

**Black Country Study**  
**Choices Consultation Report**  
**28<sup>th</sup> September 2005**  
**Draft**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

These are exciting times for the Black Country. The Black Country Consortium, which comprises the City of Wolverhampton and the Boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall, business, community and other public sector interests are coming together with Regional Partners and the Regional Assembly to create a dynamic sub-region for the communities and businesses of today and tomorrow.

The Black Country is a major urban area within the West Midlands Region. Today, over one million people live in the Black Country with half a million jobs located there. However people, particularly those with more skills and incomes, are tending to leave the area leading to an overall decline in population. Currently more jobs are being lost than created. Nevertheless, there are many great opportunities on which to build – its central location, its towns, its heritage and its people.

In order to compete as a place in which more people will choose to live, work and invest in years to come, we will have to create a radically improved, environment for communities and businesses. This is reflected in the aspirational 30 year Vision<sup>1</sup> produced by the Black Country Consortium in 2003. Achieving this Vision will involve considerable change about where we live and work, including how people travel around, while still making the most of town centres and natural and heritage features, such as the extensive canal network.

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands (RSS) gives a new direction for the Region by promoting urban renaissance of its major urban areas. By doing this, it is seeking to stem the current population loss being experienced in places like the Black Country.

In 2004, the Black Country Consortium embarked on the Black Country Study to show how we could address these issues. The results from the Study will be taken forward as a Phase One Revision to the RSS. The RSS provides the framework for the four Local Development Frameworks and Joint Core Strategy, which are being prepared by the Black Country Local Authorities.

The **Project Plan**<sup>2</sup> for Phase One Revision has been published and sets out in detail the issues and objectives, timetable and process for engaging stakeholders in the development of the Choices and the Preferred Option and should be read alongside this document.

**This Choices Consultation Report highlights some of the main findings from the Study so far and seeks views from all interested stakeholders on these findings.** It is important that we engage as many people and organisations as possible at regional, sub-regional and local level.

Questions are posed in this document about the choices facing the Black Country for its future. Please send your views on the detachable questionnaire provided or by email via the website [www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk). Local consultation events are planned - see the website or contact us for more information.

Responses will be gathered and a report summarising the comments received and how they have been used to inform the development of a new plan for the Black Country will be published. The final plan will be submitted to Government in Spring 2006. There will be another chance to comment formally once submitted, which will be organised by the Government Office for the West Midlands.

All technical reports supporting the proposals put forward in this document are available on the website. Section 7 lists the supporting technical documents.

Please respond by **6 January 2006**

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<sup>1</sup> The Black Country Study is vision led, see section e – The Black Country 30 year Vision and Objectives

<sup>2</sup> The Project Plan is available on the website [www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk)

## 2. CONTEXT

### a. The Regional Spatial Strategy and Urban Renaissance

The **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)** was published in 2004. It sets out the Region's future development opportunities and priorities until 2021. It sets out a new direction for the Region by promoting **Urban Renaissance** of its major urban areas and provides the framework for plans developed at a local level.

When the Secretary of State published the RSS, he asked the Region to give priority to the establishment of key actions to achieve urban renaissance in the Black Country. It was requested that the Black Country Study be carried out, to form a revision of the RSS to feed into the Local Development Frameworks being prepared by the Black Country Authorities.

The Black Country Study was asked to give attention to and advise on:

- Regeneration priorities;
- The strategic role of town centres and Brierley Hill/Merry Hill;
- Urban capacity;
- Employment land;
- The scope for environmental and town centre improvements;
- Ways of improving access to regeneration sites, particularly on the eastern side of the Black Country.

These issues have formed the framework for the Black Country Study and have been looked at as an integrated package (i.e. recognising they are interlinked issues and impact and depend on each other)<sup>3</sup>.

### b. Urban Renaissance

**Urban Renaissance** is more than just regeneration of areas that need to be a focus of public and private sector investment for their economic, social and environmental revival. It involves a major transformation of an area, through:-

- Changes in the pattern of land uses;
- Revival of outworn housing, industrial areas and town and city centres;
- Radical improvement of the quality of the environment – not just establishing a greener, more pleasant environment, but improved quality of services, shopping, air, water, access to open space, housing conditions, road safety and personal security.

Today, some 1,100,000 live, and 500,000 people work in the Black Country. However, 20,000 people have moved out of the Black Country in the last 10 years and that trend is set to continue. The Renaissance of the Black Country is becoming urgent and represents a major challenge facing the Region. The RSS recognises that, at a sub-regional level, there are many inter-connected issues affecting the Black Country. Change in both attitude and confidence is needed, so that people in the area as well as potential new residents and investors, will see it as a good place to live, work and trade.

### c. Government Policy

In considering its future the Black Country must give careful consideration to its relationship and role within the wider Region and nationally. Government has tried to make sure that greenfield land for development is only used as a last resort, and has challenged urban areas like the Black Country to meet their own economic and social needs. It proposes that the Black Country, which is heavily dependent upon reusing previously developed land, should seek to meet its own housing needs and accommodate people coming back into the Black Country to live. It also requires the Black Country to find the land needs for new technology companies, warehousing and firms relocating within the built-up area, but accept there may be circumstances when this cannot be wholly achieved. If so, special circumstances will need to be demonstrated for land release beyond the built-up area.

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<sup>3</sup> More details are available in the Project Plan available on the website [www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk/study](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk/study)

Regional targets have been set by Government "to make sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all the English regions by 2008 and over the long term to reduce the persistent gap in the growth rates between regions, demonstrating progress by 2006." The Black Country must contribute to this aim.

**Climate change is a key challenge** in shaping the future of the Black Country. As the UK climate gets warmer, there will be changes to both average and extreme weather conditions, including possibly more extreme rainfall and increased risks of local flooding. Transport related emissions are forecast to rise and this is a particular challenge to land use/transport planning of the Black Country; urban form and the transport system have a key role to play in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Despite change and population growth, the Black Country must contribute to UK Governments and Regional targets to reduce carbon emissions and to maximise the sustainability of new development.

#### d. Trends in the Black Country

We know that the Black Country has and will continue to face many worrying trends and **unless the Black Country takes actions to counter these trends there will be:**

- A further 84,000 people forecast to move out from the area over the next 30 years.
- An increasing £3bn productivity gap.
- A further widening of the earnings gap and the Black Country will be considerably worse off than it is now in terms of incomes.
- A potential loss of a further 65, 000 manufacturing jobs over the next 30 years.
- Too many low value jobs and not enough high value jobs.
- Poor education and skills levels below the national average.
- Decline of major town centres.
- An increase in the distance travelled per year by car, leading to more congestion and reduced air quality.
- Poor housing quality and choice.
- Potential loss and reduction of biodiversity areas.
- Continuing decline and loss of the Black Country's historic environment.
- Lack of appreciation for and management of the many functions of open space.
- Reduction in water quality and increased pollution.
- Poor recycling and recovery rates in relation to waste management.
- Poor physical image with development opportunities limited by lack of quality land.

#### e. The Black Country 30 Year Vision and the Objectives

Through the Black Country Study, the Black Country Consortium is seeking to address these trends and is testing its aspirations for the future as set out in the Black Country Vision "**Looking Forward: The Black Country in 2033**"<sup>4</sup>

***"In 2033, the Black Country is a confident, "we can do it" place. We are proud of our skills, our proficiency and our work ethic – these are key to our prosperity. The Black Country is now a truly Polycentric City – made up of four thriving and distinct retail and commercial 'City' centres – each one playing a unique role."***

In summary, the Black Country Vision for 2033 is of a Black Country comprising many different communities – offering a choice of very desirable housing for all. We will be celebrating our multi-cultural society. Educational attainments will match anywhere in Europe. A transport revolution will have taken place with our bus, Metro, rail and road networks making it easy to move around the Black Country, into Birmingham and to the rest of the City Region. Our manufacturing companies will be prospering, at the cutting edge of technological innovation. Our four main centres – Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich and Brierley Hill/Merry Hill – will each offer a distinctive, wide range of shopping, leisure and cultural facilities, office employment, and housing. Our canal system, linking our communities together, means we are known as Britain's Venice. Our high quality environment – not our industrial legacy - dominates the urban landscape.

