

Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands.

Draft Phase One Revision:

The Black Country

DRAFT

Draft Phase One Revision to RSS The Black Country

Foreword

This draft revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is intended to provide strategic guidance for development and investment in the Black Country. It proposes alterations to particular policies and paragraphs of supporting text in the current RSS and forms part of a wider process of revising and updating the RSS for the West Midlands. This document is in two parts.

Part 1 contains a summary of the context and background to the revision. It also sets out the key issues that the revision addresses, and the challenges that the Black Country needs to tackle. The process by which the revision has developed are outlined and the next steps in its formulation are described, particularly opportunities for further participation in this process.

Part 2 sets out the proposed revision to the existing RSS, including new and amended Policies and additional text together with reasoned justification for these changes. It should be emphasised that this draft revision must be read alongside the current RSS. The format of Part 2 of the document therefore reflects the format and content of the RSS itself.

Separate documents have also been produced in support of this draft revision including a draft implementation plan, a summary of consultation undertaken to date and the Black Country Study, which includes a series of technical reports.

PART 1

Introduction

1. The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

- 1.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is intended to guide development in the West Midlands up to 2021 and beyond. The RSS deals with the broad locations for development and the movement of people within and between these locations. At its heart is the aim to create more sustainable patterns of development. It is a long term strategy and does not deal with site-specific allocations of land or policies which should be developed at a more local level. The purpose of the RSS is to guide the preparation of local authority development plans and local transport plans, currently over the period up to 2021.
- 1.2 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands was published by the First Secretary of State in June 2004. It is also known as RPG11. Following commencement of Part 1 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in September 2004, the RSS became part of the statutory development plan in all parts of the West Midlands region.
- 1.3 The RSS sets out an overall vision for the West Midlands and defines the approach the region must take if it is to move towards more sustainable development. It focuses on the restructuring of the Major Urban Areas, which include the Black Country, in parallel to meeting the needs of rural areas.
- 1.4 The four main themes and challenges of the RSS are:
- Urban Renaissance** – countering the long-standing trends of net out-migration of people and jobs from the Major Urban Areas.
 - Rural Renaissance** – securing the regeneration of the region’s rural areas.
 - Diversifying and Modernising the Region’s Economy** – ensuring that opportunities for growth contribute to meeting needs and reducing social exclusion.
 - Modernising the Transport Infrastructure of the West Midlands** – supporting the sustainable development of the region.

2. A Draft Revision of RSS for the Black Country

- 2.1 When the RSS was published the First Secretary of State indicated that a fundamental review of the strategy was not anticipated as being necessary in the short term¹, however he identified that several issues needed to be developed further and that revisions should be undertaken to add further

¹ RSS paragraph 10.14

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detail. Consequently, this and subsequent revisions are intended to support and not review the existing strategy or the fundamental principles that underpin it.

- 2.2 Responsibility for drafting revisions to the RSS rests with the Regional Planning Body which has agreed a phased approach to the process. In recognition of the importance of the renaissance of the Black Country to the underlying strategy for the more sustainable development of the region and the need to resolve many inter-connected issues affecting this area, the revision for the Black Country sub-region is identified as the Phase 1 revision to the RSS.
- 2.3 The Black Country covers the local authority areas of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, as illustrated by Map .
- 2.4 The objectives of the revision and processes to be followed are set out in a Project Plan which was published in August 2005. The four key objectives of the draft Phase One revision, as set out in the Project Plan are:

- **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%)
- **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
- **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.
- **to transform the environment**
 - to protect and enhance the environment and to create a safe, attractive and healthy place to live and work.

- 2.5 The fourth objective was specifically added following consultation on the draft Project Plan. It was recognised that transforming the environment of the Black Country must be a key component in improving the overall quality of life.

3. Consultation and Participation

- 3.1 The draft revision to RSS is the product of an intensive period of consultation and participation. Following a public consultation exercise in Spring 2005, a Project Plan for the Black Country revision was published which set out the

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issues to be addressed, the processes and procedures to be adopted and the means of engaging stakeholders and the wider community.

- 3.2 In November 2005 a Choices Consultation Report was published and widespread consultation undertaken seeking views on a range of issues. Those who participated in the process were also invited to consider possible directions of change in respect of ways in which the Black Country might develop to accommodate the future needs of the area.
- 3.3 The results of this exercise have been the subject of analysis and a report prepared identifying the key issues identified and the views that were expressed on possible future development patterns. Importantly, these views have been carefully assessed and a preferred option for a spatial strategy for the Black Country has been developed taking account of these responses.
- 3.4 On-going engagement with stakeholders throughout the process of drawing up a preferred spatial option and draft revision policies has meant constant refinement aimed at establishing a consensus as to the documents to be submitted to the First Secretary of State for his consideration. The preferred option itself has been the subject of a further period of consultation and engagement.....[*details being finalised*].

4. The Sustainability Appraisal

- 4.1 The purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal is to promote sustainable development through better integration of sustainability considerations into the preparation and adoption of development plans. It is a legal requirement that an Appraisal of the sustainability of the proposals in the draft revision of RSS must be carried out, and that a report of the findings of the Appraisal must be produced. The process must incorporate the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive.
- 4.2 The Sustainability Appraisal is a process that identifies and reports on the likely significant effects of the plan and the extent to which implementation of the plan will achieve the social, environmental and economic objectives by which sustainable development can be defined. It has been carried out by independent consultants and gives objective consideration of the issues and spatial options that the revision process has generated. One of the key issues that must be confronted is the impact of proposals on climate change. As it is an issue of such critical significance for us all it will be of increasing importance that spatial planning takes account the implications of climate change. It is anticipated that local authorities through their Local Development Frameworks will need to do so.
- 4.3 As a separate piece of work, the Appraisal has provided for the early and ongoing involvement of the public, statutory authorities and other relevant stakeholders. By providing timely assessments of the sustainability of particular options as they have been developed, the Sustainability Appraisal has provided all those who have been involved in the revision process with information to assist in coming to a view on the proposals before them.

