

**West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
Phase Two Revision Preferred Option Consultation 2008**

Wyre Forest District Council submitted representations (December 2008) and subsequent recommendations arising from the Panel Report from the Examination in Public

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY PHASE TWO REVISION PREFERRED OPTION PROPOSALS	WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL RESPONSE	EIP PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS
Communities for the Future		
Policy CF1 Housing within the Major Urban Areas	Support Policy CF1 (Housing within the Major Urban Areas)	No significant change
Policy CF2 Housing beyond Major Urban Areas	Support Policy CF2 (Housing beyond Major Urban Areas)	Amendment to Policy to delete Redditch as a Settlement of Significant Development and re-order the list to place Telford first to recognise the scale of the proposed growth there.
Policy CF3 Level and Distribution of New Housing Development	<p>Strongly support Policy CF3 (Level and Distribution of New Housing) both in terms of the total level of provision within the Region to 2026, the strategy for distribution and the scale of provision for Wyre Forest District at 3,400 dwellings.</p> <p>However in view of the pressing need to provide affordable housing within the District (as confirmed in the updated South Housing market Assessment 2008) and the potential future availability of additional brownfield capacity, the level of provision for Wyre Forest District at 3,400 dwellings be expressed as a minimum figure.</p>	<p>R3.1 Replacement wording for Policy CF.3 Level and Distribution of New Housing Development:</p> <p><i>“Local Planning Authorities in their Local Development Documents should make provision for a regional total of 397,900 net additional dwellings in the period 2006-26, distributed as in Table 1. In all parts of the region the allocations should be regarded as targets to be achieved by 2026, having regard to the phasing and indicative trajectories set out in Policy CF.4.”</i></p> <p>Table 1 recommends that the total number of net dwellings for the Wyre Forest District during the period 2006-26 should be 4,000 with an indicative annual average of 200 dwellings.</p> <p>The Panel considered that it was not presented with significant</p>

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		<p>evidence to justify a substantially increased figure without the sustainability implications having been assessed.</p> <p>The Panel is confident that following the normal approach to rounding up the provision in an area such as Wyre Forest District to 4,000 dwellings still with an evident shortfall in relation to demographic need or demand, is appropriate.</p> <p>This modest uplift should help to provide greater flexibility to secure affordable housing within the District.</p>
<p>Policy CF4 Phasing of New Development</p>	<p>Support Policy CF4 (Phasing of New Development) subject to concerns regarding the early delivery of increased provision due to current market conditions.</p>	<p>A new policy CF4 to replace policies CF4 and CF10 on Phasing and Managing land for Housing.</p> <p><i>“In Local Development Documents (LDDs) Local Planning Authorities should set out a trajectory for their area having regard to the indicative annual rates and taking particular account of local factors affecting delivery in their area, including any strategic infrastructure or other constraints on the timing of development, market considerations and any opportunities for early housing delivery.”</i></p> <p>Includes a reference to the need to take account of viability and deliverability and the sustainability of locations. Not all Previously Developed Land sites will be suitable for early development. The 5 year supply and 10 year allocations identified in each LPA area should therefore contain a portfolio of sites of appropriate type, size and location to meet the housing requirements of the area.</p> <p>States that whilst windfall sites will count towards housing delivery, LDDs should not include an allowance for windfall unless this is specifically justified in accordance with PPS3 Paragraph 59.</p>

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		<p>Authorities will need to keep SHLAAs and their 5 year supply under review, and respond rapidly to any shortfall against the delivery trajectory.</p>
<p>Policy CF5 The Re-use of Land and Buildings for Housing</p>	<p>Support Policy CF5 (Re-use of land and buildings for housing)</p>	<p>Policy CF5 to remain relatively unchanged.</p> <p>The supporting text should refer to the need for the targets to be kept under review in the light of monitoring of progress in delivering the regional housing provision and the rate at which previously developed land comes forward for development.</p>
<p>Policy CF6 Making Efficient use of Land</p> <p>Paragraph 6.42</p>	<p>Support Policy CF6 (Making Efficient use of land) and in particular the reference in paragraph 6.42 to the need for a mix of provision to include accommodation for families.</p>	<p>Revise Policy CF6 Making Efficient Use of Land to read as follows:</p> <p><i>“Local Authorities should set out density policies in their Development Plan Documents specific to their areas to reflect local circumstances and the findings of the housing market assessments. High density development should be encouraged on sites within and close to the town centres, in other local centres, in locations close to public transport interchanges and in public transport corridors well served by public transport.”</i></p> <p>The Panel considers that setting density standards and policies for the efficient use of land can only be sensibly done at the local level, within the framework of Government Guidance in PPS 3.</p>
<p>Policy CF7 Delivering Affordable Housing</p>	<p>The overall approach of Policy CF7 (Delivery affordable housing) is supported subject to consideration being given to raising the affordable housing targets to take more account of the recent Strategic Housing market Assessments.</p>	<p>Revised Policy wording:</p> <p><i>“Local authorities should keep under review the need for affordable housing in their area, based on local and sub-regional housing need assessments, using a consistent approach as advised by government policy and the regional housing board. Both social rented and intermediate housing should contribute to meeting needs, dependent on the particular requirements and market circumstances of an area. Opportunities should be</i></p>