<sup>4</sup> The Black Country Study Vision "Looking Forward: The Black Country in 2031" is available on the website [www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk)

It will not be easy to realise this Vision. The Black Country needs to build on its strengths as well as addressing its challenges. This will need significant increases in private and public investment to make sure that our communities are places in which we all truly wish to live and work. To guide this investment, major changes are needed in planning and transport policies. The four objectives<sup>5</sup> for the Black Country, as outlined in the published Project Plan are:

- 1. To reverse out - migration**
  - **accommodating within the Black Country all of the generated household growth from 2011 onwards**
  - **testing scenarios involving higher growth levels (between +5% and +15%)**
- 2. To raise income levels**
  - **raising demand and household incomes (average earnings, GDP per head and reducing unemployment) to the UK average by 2033**
  - **testing scenarios to raise levels significantly above the UK average**
- 3. To change the socio-economic mix**
  - **achieving parity with the national profile of social grade in the population by increasing the proportion of A/B grades from 14.8% to 22% by 2033**
  - **testing the scenario of achieving this by 2021**
- 4. To transform the environment**
  - **to protect and enhance the environment and create a safe, attractive and healthy place to live and work**

## **f. Opportunities**

There are a wide range of ongoing planning and regeneration initiatives, which contribute towards the required transformation, including;

- Unitary Development Plans for each Black Country Borough
- Urban Regeneration Companies in West Bromwich and Walsall
- The Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership
- I54 development, Wolverhampton
- The Housing Market Renewal Area (HMRA) for Sandwell/Birmingham (Urban Living) and the Black Country/Telford Housing Market Area (HMA) assessment. <sup>6</sup>

The four Black Country Authorities are all taking a similar approach to regeneration and aim to direct investment towards town centres, identify land for employment and new homes, encourage renewal of areas of poor quality housing, work to improve the environment and seek transport improvements. However, the evidence<sup>7</sup> shows that the scale and speed of change identified in these policies and action programmes must be accelerated and co-ordinated if there is to be the necessary transformation in the quality of living and working in the Black Country.

The key opportunities for radical land use restructuring are:-

- Redevelopment of worn out housing areas in the next 25 years.
- Reuse of expected surplus industrial land or sites with poor operating conditions, which will not be needed by industry in future.
- The Wolverhampton City Centre and town centres of Walsall, West Bromwich and Brierley Hill have the potential to provide for growth in shops, offices, leisure and city living.
- The excellent transport network in parts of the Black Country around which much improved quality land can be provided to meet the needs of employment sectors, which need easy access to the major roads and motorways.
- The land availability where developments for housing and employment could be best served by public transport.
- A variety of types and density of housing need to be provided to match the varying needs of different sections of the Black Country community.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to the Project Plan published August 2005

<sup>6</sup> See Section 7 – List of Supporting Technical Documents

<sup>7</sup> See Section 7 – List of Supporting Technical Documents

## **g. The Black Country Study**

The Objectives mentioned in e above form the basis of the Black Country Study. The Black Country Consortium is undertaking the Study, on behalf of the West Midlands Regional Assembly. As the Phase One RSS Revision, the Black Country Study is subject to an independent Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The Black Country Study comprises a set of Black Country wide **technical studies** that have tested the Vision in order to establish the degree to which the Objectives can be achieved. The details of these studies are listed at the back of this report. The studies are available from The Black Country Consortium website ([www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk)). **You are encouraged to refer to these studies when considering this report. The key messages from these studies are set out in the 'evidence' boxes under Section 3 of this report.** The studies have taken their lead from the aspirations set by the Black Country Vision rather than a conventional 'trend' based approach. In other words, these studies set out **what we must achieve** and therefore **what we need to do differently** in order to achieve our Vision, rather than what might we achieve if we follow trends. The studies are based on assumptions. **The most important of these is to deliver the house building rates that have already been agreed in RSS to 2021** and an extension of these to 2031, leading to a projected population of 1.2 million people.

The RSS sets these as minimum targets for house building in the Black Country to 2021 which would enable the Black Country to meet its own needs. This means that the population in the Black Country will grow by 60,000 more people in contrast to recent population loss. Recent national population projections, however, also indicate that there maybe a greater movement of people leading to demand for more housing in urban areas like the Black Country. When the scale of this becomes clear, the matter will need to be considered for the Black Country and other sub-regions, and consequences addressed.

## **h. The Scale and Nature of the Change required in the Black Country**

The technical studies have shown that in order to create a modern economy and reverse population decline in a sustainable manner to 2031, the Black Country will need to:

- **Raise incomes to 90% of the UK average (equivalent to UK average excluding London)**
- **Create 160,000 new jobs (95,000 net)**
- **Raise skill levels - 100,000 more people with qualifications.**
- **Attract over 400,000sqm of new shopping floor space beyond current plans, and respond to the market by focusing shopping development in major town and city centres.**
- **Provide for and attract 900,000 sq metres of additional office space to accommodate growth of 101,000 jobs in office employment, which should be focused in major town and city centres.**
- **Renew 3,000 hectares of employment land by providing quality locations for modern business with a plentiful supply of labour and access to the Motorway network.**
- **Accommodate 44,000 more households to 2021 and 71,000 in total to 2031.**
- **Change the environment by protecting and enhancing it, and contribute towards targets to address climate change.**
- **Reduce congestion and improve accessibility.**

These are important assumptions for the Study and represent a major transformation of the Black Country from today's position. They set the scale and direction for change to 2021 (the RSS timescale) and beyond.

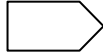
**THE EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT WE HAVE BIG CHOICES TO MAKE ABOUT HOW WE RESTRUCTURE THE BLACK COUNTRY - NO CHANGE IS NOT AN OPTION.**

### 3. CHOICES FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY

This chapter focuses on a range of questions, the answers to which will have implications for the future shape of the Black Country. Decisions and choices are interrelated given that overall available land is limited.

In order to help you understand these potential relationships Chapter 4 identifies some of the broader choices involved, particularly related to the balance between housing and employment land provisions. The illustrations provided in Chapter 4 demonstrate the consequences and grouping of different choices.

#### A. STRATEGIC CENTRES AS THE FOCUS FOR MAJOR SHOPPING AND LEISURE (see also 3B – Offices)



##### Key Issues

- Transforming the quality of life in the Black Country will require strong city and town centres - with shopping complementing wider economic and social activities.
- Over recent years, the Black Country's key shopping centres have been losing trade to surrounding centres. Unless there is confidence in their long-term future, vital investment will not be attracted and Black Country people will not be provided with the quality and range of shopping they need.
- The decline of centres has resulted in increased travel, which adds to the problems and encourages decentralisation.
- At present the RSS identifies Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich and Dudley, as "strategic centres", where it is intended that further major shopping, offices and leisure developments should be concentrated.
- Despite its current and potential role, Merry Hill, with Brierley Hill High Street and the Waterfront, is not identified as a strategic centre, and therefore restrained in its growth. The Secretary of State has asked the Regional Planning Body to reach a strategic view on the role of Merry Hill and, if appropriate, the timing of any future large scale development.
- The trends in retail investment and shopping habits have contributed towards a general decline in the Black Country's smaller town, district and local centres.

