



## Community & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

### Briefing Paper

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**Open**

## West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision – Examination in Public Report of Panel

### 1. Purpose of Briefing Paper

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision and specifically the Examination in Public Panel Report.

### 2. Background Information

- 2.1 The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy was originally approved by the Secretary of State in June 2004, as Regional Planning Guidance 11. Subsequently in September 2004, with the commencement of the Planning Act 2004 it became a part of the statutory Development Plan for the Region, and now provides the guide for the preparation of Local Development Frameworks (which must be prepared in general conformity with the RSS) and it may be directly material in the determination of planning applications.
- 2.2 When the document was approved a number of key areas of work were identified for further review. The West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) is the Regional Planning Body and had responsibility for preparing and submitting the original proposed revisions to the Secretary of State. The early review of the RSS is being delivered in a number of phases starting with the sub-regional review of the Black Country (Phase 1) and this was approved by the Secretary of State in January 2008 with the associated amendments now incorporated into the Regional Spatial Strategy document available on the Government Office West Midlands (GOWM) website.

- 2.3 The Phase 2 review subject of this report covers elements of the chapters on 'Communities for the future', 'Prosperity for All', 'Quality of the Environment' and 'Transport Accessibility'. The key policy areas covered include Development of a Sustainable Region, Housing, Employment, Town and City Centres, Waste Management and Transport. Proposals cover the period up to 2026 and provide guidance on housing and employment provision down to District level and retail and office floorspace provision for each of the strategic centres.
- 2.4 The more recent consultation on Phase 3 covers issues including rural services; gypsy and traveller accommodation; culture, sport and tourism and other environmental issues such as flooding, green belt and minerals.
- 2.5 Extensive public consultation on the Phase Two revisions has been undertaken including the draft spatial options (early 2007) followed by consultation on draft submission proposals in January 2008. However, the Government advised that it had concerns regarding the scale of housing provision proposed and as a consequence GOWM commissioned consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners to look at options for delivering a higher number of new homes. This report was published on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2008 and as a result consultation on the submission proposals was extended to the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2008.
- 2.6 Consultation on the RSS submission proposals was the subject of a report to the Regeneration and Enterprise Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008. Following the close of the consultation, an Examination in Public (EiP) was held between 28<sup>th</sup> April and 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009. Following the EiP, the Panel presiding over the examination prepared a Report of findings and recommendations on the draft Regional Spatial Strategy. This Report was published on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September.

### **3. Key Issues**

- 3.1 A summary of the District Council's original responses of late 2008 is provided at Appendix 2 to this report together with the recommendations arising from the EiP Panel Report. In line with the provisions of the Planning Act 2004, the findings of the EiP are presented as recommendations and are not binding on the Secretary of State, as is the case for Inspectors' Reports associated with LDF report findings which are binding on Local Planning Authorities.
- 3.2 The overall thrust of the RSS key principles focussing on urban renaissance and reversing the movement of people and jobs from the Major Urban Areas was recognised as an 'essential' element of the overall strategy. Members will recall that the trend towards decentralisation was seen as a key unsustainable trend which the strategy seeks to reverse.

- 3.3 In terms of specific recommendations of relevance to Wyre Forest District, these are summarised in the table at Appendix 2 and include:

**Communities for the Future** – An increase in the number of new homes to be provided between 2006 and 2026 within the District from 3,400 to 4,000 net additional dwellings. This figure includes self contained apartments and houses and represents an average completion rate of 200 per annum over the 20 year duration of the Strategy. At the time of writing this report 770 (net of demolitions) new homes have been completed since 2006 and these contribute towards the overall requirement. In addition, there are a number of additional sites with planning permission awaiting construction. The new requirement would be set in the context of and overall regional provision of 397,900 net additional homes. Elsewhere in Worcestershire the requirements have all increased including 4,000 for Bromsgrove (+1,900); Redditch 7,000 (+400); Worcester City 11,000 (+500); Malvern Hills 5,000 (+100); and Wychavon 9,500 (+400).

In terms of affordable housing provision, the Panel recommend setting a regional target of 35% of the net housing increase to be affordable with an indicative minimum target for each housing market area. For the South Housing Market the recommended target is 1,200 units over the 20 year duration of the strategy. They also recommend that each Local Planning Authority sets an overall minimum target for their area in light of local and sub-regional assessments of need, subject to economic viability assessment and having regard to the regional targets. The report states that only exceptionally will the proportion be either below 25% or above 40% of the total additional housing provision.

**Prosperity for All** – In respect of the employment land requirement for Wyre Forest District and overall level of office and retail provision for Kidderminster, the EiP Panel Report recommends maintaining the levels contained in the submission document.

**Transport** - During the EiP consideration was given to expanding the list of potential locations for Strategic Park and Ride Stations in the region. As a consequence, the Panel has recommended inclusion of *“In the vicinity of Kidderminster station”* as a possible location for strategic park and ride.

- 3.4 At this stage there appear to be no discernible cross boundary implications arising from the recommendations arising from the EiP Panel report. However, it will be for individual neighbouring authorities to consider the Regional Spatial Strategy in the development of their respective Local Development Frameworks through which Wyre Forest District Council will be a key consultee.

## 4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The Secretary of State will consider the EiP Panel Report, together with representations made on the draft RSS, with the aim of publishing Proposed Changes by the end of 2009. There will then be a period of public consultation on the Proposed Changes, likely to last 12 weeks.
- 4.2 Following consideration of responses to the consultation on the Proposed Changes, the Secretary of State is expected to publish the final West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision in mid 2010.
- 4.3 The Report is not being consulted on, but stakeholders may wish to refer to it when the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes are published for consultation.

## 5. Options for the Committee

- 5.1 The Committee may wish:
  - To note the findings of this report and await the publication of Proposed Changes by the end of the year.

## 6. Appendices

- 6.1 Appendix 1: West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision: Report of Panel: Examination in Public, September 2009 ***[Please Note that Appendix 1 to this report has been distributed electronically due to its large file size. Hard copies are available upon request.]***
- 6.2 Appendix 2: Wyre Forest District Council responses and recommendations arising.

## 7. Background Papers

- 7.1 West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy

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