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- 4.4 The Sustainability Appraisal has been overseen by a Project Steering Group with an independent Chair which has produced a Black Country Study Scoping Report and Black Country Study Sustainability Appraisal.

5. The Black Country Study

- 5.1 The RSS is clear that it is critical for the success of the region that Major Urban Areas of a scale like the Black Country, home to over 1 million people and 500,000 jobs, are subject to continuing economic, physical and environmental renewal. The Black Country must be developed such that it becomes a part of the region where more people want to live, work and invest. In order to guide development and investment in the sub-region to this end, this draft revision has built upon a particularly important piece of work, referred to in the RSS, the Black Country Study.

- 5.2 The Black Country Study has been undertaken to set out how the Black Country can collectively achieve its shared vision of Urban Renaissance to 2031 and specifically to meet the First Secretary of State's requirement in the RSS for a joined up approach to the multiple interconnected issues facing the Black Country over the coming years, namely:

- *regeneration priorities for the sub-region;*
- *the strategic role of town centres and Merry Hill;*
- *the capacity of this urban area to accommodate new development;*
- *the identification of employment land;*
- *the scope for environmental and town centre improvements and;*
- *ways of improving access to regeneration sites particularly on the eastern side of the Black Country.*

- 5.3 The Study adopted a vision-led approach to this task, examining how the Black Country could achieve population growth and economic competitiveness in a sustainable manner, taking account of current demographic and economic trends. It has pioneered a new holistic approach to urban renaissance, bringing together evidence from a series of technical reports on economy and employment land, centres and retailing, education and skills, housing market and housing land, the environment and Black Country landscape, accessibility and transport infrastructure. The process has been integrated with an iterative approach to Sustainability Appraisal which has thus continuously influenced the Study.

- 5.4 The Black Country Study is thus providing a vision and direction for the future urban renaissance of the Black Country, in accordance with the RSS to 2021 and for continuing growth and competitiveness beyond 2021. The key objectives of the Black Country Study are therefore as set out below.

The Black Country Strategy to achieve growth and competitiveness through Urban Renaissance:

- Moving from a comparatively low skilled, low income economy where comparative advantage in manufacturing is fading, to a high skilled, well paid knowledge economy where the service sector is expanding.
- Technology led change in all sectors including manufacturing and

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- logistics for which the Black Country has a comparative advantage.
- Centres led growth to accommodate knowledge based companies, quality retail, leisure and cultural facilities & opportunities for 'city living'
 - Quality integrated education and skills provision to raise both the skills base and the high end knowledge leading a more highly skilled and entrepreneurial workforce.
 - Significant increase in knowledge creation and innovation facilities and institutions.
 - Step change in quality of environment (physical and cultural) to hold and attract entrepreneurial people and businesses.
 - Significantly greater choice in housing and residential environments for both existing communities, potential inward migrants and to accommodate more higher income households.
 - Served by a genuinely integrated (rail, metro and quality bus networks) quality public transport network connecting people and businesses together and people to shops, education, health and a breadth of lifestyle opportunities.
 - Served by rail, road and IT network which provides reliable quality accessibility of all sectors of business to markets and ideas

There are three key deliverables of this strategy which are interdependent upon each other, the achievement of which RSS policies will make a significant contribution towards:

1. Raising Black Country Knowledge Base
 - reducing worklessness (to SE levels)
 - raising average wages (to UK average ex London)
 - creating new jobs (to counter manufacturing loss and real growth)
2. Transforming the Environment, building on the natural and built heritage of the area, to create an urban form fit for a modern business and living environment:
 - restructuring employment land
 - renewing and growing Centres
 - investing in urban landscape
 - providing more homes and greater choice
 - delivering quality services and education offer
3. Enhancing Black Country Connectivity based on integration of economic and transport infrastructure investment:
 - international linkages via Birmingham International Airport
 - national linkages – connections to the national rail and road network

Black Country and City Region accessibility – a fully integrated multi-modal high volume public transport network which promotes effectiveness of the polycentric form of the Black Country and Birmingham.

In addition, the Black Country Study aims:

- To set out a longer term vision and strategy, initially to 2031, on the scale of transformation required for the Black Country to achieve long term population growth (net inward migration) and competitiveness (narrowing the current £3bn productivity gap with the rest of the UK).

