



Executive Committee

All Wards

26 August 2009

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY - PHASE 3 REVISION OPTIONS

(Report of the Head of Environment and Planning)

1. Summary of Proposals

The report seeks the retrospective recommended approval of the Redditch Borough Council Response to the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) Phase 3 Revision Options Document.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

the response to the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy as detailed in Appendix A be approved.

3. Financial, Legal, Policy, Risk and Sustainability Implications

Financial

- 3.1 There are no financial implications as a result of submitting this response.

Legal

- 3.2 There are no legal implications as a result of submitting this response.

Policy

- 3.3 Changes to existing planning policy contained within the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy will occur as a result of this Phase 3 Review once adopted, principally regarding matters such as critical rural services, gypsies, travellers and travelling show-people, culture sport and tourism and quality of the environment. All planning policy produced by Redditch Borough is required to be in conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy and therefore it is necessary to have regard and respond to the Revisions of the RSS.

Risk

- 3.4 If the Borough Council does not submit a response to the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy there is a risk that some policy provisions could be favoured in the next stage of the RSS which would not be beneficial for the Borough.

Sustainability / Environmental

- 3.5 The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy is developed alongside a Sustainability Appraisal, prepared in line with the SEA Directive and relevant regulations.

Report

4. Background

- 4.1 The West Midlands Regional Assembly published the Regional Spatial Strategy in 2004. When publishing the document, the Secretary of State indicated that an early review of certain aspects of the document needed to be undertaken. Subsequently the document has been revised in three phases; Phase one concentrated on the Black Country Study, Phase Two considered housing , employment, transport and waste and this phase (phase three) looks at critical rural services, gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople, culture, sport and tourism provision, quality of the environment and minerals.
- 4.2 The West Midlands Regional Assembly prepared the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 3 Revision Options consultation document, available for consultation between 29 June and 14 August 2009.
- 4.2 Officers have prepared a response to the consultation by answering specific questions in an accompanying questionnaire. This response deadline was 14 August, therefore the response was sent with the caveat that Member approval would need to be sought retrospectively.

5. Key Issues

- 5.1 The response focussed on sections of the RSS Phase 3 revision consultation document including critical rural services, gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople, culture sport and tourism and quality of the environment.

Critical Rural Services

- 5.2 In this section the response advocated that it would not be useful to try to define 'critical rural services' because in Redditch there is a strong urban - rural interdependency mainly because of the relatively short travel times between the settlements.
- 5.3 It was also considered necessary in the response to highlight the impact of carbon emissions resulting from transportation to the urban area, pointing towards a need to improve accessibility through sustainable transport options.
- 5.4 It was also through that a portion of development should be permitted to allow settlements to survive, however any development should be tailored to the needs of that settlement and subject to certain restraints.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show-people

- 5.5 Generally the response supported the suggested requirements for Redditch Borough as set out in the RSS Phase 3 Revision because the requirements reflect the evidence in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). Support for the approach was based upon the approach conforming to current national guidance which requires provision to be made where it is necessary (Circular 01/2006 and Circular 04/2007).
- 5.6 Other options to increase the provision for Gypsies and Travellers were presented but the Redditch Borough Council response did not support this increase because there is no evidence to support this as well as land constraints in Redditch Borough.
- 5.7 The response clarified the Borough Council's understanding of the GTAA which states that the need for Redditch is *"A Temporary Stopping Place for not less than 18 pitches to accommodate short term needs, as identified in 4.5. (of this assessment). This might be located within that part of Bromsgrove District that borders Redditch, providing both districts with a shared facility for dealing with future unauthorised encampments, and providing flexibility in meeting differing levels of need at different times.* 'Whereas there is no reference in the RSS Phase 3 Revision Options Document to the location of provision in the neighbouring District of Bromsgrove.
- 5.8 The need for 14 yards (a yard accommodates a vehicle and other equipment, in addition to living accommodation) of capacity for travelling show-people has been questioned in the response, due to

Executive

Committee

26 August 2009

a lack of clarity in the evidence base.

Culture Sport and Tourism

- 5.9 Currently the WMRSS contains a portfolio of regionally significant assets in terms of culture, sport or tourism. The RSS Revision Options Document asks if this portfolio should be removed or updated to consider all regionally important assets. The Redditch Borough Council response states that there would be no reason to remove the portfolio but that reference should be made to promoting the large amount of sub-regional assets that provide a culture network throughout the region.
- 5.10 It was considered necessary to point out in the response that Redditch Borough has cultural assets which could be classed as sub-regionally significant and therefore should be classed as an asset. These include:
- a) The Palace Theatre
 - b) Forge Mill Needle Museum
 - c) Bordesley Abbey
- 5.11 It was considered appropriate that through the RSS the principle of protection for some of the existing strategic cultural assets would be supported, however it is considered that care should be taken that some assets are not prescribed additional, unwarranted protection that may stifle enhancement and restrict positive development.
- 5.12 An additional policy which promotes identifying broad locations for specific proposals is supported as it strengthens the deliverability of the policy within the RSS relating to Tourism and Culture.

Quality of the Environment

- 5.13 A policy option was presented in the RSS Phase 3 Revision Options Document for Greenery, Urban Green Space and Public Spaces which has been supported in the Redditch Borough Council response as it generally reflects national guidance.
- 5.14 It has been pointed out in the response that some of the suggested policy options for forestry and woodland would be difficult to implement because the documents presents what are considered to be local issues rather than regional issues.
- 5.15 More clarity was requested in the response about the potential for changes to water environment policies, principally where the provisions of the European Water Framework Directive would apply.

- 5.16 The proposed flood risk policy has been supported but the response sets out where parts of national planning policy may be repeated. The response does set out a concern that some of the implications cannot be implemented.
- 5.17 With regards to energy, the RSS Phase 3 Revision Options Document asked if improvements to the energy efficiency of existing buildings should be further encouraged. The response advocated that the RSS should mirror the national strategy as there does not appear to be any regional variances within the existing dwelling stock locally which would conflict with national objectives.
- 5.18 In the response to a question in the RSS Phase 3 Revision Options Document about the appropriateness of the Regional Energy Target, the Redditch Borough Council response stated that there should be clarity about whether the sub-regional target would be set by the RSS or left to the Local Authorities.
- 5.19 The RSS Phase 3 Revision Options Document asked if regional targets should be set for specific renewable energy and low carbon technologies. The response states that this may be too prescriptive and may not allow for the most suitable technology solution to be implemented.
- 5.20 With regard to the Green Belt, it is considered appropriate that the objectives of PPG 2 'Green Belts' are consistently applied throughout the region.

6. Other Implications

Asset Management - No Implications.

Community Safety - No Implications.

Human Resources - No Implications.

Social Exclusion - No implications.

7. Lessons Learnt

None, this is a new issue.

8. Background Papers

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 3 Revision Options Consultation (29 June - 14 August 2009).

9. **Consultation**

This report has been prepared in consultation with Key Stakeholders, has been to Planning Advisory Panel (PAP). The response has been coordinated with input from relevant officers in the Borough Council.

10. **Author of Report**

The author of this report is Emma Baker, who can be contacted on extension 3034 (e-mail: emma.baker@redditchbc.gov.uk).

11. **Appendices**

Appendix A - Redditch Borough Councils Response to the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Three Revision Options Consultation (29 June 2009 – 14 August 2009).

12. **Key to Terminology / Abbreviations**

WMRSS - West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.
GTAA - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.