##### The Black Country Vision

- The Vision sees the future of the Black Country – made up of four thriving and distinct retail and commercial centres – each one playing a unique role - Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich and Brierley Hill
- In addition, the traditional centre of Dudley will be transformed into a national icon for urban living with its strong family focus and its recreation and leisure facilities

##### Evidence: GVA Grimley's Study of Black Country Centres (August 2005)

- The Black Country centres have been losing trade to centres outside the Black Country because of declining population and failure to attract the spending from its higher income households.
- In order for the Black Country to retain its current market share and meet the needs of its future population, studies have shown that the Black Country should support 400,000 sq metres of additional retail floor space over the next 25 years beyond current plans. Failure to do so is likely to result in continued decline of its market share.
- Retail development is the essential driver for renaissance of centres. If the Black Country is going to attract its potential retail investment, the best way to achieve this is by encouraging the main strategic centres to grow, with improved shopping supported by quality environment, education, cultural and leisure facilities. This must include Merry Hill/ Brierley Hill as the largest retail centre in the Black Country.
- Dudley Town Centre is unlikely to attract potential growth of this nature and will not be able to fulfil effectively its role as a strategic centre, but it should continue to grow at the level



anticipated to 2011 in the Dudley Unitary Development Plan.

- Dudley MBC has consulted on a draft Masterplan that promotes the future role of Dudley Town Centre as a focus for residential, office, culture and tourism. This generated support.
- If Merry Hill/ Brierley Hill became designated as a strategic centre, it could fulfil this role but development would need to be phased in order to ensure that it doesn't damage other centres.
- The evidence suggests that the overall additional growth could be shared equally between the four strategic centres. This means that Wolverhampton and Brierley Hill would remain the biggest retail centres in the Black Country and Walsall and West Bromwich would also grow and be improved. At the same time, some growth would also take place in smaller town, district and local centres, which would be strengthened and diversified to meet community needs.

### Choices

1. Instead of relying on centres outside the area, as at present, do you think the future potential shopping and leisure opportunities should be maximized within the Black Country? Yes/ No
2. Do you agree that future major shopping and leisure facilities in the Black Country should primarily be focused in four strategic centres, one in each Borough? Yes/ No  
  
If no, what other approach would you suggest?
3. Dudley Town Centre is unlikely to be able to fulfill its role as a strategic centre in the future. However, Brierley Hill/Merry Hill offers a major opportunity to attract new investment to the Black Country and meet the needs of its population. Therefore do you agree that Brierley Hill should take over the role of Dudley as a strategic centre? Yes/ No
4. In these circumstances do you agree that Dudley Town Centre could be developed as a regionally significant tourist centre, complemented by its residential, office and culture role in the future? Yes/ No
5. Do you agree that shopping and leisure growth should be shared broadly equally between the four strategic centres, whilst still allowing some growth to take place in local town and district centres. Yes/No
6. Do you agree that most culture, health and learning facilities should be focused in and around centres, in particular the four strategic centres? Yes/ No



## B. OFFICES

Office jobs include: finance, banking, insurance, company head quarters or regional offices, legal and professional services, public administration.


### Key Issues

- The growth in office jobs over the last 30 years in the Black Country has not been sufficient to compensate for the loss of jobs in other sectors e.g. manufacturing.
- Consequently, the Black Country is under represented in provision of office space and office jobs and associated high level skills.
- The Black Country needs to diversify and encourage growth in office based services in order to provide a range of growing employment sectors to meet Black Country people's needs, and to compensate for the expected further decline in manufacturing jobs.
- Even the largest Black Country town centres have historically not been sufficiently attractive to encourage company office operations to set up or relocate to the area. They have not compared favourably with Birmingham City Centre.
- In order to achieve office jobs on a substantial scale, the Black Country needs to enhance investor and occupier confidence in the town centres, and to provide more vibrant town centres which are attractive to employers and employees.

### The Black Country Vision

- Growth in office jobs is a key to developing the Black Country skill-base, expanding new technologies and enhancing the average income levels of Black Country people.

### Evidence: GHK Economic Study (February 2005), and GVA Grimley's Study of Black Country Centres (August 2005)

- In order to meet the Black Country Objectives, to raise income levels and meet the needs of a growing and more skilled population, the Black Country will need a development approach based on restructuring towards service sector office based activities.
- The Black Country will need to provide 900,000 sq metres of additional office space to accommodate potential growth of 101,000 jobs in office employment to 2031. Currently, in the Black Country, office development in the traditional town centres of Wolverhampton, Walsall and West Bromwich has been limited. Brierley Hill however, has established itself as an office location since the late 1980's.
- The four key town centres are seen as the focus for new office growth, where such development will tie in with growth in shopping, leisure and "city-living". This will need more office development opportunities to be identified in order to encourage investor confidence and stimulate demand. Government policy also encourages such developments in places, which are highly accessible by public transport.
- The four key centres are well placed to exploit growth in this sector but they must enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness and expand beyond current boundaries (upwards or outwards).
- Developers expressed a preference in concentrating future initial investment in one or two strategic centres in the Black Country to trigger transformation and establish confidence. The preferred initial starting point is considered to be Wolverhampton City Centre to reflect its recently acquired city status and the opportunity to create a complementary focus of development to Birmingham.
- Smaller town, district and local centres will need to accommodate more localised office needs.
- Some office growth should be accommodated on new business/technology parks, linked to expanding research and development and high value-added activities.
- The role and scale of proposed business/technology parks must be identified so that they can attract appropriate office-based employment, which needs such locations, and avoid an exodus of town centre offices, which would undermine the future strength of such centres.
- Transformation of the environment is a prerequisite necessary for the development patterns set out above (this also applies to Employment Land 3c) 

**Choices**

7. Do you agree that the Black Country should maximise the future potential growth in office jobs within the Black Country rather than rely more on locations outside the area? e.g. Birmingham City Centre  
Yes/ No

8. Do you agree that future office based jobs should be:

a. Located mostly only in the four strategic centres? (Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich and Brierley Hill) Yes/No

or

b. Spread more between the four strategic centres and other locations:

i. Other smaller town and district centres? Yes/ No

ii. Other public transport interchanges such along corridors between the strategic centres? Yes/ No

iii. Located at motorway junctions and other existing concentrations of employment? Yes/No

Please suggest examples of the types of locations you would prefer.

9. Do you think that in balancing the share of future office jobs between the four strategic centres, **more** should be targeted on:

a. Wolverhampton as the City in the Black Country Yes/ No


or

b. Wolverhampton and Brierley Hill due to its existing office market Yes/ No

or

c. Evenly shared between Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich and Brierley Hill? Yes/ No

10. If future growth in offices, as well as shopping and leisure is to be focused in four strategic centres, do you accept that these centres will need to expand physically beyond their existing boundaries? Yes/ No

11. To allow strategic centres to play a major role in the future of the Black Country, it will be crucial to maintain and improve their accessibility (See 3A Strategic Centres and 3B Offices). 

For each of the following centres, what method of transport should be focussed on to achieve this? Please tick one for each centre

	Wolverhampton	Walsall	West Bromwich	Brierley Hill
Bus services				
Metro				
Rail services				
Roads				

In each case, please give any examples of where improvements might be made.

## C. EMPLOYMENT LAND

Land will be needed in the future to accommodate competitive **manufacturing**, new technologies, (including research and development and associated support services) and **logistics**, which currently provide a significant number of jobs in the Black Country. This is referred to as 'employment land'.