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		<p><i>sought within the existing housing stock where this would help the creation of mixed communities as well as through new build.</i></p> <p><i>The regional affordable housing target is that across the region as a whole 35% of the net housing increase should be affordable, equivalent to average provision of 7,000 net additional affordable housing units per annum over 20 years.</i></p> <p>The Panel proposed amendments to the indicative minimum target for the South Housing Market Area by 200 dwellings to 1,200.</p> <p>The Panel also identified the following amendments to the Policy:</p> <p><i>Local Planning Authorities in their DPDs, together with local or sub-regional housing market partnerships in their Housing Investment Strategies should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>(i) Set an overall minimum target for their area for the amount of affordable housing to be provided, in the light of local and sub-regional assessments of need and subject to economic viability assessment. Targets should have regard to the regional target and indicative sub-regional minima set out in part B above. Only exceptionally will the proportion be either below 25% or above 40% of the total additional housing provision;</i> <i>(ii) Ensure a flexible response to emerging needs and opportunities for affordable housing delivery over time, having regard to the overall trajectory of provision and</i>

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		<p><i>monitoring of delivery year by year;</i></p> <p>(iii) <i>Take full account of the need for additional affordable housing to replace losses to stock through demolitions and conversions, in deciding on the gross requirement for additional affordable housing for their area.</i></p> <p>(iv) <i>Ensure that the need and demand for housing in rural areas is adequately taken into account. Where appropriate separate indicative targets should be set for affordable housing provision in rural areas;</i></p> <p>(v) <i>consider the option of allocating sites for 100% affordable housing and lower site thresholds to recognise the contribution of small sites to the overall land supply in rural areas;</i></p> <p>(vi) <i>Actively promote the use of rural exception sites to meet the need and demand for local housing;</i></p> <p>(vii) <i>Consider how their own land resources and those of strategic partners can be used to support a higher level of social rented and intermediate tenure housing provision.</i></p> <p><i>D. The Regional Housing Strategy and the implementation of associated programmes should distribute resources, taking into account the broad pattern of identified need and the likely contribution from S106 agreements and other resources.</i></p>

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<p>Policy CF10 Managing Housing Land Supply</p>	<p>Strongly support Policy CF10 (Managing housing land supply) particularly Clause B iii) and the importance of taking full account of windfall capacity in preparing LDFs and site allocations, in the light of the particular circumstances applying within the West Midlands Region and the ongoing potential to contribute towards delivering sustainable development patterns.</p>	<p>Proposed merger with Policy CF4 – See response to Policy CF4 above</p>

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Prosperity for All		
Policy PA1 Prosperity for All	PA1 (Prosperity for All) policy amendments are supported	No further changes proposed
Policy PA6 Portfolio of Employment Land and Premises	PA6 (Portfolio of Employment land and premises). Policy amendments are supported.	No further changes proposed
Policy PA6A Employment Land Provision	PA6A (Employment Land Provision) policy approach along with level of provision set out in Table 4 for Wyre Forest District is supported.	<p>Additional paragraph proposed:</p> <p><i>“In view of the plan, monitor and manage approach and the anticipated recycling of previously developed good quality premises and land there would be no need to identify the full long term provision in the preparation of Core Strategy DPDs in order to avoid unnecessary release of greenfield land. However, as a minimum the indicative requirement for a 10-year period should be identified in order that land or premises will always be available to top up the reservoir as it is used.”</i></p> <p>For Wyre Forest District the five year reservoir remained at 11ha which meant that the longer term indicative requirement would be 44ha.</p> <p>The Panel felt that the position for employment land should be broadly comparable to housing land. The first 5 year reservoir would need to be identified as would a comparable extent of land to enable the reservoir to be topped up as it is used. This would be very much comparable to the 10 years identified supply required for housing land in PPS3. Beyond this authorities may wish to give some general indication of where further land, if required, might be located, so as to avoid the need for premature reviews of Core Strategies.</p>

