

# West Midlands@2021

## A Guide to the Region's Spatial Strategy

(Formerly Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands)



Do you have an interest in the long-term future of the West Midlands Region?

Are you involved in important policy or investment decisions such as deciding where new premises, services or facilities go?

The new Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands, incorporating the Regional Transport Strategy, will show you what will be happening, where and when - it could change your mind about your organisation's plans.

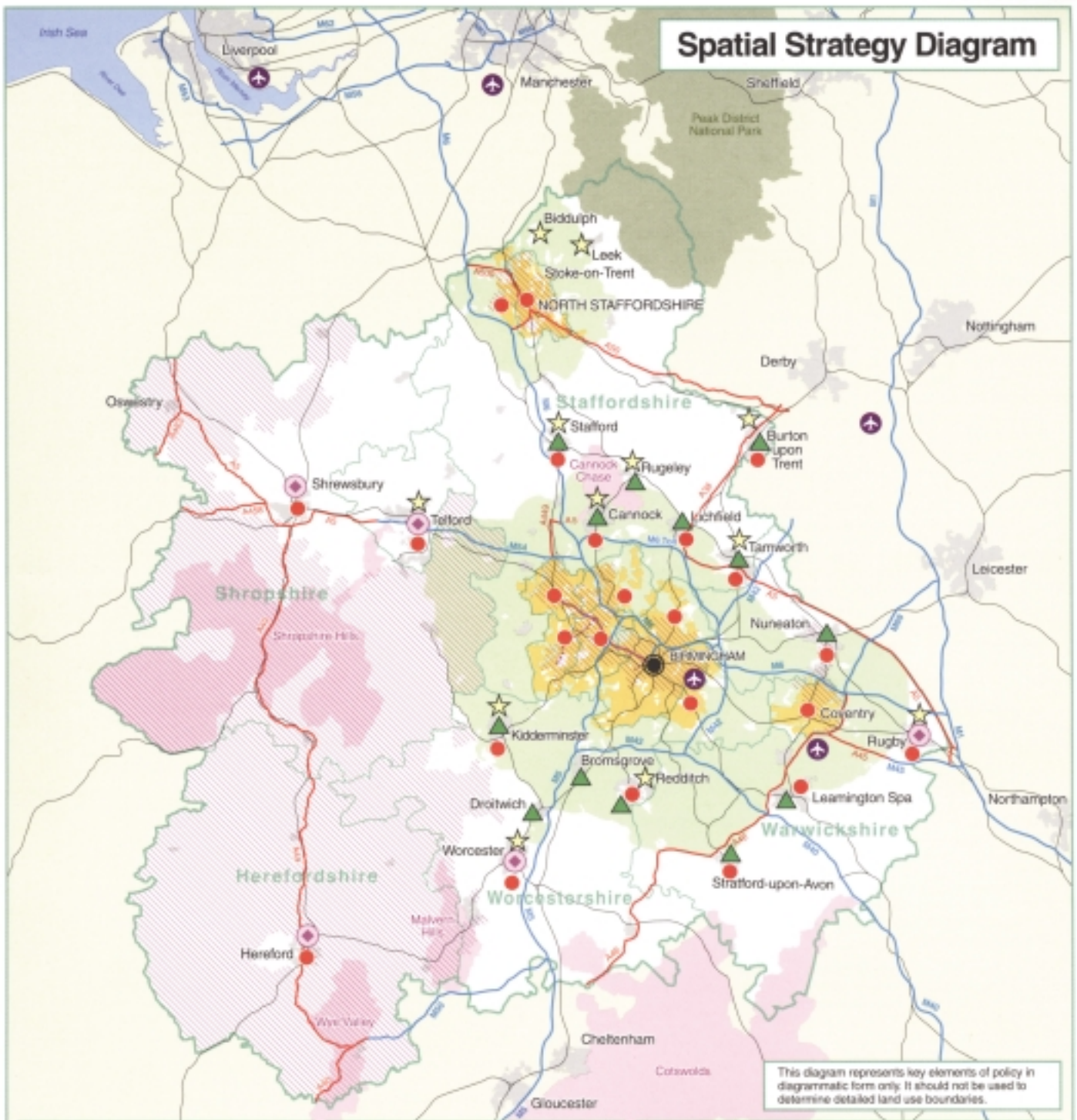


GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

West Midlands  
Regional Assembly

Speaking out for the region

# Spatial Strategy Diagram



This diagram represents key elements of policy in diagrammatic form only. It should not be used to determine detailed land use boundaries.

