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WMRSS Panel Secretary
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c/o Government Office for the West Midlands
5 St Philip's Place
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Ref: 318-1

June 24 2009

Dear

Examination in Public June 24 2009

Rail for Herefordshire are unable to attend the EIP today. We would like the following two points to be taken into consideration.

Housing Numbers

The proposed level of growth with regard to housing is too high. While there is a need for some affordable housing and rented accommodation in the county, the new housing allocation will not fulfil this need, most new housing is too expensive for those on low incomes. Powys County are concerned that more people will commute from Powys as house prices are cheaper there, but this is because it is far away from employment and therefore inconvenient for most. New housing in Hereford will not necessarily be cheaper than housing in Powys, however many houses are built there.

At the moment in Herefordshire estate agents are unable to sell houses, or even find tenants for vacant properties. There are no more homeless people now than there were before the credit crisis when the demand for housing was high. This shows that the 'need' for housing is more about fuelling the house building economy than providing homes per se.

Increasing the number of houses in Herefordshire to such a high rate will inevitably lead to building on green field sites on beautiful countryside to the west, south or north of the city. These assets will be lost to local people and visitors who enjoy walking and cycling in them today, forever. This is too high a price to pay to fuel the house building economy, on which much of the last ten years was based.

The need for housing in Herefordshire is not proved (except for some affordable and rented accommodation), therefore the allocation of housing in Herefordshire should be reduced, and the number be set as a maximum not a minimum. This means local planners can decide how much land is needed for housing at a local and more flexible level, so as they can respond to local conditions of employment and housing demand in future years.

Infrastructure

Rail for Herefordshire would reiterate their initial submission which is in agreement with FoE and CPRE (but not mentioned in your summary document), that the principle of an Outer Distributor Road under the heading of 'Infrastructure' should not be written into the Regional Spatial Strategy. Over the next 25 years of the RSS plan global warming and fuel shortages will become the main planning issues. Policy should address this now. All housing should be planned and located in such a way as to reduce greenhouse gases and the need to travel by car. An Outer Distributor Road will inevitably encourage more car travel and housing based on the car and therefore more greenhouse gases. We believe a comprehensive public transport system with big increases in the bus network, and an expansion of train capacity are the way forward and housing should be planned to enable this. The DLP request for housing to the west and south of the city is likely to reflect ownership of land by housing developers and the ease of building houses on green field sites rather than the needs of the county. It is not necessarily the best location for housing planned around public transport, walking and cycling.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Roseff
Secretary
Rail for Herefordshire