



Council

30th June 2008

? "PREFERRED OPTIONS" STUDY FOR FUTURE HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT IN AND AROUND REDDITCH

(Report of the Environment and Planning)

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to consider a £10,000 contribution towards a Redditch Joint Study. The study will identify the "preferred option" for future housing and employment development in and around Redditch. This will provide Bromsgrove, Redditch & Stratford District Councils and Warwickshire & Worcestershire County Councils with an independent view on the preferred locations for new development up to 2026.

2. Recommendations

The Council is asked to RESOLVE that

- (1) **The Project Brief attached as Appendix A for the second stage of the Redditch Joint Study be agreed.**

and

- (2) **A financial contribution of up to £10,000 be agreed.**

3. Financial, Legal, Policy and Risk Implications

Financial

- 3.1 It is estimated that the cost of the stage 2 study will be £50,000 and that the Council's contribution would be up to £10,000. This is not currently available within existing budgets.

Legal

- 3.2 It is a legal requirement for each authority to prepare a Core Strategy as part of its Local Development Framework. Core Strategies have to conform generally to the Regional Spatial Strategy. This study will provide useful background information.

Policy

- 3.3 The Core Strategy, once adopted will be the principal planning policy document for the Borough up to 2026. This study will provide useful

background information in the preparation of the Core Strategy.

Risk

- 3.4 If the study is not jointly commissioned the following risks will occur:
- a) The commissioning authorities are likely to have less influence on the final decision about the locations of future development in and around Redditch
 - b) The Inspectors considering the emerging WMRSS at the Inquiry in April 2009 could determine the split *or* The Secretary of State may dictate the course of action we should take e.g. Joint Core Strategy covering the administrative areas of Bromsgrove District, Redditch Borough and Stratford-on-Avon District. This would involve aborting work on the three separate Core Strategies.

Report

4. Background

The Preferred Option of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) Phase 2 Revision identifies a requirement for 6600 dwellings to meet the needs of Redditch up to 2026. 3300 of these are to be provided adjacent to Redditch town in Bromsgrove and/or Stratford-on-Avon Districts. A similar requirement is identified in respect of employment land, with 24 hectares needing to be identified beyond the borough boundary.

To support the preparation of the WMRSS Worcestershire County Council, Redditch Borough, and Bromsgrove and Stratford District Councils commissioned consultants White Young Green to undertake a 'Joint Study into the Future Growth of Redditch Town to 2026'. A summary of this study is attached at Appendix B. It was completed in December 2007 and forms a key part of the evidence base for the WMRSS.

The Joint Study is strategic in nature and provides an independent view on (i) the potential capacity of Redditch Town to accommodate additional growth; and (ii) taking account of that capacity, to give a view on the scale of and likely implications of growth in the surrounding districts of Bromsgrove and Stratford-on-Avon that will be required to meet Redditch Borough-related growth needs.

Having considered areas of search the study provides sufficient evidence for a view to be formed on the broad balance of development required between Redditch Borough and the

surrounding two districts of Bromsgrove and Stratford-on-Avon; the key infrastructure issues such levels of growth are likely to give rise to and which will need to be addressed; and the key policy implications that will need to be addressed such as the impact the levels of growth will potentially have on the Green Belt and its purposes.

5. **Key Issues**

The WMRSS does not identify how the Redditch Borough-related 3300 dwellings and 24 hectares of employment land should be split between Bromsgrove and Stratford-on-Avon Districts, which presents a challenge for the authorities in progressing their respective Core Strategies. In planning terms the authorities need a clear way forward which will enable them to prepare Core Strategies which are preferably in 'general conformity' with the WMRSS.

