

Meeting of Cabinet - 12th February 2007

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

**Consultation on Spatial Options for the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
Phase 2 Revision - Proposed Response by Dudley MBC**

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet of the publication for consultation by the Regional Planning Body of the Spatial Options in connection with the Phase 2 Revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and to recommend a response on these Options.
2. This report sets out the headline issues and proposed responses on key topics. More detail is provided in an appendix.

Background

3. The Phase 2 Revision of RSS considers where new development should occur, how much, in what form, and with what impact, looking forward to 2026. The vision and underpinning objectives of the approved RSS remain unchanged, but the breadth and scope of the Phase 2 Spatial Options raise issues of fundamental importance to the long term development of the Region, particularly in relation to the scale and distribution of new housing and employment.
4. The relationship between the Phase 1 (Black Country) and Phase 2 Revisions of the RSS is the subject of a protocol, the key provisions of which are firstly that decisions taken under Phase 1 will not be reviewed in Phase 2 (unless there are exceptional circumstances) and secondly that technical evidence should be consistent and shared between the Phases. It is possible that the Panel's Report on Phase 1 will be published in time for it to be taken into account in the Preferred Option for Phase 2.
5. Public consultation on the Spatial Options is taking place from 8th January to 5th March. Comments will be taken into account by the Regional Planning Body in preparing the Preferred Option, which will be published for informal consultation before submission to the Secretary of State. A Consultation Event for the Black Country area took place on 24th January, at the Black Country Museum. The views expressed at the Event will be reported verbally to Cabinet. It is intended that the Preferred Options will be submitted to Government, after a further period of consultation, by the end of 2007.

Housing

6. There are three option levels of new housing growth. Option 1 (381,000 additional dwellings in the Region 2001-2026) is based on a continuation of RSS levels. Option 2 (491,200 dwellings) is based on advice provided by the Strategic Planning Authorities (a joint submission was made on behalf of the Metropolitan Area). Option 3 (575,000 dwellings) is based on the latest Government household projections.
7. Technical work suggests that, for Dudley and the Black Country, Option 3 would involve use of green field/ green belt land and might undermine the Black Country Study's (BCS) objectives and regeneration strategy. The level of development required under Option 2, whilst greater than in the current RSS and Option 1, is likely to be achievable without the use of greenfield land and would be consistent with the aims of the BCS. It is therefore suggested that the Council should support the scale and distribution of housing growth proposed under Option 2, subject to a continuation of the existing RSS approach which sets maximum levels of development outside the major urban areas and caveats relating to phasing and delivery mechanisms. Affordable housing provision is a key element of the Revision. The Council may also wish to support the proposal to establish a regional target for affordable homes, with local level targets being fixed by local development frameworks, which in Dudley's case will be through the Joint Core Strategy.

Employment

8. The Consultation stresses that employment land supply needs to match changes in the Region's economy and the scale and pattern of new housing development. Policies for housing and employment growth need to be integrated (as exemplified in the Black Country Study) through the Phase 2 Revision Preferred Option. The proposal that RSS should for the first time establish levels of employment land to be provided for in local development documents is welcome. It would be appropriate to adopt *minimum* levels in the major urban areas and *maxima* in the shire areas. A Black Country level reservoir and back-up land bank should be established through RSS, with indicative levels for each Black Country Authority. These should be broadly consistent with the findings of the Black Country Study. A 5 year reservoir and 10 year land bank should ensure an adequate supply. The Council should also support proposals relating to a range of 'special' sites to meet sub-regional and regional inward investment needs (Regional Investment Sites, Major Investment Sites, and Regional Logistics Sites), as set out in the Appendix.

Strategic Centres

9. The Phase 2 Revision proposes to adopt the Phase 1 proposals for the Black Country centres. The Council should endorse this approach. The Council should also support proposed policies to establish limits on the scale of retail and office development outside strategic centres, and the use of a sequential approach which gives preference to in-centre development, then edge of centre development, before allowing out of centre development. The intention to establish size thresholds for development proposals to be referred to the Regional Planning Body should similarly be supported, as these will help to ensure vitality and viability of centres and regeneration.

Waste

10. The proposal that each waste planning authority or sub-region should make adequate provision (in terms of land for additional facilities) to manage an equivalent tonnage of municipal and industrial/ commercial waste to that arising within its area should be supported. In the Black Country, this may be taken forward through joint working. The implications in terms of land allocations and comments on other policies and option choices are detailed in the appendix to this report.

Transport and Accessibility

11. The consultation seeks views on options for strategic park and ride, car parking policies, road user charging and the role of the Region's airports – issues identified by the Secretary of State as needing early review. Regarding strategic park and ride, the Council has supported the principle and can continue to support the criteria for assessing proposed locations set out in RSS. Reservations need to be expressed about one of the possible locations identified – Quinton/ M5 junction 3 – which may be difficult to achieve because of the constrained nature of the sites in this area. Regarding road user charging, it would not be appropriate to make any significant changes to RSS until the outcome of the Transport Innovation Fund work is known. Finally concerning the role of the Region's airports, it is proposed to revise the RSS in accordance with the Air Transport White Paper – supporting the expansion of Birmingham International Airport, opposing any further expansion at Coventry, and maintaining the role of Wolverhampton. The Council may wish to support these proposals.

Finance

12. Whereas the options being considered will be important for the long-term development of the Borough, decisions to be made at this stage of consultation do not carry any direct financial consequences. The costs of consulting on the Spatial Options will be met from within existing budgets.

Law

13. The Regional Spatial Strategy together with local development plan documents comprise the statutory development plan for the Borough (s38(c) of Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004). Local development plan documents must conform to the RSS. The RSS is a material consideration when determining applications for planning permission.

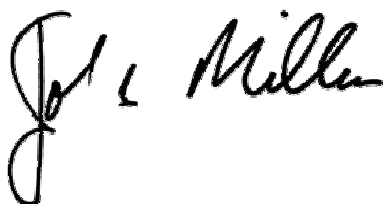
Equality Impact

14. The WMRSS vision underpins the Revision and the Spatial Options. 'The overall vision for the West Midlands is one of an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable Region, which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life of future generations.' The vision and objectives of the WMRSS will remain unchanged by the Phase 2 Revision. The needs of all sections of the community, including those of children and young people, will be addressed through the Revisions to the RSS.

Recommendation

15. It is recommended that:-

Cabinet supports the views expressed in this report and the Appendix and authorises the Director of the Urban Environment to submit a response to the Regional Planning Body based on these.



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List of Appendices

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Spatial Options: Proposed Response by
Dudley MBC

List of Background Papers

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision - Spatial Options