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- To articulate that transformation in terms of the scale of the radical restructuring of employment land, centres, housing land and transport infrastructure necessary to achieve urban renaissance.
- Having examined spatial choices and tested and consulted upon alternative scales of housing and employment growth, it establishes the spatial ramifications of extending to 2031 the rate of RSS housing provision to 2021.
- It sets out the importance of the inter-relationship between housing, employment, retail and other supporting services including transport, which is necessary for the Black Country to meet its own needs for homes and jobs as far as possible to 2021 in a balanced and sustainable manner. It also recognises the essential connectivity between the sub-region and adjacent areas.
- It links spatial change to the socio-economic changes necessary to uplift the Black Country and bring its economic performance (incomes and skill levels etc) much closer to national averages. Thus it seeks to extend the impetus towards greater social inclusion and sustainability into the long-term.
- It incorporates a Delivery Plan prepared in conjunction with implementation agencies and service providers, which indicates priorities for action and the sequence of infrastructure provision necessary to achieve required outputs. As a non-statutory supporting framework, the BCS will be capable of regular updating and alteration to enable the Delivery Plan to respond with speed to often rapidly-changing circumstances.
- It highlights Black Country needs post 2021 to achieve continuing urban renaissance and growth to inform further phases of RSS revision in due course.
- It sets down the “what if” scenario across the key areas of spatial and socio-economic objectives. This indicates the implications for the Black Country if trends were to continue without major new interventions.
- The proposed mechanisms for delivery of the vision (including the pre-2021 period). Black Country regeneration is a focus of multi-agency commitment to build upon a consensus and public/private partnership approach to the process; the Black Country Consortium through which four Local Authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) are acting strategically as one, which has been operational since 1999 and has led on the Black Country Study and this RSS phase 1 revision. There is an intention to build initially upon existing statutory powers but with a dedicated and focussed mechanism of cooperative working and a process of review to ensure that delivery mechanisms are fit for the purpose of transformational restructuring of the Black Country.
- Whilst the phase 1 RSS revision is focused on the period up to 2021, the Black Country Study vision extends to 2031 and has taken a continuation of the RSS rate of housing growth and the consequences of this, as its foundation. This is essentially a growth scenario for the Black Country

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leading to net inward migration to this urban sub-region from 2011. The inclusion of the period to 2031 and its endorsement by stakeholders has been critical to highlight the actions required in the pre-2021 period to ensure momentum is maintained on the ground over the succeeding 10 year period.

6. A Black Country Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy

- 6.1 Through the development of the Black Country Study and the process of formulating this draft revision, involving public consultation and sustainability appraisal, a spatial strategy has been formulated.
- 6.2 The spatial strategy for the Black Country sub-region addresses the relevant challenges in RSS, in particular the need to create a vibrant, urban future for current and future residents of the Black Country - this means new and better homes, job opportunities, environment and transport.
- 6.3 The spatial expression of the draft revision proposals for the Black Country is set out diagrammatically in Map ? which seeks to show the inter-relationships between key areas of action. It illustrates that in relative terms a focus of land use and transport restructuring to achieve urban renaissance will be on four strategic centres and areas of the Black Country where strategic corridors offer opportunities for carefully managed growth.
- 6.4 The four strategic centres are West Bromwich and Walsall town centres, and Wolverhampton city centre, together with Brierley Hill/Merry Hill which is proposed as a new strategic centre. It is proposed that Dudley town centre loses its status as a strategic centre, but that it will have an important new tourism role. Its local role will need to be determined through the local development framework process. The spatial strategy for the Black Country includes therefore a balanced network of four strategic centres which will play vital roles as locations for new investment and growth. The long-term health and prosperity of the four centres, and the quality of life they offer are fundamental to the future of the Black Country.
- 6.5 In addition, the Black Country is characterised by a network of other important local centres which will continue to play a pivotal role in the sub-region and the local communities they serve. These other centres are also recognised as forming important nodes, particularly along public transport routes, and as such appropriate new development in and around them will be sustainably located.
- 6.6 Corridors as a focus for growth and redevelopment will in particular include those based on existing, and future, public transport routes and on the valuable resource that is the sub-region's canal network. These corridors will include those connecting the strategic centres one to another and the sub-region to Birmingham city centre. There will also be opportunities for growth in corridors which link the network of local centres in the Black Country. Some corridors will offer the opportunity to combine proposed areas for housing growth with the priority corridors for Employment Land Investment.
- 6.7 The critical importance of a supply of high quality employment land in the Black Country has prompted the inclusion in the draft revision of Employment

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Land Investment Corridors where new sites will be identified, particularly to support high technology-led business. These are a vital component of the spatial strategy for the sub-region.

- 6.8 The centres and corridors will be supported by transport investment to ensure full connectivity between the four strategic centres of the sub-region and with Birmingham, between the employment land investment foci and national transport network and between the strategic centres, employment land investment foci and Black Country communities.
- 6.9 The draft revision to RSS therefore provides strategic guidance to the Black Country local planning authorities on spatial priorities in the form of a focus on centres and corridors. The authorities will further refine and define the spatial strategy through the Joint Core Strategy and Local Development Documents (LDDs).
- 6.9 In order to meet housing requirements in the Black Country to 2021, a significant proportion of low quality employment land either currently in use or allocated for such use in the corridors, will need to be assembled and prepared for redevelopment as new, residential led mixed use neighbourhoods. The scale of land use transformation required in the Black Country to provide the homes, jobs and the high quality environment necessary to secure urban renaissance and stem net outward migration, is challenging. This scale of development will require the commitment of all relevant agencies, including the private sector, in the process of transformation.
- 6.10 On complex and difficult sites or where large scale proposals to create new residential neighbourhoods require land assembly, the lead-in time from site identification to development could exceed 5 years. The housing capacity work undertaken as part of the Black Country Study has illustrated a “what-if” scenario representing a substantially-reduced housing provision to 2021 if efforts to accelerate land provision are not achieved. The implications of this are that the properly planned, phased release and efficient delivery of such sites should begin as soon as practicable, following completion of a comprehensive phasing strategy and delivery plan and the creation of a planning policy framework through the Black Country Joint Core Strategy.
- 6.11 A critical component in the success of the spatial strategy for the Black Country will be the improvement in the quality of the environment. Measures to protect, manage, enhance and restore the quality of the urban environment in the Black Country will be developed on the basis of the ‘Black Country as Urban Park’ proposals (Beacons, Corridors and Communities) set out in the Black Country Study. In addition, work will commence on a Landscape Plan to define a network of greenspaces, waterways, topographical, biodiversity and heritage features interconnecting centres, communities and the environs of the Black Country to enhance quality of life and healthy living, as a framework for development and to promote opportunities for safe walking and cycling.
- 6.12 It is a legal requirement that an objective of the RSS should be to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Sustainability Appraisal has assessed proposals in this draft revision against the key principles of sustainability, but beyond that local authorities should, through the Joint Core Strategy and LDDs consider how to ensure development contributes to the

