

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING PARTY

16TH MARCH 2009

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY PHASE 2 REVISION UPDATE

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Cllr Jillian Dyer
Responsible Head of Service	Dave Hammond
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The following report update members on the Councils ongoing involvement in the RSS phase 2 revision

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That members note the contents of the report and the ongoing work in respect of the RSS revision in particular the Examination in Public stage.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy was published in June 2004. At that time, the Secretary of State supported the principles of the strategy but suggested several issues that needed to be developed further. The Revision process is being undertaken by the West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) in three phases.

Phase 1 – the Black Country study, this phase was formally adopted in January 2008.

Phase 2 – Covers housing figures, employment land, town and city centres, transport, and waste, the preferred option of this phase is the subject of this report.

Phase 3 – covers critical rural services, culture/recreational provision, various regionally significant environmental issues and the provision of a framework for Gypsy and Traveller sites, and was launched on 27th November 2007.

The timeline below shows the various stages and significant events in the Phase 2 revision process, and where relevant the Councils involvement.

3.2 November 2005 - Project Plan Launched

The draft project plan was launched and technical work commenced, BDC was consulted on the project plan although it was felt there was no need to comment.

- 3.3 **February - May 2006 - Strategic Advice**
Strategic Authorities are asked to advise the Regional Assembly primarily on sub regional housing and employment issues. Worcestershire CC is the Strategic Authority (also known as a Section 4.(4) authority) responsible for BDC. Officers provided technical advice to WCC, who co-ordinated and submitted to the WMRA
- 3.4 **January 2007 - Spatial Options**
WMRA published its spatial options for the RSS revision, options included identifying significant levels of housing growth over and above locally generated need for both Bromsgrove and Redditch. Officers submitted a response expressing concern about the higher levels of growth being associated with the District but also pointed out the need for housing to begin to address the affordable housing needs of the district.
- 3.5 **March 2007 - White Young Green (WYG) Phase 1 Study**
At the meeting of the LDFWP on the 28th March 2007 in response to the high levels of housing growth being associated with Redditch, members agreed to commission independent consultants to assess the implications of these levels of growth. WYG were appointed in May 2007 and published their findings in October. The general findings were that land to the north of Redditch in Bromsgrove would be the most suitable to take additional growth, although developing any land on the periphery of Redditch would be harmful to some extent.
- 3.6 **March 2007 - December 2007 - Development of the Preferred Option**
During this period the WMRA were in the process of drawing up the preferred option. The council only had limited involvement in this process through the regional planning partnership, although concerns about the issues for Bromsgrove were expressed by the portfolio holder for planning at these meetings.
- 3.7 **October 2007 - LDF Working Party**
At a meeting of the LDFWP on the 10th October 2007 members expressed further concern about the low levels of Bromsgrove related growth and the logic of Redditch developing its housing in Bromsgrove District. These housing numbers were about to be approved by the regional planning partnership and published in the form of the phase 2 revision preferred option document see 3.9 below.
- 3.8 **December 2007 - LDF Working Party**
At a meeting of the LDFWP on the 13th December 2007 the following was recommended by members,
(a) that objections to the RSS be submitted in respect of the level of housing allocated to Bromsgrove and to the level of Redditch related housing and employment growth to be provided within Bromsgrove and/or Stratford in locations adjacent to Redditch town, when alternative more strategically viable sites within the district are available.

(b) that the Portfolio Holder for Planning be requested to write to the appropriate Officers at the Government Office for the West Midlands and the West Midlands Regional Assembly together with the local MP, expressing concern over the decision making process at the Regional Planning Partnership on 22nd October 2007.

3.9 **December 2007 - RSS Phase 2 Preferred Option Submission**

The RSS phase 2 revision was formally submitted to the Secretary of State on 21st December 2007. The submission was made up of the following documents,

- The Preferred Option
- An Overview Document
- Background Technical Studies
- The Implementation Plan
- The Consultation Statement
- The Sustainability Appraisal Report
- The Habitat Regulations Assessment
- A Summary Leaflet
- A Submission Letter

The revision contains many new and revised regional planning policies, the most significant to the Bromsgrove district are the housing allocations. For the period 2006 – 2026 the RSS identified only 2100 new units to be developed in Bromsgrove. This is considerably less than some previous regional planning regimes, in an attempt to reverse the trend of decentralisation of population away from the Major Urban Areas (MUA). Of this 2100, around 700 are already accounted for in either newly completed sites or those with valid planning permissions. The revision also allocated Redditch Borough 6600 units to be provided over the plan period, 3300 within Redditch and 3300 adjacent to Redditch in Bromsgrove, and or Stratford districts.