Government Office and the Regional Assembly have indicated that they expect robust arrangements to be put in place to determine the split between Bromsgrove and Stratford-on-Avon Districts. However there is a general agreement between the authorities concerned that the Joint Study is insufficiently detailed to allow district level splits of Redditch Borough-related growth to be identified. To enable this to happen, additional work to augment the broad study findings is required. This additional work should include the following:

- (a) More detailed information on the likely impacts of development (including different scales of development) on the areas of search considered within the Joint Study (or parts of them), in terms of the natural environment, including sensitive sites and opportunities for protection and enhancement (i.e. a more robust and detailed SWOT type analysis);
- (b) The suitability or otherwise of the areas of search (or parts of them) in relation to the existing Town form, in particular accessibility to essential Town Centre facilities and transport nodes. An accessibility profile for areas of search (or parts of them) would need to be established to allow comparisons;
- (c) The key infrastructure issues to be faced, particularly with regard to the two concerns identified within the Joint Study regarding new transportation and foul water infrastructure. This would need to address the issue of which of the areas of search (or parts of them) are most likely to be deliverable or are preferable for development given the scale of

infrastructure needs and likely costs. This information will also be needed to identify what the Council would need to receive planning obligations/ Community Infrastructure Levy for.

- (d) The implications of development in the areas of search (or parts of them) in respect of one another in terms of specific impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt and in helping to deliver the aims of the RSS (e.g. urban renaissance of the Major Urban Areas and local regeneration);
- (e) A more thorough/rigorous consideration of the capacity of the Areas of Development Constraint and White Land within and adjacent to Redditch, and a more detailed scrutiny of the capacity of the urban area including existing open space;
- (f) Consideration of the likely sustainability impacts of the scale of development required through some sort of sustainability appraisal approach, even if an informal one; and

To this end, Officers have prepared a Project Brief for a stage 2 Joint Study. This is attached as Appendix A. Given the work already undertaken by White Young Green it is considered that there would be clear advantages in terms of value for money by using them to undertake the stage 2 work. Redditch Borough Council will act as lead authority and administer the contract on behalf of all the authorities involved.

Subject to the agreement of the brief by the commissioning authorities it is anticipated that work would commence on the stage 2 study by the end of July with a report being available for public consultation by 7 October. This timing means that the stage 2 study would be available at the same time that the Government Office Study of Housing Options for the RSS, being undertaken by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners (NLP), is published for public comment. The findings of the stage 2 study would also be available for public consultation as part of the Preferred Options consultation in respect of each of the three District Authorities Core Strategies, which are due to commence by the end of October 2008.

The final study, together with the feedback from public consultation would be available to inform the Local Authorities response to the WMRSS Preferred Option and the NLP study by 8 December.

6. Other Implications

Community Safety	-	None
Human Resources	-	None
Social Exclusion	-	None
Sustainability/Environmental	-	The purpose of the study is to identify the more sustainable locations for future development and the study includes its own Sustainability Appraisal.
Asset Management	-	None

7. Conclusion

It is recommended that Council approve the Project Brief for the Stage 2 Joint Study and agree the Council's financial contribution to the cost of this study. This option will ensure that the Council:

- a) Has a robust technical evidence base which can be used for the Core Strategy and in evidence at the public examination of the WMRSS
- b) Has the robust mechanism required by GOWM and the Regional Assembly determine the split in the housing and employment land targets between the authorities' areas and to provide greater certainty in the preparation of Core Strategies.
- c) Is able to progress its Core Strategy on a 'sound' basis.

8. Background Papers

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy – Phase Two Revision – Preferred Option (December 2007)

Joint Study into the Future Growth Implications of Redditch Town to 2026 – prepared by White Young Green (December 2007)

9. Consultation

The brief for this study has been developed in consultation with Bromsgrove and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils and Worcestershire and Warwickshire County Councils.

10. **Author of Report**

The author of this report is Ruth Bamford (Development Plans Manager) who can be contacted on extension 3209 (e-mail ruth.bamford@redditchbc.gov.uk) for more information.

11. **Appendices**

Appendix A – Project Brief - 2nd Stage Joint Study into the Future Growth Implications of Redditch Town to 2026.

Appendix B – Summary of the 1st Stage Joint Study into the Future Growth Implications of Redditch Town to 2026. Prepared by White Young Green Planning.