### Key Issues

To deliver a 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy, the key issues are;

- How much quality land should be provided for future manufacturing, logistics and other new technologies.
- How much surplus employment land can be released for housing led regeneration.
- Where should quality employment locations be identified?
- How should the benefits of the existing RSS High Technology Corridors policy<sup>8</sup> be maximised in the Black Country.

### The Black Country Vision

- The 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy must include maintaining a vibrant, competitive and adaptive manufacturing and logistics base in the Black Country.
- Future jobs in manufacturing and logistics provide secure, well-paid and skilled opportunities for the future workforce of the Black Country.
- Sufficient quality land is provided in the best locations.
- Reducing adverse environmental impact of future economic activity

### Evidence: GHK Economic Study /GVA Grimleys' Employment Land Capacity Study

- The Black Country should retain and support high value manufacturing as a significant part of the future economy.
- Due to its location, the Black Country is capable of securing employment and high value added activity in the logistics sector.
- The Black Country needs to provide quality locations for –
  - Increasing the competitiveness of manufacturing, albeit employing fewer people (up to 65,000 fewer people by 2031)
  - Growing the competitiveness of logistics with up to 17,000 more jobs by 2031.
- Quality locations need a plentiful and accessible supply of labour and skills, ready access to the motorway network (5 to 10 minutes reliable journey), and a quality environment, which attracts the workforce and provides investment confidence.
- There is insufficient high quality land within the Black Country to meet current and future manufacturing and logistics employment needs.
- Quality locations need to be enhanced and protected in order to meet future needs.
- Demand for quality land and premises outstrips supply leading to dependence on quality sites outside the Black Country (e.g. Hilton Cross, I54 and Featherstone) and discouragement of investment in new technology driven businesses.
- There will be continuing surplus of poorer quality industrial land. This will allow for a "shakeout" of such land to facilitate provision of new housing in a much improved environment.
- Meeting all logistics needs will exert increasing pressure upon and competition with manufacturing for space in the most accessible locations.
- Many locations suffer from very poor access to the motorways – notably parts of Dudley and Walsall.
- Where much improved access has been created to the motorways, helped by land assembly, quality sites have been created and proved attractive to the market, particularly in Sandwell.
- Choices will need to be made as to how far resources are deployed to improve access to such areas or to focus relatively more upon providing the best access to better quality locations closer to major roads and links to the motorways.
- To grow the logistics sector by 17,000 jobs to 2031 would require an additional 240 HA of land.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to RSS Policy PA3 – High Technology Corridors

- If the Black Country is to capture a share of the growing regionalisation of logistics business, sites for large-scale buildings, near to motorways, will be essential. The Regional Logistics Study<sup>9</sup> has stated that Regional Logistics locations should have a rail connection as well as access to the motorway and a supply of labour. Under these criteria, the North Black Country/South Staffordshire area is considered one of the best locations in the Region.
- If we are to meet all our housing requirements and accommodate manufacturing in better locations, the Black Country may not be able to meet all its logistics land needs.

### Choices

12. Do you agree that the Black Country should try to meet ALL of its future employment needs within its own area rather than rely in part on areas outside? Yes/ No

13. In order to provide quality locations for future employment land (including manufacturing and logistics uses), do you think we should:

- a. Save and improve sites in locations with easy access (5-10 minutes travel time) to the motorway network, eg along the Black Country route and close to motorway junctions) Yes/ No
- b. Create new sites in the Black Country with easy access (5-10 minutes travel time) to motorway junctions through redevelopment/ land assembly Yes/ No
- c. Create opportunities for a wider spread of investment by building new roads within the Black Country to improve access from poorly located existing sites/ new sites to the motorway network (M5, M6, M54 and M6 Toll? **(Please refer to Section 3E Environment and Section F Transport)** Yes/ No
- d. Identify major new sites on the edge of the Urban area, close to motorway junctions? Yes/ No
- e. Promote sites at locations that can be served by rail as well as by road? Yes/ No
- f. Create/ enhances sites served by public transport to enable people to access jobs? Yes/No

Please give examples under a-f.

14. Do you think that the benefits of the High Technology Corridors could be drawn into the wider Black Country area to help deliver its future economic needs? Yes/ No

Please give examples of how this might be achieved.

15. Do you think a specific location/ locations should be identified where specialist research and associated business development should be promoted? Yes/ No

Please give examples of the types of potential locations you would prefer.

16. If new quality employment sites are to be created, do you agree that existing, poorly located sites should be redeveloped for other uses, e.g. housing, open space or other uses? Yes/ No

Please give examples of the types of potential locations you would prefer.

17. Given the potential for the future development of logistics in the Region, should a location be identified for a Regional Logistics Site<sup>10</sup> in the North Black Country/South Staffordshire area? Yes/ No

Please give examples of the types of potential locations you would prefer.

18. Should some employment land locations be 'reserved' to serve the needs of specific sectors of the future Black Country economy in order to provide quality employment land?

<sup>9</sup> Regional Logistics Study – www.wmra.gov.uk

- a. Manufacturing      Yes/ No
- b. Research and development      Yes/ No
- c. Logistics      Yes/ No

Please give examples of types of potential locations.

19. In order to accommodate its housing growth, offices and quality manufacturing land, the Black Country would need to locate some logistics outside the area. Do you have any views on this?

## D. HOUSING

According to the 2001 Census, there were 455,000 dwellings in the Black Country accommodating a population of 1.08m in 440,000 households.

### Key Issues

- Too many people are leaving the Black Country; usually the most skilled and higher income groups from all parts of the community;
- There is a lack of choice and quality of housing and living environments in the Black Country;
- There are increasingly fewer than average high income households;
- There is an increasing proportion of young and old people in the population;
- There is a growing “affordability” problem; and as a result overcrowding has been increasing.
- There are areas in the Black Country where housing is located within poor environments e.g. next to or on sites of older heavy industry. Not all brownfield land is suitable for residential development because of the nature of its contamination;
- In some parts of the Black Country, there is a growing problem of empty properties.

### The Black Country Vision

So far, the Black Country Consortium has concluded that in order to reverse the trend of people leaving the Black Country a future housing strategy should:

- Provide a range of housing types and densities in a variety of locations that will meet the needs of all sections of the community;
- Focus on creating the highest quality housing, and residential environments, necessary to retain and attract the ‘knowledge workers’ required to strengthen the economy;
- Celebrate the importance of diversity in our housing policies. Places that welcome new people and new ideas and are tolerant to different lifestyles attract the most entrepreneurial and creative individuals. These people are essential to the development of the knowledge economy, which is necessary for the future success of the Black Country. We should also encourage the co-location of community, religious and cultural facilities serving a variety of communities, especially in town centres;
- Address the challenges of low demand – and consequent social polarisation;
- Deliver as a minimum the house building and demolitions targets set out in the RSS to 2021 to reverse net out-migration from the Black Country;
- Move towards even higher rates of housing stock replacement from 2011 onwards to help achieve higher quality housing and environments.;
- Identify locations, which provide the best opportunities for quality residential communities including around canals, landscape features, heritage areas, and near town centres. Excellent accessibility will be provided by a range of transport nodes to quality education, health & leisure facilities and jobs;
- Implement programmes of land assembly and examples of successful development projects, which will accelerate the rate of new development and strengthen market perceptions.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to RSS Policy PA9 – Regional Logistic Sites

**Evidence: Black Country Study: Developing a Housing Market Restructuring Framework (Ecotec Sept 2005) and Housing Capacity Study: (Halcrow Sept 2005)**