3.10 **January 2008 - Baroness Andrews Letter**

Following this formal submission, the West Midlands Regional Assembly received a letter from Baroness Andrews, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Communities and Local Government. In her letter, dated 7th January 2008, the Minister expressed concern about the housing proposals put forward by the Assembly in light of the Government's agenda to increase house building across the country which was informed by the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit (NHPAU). In view of this, the Minister asked the Government Office for the West Midlands to commission further work to look at options which could deliver higher housing numbers. This work would then be considered as part of the Examination in Public (EIP).

3.11 **April 2008 - Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) Appointed**

After failing to commission any consultants at the first time of asking the GOWM commissioned NLP in April to undertake the additional growth

Study. The delay in commissioning the work required the consultation period on the phase 2 revision to be extended to 8th of December 2008.

3.10 May 2008 - Leaders and senior officers meeting

A meeting took place on 19th of May attended by the Leaders, Chief Executives and Senior Planners of Bromsgrove, Redditch and Stratford Councils. At this meeting it was decided to commission WYG to undertake further work to provide more detailed technical evidence to inform the EIP.

3.11 June - September 2008 - NLP Study taking place

Officers attended various meetings and technical seminars with NLP to discuss various regional and sub regional matters. The issues of both location and scale of Redditch related growth and the size of the allocation for Bromsgrove were discussed at these meetings wherever possible.

3.12 October 2008 - NLP study published

NLP published their full report and associated evidence including a Sustainability Appraisal on 7th October 2008, the findings of the study were significant for Bromsgrove District. NLP identified three scenarios for meeting the additional growth levels across the region as suggested by the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit (NHPAU). Scenarios 1 and 2 suggested an additional 2500 new dwellings to both south Birmingham and Redditch, both of which would have to be provided as urban extensions into Bromsgrove. Scenario 3 suggested 2500 new dwellings as an extension to Redditch and 5000 new units as an extension to south Birmingham, all of these figures are in addition to the allocations contained in the RSS Preferred Option.

3.14 October 2008 - WYG second Stage report published

The findings of the second stage WYG study were presented to members at the LDFWP on 23rd October. The major conclusion of the study was that the urban capacity Redditch was less than previously estimated, and that the likely amount of new dwellings that could be developed in sustainable locations in Redditch is approximately 2300 leaving the balance 4300 to be provided in sustainable locations in Bromsgrove District. WYG suggested an urban extension at Bordesley park as the preferred location for new housing development.

3.13 November 2008 - LDF Coach Tour

On 6th November 2008 members of the LDFWP and Strategic Planning section visited all the sites on the periphery of Redditch in response to a request from the LDFWP on 23rd October.

3.14 December 2008 - Formal Responses submitted

A joint meeting was held between members of the LDFWP and the Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) of Redditch Borough Council to discuss potential areas of agreement in both districts responses to the RSS and NLP studies. Detailed representations on both the RSS preferred option and the NLP study were presented to Executive Cabinet and the Council

on 3rd December 2008. Approval was given to submit the representations to the GOWM and both were duly submitted and acknowledged as representations.

3.15 January 2009 - Joint members meeting

A further meeting was arranged for members of Bromsgrove, Redditch, and Stratford to discuss the findings of the WYG stage 2 study and discuss potential areas of agreement at the forthcoming RSS EIP. It was agreed a further meeting between Leaders, Chief Executives and Planning Officers was to be arranged to discuss further potential joint responses for the EIP.

3.16 January 2009 - RSS Examination in Public (EIP) preliminary meetings

The Panel appointed to hold the EIP published the draft matters, this is essentially a list of topics seen as the ones which require specific hearing sessions at the examination. Officers attended both preliminary meetings held on the 27th and 28th January. Following the preliminary meetings a response was submitted on 16th February to the draft matters. The response requested a seat at the table for the Council at all sub regional housing discussions involving Worcestershire (see appendix 1).