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<p>Policy PA6B Protection of Employment Land and Premises</p>	<p>PA6B (Protection of Employment Land and Premises) the policy approach and revised wording is supported.</p>	<p>Policy PA6.B received widespread support.</p> <p>There was an element of debate about the sequential process involved in the Policy. The Panel considered that an amendment to the policy as follows:</p> <p><i>“(a) identify and protect those sites most suitable for employment purposes in Core Strategy DPDs with appropriate remediation and/or infrastructure provision to ensure the provision of sub-regional employment sites (10 ha to 20 ha) or other elements of the employment land portfolio;</i></p> <p><i>(b) identify sites for transfer from employment land to mixed-use or housing developments to ensure that the housing requirements in Policy CF3 are met;</i></p> <p><i>(c) seek to ensure the balanced provision of employment and housing development.”</i></p> <p>They identified that the amendment would still provide strong protection for good quality employment sites and require employment land reviews as part of the evidence base for Core Strategies. While prioritising retention of at least some employment use on the previous sites where necessary, it would enable parallel consideration of the merits of alternative developments.</p>
<p>Policy PA11 Network of Town and City Centres</p> <p>Paragraphs 7.52 – 7.58</p>	<p>Support the proposed revisions to Policy PA11 and accompanying explanatory paragraphs, including the identification of Kidderminster as a Tier 4 centre. Support the linkage made in paragraph 7.57 with the local regeneration areas identified in Policy UR.2.</p>	<p>The Panel considers that the intent of “Tiers” is open to misunderstanding. Seems to be merely descriptive and do not convey any particular policy towards the centres in the different tiers and their functions.</p> <p>The Network of Town and City Centres, replace Tiers with descriptions. Kidderminster is described as an “Other Strategic Sub Regional Centre” rather than a Tier 4 centre alongside Worcester and Redditch.</p>

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<p>Policy PA12A Comparison Retail Floorspace Requirements 2006 – 2026</p> <p>Paragraphs 7.62 – 7.69</p>	<p>General support for the aim of the new policy PA12A (Comparison Retail Floorspace Requirements 2006-2026) in setting out a hierarchy of requirements across the Region. However there are some concerns that the figures may be over optimistic, particularly having regard to assumptions regarding expenditure growth and the impact of e-tailing.</p> <p>For Kidderminster, there are some concerns regarding the scale of provision to 2026 of 35,000 sq.m. Both in terms of physically finding suitable and available land for such provision, together with the potential impact on the existing centre retail businesses. Would therefore wish to see floorspace figures set out to 2021 as a maximum provision which will be assessed in more detail as part of the preparation of Core Strategies and detailed district retail studies looking at the potential for specific centres.</p> <p>For the post 2021 Requirements this needs to be treated with considerable caution and the policy should refer to the LDFs having regard to the potential 2021 – 2026 needs. Such a cautious approach would be justified in view of the relatively modest levels of expenditure that have been assigned to e-tail or internet transactions in the West Midlands Regional Centres Study update</p>	<p>The Panel report broadly recommended retention of the figures outlined within the Preferred Options. However, the report recommends greater flexibility for defining significant variations from the forecasted figures before the need for an impact assessment. The revised wording identifies that:</p> <p><i>“The floorspace requirements set out in this policy should be treated as specific to each centre and should not normally be exceeded. However, it is expected that local authorities will wish to review them in the context of their Core Strategies and it is accepted that this may lead to some variation, in light of local circumstances. Any significant variations (i.e. by more than 10,000m2) should be justified on robust evidence.”</i></p> <p>The Panel also recommends amending paragraph 7.53 (regarding convenience retail development) to add:</p> <p><i>“There is no reference to convenience retail development in the following retail policies not because such development would be inappropriate at strategic centres. It is rather because the extent of convenience retail floorspace that may be appropriate at strategic centres is a matter for local determination in Core Strategy DPDs having regard to the network of other centres within their catchments.</i></p> <p>Re-number Policy PA12A as Policy PA12B</p>