- Achieving RSS house building targets to 2021 will result in a population increase of 60,000 people and 44,000 more households.
- Assuming the number of house demolitions will be matched by replacements broadly on a 1:1 basis (as set out in RSS), the RSS targets for house building to 2021 are capable of being met without extending the built up area BUT this is dependent on changing employment land into housing land to (in excess of 1,000ha to 2031).
- Continuing RSS house building targets beyond 2021 would result in a population increase of 125,000 to 1.2m in total by 2031 and an additional 71, 000 households
- This scenario may be achieved at an average density of 40 dwellings per hectare, depending on the amount of land transferred out of industrial use.
- An average density of 40 dwellings per hectare across the Black Country allows for a range of densities and house types in different areas to meet the needs of various community groups, ranging from detached houses in suburban settings to apartments in town centres.
- The current housing market has weaknesses in terms of poor housing choice, with much worn out “social” housing, too much low value housing and poor quality of housing. Poor local environments and deprivation in communities also create a weak housing market.
- If we do nothing, poor housing supply and choice and associated poor environments would contribute to continuing loss of population.
- To achieve the Vision there needs to be a major transformation in the pattern of land uses in the Black Country:
  - to achieve the scale of new housing required, older industrial areas will need to be redeveloped to create new housing environments.
  - existing poor housing areas with limited choice and poor environments will require major renewal.
  - to achieve the economic aspirations of the Black Country and retain the more skilled and higher income groups will require increased residential development after 2021 following an intensive period of public sector intervention to remodel land use patterns, redevelop neighbourhoods and provide services and transport.

**Choices**

20. In order for the Black Country to meet its future housing needs and achieve a wider variety of house type and population mix, should we give priority to:

- a. Housing growth within or very close (e.g. walking/ cycling distance) to town centres, in particular the four strategic centres? Yes/No
- b. Housing growth within walking/ cycling distance to existing and currently planned public transport network e.g. Midland Metro, bus? Yes/ No
- c. Higher density housing around locations served by good public transport? Yes/ No
- d. Housing growth close to canal corridors? Yes/ No
- e. Intensification of development in existing housing areas throughout the Black Country including in the suburbs Yes/ No
- f. Renewal of former council estates Yes/ No
- g. Redevelopment of older terraced houses? Yes/ No
- h. Use of surplus employment land areas? Yes/ No
- i. Other? Give examples

Which 3 examples would you most like to see implemented?

21. In order to attract people to live in the Black Country, should we encourage a mix of house types and densities

- a. At every neighbourhood level?
- b. Within each town?
- c. Within each Borough?
- d. Across the Black Country as a whole?

Please choose one of these options.

**PLEASE REFER ALSO TO QUESTIONS IN THE CAPACITY SECTION 3G.**



## E. ENVIRONMENT

Quality of place, including the process of radically improving the environment to provide higher quality buildings, and green spaces, underlies the Black Country Study as a whole. It lies at the heart of current perceptions and future decisions of people and businesses potentially choosing to live, work and invest in the Black Country. Quality of life is determined by a sense of being valued, interaction with others, opportunities for learning, leisure, entertainment and active lifestyles, being proud to live, work and enjoy a place.

### Key Issues

- The perception of the Black Country today is one of a poor quality natural and built environment. This includes contaminated land, an increasing area that requires air quality management and visually unattractive and often inaccessible open space.
- Climate change is a key challenge in shaping the future Black Country. Despite change and population growth, the Black Country must contribute in the future to the UK Governments and Regional targets:
  - To reduce carbon emissions by 60% by 2050;
  - To recycle 30% of domestic waste by 2010 and reduce the proportion of industrial and commercial wastes disposed to landfill;
  - 10% of renewable energy by 2010 (5% target in the Region);
  - Meet minerals apportionment targets set out in the RSS;
  - Meet the natural greenspace targets set out in the RSS;
  - Meet targets for the restoration and re-creation of habitats as set out in the RSS.
- The future Black Country must be planned in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, which now guide UK planning, and regeneration policy.

### The Black Country Vision - A high quality environment equals a high quality of life for all.

The Black Country of the future will:-

- Rediscover its distinctive settlement form, transform the environment and establish a 'Black Country' landscape as the 'backdrop' for urban living and working - 'An Urban Park',
- Pursue the designation of the canal network as a World Heritage Site, with Birmingham.
- Celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity
- Be safe, secure, healthy and 'addicted' to sport.
- Exploit significant business opportunities for sustainable environmental activities.
- Plan water issues on a joint basis across the two Black Country river catchments, including flood risk management, in order to reduce potential effects.
- Establish Black Country wide policies on urban design and sustainable development.
- Provide the cultural and leisure facilities of a City of 1.2m people for the future.

### Evidence: Environment Technical Report (Sept 2005), and "Broadening Horizons" – a Vision of the Black Country Urban Park

- **The need for radical change of the Black Country environment has been identified in both the Black Country Economic and Housing Studies** as being critical to delivering the economic change attracting and retaining more people with higher skill levels. The Housing Study revealed that the poor quality of environment was a major factor behind many peoples' (and community groups) desire to leave the Black Country, at least for those who had the choice.
- The Black Country Urban Park Study has identified opportunities for developing a distinctive Black Country landscape which would lead to the creation of a quality environment and image for the Black Country – the Black Country has assets in its landscape, wildlife, geology and waterways which will provide a sound foundation for future transformation.
- Consultation on the draft Project Plan for the BC Study emphasised that quality of the environment is essential to the Black Country's future and that this should involve:-
  - A secure and trouble-free living environment;
  - Quality education and health services;
  - Decent air and water quality;



- Sufficient local open space;
  - More “greenery” in their localities;
  - Enhanced and more accessible biodiversity/wildlife areas;
  - Access to local services;
  - Reduced traffic congestion and threats to road safety;
  - Better quality of design in buildings and spaces.
- The Black Country’s **water** bodies are likely to be classified as ‘heavily modified’ requiring action to restore them to good ecological status or potential by 2015 to comply with the Water Framework Directive.
  - **Air Quality** Management Areas have been identified in the Black Country.
  - Rates for **recycling household waste** in the Black Country are lower than the national average. A Black Country Waste Management Forum has been established to look at waste minimisation with coordinated approaches to deal with waste in a sustainable manner.
  - To meet English Nature’s guideline targets for **Accessible Natural Green space and Local Nature Reserves** (LNR’s) per 1,000 residents, 500 ha of more LNR’s need to be created.
  - Two **Biodiversity Enhancement Areas** in the Black Country are defined in the RSS. The first is from Cannock Chase to Sutton Park, via much of rural Walsall. The second is from North Worcestershire through Dudley and into the southern part of Wolverhampton. These require future investment.

**Choices**

22. In order to create quality living, business and leisure environments should we **prioritise** investment in the landscape and built environment:

- a. In and around our centres, in particular the four strategic centres? Yes/ No
- b. Along existing corridors e.g. canals/ transport? Yes/ No
- c. Improvements in residential areas Yes/ No
- d. Creation of new corridors e.g. river valleys not currently enjoyed or walking/ cycling routes between centres? Yes/ No
- e. Other locations? e.g. making more of existing historic and heritage assets/ hill tops and valleys / open spaces and biodiversity areas/ around water features Yes/ No
- f. Creation of space for wildlife Yes/ No
- g. Creation of new large scale accessible sites to serve the Black Country and/or to attract regional or national events based around e.g. new water feature/ sports venue/ festival/ environmental attraction Yes/No

Which 3 examples should have priority.  
Please feel free to give examples of the types of locations you would prefer.

23. Could policies relating to centres, employment land, housing and transport contribute to the Black Country’s environmental improvements/objectives? Yes/No



**(Please also refer to the Section F Transport and other relevant theme sections)**

Please give examples.

24. Should the Black Country have specific Black Country policies relating to sustainable development to deliver sustainability, (in addition to the RSS Policies), which set higher than national environmental targets e.g. for sustainable design, waste management, water and air quality? Yes/ No

If Yes, please identify policy areas that you feel would best promote sustainable development.

