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16<sup>th</sup> February 2009

Dear Panel Secretary

**Bromsgrove District Council response to West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy  
EIP Draft Matters and Participants - Respondent Number 492**

Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) wishes to submit the following comments in relation to the draft matters and participants document published on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

The current RSS revision as well as the evidence submitted by the GOWM based on the Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) study have significant implications for Bromsgrove District. The Council has been involved in the formulation of the current revision through close working with Worcestershire County Council on preparing its advice as a section 4(4) authority. The Council has also submitted its own responses to both the RSS revision and the NLP study, and would welcome the opportunity to continue its involvement in the revision process by participation in the Examination in Public where necessary. The Council understands the strategic context in which the document operates, and as such is only requesting to be specifically involved in areas where it feels it can add to technical knowledge and understanding to the debate.

As the details of the likely discussions is still in formulation its not always possible to predict the amount of involvement the Council is likely to require, the wish to be involved in some sessions may change once more detailed information is produced. The information below highlights the councils current wishes to take an active part in selected elements of the EIP.

**Matters 1-2**

It appears that the discussion will remain at a regional level and therefore Bromsgrove do not expect to be able to add significantly to the debate. Although if discussion is likely to become more detailed and focus on sub regional issues, then Bromsgrove District Council would hope to be included in any sessions that focus on housing and employment growth related to Bromsgrove and Redditch/Stratford districts, and South Birmingham.



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### **Matters 3, 4B, 5**

Many of the proposed topics for discussion would have a direct impact on the district and the Council would welcome the opportunity to be able to participate in these sessions. Bromsgrove District is in a very complex position with regard to the RSS revision. It currently serves an important greenbelt function with 91% of the district being designated as green belt. Bromsgrove Technology Park also ensures it plays a key part in the Central Technology Belt. It is also a district which has always been subject to intense residential development pressure and shares its borders with the Birmingham / Black Country MUA to the North and Redditch to the South.

The council, in its submitted response to the RSS preferred option and NLP studies, has identified concerns about both the low levels of housing allocated to Bromsgrove, as well as the proposed expansion of Redditch and its possible designation as a Settlement of Significant Development. The potential for Birmingham related growth to be catered for in the Bromsgrove green belt is also a significant issue.

The district has been identified as having an acute need for affordable housing which will not be catered for under the current allocation of housing growth, recent housing market assessments confirm this fact.

The levels of development required at Redditch and any development proposed around South Birmingham also pose significant issues for the protection of the green belt with a possible land take of over 300 hectares, and potential coalescence of green belt settlements.

The Council has been working with other key stakeholders including Redditch Borough Council, Stratford District Council, Worcestershire County Council, and the West Midlands Regional Assembly to address the issue of potential Redditch expansion. A study carried out by White Young Green planning has been completed to assess the implications of the various levels of growth around Redditch.

Through the commissioning and subsequent discussions with White Young Green, and the considerable amount of work undertaken to support the Bromsgrove Draft Core strategy including a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Bromsgrove housing market assessment, employment land study, and a joint strategic flood risk assessment and water cycle study with Redditch Borough, as well as other studies and reports, we feel we have significant up to date knowledge and evidence which would benefit the EIP. Allowing the district to be actively involved would ensure different scenarios for housing development in and around Bromsgrove District would be considered fully.

It is not clear exactly what level of detail will be investigated at the EIP but the implications for Bromsgrove District are significant. It is suggested that sufficient time is scheduled to allow for all the issues to be discussed, and the panel to be sufficiently informed in order to successfully clarify Bromsgrove's position within the RSS. The Council in its formal response has requested that the RSS should clarify the position in terms of the exact levels housing and employment growth to attributed to Bromsgrove, Redditch and Stratford, this is a view shared by the three authorities as well as Worcestershire County Council, in order for this to happen we feel the full involvement of the District Councils in the EIP would be essential.

**Matter 6A**

BDC has expressed concerns about the levels and distribution of housing growth being associated with the district, which it has identified above. The Council hopes it will have the chance to discuss the issue further under matters 3, 4B, and 5. The amount of employment land to be associated with the eventual levels of housing growth is similarly an issue which the Council feels it could help clarify at the EIP.

**Matters 6B,7,8,9**

It is not envisaged at the moment that BDC will be able to contribute significantly to these matters. Matters 7 and 8 are primarily functions of the County Council and therefore the Council would expect to see Worcestershire County Council represented at these sessions.

I hope this information will help the panel to make further progress on the EIP sessions, If you require further information about any element of this letter please do not hesitate to contact me on 01527 881325 or [m.dunphy@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:m.dunphy@bromsgrove.gov.uk)

Yours Sincerely



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