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	<p>report compared with the original study.</p> <p>Generally support the guidance set out in paragraph 7.68. The reference in paragraph 7.69 of the supporting text to the need to including provision for small shops and independent retailers is strongly endorsed.</p>	
<p>Policy PA12B Non-Strategic Centres</p> <p>Paragraphs 7.70 – 7.74</p>	<p>General support for Policy PA12B (Non-Strategic Centres) and accompanying explanatory text.</p> <p>One issue of some concern is the scale of comparison retail floorspace permitted of up to 10,000 sq.m. It is not clear whether this relates to the total cumulative provision 2006 – 2026 or specific scheme proposals. For some of the smaller centres a total 10,000 sq.m. floorspace expansion would represent a substantial percentage increase, which could adversely impact on the role of nearby strategic centres.</p>	<p>Amendment as follows:</p> <p><i>“There are many other centres within the Region that meet local needs and Local Planning Authorities should identify these centres in Core Strategy DPDs.”</i></p> <p>The Panel considers that it should be made explicit in Policy PA12B that the non strategic centres should be identified in the Core Strategy to meet the provision in policy CF2, that settlements for balanced sustainable development should be so identified.</p> <p>Re-number Policy PA12B as Policy PA12C</p>
<p>Policy PA13 Out-of-Centre Retail Development</p> <p>Paragraphs 7.75 – 7.77</p>	<p>Support the proposed revisions to Policy PA13 and accompanying explanatory paragraphs.</p>	<p>No changes proposed</p> <p>Re-number Policy PA13 as PA12D</p>
<p>Policy PA13A Office Development Requirements 2006 - 2026</p>	<p>Policy PA13A sets out a requirement of 40,000 sq.m. gross office space for Kidderminster Centre from 2006 – 2026. In view of the scale of existing office provision in Kidderminster, together with the recent low rates of new development and take up,</p>	<p>Proposed amendment to the Policy:</p> <p>Additional paragraph: <i>“Much of the demand for the period to 2026 will occur towards the middle and end of the plan period and mainly after 2016.”</i></p>

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	<p>the proposed additional requirement appears to be unrealistically high. Aside from potential problems of accommodating such levels of provision in town centre or edge of town centre, locations, there is considerable doubt as to whether there is sufficient demand to deliver such provision.</p> <p>Whilst it is appreciated that in arriving at the requirements account has been taken of the need to promote diversification in areas with high manufacturing employment such as Wyre Forest District, the proposed requirement appears unrealistically high and is unlikely to be deliverable. The target should be seen as an aspiration figure which is subject to more detailed consideration and determination through the Local Development Framework.</p>	<p>Amendments to paragraph 7.85: <i>“Additional development will take place in or on the edge of other centres defined in Core Strategy DPDs.”</i></p> <p>Roger Tym update study (2009) recommends that explanation / wording is added to the supporting text to the effect that much of the demand for the period to 2026 will occur towards the middle and end of the plan period and mainly after 2026.</p> <p>Panel recommends minor amendments to the supporting text to make clear the intent that if office development cannot be secured at any of the designated strategic centres, the expectation is that the other town centres designated in Core Strategies would be the next sequentially preferable locations for such development.</p>
<p>Policy PA13B Large-scale Office Development outside the Strategic Centres</p>	<p>Support Policy PA13B (Large-scale Office Development outside the Strategic Centres)</p>	<p>No proposed changes</p>