## Settlements

- Major Urban Area - Main focus for development and investment  
BIRMINGHAM  
BLACK COUNTRY  
COVENTRY  
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE  
SOLIHULL
- Sub-Regional foci for development beyond MUAs
- Other large settlement

## Regeneration

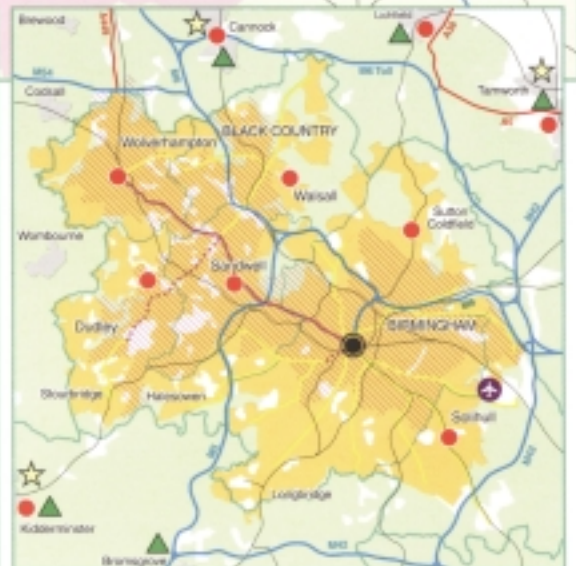
- Regeneration Zone included in Agenda for Action
- Local Regeneration Area outside of Regeneration Zones
- Regional Centre
- Strategic Centre

## Strategic Links

- Motorway
- Core Trunk Road
- Railway
- Midland Metro Line 1
- Metro Extensions (Brierley Hill & Edgbaston)
- Other high volume corridors with potential for enhanced public transport
- Airport

## Environment

- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- National Park
- Green Belt
- Built-up Area
- Strategic Authority Boundary

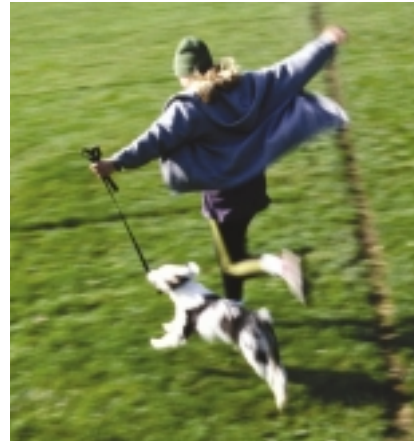


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Cartography by PCW based on mapping provided by JdH MapInfo GIS

# What is a Spatial Strategy?

The **West Midlands Spatial Strategy**, formerly known as Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands, sets out **what should happen where and when** across the West Midlands Region up to **2021**.



Incorporating the **Regional Transport Strategy** it focuses on the things that will make the West Midlands a better place in which to live and work. For example

- the amount of housing that should be built in different parts of the Region
- which city and town centres should be targeted for growth
- where major new employment sites are needed
- how and where we should improve the environment
- the priorities for transport investment

The Spatial Strategy covers a wide range of subjects including **housing, economic development, the built, historic and natural environment, renewable energy, minerals, waste and transport**.

Taking forward the Spatial Strategy - the job of finding sites and deciding on local policies - is best done by the Region's local councils, where particular local circumstances can also be taken into account.

To be successful it must also be supported by other strategies and investment, such as those for **the economy, culture, health, education, crime reduction and skills & learning**.



## What's in it for you?

A few minutes looking through the Spatial Strategy might save you time and money, particularly as it will be used to judge major development proposals as they come forward.

**For the public sector** - strategies, policies and development proposals that align with, or better still drive forward the Spatial Strategy are likely to be better received by government than those that don't. Similarly, in the future it is increasingly likely to be important in deciding suitability for national and European funding.

**For the private sector** - the Spatial Strategy gives a good indication where the future markets for property, development and services will be, where the population is expected to increase, where growth will be encouraged and where development will be less welcome.

**For the voluntary sector** - direct engagement will be crucial if we are to achieve the desired improvements to the quality of life. The Spatial Strategy shows where change can be expected and where new or increased community involvement might be needed.

# The West Midlands Spatial Strategy, in a nutshell

At the heart of the Spatial Strategy is the will to make the housing and employment markets in our big cities and major urban areas attractive once again. This is a **fundamental change in direction** from the previous strategy, which allowed for people and jobs to move away from these areas. A key part of the new Strategy is, therefore, to increase the number of high-quality homes in our major towns and cities. And to match this with big improvements to the quality of the environment and access to high-quality, public services and transport. Linking strongly with the **Regional Economic Strategy**,

the aim is to increase the range and quality of business opportunities available, particularly in the **Regeneration Zones and High Technology Corridors**.

In the shire and rural areas, development is increasingly focused on a few key towns. This is to create balanced communities and provide the commercial, retail, transport and leisure facilities to serve a wider area, thereby minimising the need to travel further afield. Elsewhere, the emphasis is on matching development to the needs of local communities. All this means:

- significant new development in the major urban areas of **Birmingham and Solihull, the Black Country, Coventry, Stoke and Newcastle-under-Lyme**, particularly in the Regeneration Zones
- focusing development outside the major urban areas on **Hereford, Worcester, Shrewsbury, Telford and Rugby**.
- A network of **25 key city and town centres** providing the main opportunities for large-scale retail, leisure, business and commercial development; as well as the main focus for other major community facilities like education, health and public administration.
- a range of initiatives to regenerate **rural areas** facing serious problems of economic and social change

The Strategy sets out the areas where improvements to the natural, historic and cultural environment will be the priority. It emphasises the reuse of 'brownfield' land, but equally it signposts where development will be less welcome.