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creation of a more sustainable Black Country. In particular local authorities should consider how best to ensure new developments:

- optimise the regeneration, re-use and recycling of derelict and contaminated land;
- minimise resource demand and encourage the efficient use of resources, especially water, energy and materials;
- encourage the construction of climate-proofed developments and sustainable buildings to help to ensure their long term viability in adapting to the climate change;
- promote quality design;
- avoid development in flood zones and promote the use of sustainable drainage techniques;
- promote walking, cycling and public transport;
- facilitate effective waste management;
- protect, conserve, manage and enhance environmental and heritage assets;
- encourage overall improvements in air quality and promote action to improve poor air quality.

7. The Next Steps in the Phase 1 Revision of Regional Spatial Strategy

to be confirmed

8. Issues for Further Consideration in the Phase 2 Revision of RSS

- 8.1 The RSS Phase 2 Project Plan sets out in detail the policy areas to be revised and the process for doing this. Unlike Phase 1 which covers a specific sub-region, Phase 2 will cover the whole Region but will be informed by the Black Country work. Nonetheless, there are a number of issues for Phase 2 that the Black Country Study has highlighted as being of particular importance for the sub-region. These are listed briefly below:

Logistics

- 8.2 The Black Country Study has identified the potentially important role logistics could play in supporting the economic growth of the sub-region. Logistics is an issue for Phase 2 and will identify the number and broad location of regional warehousing and distribution facilities. This work should consider the extent to which this can be used to support Black Country urban renaissance objectives.

High Technology

- 8.3 The Black Country Study has also identified the need to diversify the sub-regional economy and in particular the importance of a higher number of knowledge based jobs and the growth of high technology employment. Phase 2 will be reassessing strategic employment land allocations but is not expressly looking revising the High Technology Corridors (HTCs). HTCs are key delivery vehicles for the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) which is prepared by Advantage West Midlands, the Regional Development Agency. The RES is being also under-going review and it is important that outputs from the Phase 1 revision and on-going Phase 2 work inform this process.

Housing

- 8.4 Phase 2 will be re-examining the regional and sub-regional housing needs and requirements and how these can be best met in the Region up the period 2026. Among other things it will also be examining the local housing market areas required by draft PPS3 and the role of the sub-regional foci² and their appropriate level of development.
- 8.5 The work of the Black Country Study has illustrated the challenge in accommodation the present RSS requirement for new housing to 2021 within the Black Country itself. The Phase 2 work will take account of this in the context of the Spatial Strategy objectives in distributing new housing development across the region up to 2026.

Development Outside the Black Country

- 8.7 The Phase 2 also revises a number of policies controlling other types of development. For example it will identify investment priorities within the Region's strategic network of centres; provide guidance on the location of the

² Hereford, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Telford and Worcester

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new generation of casinos; and identify broad locations for park and ride sites. In determining regional policies it will be necessary to take account the impact on the Black Country urban renaissance objectives.

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PART 2

Draft Revision of Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands

Phase 1: the Black Country

Introduction

The draft revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) proposes new and amended policy and text to the existing, June 2004, document. These changes are prefaced by reasoned justification. References to topics covered, and particular Policies relate to the relevant parts of the existing RSS.

It is important to stress that the draft revision should be read alongside the RSS as, unless amended by the proposed changes set out here, existing policies and text remain in place.

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Urban Renaissance

Reasoned Justification

- a) *The main purpose of this draft revision to the RSS is to provide a sub-regional spatial strategy to enable the achievement of urban renaissance in the Black Country. The key objectives of the draft revision are the reversal of net out-migration, the raising of income levels, changing the population mix of the area and transforming the environment.*
- b) *Through the development of the Black Country Study and the process of formulating the Phase I Revision, including public consultation around spatial choices and the sustainability appraisal, a spatial strategy has been formulated. The spatial strategy for the Black Country is to concentrate activity and resources primarily on the four strategic centres and on corridors where there is the opportunity for change to accommodate growth, enhance the environment and support economic competitiveness.*
- c) *At the level of the RSS the spatial strategy is not intended to be locationally specific, particularly in respect of the definition of the corridors, but provides the policy direction for the local authorities in formulating the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country and Local Development Documents.*
- d) *Corridors will be based on the existing and proposed key public transport corridors that cross the sub-region and contain the areas where the need for new employment sites in accessible locations can be met, where new housing can be accommodated (largely from restructuring of poor quality and poorly located older industrial areas) and where significant environmental renewal is most needed. They also contain areas of significant housing market stress.*
- e) *The four strategic centres are the drivers of economic growth in the Black Country. They are identified as locations for investment in new retail floorspace, office and other main town centre uses and residential development.*
- f) *The Black Country Study has confirmed the vitally important role the growth of Wolverhampton City Centre, Walsall, West Bromwich and Brierley Hill/Merry Hill strategic centres should play in the sustainable regeneration of the sub-region. As a focus for the location for main town centre uses and for complimentary residential development, place making and environmental improvement they are a key regeneration priority for the Black Country and will underpin economic growth in the sub-region.*
- g) *Managing the growth of comparison retail floorspace of the four strategic centres within a target control figure for the Black Country is important to ensure the development of a balanced network of strategic centres.*
- h) *The provision of new environments for incubating entrepreneurial activity and providing grow-on space for successful companies and to sustain knowledge led manufacturing and logistics businesses is a vital component of the Black Country's economic strategy. Employment Land Investment corridors have been identified through the Black Country Study, with the aid of market-led advice, as the key locations for the development of environments and provision of sites to meet this need.*

