

Stourbridge Area Committee – 10th March 2008

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Public Consultation on the Preferred Options for The Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country

Purpose of Report

1. This report is to advise the Stourbridge Area Committee on the timescale and process for public consultation on the Preferred Options for the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country.

Background

2. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, each Local Planning Authority is statutorily required to produce a Core Strategy Development Plan Document as part of its Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy is to provide the strategic planning basis for all development in the Borough up to 2026 linking in with other Council Strategies and the Community Plan. Significant work has already been carried out between the four Black Country Authorities on the Black Country Study. These were the basis of subsequent changes approved by The Secretary of State in January 2008 to the Regional Spatial Strategy, including Brierley Hill becoming a new Strategic Town Centre and Dudley being approved as a centre for Tourism and Heritage. Joint working is now continuing in the production of a Core Strategy for the whole Black Country. The Government have increasingly encouraged joint working between authorities in the production of such Plans and Documents and this arrangement has been agreed by all four Black Country Authorities and endorsed by Dudley Council Cabinet on 13th September 2006 and by Full Council on 16th October 2006.
3. As part of the joint working process, the four Black Country Authorities have set up a Joint Advisory Group (JAG) made up of the Cabinet Members with responsibility for Planning and Regeneration from each of the four Councils. The JAG meets on a regular basis to endorse the joint approach and provide a steer for the progress of the joint working arrangements. The JAG last met on 17th January 2008 and agreed that the Preferred Options Document could proceed to each of the four Council Cabinets for their approval to consult. The Cabinet of Dudley Council meets on the 13th February to make this decision.
4. The Joint Core Strategy will provide planning strategy at the more local level, building on the work carried out previously in the Black Country Study. For example, the Black Country Study identified that future development in the Black Country would be concentrated in a network of strategic and town centres and the corridors interlinking them. The Joint Core Strategy takes that policy

approach forward and provides more detail on how much and what kind of development will go into each centre and corridor. (i.e. how much new housing, how much employment land and so on).

5. In the preparation of a Core Strategy, it is necessary to follow a required set of stages as stipulated in the legislation, all of which require community involvement and consultation. The initial stage led to the production of an 'Issues and Options' Paper which was approved by Cabinet for consultation in June 2007. Since then, the four Black Country Authorities have continued to work on the preparation of a 'Preferred Options' Document which must be made available for public consultation. It is proposed that this document will be out to public consultation for six weeks beginning in March 2008 until 11th April 2008. Following this period, a final Submission Document will be prepared and submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in November 2008. This will then be subject to an Examination in Public, probably in Spring 2009, before it is finally approved towards the end of 2009.
6. In order to reach this stage, public consultation and engagement was carried out following the publication of last year's Issues and Options Paper. In Dudley, a series of public exhibitions took place in the Summer of 2007 in town centres across the Borough and regular consultation has taken place since then with stakeholder groups, government agencies, health and education representatives as well as officers within the Council to help inform the development of the Preferred Options Document which is now put before Cabinet for approval for the next consultation stage.
7. The Preferred Options Document sets out the preferred planning policy areas to be covered but, at this stage, still poses various questions to enable the consultation responses to shape the emerging strategy further. Details about specific consultation events to be held to discuss how these proposals affect the future areas in Dudley Borough will be made available on the website at <http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk>. These will include workshop sessions in each of the designated corridors set out in the Core Strategy and discussed with stakeholder and community groups. The report on the Preferred Options is also available to be viewed in the Members Room. Any responses will help to finalise the Submission Document which is due to be completed and submitted to the Secretary of State by the end of 2008.

Finance

8. The Joint Core Strategy itself will be produced using existing budgets and resources dedicated to the production of Development Plan Documents and other such statutory planning documents. Whereas it is intended that any additional work arising will be funded from existing budgets, if these prove insufficient to deliver the Joint Core Strategy, Members will be notified accordingly.

Law

9. The production of a Core Strategy as a Development Plan Document is a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

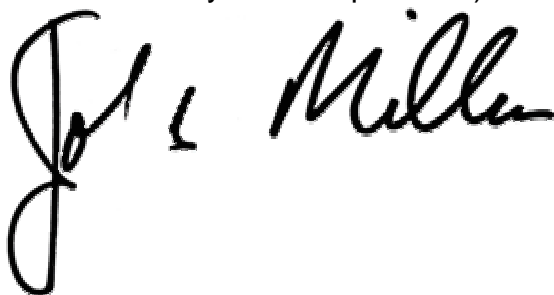
10. In addition, Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, allows the Council to do anything that it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area.

Equality Impact

11. The Joint Core Strategy will set the planning framework for the development of the Borough, as well as the rest of the Black Country up to 2021. The Core Strategy will seek to ensure that sufficient homes, shops and employment, social, educational and recreational facilities are planned and provided for in that time to meet the needs of all communities and everyone within those communities. This will include meeting the needs of children and young people seeking to provide sufficient facilities within the Borough for them as well as having a positive effect for future generations.

Recommendation

12. That this Area Committee notes the contents of this report and is invited to submit its response to the Consultation within the prescribed timescale (29th February – 11th April 2008).



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List of Background Papers

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks (ODPM 2004)
www.communities.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/downloadable/odpm_plan_030922.pdf

The Black Country Study and supporting technical documents. See
www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk/page.asp?PageRef=10