PROJECT BRIEF

2nd STAGE JOINT STUDY INTO THE FUTURE GROWTH IMPLICATIONS OF REDDITCH TOWN TO 2026

PREAMBLE

1. West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) as Regional Planning Body (RPB) for the West Midlands Region is currently undertaking a partial revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS). The current WMRSS was approved in June 2004. As part of the revision process the WMRA undertook between January and March 2007 a consultation exercise on the Spatial Options for the Region for the period 2001-2026. The consultation exercise considered, amongst other things, issues in relation to the two main drivers of the WMRSS – housing and employment. Following on from the Spatial Options consultation exercise the WMRA has prepared the Preferred Option which was submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2007.
2. Following this formal submission, the West Midlands Regional Assembly received a letter from Baroness Andrews, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Communities and Local Government. In her letter, dated 7th January 2008, the Minister expressed concern about the housing proposals put forward by the Assembly in light of the Government's agenda to increase house building across the country. In view of this, the Minister has asked the Government Office for the West Midlands to commission further work to look at options which could deliver higher housing numbers, this work will be considered as part of the Examination in Public.
3. Consultants Nathaniel Lichfield have been appointed to carry out this study and the aim is for the work to be completed by 7th October, 2008, in order for stakeholders to take it into account when submitting final representations on the Phase 2 revision which now closes on the 8th December.
4. In developing the Preferred Option a difficult and sensitive issue arose which related to the implications of future growth within Redditch Borough, given the projected high level of future 'local' housing need and the perceived limited capacity of the Borough and Redditch Town in particular to accommodate further growth to 2026.
5. The RSS revision proposes that some of Redditch's growth (3300 dwellings and 32 ha of employment land) should be accommodated in the adjoining districts of Stratford-on-Avon and/or Bromsgrove and that this growth should be located adjacent to Redditch's boundary.
6. The WMRSS does not identify how these requirements should be split between Bromsgrove and Stratford-on-Avon Districts, which presents a challenge for the authorities in progressing their respective core strategies.
7. A joint study, funded by Worcestershire County Council, the adjoining districts and the Regional Assembly, was completed in December 2007 by White Young Green, an independent firm of consultants who undertook a land use planning study to provide an improved evidence base to inform the preparation of the Preferred Option for the Region. This evidence base comprised both an assessment of the potential urban capacity of

Redditch Town to 2026 and an assessment of the implications of the possible options/directions of growth for the Town, including site constraints and opportunities. It did not however determine a priority of sites to be developed nor examine the split of development between Bromsgrove and Stratford-on-Avon Districts. This work needs to be done to enable each district to develop appropriate policies within their respective core strategies.

STATUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

8. This stage 2 work will build on the work already undertaken by White Young Green. It is being commissioned by Worcestershire County Council, **Warwickshire County Council***, Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and the Regional Assembly. It will give clear technical and detailed guidance to the three authorities on:
 - (a) the split of growth, including housing and employment land, both within Redditch Borough and then between Stratford-on-Avon and/or Bromsgrove (in other words the 3300 RSS target for Redditch Borough needs to be evaluated)
 - (b) the priority of sites to be developed shown on an Ordnance Survey base
 - (c) the implications of accommodating these peripheral growth levels on infrastructure requirements in each District
 - (d) the implications of an increase in housing figures as a result of Nathaniel Lichfield's work
 - (e) the implications of the designation of Redditch as an SSD in terms of potential growth requirements and impact on two adjoining districts.
9. The Study will not incorporate any form of public consultation but will require technical consultation with the five/**six*** commissioning authorities and relevant outside organisations. Public consultation will be undertaken by the on the back of the RSS consultation period. There will also be local consultation as the three District Authorities will include the outcome of the study alongside planned consultation on their respective Core Strategy – Preferred Options consultations. The Study will be dealing with sensitive issues and information and will be confidential between the commissioning authorities and the consultants until such time that the authorities consider it appropriate to place its findings in the public domain.)