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Transport and Accessibility		
Policy T6 Strategic Park and Ride	Support Policy T6 (Strategic Park and Ride)	<p>Panel report recommends that “In the vicinity of Kidderminster station” should be listed within the policy as a potential strategic park and ride location.</p> <p>The list of strategic park and ride locations largely comprises stations at which Centro see potential to provide improved car parking. Centro put forward proposals for Kidderminster although they confirmed that it was not the intention to replace Kidderminster Town Centre Station by new provision in the Green Belt.</p>
Policy T11 Airports	<p>Objection to Policy T11 (Airports) and in particular paragraph D and the proposed policy in relation to the development of Wolverhampton Business Airport. The District Council considers that surface access links to the airport would not be conducive to delivering commercial services even on a limited scale. The RSS policy should restrict any further significant expansion of the airports role or facilities. The Council is opposed to expansion of the airport because it could potentially cause the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Cause very serious environmental damage within North Worcestershire II. Have severe impact on the quality of life of residents in the Wyre Forest District III. Require massive investment in infrastructure which would result in irreversible changes to the environment. 	<p>Proposed amendment to Paragraph 9.108 to read:</p> <p><i>“The roles of Birmingham International Airport, Coventry Airport, Wolverhampton Business Airport and RAF Cosford were outlined in the 2003 Air Transport White Paper. The BIA role is set out in paragraphs 9.101 and 9.102 above. Coventry Airport currently serves a specialist role within the region catering for business / general aviation, air mail and bulk freight and other niche functions. It has planning permission for a passenger terminal with a throughput of around 1 million passengers per year. Wolverhampton Business Airport also serves a business / general aviation role for the north-west of the region and Tatenhill airfield performs a similar role for the north-east of the region. Although considered to have potential as it is rail-served airfield, the Ministry of Defence have indicated that RAF Cosford near Telford will not be available for commercial air transport services during this RSS period in view of its continuing military role”.</i></p> <p>Amend existing Policy T11D to commence:</p>

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	IV. Destroy the integrity of the green belt between Wyre forest and the western part of the West Midland conurbation.	<i>“The further development of Coventry Airport, Wolverhampton Business Airport, Tatenhill airfield and other airfields in the region should be in accordance with the roles set out in paragraph 9.108 (see above) and complement the role of BIA as the region’s principal passenger airport.”</i>

Other Issues arising from the EIP Panel Report

The Environment Agency made a strong case that new water related policies were needed now to support the level of development proposed in Phase 2. GOWM considered that updated RSS water policies are needed now, a point which WMRA also accepted.

The Panel therefore proposes that the Water Environment section of the RSS Chapter 8 should be expanded and a Policy QE9 updated and amplified with new wording embodying the EA proposals on Water Cycle studies. Furthermore, the Panel concluded that the case for including a specific flood risk Policy was compelling as without this the RSS is at risk of being unsound in the way it deals with the water-related consequences of the development it proposes. The amended policy on water management and the new policy on flood risk are outlined below:

Amendments to Policy QE9: Water Management and Water Cycle Studies

A. LDDs should be supported by a Water Cycle Study produced in accordance with Environment Agency guidance and advice. On the basis of the findings of Water Cycle Studies, LDDs should include environmental infrastructure identified as being needed to support new development.

B. Local Planning Authorities in their LDDs and in determining planning applications should have regard to the actions and objectives of the Severn and Humber River Basin Management Plans which include specific environmental objectives for each water body and how the objectives will be achieved.

C. Local Planning Authorities in their LDDs and in determining planning applications should recognise the need for water efficiency and encourage schemes designed to reduce water consumption.

D) LDDs should seek to maintain and enhance the region’s river and inland waterway corridors as a key strategic resource, particularly helping to secure the wider regional aims of regeneration tourism and the conservation of the natural and built environment and biodiversity.

Insert a new Policy QE10 – Development and Flood Risk

Policies should aim to ensure that new developments and residential properties are located where there is little or no risk from all potential sources of flooding as far as possible unless there is overwhelming technical evidence to support an alternate approach.

LDDs should have regard to the guidance in PPS 25 and should use strategic flood risk assessments to guide development away from functional floodplains, areas of current high and medium risk of flooding, areas likely to be at risk of flooding in the future and areas where development would increase the overall risk of flooding in and outside the region.

Include policies which identify and avoid development in flood zones, protect essential infrastructure, support the objectives of the relevant Catchment Flood Management Plans and discourage development behind engineered flood defences.

Require that sustainable drainage systems are incorporated in all new development and encourage their provision for existing development, unless it is demonstrated that it is not practicable to do so.

Commit local authorities to adopt positive approaches to flood risk management by promoting land management practices which provide multifunctional benefits and encouraging new development to seek opportunities to make space for water by providing guidance on layout and design issues.

Be supported by Surface Water Management Plans (as part of Water Cycle Studies) to inform the location and design of new development and adopt a strategic and integrated approach to managing surface water. These plans must also include identification and implementation of appropriate safe passage for overland flooding from sewerage systems and channels.