

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 28TH FEBRUARY, 2005

THE BLACK COUNTRY STUDY – PROJECT PLAN AND OUTCOMES FROM BLACK COUNTRY III

REPORT OF THE CABINET

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To endorse the project plan for the Black Country Study as part of the formal revision process for the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). To endorse the outcomes from the Black Country III event held on the 11th - 12th October 2004. Both the Project Plan and the Outcomes Summary are available in the Members Library.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.3.1 In June 2004, the Secretary of State approved the Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands. This set out an ambitious strategy to guide the future development of the Region, focusing on the renaissance and renewal of the Major Urban Areas, including the Black Country.
- 2.3.2 In approving the Spatial Strategy, the Secretary of State recognised that, in some instances, more work was required to develop further this strategy and this specifically included a proposal to undertake a Black Country Sub- regional Study where there was a particular need to resolve a number of inter-connected issues affecting the area i.e.
- a. Regeneration priorities;
 - b. The strategic role of town centres and Merry Hill;
 - c. Urban capacity;
 - d. Identification of employment land;
 - e. Scope for environmental and town centre improvements; and
 - f. Ways of improving access to regeneration sites, particularly on the eastern side of the Black Country.

(Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands, RPG 11 – paragraph 1.32)

The Secretary of State requested that the Study should be completed by Summer 2005 and feed into a subsequent review of guidance.

- 2.3.3 Originally it was thought that the Black Country Study would 'feed into' the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Regional Planning Body has now confirmed that the Black Country Study should now be taken forward as a separate first phase of the review of RSS and should be submitted directly to the Secretary of State. This will ensure that any proposals, once agreed, can be implemented as quickly as possible.
- 2.3.4 The project plan is a requirement of PPS 11 – Regional Spatial Strategies. The purpose of the Project Plan is to set out the objectives of the sub regional study and the timetable for the preparation of the partial revision and details the timing of key milestones. The project plan describes the work to be undertaken to progress the review of Regional Spatial Strategy. The timetable and the Project Plan as a whole set out the stages up to the submission of the partial review of the RSS (the Black Country Study) and are the responsibility of the Regional Planning Body. After the submission to the Secretary of State, responsibility for progressing the revision lies with the Government Office for the West Midlands acting on his behalf.
- 2.3.5 The responsibility for progressing the Black Country Study, as part of the RSS review process, lies with the Regional Planning Body. On the 27th January 2005 the Regional Planning Body approved the Project Plan. In order to start the review process, the Project Plan will need to be formally launched. The launch event is scheduled for the 22nd February 2005.

Outcomes from Black Country III

- 2.3.6 The key messages and decision areas, as a result of Black Country III event relate to the following areas; economy and employment, centres, housing, environment, education and skills, transport, culture, developing spatial land use framework and delivery. Full details of the outcomes from Black Country III event are available in the Members Library.
- 2.3.7 In consideration of the above, the Cabinet at its meeting held on 9th February, 2005, resolved to recommend the Council to approve the proposal set out in paragraph 3.1 below. I undertook to consider arranging a Members' Seminar on this issue.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 That the Project Plan for the Black Country Study and the outcomes of Black Country III event held in October 2004, be endorsed.

4.0 FINANCE

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the proposals contained within this report. However, there will be financial implications of the Black Country Study which will need to be reviewed.

5.0 LAW

5.1 The partial review of RSS (Black Country Study) is being undertaken in accordance with PPS 11 Regional Spatial Strategies. Under the new planning system the RSS forms part of our development plan and the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the RSS and the development plan documents and taking into account other material considerations.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 The Black Country Study will be subject to full public consultation with all members of the community.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 That the proposal set out in Paragraph 3.1 above be approved.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS:-

The Black Study Draft Project Plan

Black Country III: Outcomes Summary - November 2004

Planning Policy Statement 11: Regional Spatial Strategies

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LEADER OF THE COUNCIL