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- i) *The spatial strategy provides a framework for directing the considerable effort that will be required by public and private sectors to deliver the transformation in land use and environmental quality. Delivery will also require the linked provision of essential supporting infrastructure and services, in particular to reduce the risk of congestion, and to ensure people and businesses have sustainable travel choices.*
- j) *It is also vitally important to recognise that in order for growth in the Black Country to be sustainable it must be balanced growth involving the appropriate provision of land for a range of uses. The challenge for local planning authorities and other partners is to deliver this balanced growth. In particular managing the loss of well located, good quality employment land to new housing so as not to undermine the local economy is of critical importance as is the provision of new, high quality sites for employment purposes.*
- k) *The Black Country Study has highlighted that quality of the environment, in particular a sense of place and belonging, together with access to nature, recreational and cultural pursuits will be key factors in the urban renaissance of the sub-region. A high quality environment has been identified through both the economic and the housing technical work as an essential prerequisite for an environment conducive to economic competitiveness, for the attractiveness of residential locations for those with housing choice, and as a goal in its own right to sustain the health and well-being of the population as a whole and to contribute to climate change objectives.*

Urban Renaissance

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- 1.1 As a major urban area which is home to more than 1 million people and 500,000 jobs, the renewal and regeneration of the Black Country is critical to the delivery of the Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands. Extensive work undertaken through the Black Country Study has highlighted a number of regeneration priorities which must be addressed. The following policy provides a sub-regional focus for Urban Renaissance in the Black Country.

UR1A: Implementing Urban Renaissance – Black Country Regeneration Priorities

- i) In the Black Country the focus for regeneration activity, development and investment will be the four strategic centres and growth corridors located primarily in the areas illustrated on Map ?. Development and environmental enhancement should also be planned for and encouraged in appropriate locations across the Black Country to support the network of local centres and communities which exists, taking advantage of the availability of suitable sites and accessibility by public transport.
- ii) Local Authorities should ensure, through the Black Country Joint Core Strategy and Local Development Documents (LDDs), that growth of

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the strategic centres is planned for and carefully managed and that growth corridors are defined and appropriate sites in the corridors are identified for housing and employment, environmental improvement, and transport and other infrastructure provision.

- iii) The range of housing choice across the Black Country must be protected and extended. Local authorities should give careful consideration through their LDFs to issues of density, urban design and the fabric and character of existing residential areas.
- iv) Local authorities should identify in LDDs, and work towards the delivery of, sub-regional employment sites (10 – 20 has) and quality employment land, in particular for technology-led business, focussing on the following four priority Employment Land Investment Corridors: (PA6);
 1. Wolverhampton Centre – Stafford Road Corridor (incorporating Wolverhampton Science Park and Wobaston Road i54/MIS);
 2. Walsall Centre – Darlaston – Wednesbury Corridor (incorporating Darlaston SDA, Hill Top , the Black Country Route and Wednesfield Way, Wolverhampton);
 3. Pensnett – Brierley Hill – Dudley Town Centre Corridor;
 4. Oldbury – West Bromwich Corridor (incorporating M5 Jcts 1 & 2).
- v) Local authorities will plan for and promote growth in main town centre uses in the four strategic centres. The overall target for growth in comparison retail floorspace in the Black Country (including commitments) in the period 2004 to 2021 is up to 236,000 sqm gross. Growth of 185,000 sqm gross is to be planned for in the four strategic centres in the period 2004 to 2021. The overall target for growth in office floorspace in the Black Country (including commitments) in the period 2004 to 2021 is up to 845,000 sqm gross. Growth of up to 745,000 sqm gross is to be planned for in the four strategic centres in the period 2004 to 2021.
- vi) Local Authorities will plan and promote enhancement of the quality of the environment giving physical expression to the concept of the 'Black Country as Urban Park' through identification of Beacons, Corridors and Communities. This will include preparation and implementation of a joint Black Country Landscape Plan to define a network of greenspaces, waterways, topographical, biodiversity and heritage features and promote walking and cycling interconnections between centres, communities and the environs.

- 1.2 Sustainable urban renaissance in the Black Country depends on securing carefully balanced growth in housing, centres and the local economy. Housing and employment land capacity studies have been undertaken for the Black Country. The studies conclude that in order to achieve RSS housing figures to 2021, significant amounts of land currently (or last) in use for employment purposes or allocated for such uses, will need to be developed for housing. However, in order to ensure that an adequate supply of good quality employment land is maintained in the Black Country, the release of former employment sites for housing will need to be carefully managed. The

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process will also require management to ensure provision of appropriate services, transport infrastructure and environmental enhancement to ensure sustainable quality of life.

