

**Meeting of the Cabinet – 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

**Report of the Director of the Urban Environment**

**Response to the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision Preferred Options Report**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To approve the Council's response to the Preferred Options of the Regional Spatial Document Phase 2 Revision.

**Background**

2. The Regional Assembly has submitted a Preferred Options document to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for Phase 2 of its revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy. As part of this process, responses are invited on the Document for a set consultation period to inform an Examination in Public which is to be held early next year prior to the final document being adopted. Phase 2 of the Revision is a region-wide review of planning issues following Phase 1 of the review which focused on the Black Country Study and was adopted in 2007.
3. The Document provides suggested revisions to five regional planning policy areas between now and 2026 as follows:
  - **Housing** – The Document proposes revised housing targets for each local authority (apart from the Black Country authorities where an aggregated target is set). The proposed housing targets are significantly higher than the previous Regional Spatial Strategy which was adopted in 2004 and reflects recent Household Projection figures which show a significant upward trend. This is primarily due to factors such as people living longer, more people living alone and people marrying at a later age – all factors which increase the formation of additional households. The total number of additional houses proposed in the Document across the whole Region up to 2026 is 365,000 dwellings.
  - **Employment and the Regional Economy** – Maintaining a supply of readily available sites for employment use is the primary focus of this section of the Document. It sets employment land targets for each local authority (again the Black Country figure is aggregated) in order to maintain a reservoir of land to meet future employment requirements

- **Centres** – The Document proposes revised figures for retail floorspace expansion for all Strategic Centres in the Region (including Brierley Hill) between now and 2026 and suggested levels of expansion for other town centres in the Region.
  - **Transport and Accessibility** – Infrastructure improvements to the Regional transport system up to 2026 are proposed in the Document including improvements to the rail and road infrastructure and continued emphasis on Birmingham Airport as the Regions primary airport.
  - **Waste Management** – The Document emphasises the need to provide waste management and recycling facilities to meet the needs for the Region's population and economic needs.
4. The Document was submitted for consultation in January 2008 and was originally only open for consultation until March 2008. However, following submission to the Secretary of State the Government felt that the Housing figures, although significantly higher than previously, were not high enough to meet the very latest projections required up to 2026. The Government subsequently appointed Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) to consider options for providing for further housing growth and its implications.
  5. The Study produced by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) on behalf of the Government has only recently been completed which prompted the Regional Assembly and the Government to extend the Consultation period for the document to December 8<sup>th</sup> 2008. The study was published on 7<sup>th</sup> October and launched to stakeholders on 9<sup>th</sup> October in Birmingham. It will be used by Government Office and other stakeholders as a source of evidence for representations on the submitted RSS Document and will then be subject to an Examination in Public where all representations will be considered.
  6. The Study contains three scenarios distributing between 51,500 and 80,000 additional dwellings (over and above the 365,000 identified in RSS 2 Preferred Option) by 2026. In short, Black Country figures remain unchanged. However all three options include higher levels of housing for Birmingham (an additional 10,000 across all scenarios) and Solihull (between 5000 and 13000 additional dwellings). whilst a range of zero to 10,000 additional dwellings are proposed in Telford and Wrekin.
  7. Dudley's proposed response as set out in Appendix A, continues to support the housing figures originally put forward by the Regional Assembly in the Preferred Options Document as opposed to the proposals within the NLP Study. The original housing figures had been carefully calculated and negotiated with and between local authorities within the Region. This was done in accordance with infrastructure capacity and the planning policies which already existed in the Region which promote most growth within the Major Urban Areas and other regional centres.
  8. The proposed response, as attached, makes comments on all of the main policy areas within the Preferred Options Document and once approved will be submitted to the Government for consideration in the formulation of the final approved Document following the Examination in Public in Spring 2009.

## **Finance**

9. The Council's input into the formulation of the Regional Spatial Strategy is done using existing budgets and resources dedicated to the production of the Local Development Framework. Whereas it is intended that any additional work arising will be funded from existing budgets, if these prove insufficient Members will be notified accordingly.

## **Law**

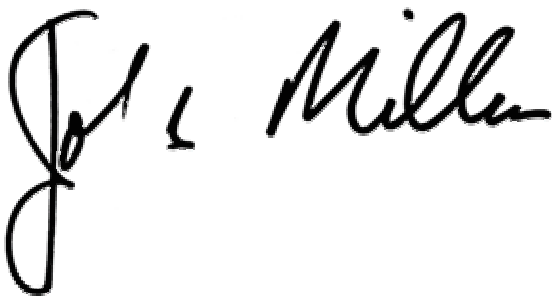
10. Under Section 38 of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is now part of each Council's statutory Development Plan Documents. As such each Authority should be in conformity with RSS when formulating planning policies and when determining planning applications, the determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. 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**

11. The Regional Spatial Strategy will set the planning framework for the development of the Region up to 2026. The Regional Spatial Strategy will seek to ensure that sufficient homes, shops and employment, social, educational and recreational facilities are planned and provided for in that time across the Region 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 Region for them as well as having a positive effect for future generations.

## **Recommendations**

12. It is recommended that the Council's response to the Preferred Options Document of Phase 2 of the Regional Spatial Strategy be approved as part of the consultation process to assist in its formulation.



.....  
**John Millar**  
**Director of the Urban Environment**

Contact Officer: Martin Dando – Planning Policy Team  
Telephone: 01384 817214  
Email: [martin.dando@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:martin.dando@dudley.gov.uk)

## **List of Background Papers**

The Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision Preferred Options Document. (January 2008)

[http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Planning\\_and\\_Regional\\_Spatial\\_Strategy/RSS\\_Revision/RSS\\_Revision\\_Phase\\_2/RSS\\_Revision\\_Phase\\_2.aspx](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Planning_and_Regional_Spatial_Strategy/RSS_Revision/RSS_Revision_Phase_2/RSS_Revision_Phase_2.aspx)

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks (ODPM 2004)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps12>

Appendix A (Attached) – The Councils Response to the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision Preferred Options Document.