

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**  
**26<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

**Black Country Joint Core Strategy**  
**Preferred Options Consultation Response**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:</b>	A 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
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<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1 – Representations submitted to the Black Country authorities Appendix 2 – Representations submitted on Brierley Hill AAP Preferred Options Paper

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek the Cabinet's endorsement of representations submitted on Local Development Framework documents for the Black Country and Dudley.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE:**

- 2.1 **To note the representations submitted to the Black Country Local Authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, and Wolverhampton) on the Joint Black Country Core Strategy Preferred Options Paper, as set out at Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report and the representations submitted to Dudley MBC on the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan Preferred Options Paper, as set out at Appendix 2 to the Cabinet Report.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The four Black Country authorities of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton are preparing a Joint Core Strategy as part of their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) which will replace their existing individual Unitary Development Plans (UDPs).
- 3.2 The four Black Country authorities consulted on an Issues and Options Paper during July and August 2007, to which Wyre Forest District Council submitted representations. The four authorities have now prepared a Preferred Options Paper which sets out: the

preferred spatial strategy for shaping the development of the Black Country to 2026; proposed policy areas to help make decisions regarding development proposals; and, broad locations for new development, particularly employment and housing.

- 3.3 Dudley MBC have also prepared a Preferred Options paper for the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan. This sets out more detailed planning policy for the Brierley Hill/Merry Hill/The Waterfront area which has replaced Dudley as a Strategic Centre in RSS Phase One (January 2008). The overall aim of the document is to deliver an integrated and accessible Brierley Hill Town Centre.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 Some areas of concern were raised at the Issues and Options stage. These related to the future growth of Brierley Hill/Merry Hill/The Waterfront; the need to stem out-migration from the conurbation; the importance of the greenbelt; and the re-opening of the Stourbridge to Walsall rail line.
- 4.2 In terms of the Preferred Options document, the issues surrounding Brierley Hill Strategic Centre are still a cause for concern. Firstly, further retail growth here could undermine retail regeneration within Kidderminster town centre, and secondly, the high level of reliance on the private car for accessing the Merry Hill shopping centre is unsustainable. For both of these reasons, it is considered important that further retail expansion is aimed at meeting the need arising within the Black Country and not at attracting shoppers from further afield. These issues have also been highlighted in the response submitted to Dudley MBC on the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan Preferred Options consultation document.
- 4.3 At the Core Strategy Issues and Options stage, Wyre Forest District Council expressed support for a number of options which would seek to reduce the levels of out-migration from the conurbation to the surrounding rural districts. The Preferred Options report sets out a number of policy areas which aim to achieve this and these are supported.
- 4.4 Wyre Forest District Council's response to the Core Strategy Issues and Options paper expressed a desire to see the re-opening of the Stourbridge to Walsall rail line tested as an option. The Preferred Option makes reference to passenger heavy rail development but not specifically to this line.
- 4.6 In view of the deadline for receipt of representations on both of the Preferred Options Papers (28<sup>th</sup> April 2008), Officers have, following the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity's agreement, submitted representations reflecting those issues outlined in this report and Council policy. Cabinet are asked to note these responses. Further opportunities to consider the Black Country Core Strategy and the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan in more detail will be available at the Submission stage of the document's preparation.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS.**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications to the Council arising out of this report.

**6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The policy responses are in accordance with the Council's established priorities.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

**8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 It is considered that the Core Strategy for the Black Country and the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan should ensure that future retail expansion at Brierley Hill Strategic Centre does not undermine retail regeneration in Kidderminster town centre and that Brierley Hill Strategic Centre develops as a sustainable location supported by an attractive public transport network. The Joint Core Strategy should also ensure that out-migration from the conurbation is reduced through the provision of high quality housing and the protection of existing attractive residential areas and that consideration is given to the re-opening of the Stourbridge to Walsall rail line for heavy rail passenger transport.

**9. CONSULTEES**

- 9.1 Cabinet member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 Joint Black Country Core Strategy – Preferred Options Paper (February 2008)
- 10.2 Brierley Hill Area Action - Plan Preferred Options Paper (February 2008)

**Comments on Black Country Core Strategy Preferred Options**

**Spatial Objective 1:**

Retail expansion at Merry Hill/Brierley Hill/The Waterfront should be to meet need arising within the Black Country and should not be aimed at generating an increasing number of trips from Wyre Forest District as this has the potential to undermine retail regeneration within Kidderminster Town Centre.