25. Do you agree that to make green space more accessible to communities, some existing open areas could be developed for other uses in exchange for creation of new green spaces e.g. from former industrial land ? Yes/No

(Decisions will be taken in the light of open space audits and assessment work).

## F. TRANSPORT

Access to goods and services are needed to support the development of the Black Country Vision. At present, over 2 million trips are made each day on road and public transport networks in the Black Country. People travel to work, shop, education and leisure activities by bus, metro, train and car, and by walking and cycling. Goods and freight are moved by road and rail. The Black Country is at the heart of the national motorway network providing excellent links to all key UK and European markets. The motorways through, and on the edge of, the Black Country, serve both long distance and local business and commuter traffic. The network of passenger and freight rail lines serving the Black Country performs national, regional and local roles. Bus routes provide a network of services between Black Country towns and centres whilst the region's only light rail route runs from Wolverhampton and West Bromwich to Birmingham.

### Key Issues

- All of the main centres in the Black Country suffer from congestion problems at peak times, effecting journey time reliability for both car and bus users.
- Bus services are affected by congestion across the Black Country and opportunities are needed to provide greater priority in congested conditions.
- In certain areas, a lack of adequate public transport links to employment and educational opportunities has led to social exclusion.
- At peak periods, the motorway network – and many key roads within the Black Country – suffers from severe congestion.
- Rail usage in the West Midlands is growing more rapidly than nationally. All routes through the Black Country are congested. The recently published “West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy<sup>11</sup>” focuses on longer distance travellers. An increase in rail capacity is unlikely.
- Despite the fact that rail usage is increasing, the main rail route through the Black Country and out to Birmingham and Birmingham International Airport is nearing capacity.
- As land uses have become more decentralised, more people use cars to gain access to jobs and services rather than walking and cycling, creating congestion and pollution.
- Traffic levels are forecast to grow in the future, contributing to increasing carbon emissions, poor air quality and pollution. The Government wants to reduce the extent of road building, discourage car use and promote public transport.
- Currently, only one corridor in the Black Country is served by Midland Metro – between Wolverhampton and Birmingham.
- Most public transport trips are made by bus – however, the quality, performance and perception of buses is an issue. The ability of some people to access key destinations e.g. work is an issue
- The resources to improve transport in the West Midlands are limited. It will be important to consider how such limitations will affect the timing and implementation of transport changes.
- The Government is leading a national debate about the role of demand management and the implications of such an approach will need to be considered for the Black Country.
- If demand for travel exceeds supply then congestion acts in an unmanaged and inefficient way to deter people from travelling at the busiest times. Some years ago the Confederation of British Industry estimated that the loss in time from congestion costs the West Midlands region over £2,000M per annum.
- Demand management seeks to reduce the use of transport networks at times and places where demand is heavy and catering for it in full is not practicable, fundable, environmentally acceptable or an efficient use of resources. Examples for bus and rail transport include concessionary fare schemes and off peak tickets which allow cheaper travel outside the peak hours, when there is spare capacity.
- Demand for car travel in peak periods can be controlled by the supply and price of car parking in town and city centres. It allows car-based shoppers, visitors and workers to be treated more or less favourably depending on local circumstances.
- The most recent demand management mechanism is paying directly for road use by road pricing and has operated in central London since 2003. It is expected that by 2031 a national electronic

<sup>11</sup> The West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy is available on the website [www.sra.gov.uk](http://www.sra.gov.uk)


road pricing system as outlined by Secretary of State Alistair Darling in his June 2005 statement will be operational.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Black Country Vision**

Key to the Black Country's prosperity is the creation of a new public transport system – the 'Black Country Express' which knits together Metro, heavy rail and bus networks to provide a seamless transport system for all to serve all town centres, all major employment sites and residential areas. Most people will make their journey to work, shop learn, and spend their leisure time by public transport. This will be part of the development of network West Midlands. Residents and businesses in the Black Country can access Birmingham City Centre and Birmingham International Airport through an integrated network of bus rail and metro services.

In the Black Country, the road network provides ready access to key motorway junctions, rail freight depots and the new inter modal logistics hub, all of which flow freely.

### **Evidence –Transport Technical Report – PRISM: Black Country Study**

- The Local Transport Plan (LTP) (2006-11)<sup>13</sup> prepared by the West Midlands Local Authorities and others has proposed a package of highway and public transport measures designed to tackle existing and emerging problems based on the continuation of existing land use patterns. However, growth and change in both the numbers and location of population and jobs will potentially mean that other schemes should be added to the package to help in the radical transformation of the Black Country over the next 30 years.
- The LTP has included:-
  - The extensions of Midland Metro from Wolverhampton to Walsall and Wednesbury to Brierley Hill, along the Hagley road from Birmingham to Dudley, and the Varsity route from Birmingham to the south of Walsall.
  - Highway improvements and traffic management.
  - Measures to improve the quality of bus services, safety and air quality.
  - The Black Country economy and employment rely on the M5 and M6 for access to national markets, raw materials and communications. It is vital that these motorways are managed in a way that supports business in the Black Country.
  - The evidence is showing that these planned improvements, whilst contributing to reducing congestion, will not provide sufficient improvements to create quality employment land and facilitate centres growth to deliver the future Black Country economy. If the Black Country is to accommodate future manufacturing and logistics employment within its own urban area, additional routes and links, including those for public transport will need to be considered.
- The existing transport network will not support the future economy of the Black Country, including growth in the four key centres and the provision of quality employment land for manufacturing and logistics.
- In all spatial illustrations tested  (see Section 4 demonstrating directions of change), the demand for car travel will be 25% higher than today. If this is translated into road traffic, roads in areas of development will be very congested, thereby increasing carbon emissions, and adding to poor air quality and pollution.

In parts of the Black Country, this demand cannot be accommodated as car traffic on the highway network. Improvements in the quantity and quality of public transport will be needed supported by some way of accommodating demand ie some form of demand management.

<sup>12</sup> Alistair Darling's statement is available on the website [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)  
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**Choices**

26. In order to create an effective transport network for the Black Country, a transport strategy will be needed that includes some of the following elements for **people** to move around, please rank your preferences (as many as you like) and give reasons why you feel these are preferred:

<b>Travelling within the Black Country</b>	Rank
Improvements to aid walking	
Improvements to aid cycling	
Improvements to bus services	
Extending Metro beyond existing proposals	
Improved rail services	
New or improved roads	
Demand management	
Park and Ride	

<b>Travelling within Metropolitan conurbation</b>	Rank
Improved bus services	
Extending metro (beyond existing proposals)	
New or improved roads	
Improved rail services	
Park and ride	
Demand management	

<b>Links to/From the West Midlands Conurbation</b>	Rank
Improved links to the national rail network	
Improved Bus and coach services	
New and/or improved roads	
New and /or improved links to Birmingham International Airport	

27. In order to create an effective transport network to support the Black Country Vision, a transport strategy will be needed that includes some of the following elements for **goods** to move around. Please rank your preference (as many as you like) and give reasons for your preferences:

	Rank
Improved local road links to aid distribution	
Improved access to town centres for deliveries	
Improved links to the motorway network	
Improved rail services (including improved access)	

28. Do you consider that policies should be developed to prioritise the movement of freight by road as well as buses? Yes/no

**PLEASE ALSO REFER TO QUESTIONS IN THE OFFICES AND EMPLOYMENT LAND AND HOUSING SECTIONS RELATING TO TRANSPORT**

 **3B Offices, 3C Employment land, 3D Housing.**

## **G. CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE POPULATION AND JOBS GROWTH.**

The Vision has been promoted in order to respond positively to, and reverse worrying trends in the Black Country's population, economy and environment. The scale of new housing, jobs and environmental transformation needed is enormous and we have examined whether it can be physically accommodated within the Black Country. We have undertaken comprehensive land use capacity studies looking at different spatial illustrations (see Section 4) and have examined the land requirements on the basis of the following assumptions:

- Future manufacturing industry in the Black Country will need less land than in the past.
- The best quality employment land is that which already exists close to the Black Country motorways, or where land can be assembled to create high quality sites within 5 - 10 minutes drive of the National motorway network.
- The Black Country needs high quality locations for new technology employment activities. These would be best located close to the motorways or key town centres or along major public transport corridors.
- The major proportion of additional shopping, leisure, services and office requirements should be provided in town centres, particularly the four key strategic centres;
- An average housing density of 40 dwellings per hectare
- Housing should be located where it can meet the varied needs of Black Country people.
- Existing areas of open space should not be regarded as available for development

The extent of choice as to where new development needs should be met across the Black Country is determined largely by the above factors.