3.17 February 2009 - Further joint meeting of Leaders and Senior Officers

A further meeting was held on 27th February 2009, no political agreement was reached on the principle of Redditch expansion and the findings of the WYG stage 2 study. It was agreed the Leader of the Council would meet with relevant County Council officers to consider the rationale behind the allocation of 6600 new units to be provided in and around Redditch, between 2006 and 2026.

3.18 Next Steps

The RSS EIP has been scheduled to take place between 28th April and 26th June 2009, further details of those invited to attend will be published in due course. At the moment it is not clear how much of an active role the council will be able to play in the hearing element of the EIP. Any further information that can inform the EIP must be submitted by 12 noon on the 31st of March.

3.19 The process beyond the EIP sessions is as follows: in autumn 2009 the panel will publish its report. Once the report is published the Secretary of State will then aim to publish proposed changes to the RSS, which is envisaged to take place in spring 2010. These proposed changes undergo a period of public consultation and following the consultation period the final RSS incorporating the changes will be published. This is likely to be in the summer of 2010, although these dates are subject to change depending on the complexity of the issues discussed at the EIP hearing sessions and the subsequent Panel report.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Whilst there are no direct implications of the RSS revision at the moment, the levels of income generated over longer periods could be affected depending on the scale and type of development taking place in the district.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The RSS is the responsibility of the West Midlands Regional Assembly and is being prepared under the regulations and guidance of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and PPS 11: Regional Spatial Strategies. The district council also has an obligation under the Act to prepare Local Development documents in general conformity with the RSS

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

6.1 Objective One: Regeneration - Priorities: Housing and Town Centre

The impact of the RSS is fundamental to the meeting of these priorities. The current level of housing growth being focussed on the district whilst being significant, largely meets the needs of other districts. The outcome of the RSS revision will determine the future housing and planning policies up to 2026. Whilst the RSS does not mention Bromsgrove Town specifically as, there are policies in the RSS which encourage non strategic centres such as Bromsgrove Town to be proactive in attracting appropriate development to maintain and enhance their function within the regions retail economy

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

- Inability to influence the RSS to such an extent that, proposals in the adopted RSS limit the ability of the District Council to prepare Spatial Planning Documents which adequately address the identified needs, and opportunities the district possesses.

- 7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

Risk Register: Planning and Environment
Key Objective Ref No: 6
Key Objective: Effective, efficient, and legally compliant Strategic planning Service

- 7.3 The District Council as the local planning authority has to prepare a development plan in the form of the Development Plan Documents (DPD) contained in the Local Development Framework. The planning system requires that all DPDs are in general conformity with those documents which are at a higher level in the cascade of planning policy. The highest level of policy being national Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy

statements. The RSS is the plan which guides development across the whole of the West Midlands region, and as such the policies in the Bromsgrove District Core Strategy have to be in general conformity with those in the RSS. The ability to address issues through planning could be severely restricted if the policies at a higher level do not contain sufficient flexibility in both housing, and employment allocations for Bromsgrove District.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The impact of the RSS is wide ranging and it is difficult to say at this point in time what the exact implications on customers will be.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues - None
Personnel Implications – None
Governance/Performance Management – None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – None
Policy - The policy decisions taken at a regional level directly affect the ability to generate local spatial planning policies.
Environmental - the policies included in the RSS wherever possible try to limit the impact on the environment, although it is inevitable when creating policies which are dealing with substantial levels of new growth that there will be adverse impacts on the environment. It is the responsibility of local planning authorities, and other agencies implementing the policies in the RSS to ensure that all environmental issues are fully considered in all new development proposals.

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects	No
Executive Director – Services	No
Assistant Chief Executive	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No

Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Response to the Draft RSS EIP Matters

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- West Midlands RSS Phase 2 Revision Preferred Option
- Bromsgrove District Council formal Response to the RSS Phase 2 Revision Preferred Option.
- Bromsgrove District Council Formal Response to the NLP additional growth study.

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