

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

10th January 2011

OUTCOME OF BROMSGROVE AND REDDITCH SPECIAL CONSULTATION ON REDDITCH EXPANSION

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jinny Pearce, Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development & Transport
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford, Head of Planning & Regeneration
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report contains details of the outcome of the Bromsgrove and Redditch Special Consultation on Redditch Expansion. Public consultation was conducted from 8th February 2010 until 22nd March 2010. The representations received have been summarised, an Officer response provided and details of any action arising following receipt of the representation (these can be viewed at Appendix A).
- 1.2 The consultation document presented options for development within Redditch Borough's boundaries and the options for development in Bromsgrove District, adjacent to Redditch Borough to meet Redditch's growth needs up to 2026. These options represented a joint response to the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) Phase Two Report of the Panel.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to RESOLVE that the outcome of the Bromsgrove and Redditch Special Consultation on Redditch Expansion (Appendix A) be approved.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This period of public consultation was carried out in response to the recommendations of the panel following the Examination in Public in to the Phase Two Revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS). The WMRSS provided the framework and targets for the two separate Core Strategies being produced by Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council. The Panel recommended that 7000 dwellings be delivered to meet Redditch's growth needs up to 2026. Around 4000 of these dwellings were to be delivered within Redditch Borough and around 3000 in Bromsgrove District, adjacent to the Redditch boundary.

Additionally, the employment targets set for Redditch's long-term requirements were 68 hectares. The Panel Report specified that 37 hectares would be provided cross-boundary, of which at least 12 hectares would be provided within Stratford-on-Avon District west of the A435.

- 3.2 These targets required both Councils to consult on development options that had not previously been consulted on. Therefore a period of consultation was needed to consider where the 7000 dwellings and other development would be best located. The WMRSS Panel Report concluded that 4000 dwellings needed to be provided within the Redditch boundary; therefore it was necessary to reconsider, and consult on, potential development areas that were previously not considered for development. The development options put forward within Redditch concentrated on meeting the 4000 dwellings required and identifying the location of employment land within the Borough.
- 3.3 The WMRSS Panel Report stated that the remaining 3000 dwellings needed to meet Redditch's growth needs up to 2026 should be located in Bromsgrove District adjacent to the Redditch boundary. The WMRSS Panel Report stated at paragraph 8.84: "*we must conclude that provision should be made for around 3000 dwellings for Redditch in Bromsgrove District....the choice of locality around the boundary of Redditch should be locally determined whether at or adjacent to Webheath/Foxlydiate or Brockhill ADRs or in the Bordesley park area or in some combination of these possibilities or elsewhere*". This local determination meant that consultation was required on the possible locations for this development. The options for Redditch-related development in Bromsgrove considered land for both housing and employment.
- 3.4 In terms of progress towards the production of both Authorities' Core Strategies, Bromsgrove District Council have completed the Issues and Options stage of the Core Strategy (2005 and 2007) and consulted on a Draft Core Strategy (2008-2009). Redditch Borough Council have consulted on the Issues and Options (June 2008) and the Preferred Draft Core Strategy (2008 – 2009). Therefore, in effect, both Authorities are at the same stage in the production of their respective Core Strategies.
- 3.5 Subsequently, the Bromsgrove and Redditch Special Consultation on Redditch Expansion (February – March 2010) included the 'Revised Development Strategy for the Emerging Core Strategy Consultation Paper' and the Sustainability Appraisal Refresh.

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- 3.6 On 27th May 2010 the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, wrote to Council leaders highlighting the Coalition Government's commitment to rapidly abolish Regional Strategies and return decision making powers on housing and planning to local councils. On 6th July 2010 the Secretary of State announced the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Prior to this, the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) formed part of the statutory development plan for Redditch Borough, the revocation meant that the WMRSS did not form part of the development plan. However, following a judicial review the decision to revoke RSSs was found to be unlawful; this ruling re-instates the WMRSS as part of the statutory development plan. Following this judgment, the Chief Planner at the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) wrote to all Local Authorities stating that the Government still intended to abolish RSSs and that material consideration should be given to this. A further legal challenge has now been launched seeking a declaration from the Court that the government's stated intention to revoke RSSs is not a material consideration for the purposes of making planning decisions. The claim has been expedited with the effect that both the government's statement and the letter from CLG is stayed until further notice. Therefore, at the time of writing this report the WMRSS is part of the development plan and the Government's intention to abolish RSSs is **not** a material consideration.
- 3.7 At the time Officers were working on the 'Officer Response' and 'Actions' (see Appendix A) to the representations received during the consultation, the WMRSS was revoked. The Officer responses therefore reflect this. Legal proceedings regarding the status of RSSs are ongoing.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The following paragraphs detail the key issues that arose from the representations received during the consultation period. The key issues are those issues which are important points of consideration, raised by a number of respondents.
- 4.2 Respondents were concerned over the loss of the Green Belt for two reasons: it would be a loss of buffer between both Redditch and Bromsgrove and Redditch and Birmingham, and there would be an increased risk of coalescence of both Redditch and Mappleborough Green and Redditch and Bordesley. The Officer response states that the delivery of cross-boundary growth is uncertain given the revocation of the RSS and

