

Cabinet Meeting – 31st October 2007

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Regional Spatial Strategy Review: Phase One: The Black Country Proposed Changes by the Secretary of State.

Purpose

1. To approve the Council's response to the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes on the Phase One revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

Background

2. The Secretary of State published on the 10 September 2007 changes to the Phase one revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy and is seeking comments on these proposed changes by the 9th November 2007.
3. Members may recall earlier reports on the progression of this document. The earlier stages of this document were prepared by the Black Country Consortium under the heading of the Black Country Study. This was then taken forward by the Regional Assembly as a Phase one revision to the RSS focused entirely on the Black Country. This culminated in an Examination in Public in January of 2007 where an independent panel appointed by the Government heard the objections into the phase one revision. Members will be aware that there was a positive panel report on these matters in March 2007 with the report overwhelmingly endorsing the principles of the Black Country Study.
4. The Panel Report has now been considered by the Secretary of State and the Government Office for the West Midlands and has been prepared as a set of proposed changes to the RSS. This stage now represents the final consultation stage before the revised RSS is approved by the Secretary of State early next year. It must be remembered that this is of importance in that the revised RSS forms the strategic element of the development plan which is a guide to all decisions about development which are made in the Borough.

KEY ISSUES FOR DUDLEY

There are a number of key messages and recommendations contained within the proposed changes. They are as follows:-

- Confirmation of the designation of Brierley Hill as a new Strategic Town Centre within the Region to include Brierley Hill High Street, the Waterfront and the Merry Hill Centre

- Confirmation of the recognition of Dudley Town Centre and its renaissance as a significant centre for tourism and cultural facilities as well as for housing-led regeneration making the most of its historic and cultural heritage and it's civic function
 - Development of a network of quality public transport routes, utilising the existing rail and Metro together with new approaches to bus transport, linking people with jobs and the Black Country network of Centres.
 - Requests that the Area Action Plan for Brierley Hill defines a Northern Limit so as not to compromise habitats in the Special Area of Conservation at Fens Pool.
 - Emphasises that the strategic town centres of the Black Country will also be the focus for new homes, new office and leisure based opportunities as well as significant new retail development.
 - Confirms that transformation of the environment using the heritage of canals and nature reserves within the Black Country to make it more attractive to live, work and invest is a key strategic matter
 - The provision of jobs within designated employment land corridors through land assembly and improvements in land, buildings and transport infrastructure in such areas.
 - Increasing the emphasis in mitigating for climate change including use of renewable energy sources, reducing waste, reducing the need to travel and enhancing and extending natural habitats and environments and introduces the need for water cycle strategies to be prepared.
5. These changes are positive and allow for the Borough to realise the regeneration potential through the designation of Brierley Hill as a Strategic Centre and allow for the wider regeneration of the Borough. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council are working with the other three Local Planning Authorities in the Black Country to prepare a joint core strategy which will set out the development framework for the Black Country. Similarly alongside this Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council officers are progressing an Area Action Plan to take forward the regeneration opportunities in Brierley Hill. The responses attached at Appendix 1 reflect these sentiments

Finance

6. The work on the Regional Spatial Strategy is being undertaken within current budget and resources specified for that purpose.

Law

7. This is the first phase of the Review of Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG11) (2004). Under Section 38 (3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 it states that the Development Plan for the Borough consists of Local Development Plan documents and the Regional Spatial Strategy. The

Regional Spatial Strategy therefore must be taken account of in the consideration of development proposals in the Borough.

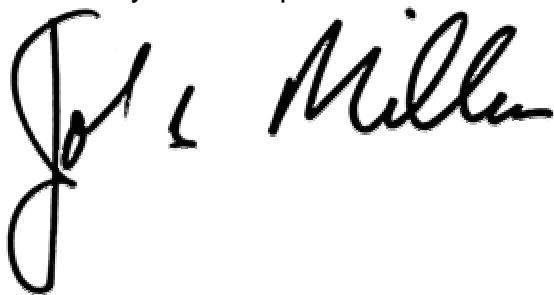
8. In addition, Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, allows the Council to do anything that it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic or environmental well-being of the area.

Equality Impact

9. The RSS sets out the strategic planning framework for the Region . The RSS sets out the framework to ensure that appropriate development is provided for in that time to meet the needs of all communities and everyone within the region. This will include meeting the needs of children and young people seeking to provide sufficient facilities within the Region and the Borough for them as well as having a positive effect for future generations.

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that the statements in at appendix one are approved as the Dudley MBC response to the Secretary of State.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Millar', with a stylized, cursive script.

John Millar
Director of the Urban Environment

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List of Background Papers

Phase 1 Panel Report March 2007-10-01

Secretary of State Proposed Changes

RSS Phase 1 Sept 2007

REPRESENTATIONS

Dudley MBC welcomes and supports the strategic approach of the proposed changes which focus on positive regeneration of the Black Country as a whole. To that end the Council are committed to delivering the objectives of the strategy by undertaking through the preparation of the Local Development Framework, the production of the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country and the Area Action Plan for Brierley Hill. The Council recognises the strategic environmental importance of the Special Area of Conservation within the Borough's boundary and will undertake planning duties to ensure that the environmental limits of development within the Borough are not exceeded.

Dudley MBC welcomes the confirmation of the support of the designation of Brierley Hill as a Strategic Centre. It has long been the Council's ambition to deliver planned regeneration and change and this positive framework allows that regeneration to be witnessed. The Council is committed, through working with partners to deliver this regeneration, starting with the production of the Area Action Plan for Brierley Hill.

The Council welcomes the identified role for Dudley as a town able to capture its renaissance of the unique tourism and cultural assets and focusing on its role as a provider of residential development and retail akin to its new role.

Dudley MBC welcomes the emphasis on climate change in the proposed changes and will ensure that the policies it prepares delivers this strategy.