

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET MEETING**  
**25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2007**

**Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 1 - The Black Country Study:**  
**Proposed Modifications**

<b>OPEN ITEM</b>	
<b>COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME</b>	Better Environment
<b>CORPORATE PLAN THEME:</b>	Managing the Local Environment
<b>KEY PRIORITY:</b>	Forward Planning
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Stephen Clee
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Head of Planning, Health and Environment
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Maria Dunn – Ext. 2551 Email: Maria.dunn@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>Appendix A:</b> RSS1: The Black Country Study - Completed Response Form

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report outlines the suggested response to the consultation on the Secretary of State's proposed Modifications to the first phase in the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands, which looks specifically at the Black Country. The report seeks Cabinet approval for representations to be submitted to Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM).

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet is asked to **DECIDE** that:

- 2.1 The comments and suggested representations set out at Appendix One to this report be agreed as the formal representations to Government Office for the West Midlands.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Members will already be aware of the on-going partial review of the RSS which is being conducted in three stages. The first stage of this review relates specifically to the Black Country. The District Council has submitted representations at previous

stages of the revision process. The consultation on the Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications is the final stage of consultation.

- 3.2 Although not immediately adjacent to the Black Country Authorities there is an historic and significant link between the area and Wyre Forest District, which has in the past manifested itself in over-spill development and the on-going day tripper phenomena. Many residents of the district also work in the Black Country and since the opening of Merry Hill have also shopped there.
- 3.3 At the 'Choices' consultation stage the District Council primarily focussed on its concerns over the emerging proposals to recognise Brierley Hill/ Merry Hill as a new strategic centre for retail growth. These concerns were based on issues regarding the underlining research assumptions and the potential for adverse impact on the future catchment and expenditure retention of Kidderminster. These concerns were maintained at the submission stage and again form the basis of the response at this stage of the process.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES**

##### *Brierley Hill/ Merry Hill & Retail Growth*

- 4.1 The District Council has reservations regarding the designation of Brierley Hill/Merry Hill and the Waterfront as a Strategic Centre, and has previously submitted representations to this effect. However, the proposed designation has been accepted by the panel and the Secretary of State. Therefore, representations at this stage seek to ensure that the Brierley Hill/Merry Hill and the Waterfront develop as one integrated strategic centre guided by an Area Action Plan and in accordance with the conditions set out. These conditions are:

- A) Adoption by the Local Planning Authority of the Area Action Plan for Brierley Hill ; and
- B) Implementation of improvements to public transport, including completion of initiatives of equivalent quality and attractiveness to the proposed Metro extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill, and improvements to bus services connecting the centre with other locations in the Black Country and beyond, and other measures to improve accessibility to and circulation within the centre by non-car modes; and
- C) Introduction of a car-parking management regime including the use of parking charges compatible with those in the region's network of major centres.

- 4.2 It is considered important that these conditions are met before any further retail growth occurs at the new Strategic Centre.

##### *Transport and Accessibility in the Black Country*

- 4.3 The District Council is concerned that the proposed paragraph 9.93 is proposed for deletion by the Secretary of State on the basis that including it would duplicate text and policies elsewhere. The removal of this paragraph could have implications for any possible re-opening of the Stourbridge to Walsall rail line in the future as it is not clear where else text to the same effect appears in the RSS.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications emerging from this report.

## **6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no legal issues arising from this report.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

7.1 The Phase One revision of the RSS has raised the prospect of housing under supply in the Black Country and this could have potential implications for Worcestershire County and Wyre Forest District. The prospect of further retail growth at Merry Hill could have possible implications for the town centre of Kidderminster.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

8.1 Generally, the Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications to Phase One of the RSS are considered to be reasonable and appropriate. However, it is vital to ensure that the new Strategic centre of Brierley Hill/Merry Hill and the Waterfront meets the conditions set out before future retail growth is allowed. It is also considered important that the RSS makes reference to exploring the potential for new and re-opened rail lines.

## **9. CONSULTEES**

9.1 None

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
- Draft RSS Phase One Revision: The Black Country Study (May 2006)
- RSS Phase One Revision: The Black Country Study – Secretary of State's proposed Modifications (September 2007)

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007