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therefore further consultation will be conducted on the level of development appropriate for the Borough and District and the strategic locations for this. Officers also note that Bordesley is not a defined settlement and therefore coalescence of settlements in this location is not a relevant consideration.

- 4.2 A number of respondents were concerned whether infrastructure would be provided alongside any new housing development. Respondents made it clear that, amongst other things, employment and community facilities would be necessary. Officers provide the response that all necessary infrastructure would need to be in place to enable development, and an Infrastructure Delivery Plan was being progressed by both Authorities.
- 4.4 There were a significant amount of comments regarding flooding. Many respondents had concerns that new development would make flooding worse and that no mitigation measures would be put in place. Respondents also considered that if an area was likely to flood then this would prevent any development being located there. Officers advise that a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 1 had been completed and that a Level 2 SFRA was being completed. This study will consider the flood risk posed to development sites and detail the mitigation measures necessary. Officers also stated that flooding issues are an important consideration but may not necessarily prohibit development.
- 4.5 Respondents were concerned that new development would lead to the loss of wildlife and habitats. Officers state that an analysis of available ecological information would be carried out which will identify any constraints to development. A number of the sites that have specific environmental issues will also require an ecological assessment at the Planning Application stage.
- 4.6 Many respondents questioned the amount of dwellings that had been allocated to Redditch Borough as a development target up to 2026. Many respondents stated that 7000 dwellings was too high. A number of respondents particularly questioned whether this target was appropriate when considering the implications of the recession and the economic downturn. Officers state that the housing figures were set by the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and the target for Redditch was based on projected need and takes account of past trends and population projections. Officers also note that the plan period runs up to 2026, therefore this takes into account peaks and troughs in the market. Officers state that the Councils would be undertaking further work to assess relevant factors/constraints before determining which site or sites should be developed. Officers advise that in light of the revocation of the RSS further

consultation will be conducted on the level of development appropriate for the Borough and District and the strategic locations for this. As stated in paragraph 3.6 above, the WMRSS has now been reinstated as part of the statutory development plan. However, the government has also signalled its intention to radically reform the planning system and introduce new national planning policy through the forthcoming Decentralisation and Localism Bill, which is likely to require further consultation on the appropriate level of development for the Borough.

- 4.7 Respondents presented alternative options for the location of new development; these include Studley, Beoley, Astwood Bank, Feckenham or east into Stratford-On-Avon District and the alternative option of a combination of the proposed cross-boundary strategic locations. In terms of the alternative options that were presented, Officers have established the specific reasons why these locations are not suitable for further development: these explanations can be seen in the Redditch background document to the consultation the 'Revised Development Strategy for the Emerging Core Strategy Consultation Paper' and the Sustainability Appraisal Refresh.
- 4.8 Topography was commented upon as an area of concern. Respondents considered that building in an area with steep topography would increase flooding; they were also concerned that areas with steep topography would increase the visibility of the development. Officers respond by stating that topography would be carefully considered together with other factors but may not necessarily prohibit development.
- 4.9 There was both support and objection to the development of the three Areas of Development Restraint (ADRs) in Redditch (known as A435, Brockhill and the Webheath), as well as the three strategic locations identified in Bromsgrove District for potential cross-boundary development. The following paragraphs are a very brief summary of the concerns expressed for each of the potential development areas. Many of the objections received in relation to strategic locations were unsubstantiated; however those arguments which are duly made are being investigated further.
- 4.10 A435 ADR
The main issues are: possibility of conflict between industrial and residential uses; wildlife/protected species; flood risk; infrastructure upgrades for water supply and waste water; remote from town centre; not well integrated with existing residential neighbourhoods; lacks the scale to create balanced local communities; coalescence with Mappleborough Green and; development may lead to traffic problems on the A435.

