that are affordable, I do not believe that the approach in the RSS is the right one. Specifically I would ask you to:

- **commit to regenerating urban areas before developing on greenfield land, in order to protect the countryside.** Local authorities should be rewarded for regenerating urban areas, converting empty buildings where appropriate and bringing empty homes back into use. Brownfield land must be used before greenfield land is developed. Road schemes that open up the countryside must be opposed, and a sustainable transport plan produced;
- **ensure that the priority for new housing in the region is affordable homes** and that these are fully funded. It is unrealistic to rely on a developer-led approach through planning agreements; and
- **reduce the overall number of new houses allocated.** Housing numbers should not be treated as fixed targets or, even worse, as minimum figures but rather as guidance for a properly planned approach to delivery. New housing development should meet local needs and be provided in tandem with community and social facilities.

At a time when the public are concerned more than ever about whether MPs and Ministers are really representing the views of local people I hope you are able to take these points into consideration before publishing the South West RSS.

Yours sincerely,