- 1.3 Implementation of the regeneration priorities will involve a range of existing delivery mechanisms and partnerships. Consideration will also be given to the establishment of a dedicated Black Country delivery mechanism which, subject to progress, might require formal statutory recognition in order to bring forward land and infrastructure.
- 1.4 In the Black Country the issue of the density of new housing development needs to be treated with particular care. In order to create the attractive living environments (Policies CF1, QE3-4) which will help stem net out-migration, a range of densities and a mix of dwelling types for new development will be appropriate. Existing attractive residential environments may also warrant protection. Local Authorities should give consideration, initially through the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country and LDDs, to the need to protect existing residential areas and in certain instances prescribe densities and the mix of dwellings for new development with the aim of enhancing the range of housing choice in the area.
- 1.5 The Black Country has historically lacked a portfolio of good quality employment land. It is a priority to ensure that new, high quality sites are delivered focused on key Employment Land Investment Corridors which will be defined in the Joint Core Strategy. Local authorities should work with Advantage West Midlands in ensuring the delivery of new employment sites in the context of the Regeneration Zones.
- 1.6 The four strategic centres will be the main locations for major office development, particularly for schemes exceeding 5000 sq metres. All 4 centres have both potential and capacity to absorb an equal proportion of proposed growth. In LDDs sites will be identified in each of the four strategic centres to accommodate up to 186,000 sqm of office development to 2021.
- 1.7 The spatial strategy seeks to focus the majority of further comparison retail investment within the 4 strategic centres as catalysts for regeneration. The strategy however also seeks to maintain the vitality and viability of other non-strategic centres in the sub-region. The apportionment of additional comparison retail floorspace for the four strategic centres and the non-strategic centres over the period 2004 to 2021 is indicated below:

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	square metres gross
Wolverhampton	54,000
Brierley Hill/Merry Hill	51,000
Walsall	45,000
West Bromwich	35,000
Non-strategic centres	51,000
Total	236,000

- 1.8 Of central importance to the achievement of urban renaissance in the Black Country is the objective of improving the quality of the environment. The general poor quality of the living and working environment has been a factor influencing the scale of net out-migration and low levels of investment. The environmental and heritage assets of the Black Country provide a foundation to work towards a step change in environmental quality, and the aim of making the Black Country as a whole a more attractive place within which to live, work and invest will be reflected in the Joint Core Strategy and LDDs.
- 1.9 A key component in the process of improving the quality of the environment will be to give physical expression to the concept of the 'Black Country as Urban Park'. The Black Country local authorities will work on a Landscape Plan and measures to identify and implement a network of key landscape corridors for enhancement, as set out in the Black Country Study, including proposals for waterways and canals, a network of open spaces, biodiversity enhancement areas, wildlife corridors and accessible natural greenspace, and the creation of new greenspace and water assets to connect the Black Country towns and communities with each other and to surrounding countryside via walkways and cycleways. Further work will promote vistas, gateways and heritage assets and combine landscape improvement with sustainable management of drainage in the Stour and Tame River basins. Efforts will be made to integrate the development of the Black Country Living Landscape, including the development and implementation of Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plans with increasing accessibility to natural greenspace, developing opportunities for environmental/ecological tourism and promoting healthy lifestyles and education.

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Communities for the Future

Reasoned Justification.

- a) *In accordance with draft PPS3 and to be consistent with the approach to be taken in the Phase 2 revision to RSS, housing figures have also been re-presented to indicate both gross and net requirements. The figures are consistent with those in existing RSS.*
- b) *The sub-regional spatial strategy, which describes the broad locations for a significant proportion of new housing development across the Black Country, recognises clear interdependencies between the four local authority areas, acknowledged by the decision to produce a Black Country Joint Core Strategy. On the basis that a Joint Core Strategy will be produced there is advantage in amalgamating the annual average rates of housing provision for the four Black Country planning areas.*

Communities for the Future

POLICY CF3. Levels and distribution of housing development.

TABLE 1: Housing

Planning Area	Annual Average Rate of Housing Provision			
	2007-2011		2011-2021	
	Gross	Nett	Gross	Nett
Dudley	700	490		
Sandwell	900	440		
Walsall	500	450		
Wolverhampton	500	390		
Black Country*			3600	2810

*Combined figure conditional upon Black Country Joint Core Strategy

2.1 The Joint Core Strategy and LDDs will need to manage carefully the rate of land use transformation in the Black Country to achieve the annual average rate specified in Table 1, taking into account the need to protect other uses critical to urban renaissance as set out in policy CF3.

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Table 2. Demolition assumptions.

	2011 – 2021
Black Country	790

- 2.3 As the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country is progressed demolition assumptions across the Black Country as a whole can be revised and the replacement rates adjusted to reflect actual circumstances.

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Prosperity for All

PA10

Reasoned Justification

- a) *Dudley town centre and adjoining heritage and tourism attractions have an important role to play in the Black Country. There is considerable potential for Dudley town centre and its surroundings to strengthen its position as a key tourism asset and this will help establish a new role for the centre.*

Policy PA10: Tourism and Culture

Add after "Black Country Heritage Attractions"

" in particular Dudley Town Centre and its surroundings."