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4.11 Brockhill ADR/ Brockhill Green Belt and Land west of A441

The main issues were: potential presence of mineral deposits; may be potential for designation as SSSI; lack of existing amenities; flooding; adverse traffic implications; adverse impact on biodiversity/wildlife; adverse impact on Brockhill Woods; infrastructure upgrade required for water supply and waste water; topography; reduction of Green Belt buffer between Redditch and Birmingham and; encouraging migration from Birmingham.

4.12 Webheath ADR. The key concerns that have been expressed relating to the Webheath ADR include: the implications of development on the local road network; the lack of local services; the lack of local employment opportunities; the need to pump sewerage due to topography; flooding issues surrounding the site and; concern over the implications of development on wildlife located on the site. Respondents also requested that the findings of the White Young Green Report, which recommended that the three ADRs should be changed to Green Belt, be implemented.

4.13 Foxlydiat Green Belt and Area Adjacent to A448

The main issues raised for this area concerned: the Green Belt; coalescence with other settlements; unnatural expansion of town; topography; sewerage issues requiring pumping "over the ridge"; adverse impact on setting of Hewell Historic Park; western half of the area is classified as being of moderate importance for biodiversity and the eastern part is low to moderate; further away than other options from town centre, employment opportunities, railway station and other amenities; major infrastructure improvements would be required to transport system; poorly served by public transport; Foxlydiat Wood Local Nature Reserve, Foxlydiat and Pitcheroak Woods Special Wildlife Site, Hewell Park Lake Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); loss of working farms; poor potential for integration with the town; greater likely dependence on car-borne travel; no defensible green belt boundary and; could encourage ribbon development along A448.

4.14 Land East of A441

The main issues highlighted were: inadequate infrastructure; reduction of Green Belt buffer between Redditch and Birmingham; encourage in-migration from Birmingham; traffic congestion; flooding; topography; adverse impact on small villages and communities including coalescence with Bordesley; adverse impact on biodiversity/wildlife and; loss of amenity space.

4.15 Ravensbank ADR

Main concern is with the Special Wildlife Site in this area.

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4.16 Winyates Green Triangle

Although the Winyates Green Triangle site was not presented as part of this consultation, Stratford on Avon District Council was consulting on their Draft Core Strategy at the same time, which did include the site. A small number of representations were submitted to RBC regarding this site during the consultation period. These representations were copied to Stratford on Avon District Council Officers for their consideration but those that were received by RBC have been summarised at the end of Appendix A for information. Since Winyates Green Triangle was identified for potential development, a Transport Assessment and Ecological Assessment have been carried out which indicate that the cost of providing access and the ecological constraints on the site are likely to mean the delivery of development on the site is unviable.

4.17 Officers have provided responses to the issues mentioned above at 4.10 - 4.15 in Appendix A, however the responses do carry the caveat that the delivery of cross-boundary development and development on other sites within Redditch is uncertain due to the proposed abolition of the RSS and the emerging changes to the national planning system.

4.18 Many of the issues raised during the consultation period are non-planning considerations and could not be controlled by the policies within a Core Strategy. These issues included; property values, covenants, compensation during construction, council tax, the timing of the consultations and the responsibility of the provision of council services.

4.19 Many comments received during consultation recommended that empty properties are used and vacant land should be utilised for housing and employment ahead of the use of ADR land or Green Belt land. Officers state that the Evidence Base studies that have been conducted ensure that all potential sites for development in Redditch Borough have been identified.

4.20 Concerns were raised about the lack of employment opportunities in the town and that people may commute into Birmingham for work. Officers state that it is necessary to have employment land targets to ensure a balance between housing and employment. The employment targets allocated to Redditch were set by the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and based on the projected need, however these may be revised in light of the revocation of the RSS. There is a need to identify land for a variety of employment uses. Officers also state that it is intended that new development will comprise sustainable mixed use communities enabling people to live and work locally rather than commuting to Birmingham.

