

Response from Mr. P. Johnson

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the issue raised in your recent letter following the Cala Homes judgment. Your letter asks: What weight should be given to the Secretary of State's intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies, and what are the implications for the Inspector's consideration of the proposed changes? Please find my response below.

Rochford Council's Core Strategy should be amended so as to give full weight to the Secretary of State's intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies. In particular, the Core Strategy's target for building new houses should be amended, having regard to the following:

- 1) the currently proposed Rochford target appears to simply replicate, albeit over a somewhat longer period, the target from the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- 2) the Cala Homes judgment makes clear that Rochford should have regard to the Secretary of State's intended abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies, and that councils should base housing targets on local need within a national framework;
- 3) the response of local residents to the Core Strategy consultation which was overwhelmingly against building on Green Belt land;
- 4) the Government's stated intention to rebalance the economy by region and sector.

In the light of the above, Rochford's present house building targets should be withdrawn, and new, lower targets substituted that are based on assessment of local need. The Core Strategy should also be amended to include a policy of refusing to build on Green Belt land unless there is a compelling local need.

Peter Johnson