PLANNING AND STUDY CONTEXT

10. As mentioned above the Study is to provide technical evidence to inform the Local Development Frameworks of the three Local Planning Authorities. The Study must also be considered within the context of the current RSS revision process, the implications of the work being undertaken by Nathaniel Lichfield to increase the housing figures across the Region, the implications of the designation of Redditch as a Settlement of Significant Development (SSD) and the implications, especially for the strategic function of the Green Belt due to the potential peripheral expansion of the conurbation southwards.

11. Additionally the Study should take into account all relevant current national policy guidance, including that which may have been issued subsequent to the original adoption of the WMRSS in June 2004.
12. The Study will be confined to the administrative areas of Redditch Borough, Stratford-on-Avon and Bromsgrove Districts

STUDY REQUIREMENTS

13. Investigate whether Redditch Borough can accommodate more than its 3300 dwelling designation within its boundary and the optimum split of the remaining designation between Stratford-on-Avon and Bromsgrove districts, together with a phasing programme based on two scenarios firstly the Preferred Option figures for housing and employment land together with a second scenario of a 30% increase on these figures;
14. Detailed information on the likely impacts of development (including different scales of development) on the priority of sites to be developed. This will relate to the areas of search considered within the existing Joint Study (or parts of them), in terms of the natural environment, including sensitive sites and opportunities for protection and enhancement (i.e. a more robust and detailed SWOT type analysis). This should include reference to the Worcestershire/Warwickshire Landscape Character Assessments and the application of a sensitivity analysis.
15. The suitability or otherwise of the areas of search (or parts of them) in relation to the existing Redditch Town form, in particular accessibility to essential Town Centre facilities and transport nodes. An accessibility profile for areas of search (or parts of them) would need to be established to allow comparisons;
16. The key infrastructure issues to be faced, particularly with regard to the two concerns identified within the Joint Study regarding new transportation and foul water infrastructure. This would need to address the issue of which areas of search (or parts of them) are most likely to be deliverable, or are preferable for development given the scale of infrastructure needs and likely costs. This should examine the scale of development and associated infrastructure required in various areas to justify unlocking them. In terms of transportation this would involve more detailed analysis throughout the sub-region of trip rates, the implications of growth on the proposals for the Studley By-pass, the Bordesley By-pass and future rail plans particularly along the cross city line between Redditch and the conurbation.
17. The implications of development in the areas of search (or parts of them) in respect of one another in terms of specific impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt and in helping to deliver the aims of the RSS (e.g. urban renaissance of the MUAs and local regeneration), including for example an appraisal of the proposed development on the strategic function of the Green Belt;
18. Thorough/rigorous consideration of the capacity of the Areas of Development Constraint and White Land (Winyates Green Triangle) within and adjacent to Redditch;

19. Detailed scrutiny of the capacity of the urban area, both the Town Centre and more widely in terms of the adopted open space standards in Redditch;
20. Sustainability Appraisal to consider likely sustainability impacts of the scale of development required and the implications, for example in terms of infrastructure needed

LEAD AUTHORITY

21. Redditch Borough Council will act as lead authority for the Study and will be the contact point for the appointed consultants. The project will be subject to confidential reports to an inter-authority panel of senior officers in the first instance.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

22. The three authorities commissioning the Study require an independent view on the potential future capacity and growth implications for Redditch Town. However, the County Councils as strategic planning authority and the three District Councils as local planning authorities, clearly have between them substantial expertise and knowledge in relation to the strategic and local planning issues within Worcestershire and Warwickshire. The authorities also hold significant detailed information at both a strategic and local level. Whilst an independent outcome is required it is essential that this expertise, knowledge and information is fed into the process in order to assist the consultants in reaching informed and accurate conclusions. To this end it is proposed that the consultants should work closely with officers of the authorities in the assembly of base information.
23. In addition the consultants will be required to involve, (as appropriate), other organisations directly in order to gain relevant technical information to inform the study, such as the Highways Agency; Severn Trent water, Network Rail.

