

**DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF CABINET - 15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2006**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

**BLACK COUNTRY STUDY - PREFERRED OPTIONS**

**Purpose of Report**

- 1 To seek member endorsement of the preferred strategy of the Black Country Study which is to be submitted to the Secretary of State before the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006, as the first stage of a partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

**Background**

- 2 The Black Country Study is the first phase of the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. In approving the existing Regional Spatial Strategy in June 2004, the Secretary of State stated that future reviews were necessary and that an early review of certain aspects of the Guidance were necessary. He stated that "a particularly important study is underway for the Black Country to assist in resolving the many inter-connected issues affecting this part of the region. This will advise on a broad range of issues including regeneration priorities, the strategic role of town centres and Merry Hill, urban capacity, identification of employment land, scope for environmental and town centre improvements, and ways of improving access to regeneration sites, particularly the eastern side of the Black Country" (para. 1.32, RSS, 2004). This study is the Black Country Study.
- 3 Members may recall that in February 2005, the project plan for the Black Country Study was launched by the Regional Assembly, in partnership with the Black Country Consortium. Since then a great deal of work has been undertaken in which both leading Members and your officers have been involved. Members will recall at the Cabinet meeting in October 2005 endorsing the material to be used as a basis for consultation on the spatial options. This consultation has been undertaken and Members considered a report taken to the meeting of the Cabinet on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006 approving officers' comments on the consultation document as the basis of Dudley Council's response. At that same meeting Members heard an information report which detailed the comments of stakeholders who were invited to the Dudley Black Country event on the 28<sup>th</sup> November at the Black Country Living Museum.

- 4 Since then there has been significant work undertaken to develop the preferred option based on technical evidence and the results of the consultation. The preferred option document is the document that will be presented to the Secretary of State before 31<sup>st</sup> May and will be the proposed changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy. These changes will be subject to the examination in public which will be chaired by an independent inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

### **Key Issues for Dudley**

5. Within the document there are a number of significant issues facing Dudley Borough.

The document recognises that

- Briereley Hill should become one of the four strategic centres in the Black Country as a focus for regeneration and investment.
  - Dudley Town Centre no longer performs its role as a strategic centre and it is appropriate that Brierley Hill should take over as a strategic centre.
  - Dudley Town Centre has a continuing important role to play in providing a leisure and cultural focus for the Borough and the Black Country and in providing a quality residential market.
  - The Borough will play an increased role in finding land for housing in the Borough. Nevertheless the document recognises the importance of some key areas of employment retention, for example Pensnett.
6. It must be recognised that this report is dated at an early stage of the preparation of the document, and has not yet been through final drafting. In particular there are still discussions regarding the phasing and amount of retail development at Brierley Hill. For this reason the recommendations set out in this report provide for an opportunity to review this endorsement should the document change significantly. This approach is set out in the Recommendation. The Preferred Strategy Document and the Black Country Study is available in the Members' Library and published on Committee Management Information System (CMIS).

### **Finance**

7. The Black Country study is managed centrally by the Black Country Consortium, which is part funded by this Council and the three other Black Country Boroughs. Dudley Council provides very significant support in terms of professional officer work.

### **Law**

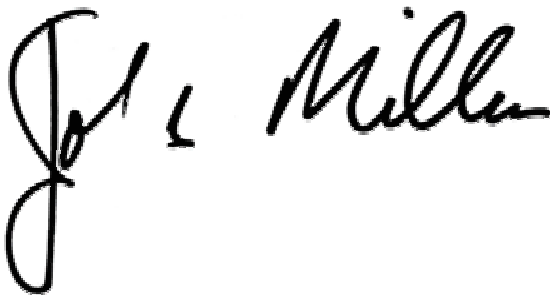
8. The Black Country study is the first phase of the review of Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands (RPG11, 2004). Section 38(3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that the development plan for the Borough consists of local development plan documents and the Regional Spatial Strategy. The RSS therefore must be taken into account of in the consideration of development proposals in the Borough.

## **Equality Impact**

9. The Black Country Study seeks to create a positive impact to increase regeneration opportunity in the Black Country, to create a better quality of life and create a more prosperous economic base. Moreover, the study seeks to reverse the trends that lead to social exclusion in the Black Country. The consultation methods employed at a sub-regional and Borough level will aid in ensuring that the aspirations of all citizens are taken into account in an inclusive manner. In developing the options a wide range of organisations were consulted and were engaged in the process, this included representatives of a wide range of stakeholders, including those representing the views of children and young people, in particular the creation of job opportunities and housing provision which will provide opportunities for children and young people to remain living in the borough.
10. The content of this report complies with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

## **Recommendation**

- 11 It is recommended that Members endorse the preferred strategy of the Black Country Study which is to be submitted to the SOS and endorse the approach set out below. Should during the final drafting stages, contents of the document change in a manner which does not materially alter the document, delegated power is recommended to be given to the Leader of the Council as Chair of the Cabinet to endorse the changes. Should however, the changes be material, and considered to be significantly altering the document, then the document would be reconsidered at a special cabinet meeting to be held on the 19<sup>th</sup> April.



**J. B. MILLAR – DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

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## **List of Background Papers**

1. Preferred Strategy Document