PA11

Reasoned Justification

- a) *The evidence in support of the Black Country Study points to an imbalance in the network of strategic town and city centres in the Black Country set out in RSS. It is clear that Merry Hill currently performs the role of a major regional shopping destination and sub-regional focus for office and commercial leisure uses. In this role it has supplanted Dudley, which has declined to the extent that it is unlikely to be able to fulfil the role of a strategic town centre and does not have the capacity to grow to meet identified retail need*
- b) *The roles of Wolverhampton, Walsall and West Bromwich have declined regionally in relative and absolute terms in the last 20 years. Merry Hill, whilst clearly absorbing some of the trading potential of the other 3 centres, has proved to be a focus of significant growth not only in retail development but also as the key office growth point in the Black Country. Nevertheless the Black Country has lost significant market share in recent years primarily to Birmingham City Centre and, in part, Solihull and Telford.*
- c) *The designation of Brierley Hill/Merry Hill as a strategic centre will enable it to fulfil an important role in the renaissance of the Black Country, but in recognition of its origins, further retail growth will be strictly phased and conditioned.*

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Prosperity for All

Policy PA11: The Network of Town and City Centres.

A. Delete "Dudley"

Insert "Brierley Hill/Merry Hill"

- 3.1 Growth will be planned for in the four strategic centres in the Black Country leading to the development of a balanced network of centres. Their success will play a pivotal role in the sustainable growth of the sub-region. As a newly designated strategic centre Brierley Hill/Merry Hill will be subject to specific controls and restrictions designed to ensure growth across all four strategic centres is achieved.

Policy PA11A: Brierley Hill/Merry Hill and Dudley

The designation of Brierley Hill/Merry Hill as a strategic town centre will enable the development of a balanced network of 4 strategic town and city centres in the Black Country. Carefully managed growth in main town centre uses at Brierley Hill/Merry Hill will enable it to play an important role in the regeneration of the sub-region.

Exceptionally, as a newly designated strategic town centre future retail growth at Brierley Hill/Merry Hill will be carefully phased and conditioned in the following manner:

i) Growth in retail floorspace for comparison goods will be limited to XX,XXX sq metres gross in the period 2004 to 2016. Any operation of new retail development at Brierley Hill/Merry Hill in the period to 2016 is also conditional upon:

- Completion of improvements to public transport, including the extension of the Metro to Brierley Hill/Merry Hill or a range of other public transport initiatives of equivalent effectiveness, to improve the accessibility of the centre by non-car modes relative to the car;
- Introduction of a car parking management regime at Brierley Hill/Merry Hill, including the use of parking charges, compatible with those in the Region's network of major centres;
- Adoption of an Area Action Plan reflecting the Masterplan for Brierley Hill/Merry Hill which will define the centre and provide a clear framework for mixed use development, including residential and employment uses.

ii) further comparison retail development at Brierley Hill/Merry Hill in the period beyond 2016 will be considered in the context of the Joint Core

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Strategy for the Black Country and the need to create a balanced network of strategic town and city centres. This will include an assessment of the overall need in the Black Country and the region for additional floorspace, especially for comparison retail, leisure and office development and, having regard to the capacity and accessibility of the strategic centres, identification of where this need would best be met. In particular, further retail growth in the period beyond 2016 will be conditional upon:

- Evidence through monitoring that the strategy for balanced growth of the 4 strategic town and city centres is being achieved;
- Review of the extent to which development at Brierley Hill/Merry Hill has contributed to the regeneration of the Black Country;
- Further improvements in public transport accessibility to Brierley Hill/Merry Hill;
- Evidence through monitoring that the car parking management regime at Brierley Hill/Merry Hill remains compatible with other major centres in the region;
- Review of the extent to which the adopted masterplan for Merry Hill has been implemented.

Dudley will continue to perform an important role as a non-strategic town centre in the Black Country. The level of new retail development in Dudley will be determined through the LDF in accordance with its revised status

- 3.3 Policies PA11 and PA11A recognise the reality of the importance of Brierley Hill/Merry Hill, and the potential it has to contribute to the regeneration of the sub-region. However, its circumstances are exceptional in this regard and future retail growth at Merry Hill will be strictly conditioned in order to ensure the successful development of a balanced network of strategic centres throughout the Black Country.
- 3.4 Dudley's future renaissance will be founded upon the town centre's unique tourism and cultural assets and major residential development. All future development will seek to maintain and enhance the existing general character of the centre as a key contributor to the Black Country's tourism role and an important focus for quality housing.