The technical evidence provides expert advice on the degree to which the Vision is attainable. However, as with any strategy which involves major transformation through renaissance and regeneration, there are inherent risks and uncertainties as to what will actually happen 20 or 30 years from now.

Whilst planning must use the best information to guide investment decisions, it must be realistic that not all future development needs may be capable of being met inside the Black Country built-up area. A key area of choice will be the balance between meeting the Vision's housing requirements and all job needs. The evidence shows that in order to meet all housing requirements, the Black Country is unlikely to have sufficient land for all its job needs. This would be the case in respect of logistics/warehousing the land needs for which are extensive. Manufacturing needs could also be affected.

Should this conclusion be reached, the Black Country would need to look either to some incursions into the adjacent Black Country Green Belt or to adjacent local authorities, for employment land directly related to the motorway network. Conversely, should there be a shortfall in housing land resources this would effect the wider West Midlands Region. As the RSS suggests, any deficiency in meeting the Vision's housing requirements would mean that key regional towns (e.g. Telford, Worcester) would be the main focus for additional housing provision. However, due to the distance of these towns from the Black Country, people would either work in, or close to these towns, or they would commute to the Black Country for work, adding pressure on key routes into the Black Country.

Other ways of meeting housing needs could be explored (e.g. increasing average densities) although these may prove to be unpalatable and unrealistic, and prejudice the objectives of improving the overall quality of life in the Black Country.

Further, if the Black Country cannot meet its estimated office requirement for 900,000 sq metres of additional space, either by reason of land shortage or market factors, then there would be an increased reliance for office employment in areas outside the Black Country particularly upon Birmingham City Centre where outstanding planning consent exists for 400,000 sq metres of office space. Research on shopping and land capacity has confirmed that the town centres of the Black Country are likely to have sufficient capacity for the projected increases in shopping and leisure space.

Whilst the Black Country may have the physical capacity to accommodate anticipated growth in shopping and leisure, failure to accommodate the housing requirements of the Vision would reduce the need for the

projected scale of additional shopping space in the Black Country. This would reduce the scale of growth in centres and potentially adversely affect their future competitiveness.

Thus it is important to acknowledge that for the scale of projected growth over the next 30 years there are a number of variables and uncertainties. This means that the illustrations in the next section focus on directions of change rather than specific targets in particular localities.

Whilst this RSS Revision will set the broad balance between new housing, jobs and shopping - future rates of development will be further guided through the preparation of a joint Black Country Core Strategy and associated Local Development Frameworks. Regular monitoring will also be undertaken of what is happening on the ground.

The overall aim must be to ensure that mismatches do not occur to the extent that the need for commuting increases significantly and people need to travel further to shop. This would be a threat to achievement of more sustainable communities in the future.

#### **Choices**

29. Should the Black Country prioritise providing for its population growth and housing needs over meeting all of its office and employment land needs even if this means that some jobs may need to be located outside the Black Country e.g. Birmingham?                      Yes/ No
30. Or should we seek to achieve a balance between providing housing growth and employment land even if this means we cannot accommodate all of our housing needs?                      Yes/No
31. Alternatively, if there was a need for more dwellings to be provided to meet the needs of the Black Country population, should we perhaps consider building at higher densities?                      Yes/No

#### 4. OPTIONS: ILLUSTRATIONS TO DEMONSTRATE DIRECTIONS OF CHANGE

This section presents illustrations of possible different overall directions of change for the Black Country. They show how the economic and housing objectives can be achieved through different “packages”, taking into account the findings of the Transport and Capacity Studies

The possible “packages” or “spatial illustrations” set out below are designed to show how different emphases could be used to guide future development. There are a number of key features and considerations for the nature and scale of development that can be accommodated by the Black Country arising from each of the broad illustrations set out below.

There are potentially many combinations and you are not being asked to choose between the packages. However, we would appreciate your general views on whether there are any particular features of the packages presented that you like or dislike.

It is possible that when a preferred strategy emerges it may consist of a combination of different elements. The aim is to find the best solution of meeting the future development needs of the Black Country in the most sustainable manner.

#### **A PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON GROWING THE 4 STRATEGIC CENTRES**

Focus on growth being directed at the Black Country’s most important centres – WOLVERHAMPTON, WALSALL, WEST BROMWICH AND BRIERLEY HILL. The emphasis would seek to provide the most attractive shopping and leisure facilities and to develop the strongest markets for office employment.

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Key features and considerations</b>
<b>Shopping</b>	The major proportion of shopping growth beyond existing planned proposals will focus upon the 4 strategic centres with a high degree of focus on accessibility. Some shopping development will also take place in smaller town, district and local centres
<b>Leisure, Culture, Education and Health</b>	The majority of new leisure, cultural development, education and health facilities will take place in the 4 strategic centres with a high degree of accessibility.
<b>Offices</b>	The major proportion of new office development will take place in the 4 key centres.
<b>Employment Land</b>	Focus on locations in <u>existing</u> accessible areas to the Motorway network
<b>Housing</b>	A large number of new homes would be built in the 4 centres to meet the needs of those who wish to live close to shops, offices and a range of leisure and cultural attractions. Homes could be part of “mixed use” schemes or on sites exclusively for residential use. The role of Dudley Town Centre would increasingly focus on residential use, tourism and heritage. A strong emphasis on ‘Centres’ would not be able to accommodate the full 70,000 new homes envisaged in the Vision. Other options might therefore need to be considered including a higher degree of intensification in suburbs.
<b>Environment</b>	Prominent landscape structure in and around the four key centres – including environmental improvements
<b>Transport</b>	The scale of potential growth in these activities would demand a major strengthening of transport facilities and linkages between different forms of transport, particularly bus, rail and metro services to and between the four centres. Such growth may also require a package of transport measures complemented by demand management measures particularly at peak times. However an increasing number of trips will be made within centres over short distances, which can be covered using sustainable modes.

**31. Please give any views you might have on this on this illustration to demonstrate the direction of change**



## **A PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON GROWTH ALONG CORRIDORS – CANALS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT ROUTES**

The key transport corridors broadly coincide with areas of substantial likely surplus industrial land. They also have some overlap with areas of high levels of housing deprivation. A strategy based upon corridors could achieve a multiple function focussed around more sustainable travel opportunities. The canals usually parallel other transport corridors or make up corridors in themselves.