**Spatial Objective 4:**

Wyre Forest District Council support this objective as protecting and enhancing high quality residential areas within the Black Country will help to contribute towards a more sustainable pattern of development and to relieve pressure for house building within Wyre Forest District, and other neighbouring Districts, arising from out-migration from the Black Country conurbation.

**Core Policy Area 3: Approach to development outside the Strategic Centres and Regeneration Corridors (excluding Free-Standing Employment Sites).**

Wyre Forest District Council support the provision of “a strong greenbelt” as this will also help to support urban regeneration within Kidderminster. Both the protection of the greenbelt and the regeneration of Kidderminster town centre are key objectives within the emerging Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

Wyre Forest District Council also support the protection and enhancement of ‘High Quality Residential Areas’ within the Black Country as this will help to relieve pressure for house building within Wyre Forest District, and other neighbouring Districts, arising from out-migration from the Black Country conurbation.

**Core Policy Area 7: The Density of New Residential Development**

Wyre Forest District Council supports ‘High Quality Housing Low Density Areas’ as this will help to relieve pressure for house building within Wyre Forest District, and other neighbouring Districts, arising from out-migration from the Black Country conurbation.

**Core Policy Area 26 – Directing the RSS Comparison Retail and Office Development Requirements to the Strategic Centres**

Wyre Forest District Council is supportive of a policy that ensures that comparison retail is distributed between the four Strategic Centres. Wyre Forest District Council would be concerned if retail expansion at Brierley Hill exceeded the levels set out in the RSS upto 2016 or 2021 as this may have a detrimental impact on the regeneration of Kidderminster Town Centre which is also a Strategic Centre within the RSS. Additional retail growth – above that set out in the RSS - at Brierley Hill will have the potential to increase the number of people driving there, from Wyre Forest District, to shop. This is unsustainable. For these reasons, Wyre Forest District Council would be supportive of a policy which aims to direct ‘extra’ retail growth away from any Strategic Centre which has achieved its ‘share’ of investment and towards another Strategic Centre which may not have achieved its ‘share’.

**Core Policy Area 31: Providing the Transport Requirements to Support the Strategy:**

### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 11.3**

Although not specifically mentioned within the policy, in relation to heavy rail, Wyre Forest District Council would support the re-opening of the Stourbridge to Walsall rail line which would enable passengers to travel from Kidderminster via Stourbridge to Walsall and beyond without the need to travel to Birmingham New Street or Smethwick Galton Bridge.

Brierley Hill needs to be made more accessible by public transport, at the moment, it remains heavily dependant on access by the private car which is unsustainable.

**Wyre Forest District Council  
Response to Brierley Hill Area Action Plan  
Preferred Options Consultation**

**(Closing Date 28/04/08)**

**The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country (Paragraph 2.11)**

The District Council welcomes the early preparation of the Area Action Plan to guide the development of the new centre. In particular, the reference to the Area Action Plan's conformity with higher level strategic plans is noted.

**Spatial Objectives (Page 17)**

The fifth spatial objective under "To achieve environmental transformation" relates to reducing the need to travel by private vehicle and promoting sustainable travel. It is considered that the preferred options for policy areas relating to the introduction of a car parking management regime would help to achieve this spatial objective.

**Retail Development Pre-Conditions (Paragraphs 8.8 – 8.13)**

Support the requirement for the implementation of improvements to public transport and the introduction of a car parking management regime prior to the development of new comparison retail floorspace within the Brierley Hill area. It is noted that the car parking management regime will include the use of parking charges compatible with those in the region's network of major centres. This is in line with Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 1 requirements.

The District Council would support the introduction of this policy, as it will help to address any potential impacts on Kidderminster town centre retailing. There is concern that increased amounts of retail floorspace at Merry Hill will attract car borne shoppers away from Kidderminster town centre, which is designated as a Strategic Centre, and part of a Local Regeneration Area, in the Regional Spatial Strategy. It is essential that Merry Hill/Brierley Hill/ The Waterfront is made accessible by public transport in order to reduce over reliance on the private car for access.

**Car Parking Standards Policy (Paragraphs 8.30-8.32)**

In particular support for Paragraph 8.32. Wyre Forest District Council supports the RSS Phase 1 requirements to introduce appropriate car parking charges throughout Brierley Hill Town Centre before any new comparison retail development will take place.