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Transport and Accessibility

Reasoned Justification

- a) *Technical work for the BC has identified that transport networks in the Black Country will undergo some considerable challenges in order to support the implementation of the Black Country Vision. The land use strategy identified through the Black Country Study strengthens the roles of the centres of Walsall, Wolverhampton, West Bromwich and Brierley Hill/Merry Hill and allocates more development along proposed and existing public transport corridors. In order to meet these challenges the sub-region will need a well co-ordinated integrated and high quality public transport network and reliable fast links to Employment Land Corridors, from the national highway networks.*
- b) *A key part of the delivery of improved public transport in the Black Country will be a network of Metro lines providing links between the strategic centres and to Birmingham. This network will be a key means of achieving a sustainable renaissance in the Black Country and thus contribute to sustainable economic development in the West Midlands region. The importance of investment in the transport infrastructure was highlighted in the 'Long Term Economic and Employment Strategy for the Black Country-Final report' GHK (2205) and in the 'Study of Black Country Centres' GVA Grimley (2005). The future metro networks in the Black Country are needed to ensure that the Black Country can contribute positively to the national and regional economies and overcome a £3 bn productivity gap and have therefore been identified as being a National and Regional priority.*
- c) *A key part of the competitiveness of the Black Country is the sub-region's location accessible to the M5, M6, and M54. This location can also create considerable challenges for the local highway networks (thus affecting freight, car travellers and bus users) when traffic needs to cross the physical barriers of the motorways between the East and the West of the conurbation and into Birmingham. Further challenges arise when traffic either cannot join the motorway network or has to leave that network due to congestion. Measures to address these challenges are under investigation and are of regional and national importance. The M6 Toll has eased movement between Birmingham and Cannock, but long distance through traffic from the South West to the North West Regions continues to suffer lengthy delays.*
- d) *There is a clear link between the pattern of development and key transport infrastructure that is part of existing plans (eg the West Midlands Local Transport plan). It is important to make that link explicit and that it should be clear to those that read the RSS Revision that such transport interventions remain a key part of the vision for the Black Country. The desired pattern of development for 2015 relies on transport interventions now found in the West Midlands LTP. In the longer term it is important to identify the key outcomes and spatial priorities in T12. Therefore the need for transport interventions required to support the development of the centres of Walsall, Wolverhampton, West Bromwich, Brierley Hill centres and the Black Country Employment Land Corridors and proposed areas for housing growth, have been identified in T12.*

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Revised Policy T12: Priorities for Investment

Scheme	Key Policy Links	Status as of May 2006	Delivery Mechanism	Key Delivery Role	Support delivery	Implementation period
National and Regional Priorities						
Metro extension Wednesbury to Brierley Hill	UR1A, UR1B, T5, UR2, PA11A	C Business case to be presented to Government	TiF/LTP	Centro	LA, Operators	2010-2015
Further Metro extensions in the Black Country and Birmingham	UR1A, UR1B, T5, UR2	TWA orders to be obtained	TiF/LTP	Centro	LA, Operators	2010
M5 Junc 1-2 improvements	UR1A, UR1 B	PI	HA	LA/HA		2010-2021
M6 Junc 9-10 improvements	UR1A UR1 B	PI	HA	LA/HA		2010-2021
Active Traffic Management for M5/M6/M42 motorway box	UR1A UR1 B	PI	HA	HA		1210-2021
Sub-regional-within MUAs						
Improved transport networks to facilitate access to centres of Walsall, West Bromwich, Wolverhampton, and Brierley Hill	UR1 A, UR1 B.	UI	LTP	LA	LA	2011-2031
Improved transport networks to facilitate improved access to Employment Land Investment Corridors; Walsall/Darlaston/Neachells/Wednesbury; Pensnett/ Brierley Hill/ Dudley; Oldbury/ West Bromwich; Wolverhampton/ Stafford Road.	UR1 A, UR1 B.	UI	LTP	LA	LA	2011-2031

Status
 C (committed) schemes approved for the SoS and included in the relevant programme
 FA (further appraisal work needed) schemes identified in a MMS or the strategic plan but requiring further appraisal work
 UI (under investigation) appraisal work is underway
 PI (proposed for investigation) schemes or studies required to deliver the spatial strategy, but not yet clearly defined.

Organisations
 HA Highways Agency
 LA Local Transport Authorities

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- 4.1 A series of strategic imperatives is important to guide the overall identification of network priorities in the Black Country. These are:-
- To plan for no increase in congestion, maximising the use of existing road space and to improve radically public transport;
 - To test feasibility and sustainability for providing new access routes for freight into the BC;
 - To develop a high volume public transport network to connect the four strategic centres, and connectivity to Birmingham and beyond;
 - To allocate and reallocate the space required for high volume networks;
 - To assess the implications of demand management; and
 - To encourage the development of walkways and cycling as an integral part of the transport network.
- 4.5 Using the PRISM transport planning model, the preferred pattern of land use change identified in the spatial strategy for the Black Country has been used to assess the transport networks to be delivered through the West Midlands Local Transport Plans (WMLTP) and potential schemes required to provide speedy, convenient and predicable highway and public transport access and accessibility for the periods to 2021 and 2031. The objective of the draft phase one revision is to bring new people and jobs into the Black Country generating new trips. To capture those trips for public transport and therefore to contribute to the environment in the Black Country will require a high quality reliable public transport network at the core of a transport strategy. Existing Black Country networks are operating at or near their maximum capacity and space for public transport priority is limited. To capture the new trips that will be generated in the Black Country in the future, an integrated metro network will be needed providing an attractive public transport system with capacity to accommodate substantial growth.
- 4.6 The Government is leading a national debate about the role of demand management. The implications of any such approach will have to be considered for the Black Country. The West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities have been successful in a bid to undertake a management feasibility study within the framework of the Transport Innovation Fund. The West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities which includes the Black Country Authorities will consider carefully the results of feasibility work and the implications for the West Midlands economy.
- 4.7 Key drivers in identifying priority network improvements have been:-
- i) To enhance public transport and walking and cycling access to the four strategic centres and connectivity between them;
 - ii) To enhance access to meet business needs in Centres and the
Priority Employment Corridors in the Black Country;
 - iv) To provide attractive and convenient public transport links between existing and proposed areas for housing growth and Employment Land Investment Corridors.

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- v) To ensure that the Black Country contributes positively to the National and Regional economies to overcome a £3 bn productivity gap.

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