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Key features and considerations</b>
<b>Shopping</b>	Focus upon the 4 strategic centres and to a lesser extent, smaller town, and district and local centres.
<b>Leisure, Culture, Education and Health</b>	The majority of new leisure, cultural development, education and health facilities will take place in the 4 strategic centres and along Corridors/ and or in more local centres.
<b>Offices</b>	The major proportion of new office development will take place in the 4 strategic centres, but less than in the Centres approach. Some development will also take place in the smaller district centres and at key locations on public transport corridors and/or close to motorways.
<b>Employment Land</b>	Focus on locating in existing accessible areas to the Motorway network A strong emphasis on housing in ‘Corridors’ means that the Black Country may not be able to accommodate its full employment land needs. Some employment land may need to be provided on the periphery of the Black Country in the Green Belt.
<b>Housing</b>	Focus on building homes close to bus, rail and metro routes and stations/stops and canals. A variety of densities would be used to meet varying needs. Efforts would be made to accommodate higher income/skilled groups and creating new housing-led environments. Key locations around public transport interchanges will be provided offer opportunities for higher density living for those who choose this lifestyle. A corridor emphasis would mean somewhat less emphasis upon housing in the vicinity of the 4 strategic centres.
<b>Environment</b>	Large scale environmental landscape improvements and enhancements can provide for networked linkages throughout the Black Country. This provides the greatest opportunity to exploit the potential of the canals as a focus for living, working and relaxing. Investment in development close to the canals might also facilitate investment in the canal network itself as a unique feature of the Black Country.
<b>Transport</b>	The emphasis upon corridors would closely associate much new development with public transport services and choices. This would contribute to the most viable public transport network. Dependant upon the degree of concentration of development in centres the need to provide packages of measures to increase public transport and manage demand would continue for this option.

**32. Please give any views you might have on this on this illustration to demonstrate the direction of change**

## **A PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON PLANNED DISPERSAL**

This direction of change largely maintains the broad pattern of mixed land uses that exists at present. It also follows past trends where the market has responded to a planning led process.

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Key features and considerations</b>
<b>Shopping</b>	<p>Whilst this direction maintains the total amount of additional non-food space for shopping, and leisure needed to support a growing population, this total will be more widely distributed amongst a larger number of town and district centres. Evidence shows that major retailers, leisure operators and developers are not willing to invest significantly in smaller centres, so if the Black Country does not encourage investment in its larger centres, it will go elsewhere e.g. to out of centre locations or outside the Black Country.</p> <p>Unless the Black Country's larger centres are encouraged to grow more they will lose out to competing centres outside the BC and mean more people would need to travel further a field for their main non-food shopping trips.</p>
<b>Leisure, Culture, Education and Health</b>	<p>Facilities will be spread throughout the Black Country among both the smaller and larger centres to the extent that this would be viable.</p>
<b>Offices</b>	<p>A large proportion of offices would still be developed in the larger centres but not to the same extent as in the other illustrations.</p> <p>More offices may chose to locate in smaller centres and business parks, although with competition from centres such as Birmingham to capture footloose office occupiers the Black Country would be less competitive to gain these jobs.</p> <p>New prestigious sites for research and new technology firms would still be provided close to the motorways or town centres.</p>
<b>Employment Land</b>	<p>In addition to focussing on locations with existing access to the Motorway network, access would be improved to other areas</p>
<b>Housing</b>	<p>Although this direction involves some transfer of surplus employment land to housing, more employment areas would remain. This approach would likely mean that the intensification of lower density housing areas may need to be encouraged in this approach to meet housing needs.</p> <p>Redevelopment of older housing areas would continue at the same rate as in the other spatial illustrations.</p> <p>A strong emphasis on 'planned dispersal' would not be able to accommodate the full 70,000 new homes envisaged in the Vision. Other options might therefore need to be considered including a higher degree of intensification in suburbs.</p> <p>This might place further reliance for housing on adjacent areas beyond the Black Country, which runs against the emphasis upon "self-sufficiency" for the Black Country to accommodate as much of its own needs as possible.</p>
<b>Environment</b>	<p>There may be limited opportunity for focussed environmental improvement because of less land restructuring.</p>
<b>Transport</b>	<p>It is likely that people will be more dependent on the car. With a more dispersed pattern of development, sites for development will be less well located for the best public transport services, again increasing the likelihood of car dependency, more roads experiencing more traffic and the problems of social exclusion being exacerbated.</p>

**33. Please give any views you might have on this on this illustration to demonstrate the direction of change**

## 5. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

We would like your views on the issues raised in this Choices Consultation Report. Please answer the questions in the enclosed questionnaire.

Your views will be considered and will be used to inform the shape of the preferred option.

By Spring 2006, the Black Country Study will be complete, and a Preferred Option will be drawn up, together with suggested policies that will form the Phase One Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy, to be submitted by the Regional Planning Body to the Secretary of State.

Our timetable is as follows:

Comments on the Consultation Report:	to be sent to the Black Country Consortium by 6 <sup>TH</sup> January 2006
Analysis of Comments	by 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2006
Preparation and Testing of Preferred Option and further engagement with stakeholders	January – March 2006
Publication of Final Black Country Study Report	Spring 2006
Submission to Secretary of State	Spring 2006

Once the Phase One Revision to the RSS has been submitted, there will be a period of formal consultation on this, leading to Examination in Public (EiP). When this is complete and responses have been taken into account, the Secretary of State will make a decision on the Revision, based on the EiP Panel's recommendations. Following further consultation on "proposed changes", the Revision to the RSS will then become a Statutory Document with Secretary of State Approval anticipated by Autumn 2007. This will provide the statutory framework for Local Development Frameworks developed at a Borough level. The RSS Revision and the outcomes of the Black Country Study will also need to be reflected in each of the Borough's Community Plans, being drawn up by each Local Strategic Partnership.

## **7. List of Supporting Technical Documents**

### **Economic study - GHK**

Long-Term Economic and Employment Strategy for the Black Country – Final Report Feb 2005  
Long-Term Economic and Employment Strategy for the Black Country – Executive Summary  
Long-Term Economic & Employment Strategy for the Black Country – Technical Annex 1 – Model & Scenarios  
Long-Term Economic & Employment Strategy for the Black Country Technical Annex 2 – Spatial Implications  
Long-Term Economic and Employment Strategy for the Black Country – Technical Annex 3 – Other Strategies  
Long-Term Economic & Employment Strategy for the Black Country – Technical Annex 4 – Sectoral Appraisal

### **Centres Study – GVA Grimley**

Study of Black Country Centres – August 2005  
Study of Black Country Centres – Appendix A  
Study of Black Country Centres – Appendix B  
Study of Black Country Centres – Appendix C  
Study of Black Country Centres – Technical Paper 1  
Study of Black Country Centres – Technical Paper 2  
Study of Black Country Centres – Technical Paper 3  
Study of Black Country Centres – Technical Paper 4  
Study of Black Country Centres – Technical Paper 5  
Study of Black Country Centres – Technical Paper 6

### **Transport Reports**

PRISM : Black Country Study – Prism Joint Application Team  
Black Country Study: Black Country Express  
Regional Logistics Study

### **Environment Reports**

Black Country Study: Environment Technical Report – Quality of Place – Environment Theme Group – Sep 2005

### **Housing Reports**

Baseline housing-related health indicators for Urban Living - HMRA  
Black Country Study: Black Country Housing Market Thinkpiece –CSR Partnership  
Black Country Study: Demographics & Housing (including demolitions) Discussion paper – Piers Waterston  
Black Country Study: Developing a Housing Market Restructuring Framework – ECOTEC Sep 2005  
Black Country Telford Housing Market Renewal Area – Phase 1  
Housing Capacity Study – Halcrow Sep 2005

### **Employment Land Reports**

WMLGA - Black Country Employment Land Capacity Study – GVA Grimley

### **Black Country Urban Park**

Broadening Horizons – A vision of the Black Country Urban Park -Lovejoys

**DETACHABLE QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE ADDED**