TIMESCALE

24. The project is to commence mid July 2008 and be completed by the 7th October 2008. As part of the process specific milestones will be identified within the contract and the initial "draft" findings will be required by 31 August 2008
25. Public and stakeholder consultation on the issues and options associated with the future growth of Redditch Borough into the surrounding district areas is to be carried out alongside the consultation on the findings by Nathaniel Lichfield's work after submission on 7th October 2008. There will also be consultation on the back of the three Core Strategies (Preferred Options stage).

OUTPUTS/REQUIREMENTS OF THE CONSULTANTS

26. Attendance at an initial joint briefing meeting in mid July 2008 with officer representatives of the three authorities and County Councils to consider the detailed approach to undertaking the work. To include issues such as the following:
 - working arrangements/roles;
 - inputs from the local authorities
 - timescales/clarification of outputs, etc.
 - to establish the detailed project plan.
27. Submission of a report to the authorities by 1 August 2008 following the initial joint meeting detailing the discussions at the meeting and agreed outputs/approach to the work (i.e. the project plan).
28. Attendance as required at a regular progress meeting with officer representatives of the five/six* authorities.
29. Submission and presentation of a written final report to officer representatives of the five/six* authorities **at least two weeks before** the agreed end date of the project, i.e. no later than 23 September 2008.
30. Submission of a written clear and logical final report to the five/six* authorities covering all the aspects set out in the section "Project Requirements" (unless subsequently jointly agreed to be amended) by the specified end date of the project. It is envisaged that six copies of the final report in paper version and on CD's will be required.
31. All mapped information to be prepared and provided by the consultants.
32. Both the draft and final reports to be provided in paper and electronic format, including key diagrams.

* The role of Warwickshire County Council is still to be clarified.

White Young Green Study

The WYG Study was commissioned to carry out a strategic assessment of the implications for potential future growth both within and adjacent to Redditch Borough during the period to 2026. In this respect it related to land within Redditch BC, and peripheral land around RDC but within Bromsgrove DC and Stratford District Council. In particular, the study looked at:

- The potential of the urban area of Redditch to accommodate housing & employment growth to 2026
- The level of additional peripheral growth required to meet the housing & employment requirements
- The implications for accommodating the peripheral growth

The RSS Preferred Option was actually published during the drafting of the WYG Study Report and the implications of this were therefore dealt with as an addendum to the WYG Report.

The conclusions in the report include the following:

- The identified urban capacity of RBC alone is insufficient to meet the RSS Preferred Option of 3,300 dwellings.
- However, the urban capacity together with the capacity of the ADRs would be more than sufficient to meet the target.
- In terms of accommodating the 3,300 dwellings on sites outside, but on the periphery of Redditch, the Report concluded that constraints imposed by highway and drainage infrastructure are generally less to the north than to the south and west. In addition, expansion northwards, including the development of the Brockhill ADR would be relatively close to the town centre. Significant savings on vehicle mileage, in comparison with the more peripheral locations could be achieved particularly if improved public transportation links were incorporated.
- Whilst development to the north of the town is more likely to result in a more sustainable pattern of development, the Report also highlighted the suitability of the non ADR land to the west of the A435 and the area known as the Winyates Green Triangle, these being areas of White Land.
- Any major expansion of the town should continue the town's established character with regard to Open Space provision.
- From an education point of view, Option 2 may require some extensions or reconfiguration of sites but not new sites.

Notwithstanding the above, the report throws up a number of issues which would warrant further investigation. E.g. it states that development in the north-west quadrant would require the development of the Bordesley By-pass.

Also, it states that irrespective of where development may be allocated in or around Redditch, it may be significantly constrained by Severn Trent Waters feasibility, design and build programmes for the delivery of new assets, pointing out that STW will not programme this work before their 2010-2015 capital investment period. Whilst these may not be show stoppers, they cast doubt on the ability to accommodate Preferred Option growth over the plan period, let alone any additional housing figures likely to arise out the further RSS study work currently being undertaken.