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- 4.21 It was considered that many respondents misunderstood the funding procedures of new development and many believed that the Council would pay for all future development. It is clarified by Officers that the cost of development would be borne by the developer and this also applies to the infrastructure that is required to enable the development to proceed.
- 4.22 Representations to the consultation period were received from key statutory consultees including English Heritage, Environment Agency, Government Office for the West Midlands, Natural England, Worcestershire County Council and Parish Councils. English Heritage, Natural England, Government Office for the West Midlands and Worcestershire County Council generally supported the consultation and had no significant issues with the sites put forward. The Environment Agency, although generally in support of the consultation, raised a range of concerns which they recommend were given further consideration prior to final site selection. A number of parish councils expressed their concerns over the levels and proposed location of development. The Officer response to these can be viewed at appendix A. Representations were also received from developers and landowners with an interest in putting forward cross-boundary sites for development.
- 4.23 Many representations received on the options for cross-boundary development and some development sites within Redditch (including some ADR land) made objections to the option that was located closest to the respondent: the respondent generally supported the option that was located furthest away. Officers state that a decision on development locations will be based on technical evidence and justified arguments presented through the consultation period.
- 4.24 The next stage for the production of the Core Strategy is to publish a revised Draft Core Strategy for public consultation; this is the subject of a separate report at the executive committee meeting.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To progress to the next stage of the Core Strategy (Publication and Submission to the Secretary of State), full compliance with Planning Policy Statement 12 'Local Spatial Planning' is required, to demonstrate deliverability. To achieve this, additional evidence base work will be necessary in light of changes to the economic circumstances and the likely changes to the planning system, which will have budget implications. This will be the subject of future committee reports.

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6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Borough Council is required to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF) under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The Core Strategy forms an integral part of the LDF.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Redditch Borough's LDF forms part of the development plan for the area. The Core Strategy is the main Development Plan Document within the LDF.

8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

The Outcome of the Bromsgrove and Redditch Special Consultation contributes towards the production of both Authorities' Core Strategies. The policies in the Redditch Core Strategy will contribute to achieving the following Council Objectives:

- EC3: Improving Economic Development
- EC4: To develop the Town Centre and Church Hill District Centre
- EC5: To provide new leisure facilities across the town enhancing residents' opportunities to access quality sporting facilities
- EC7: To improve health and well being across the Borough through leisure and arts
- S1: To reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
- S4: Deliver agreed improvements to the Town Centre in terms of environmental quality and the night-time economy
- CG1: Deliver a cleaner, greener Borough and improve the quality of green spaces
- CG5: Improve energy efficiency

9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Progress on the Core Strategy is necessary to ensure the Core Strategy can be adopted in the anticipated timescale. If the Core Strategy is not progressed and adopted there is a risk the council will not have an up to date development plan with which to determine planning applications.

10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

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None identified.

11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

An Equalities Impact Assessment is carried out in advance of the next stage of Core Strategy consultation.

12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

None identified.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY

National planning policy has a requirement to address adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change. National Planning Policy also has a requirement to ensure that implications from development on biodiversity are minimised and mitigated against. The Core Strategy will seek to implement this at a local level.

14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

The Redditch Borough Core Strategy will seek to ensure that community safety is maximised by having a policy which ensures new development in Redditch is designed to high standards.

17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

A health impact assessment is to be completed before publication and submission of the Core Strategy.

18. LESSONS LEARNT

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Monitoring forms were issued with the consultation material in order to gather data on who was responding to the consultation. From this monitoring we can identify that there was very limited response from those under 35 years of age and from ethnic minorities. Therefore, future consultations will aim to target groups that have previously had limited involvement in the Core Strategy in order to achieve a comprehensive consultation.

19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A number of 'drop-in' sessions and exhibitions were conducted to allow consultees to talk directly with a Planning Officer from either Bromsgrove District Council or Redditch Borough Council. Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils have dedicated webpages with up-to-date information detailing the consultation opportunities. A newspaper advert and press release were placed in The Standard and The Advertiser. The item went to each Redditch Neighbourhood Group as well as Redditch Borough Council's Community Forum and Bromsgrove's equalities and diversity forum. Letters and emails were sent to people on both the Bromsgrove and Redditch consultation database. Furthermore, in some hard-to reach locations flyers were hand delivered to individual properties. Publicity material was made available in various locations such as Redditch Town Hall, Bromsgrove Council House and Customer Service Centre and local libraries.

20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes - PAP
Chief Executive	Yes - CMT
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	Yes - CMT
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	Yes - CMT
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes - CMT
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	Yes - CMT
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Resources	Yes - CMT
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes - CMT
Corporate Procurement Team	No

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21. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards.

22. APPENDICES

Appendix A - Outcome of Bromsgrove and Redditch Special Consultation on Redditch Expansion.

23. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Bromsgrove and Redditch Core Strategies – Special consultation on Redditch expansion.

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision Report of the Panel September 2009

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