# Why this Strategy?

“The overall vision for the West Midlands is one of an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable region, which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life of future generations.”

The Spatial Strategy moves us towards this vision; setting out the route to a more balanced and sustainable pattern of development. It will mean towns and cities that more people choose to live in, and a countryside that people do not feel forced to leave - a significant step in making the West Midlands a better place to live.

Currently more people are leaving our big cities than arriving

- putting more pressure on the environment, transport and social facilities in the surrounding areas
- leaving some parts of our cities suffering from depopulation and under-investment
- contributing to long-distance commuting and rising house prices in rural areas, making it hard for local people to afford to live there

Reversing these trends means tackling four interconnected challenges

- Urban Renaissance
- Rural Renaissance
- Diversifying and modernising the Region's economy
- Modernising the transport infrastructure of the West Midlands.

The Spatial Strategy recognises that what happens in one part of the Region can have effects elsewhere and, because of this, each part of the Region has a critical role to play.



# What's in the Spatial Strategy?

The Spatial Strategy covers a lot of ground and to understand it fully it is important to make the links between its different chapters.

## Urban Renaissance

Urban Renaissance means creating communities in towns and cities where people choose to live, work and invest. This chapter sets out the importance of urban renaissance, drawing together the different strands in the document and giving pointers about how regeneration should be tackled (policy UR1) by creating:

- a variety of high-quality, affordable, safe and secure environments
- a sufficient variety of jobs to meet employment needs
- modern transport networks
- rejuvenated city, town and local centres

Previous urban regeneration has tended to concentrate on the 'worst areas' but has failed to change people's perception of them. The Spatial Strategy takes a more comprehensive view. It targets radical change in some areas, for example the two **Housing Market Renewal Areas** (policy CF1) and the five **Urban Regeneration Zones** (policy PA2), but aims to make improvements across all our urban areas.

Making the Major Urban Areas attractive to live and work in is critical, and action is heavily prioritised towards **Birmingham, the Black Country, Solihull, Coventry and Stoke and Newcastle-under-Lyme.**

A need for smaller scale, local regeneration areas (policy UR2) is also identified for **Biddulph, Burton-on-Trent, Cannock, Kidderminster, Leek, Redditch, Rugby, Rugeley, Stafford, Tamworth, Telford and Worcester**

- but it is important that these do not detract from the regeneration of the Major Urban Areas.

The Region's **city, town and district centres** (policies UR3 and PA11) are emphasised as the focus for urban renaissance and in providing the identity and services that underpin local communities.

Improved **public transport** (policy T5) will support urban regeneration, as should the strategies and investment plans, concerning **housing, education, health, leisure and crime** reduction (policy UR4).

Building on the regeneration successes around the Region, including Birmingham's city centre, we expect the Spatial Strategy to provide the **private sector** with the opportunities and confidence to invest in existing and emerging urban markets. Equally, it is important to recognise that there will be fewer development opportunities elsewhere than in the past.



# Rural Renaissance

This chapter draws a general distinction between places close to large towns and cities and 'deep rural' areas. (policy RR1).

Although all areas of the Region have pockets of deprivation, the issues and solutions for 'deep rural' places in Shropshire are likely to be very different to those close to the big cities. Because of this, the priority is to match housing, commercial, retail and community services, like health and education, to local needs and circumstances.

In the past, a less tailored approach has attracted people and investment from other places, including the major urban areas. This has not always been to the advantage of local communities - with rising house prices, increased commuting and added pressure for 'greenfield' development as some of its consequences. The need to provide **affordable homes** (policy CF5) for local households is, therefore, a key issue.

The areas under greatest threat from economic change are covered by the **Rural Regeneration Zone** (policy RR2). Comprising large parts of **Shropshire** and **Herefordshire**, and some of **Worcestershire**, the Zone will be the focus for a wide range of measures targeting unemployment, low incomes, deprivation and social exclusion.

While a positive stance is taken to the economic diversification of **agriculture and farms** (policy PA15), the **Market Towns** (policies RR3 and PA14) are the focus of economic development. Acting as local service centres, they may need to be complemented by more innovative forms of **service delivery** for more dispersed communities (policy RR4). Overall, it is vital to co-ordinate services and development with transport, with the priority being given to **community and public transport** (policy T5), linking smaller communities to service centres.



# Communities for the Future

Currently more **housing** is being built outside the Major Urban Areas (Birmingham and Solihull, the Black Country, Coventry, Stoke and Newcastle-under-Lyme) than inside. This reflects not only the number of development sites in the shire and rural areas but also many people's **lifestyle aspirations**. Encouraging people to choose urban lifestyles means providing more high-quality residential areas and co-ordinating this with **education, policing, health and other community services** to meet people's aspirations (policy UR4).



Shifting the balance of new housing in favour of our Major Urban Areas will be the clearest sign that the Spatial Strategy is working and consequently setting-out the **amount and timing of new homes** (policy CF3) to be built in the different parts of the Region is a critical part of the Strategy.

In short, the proportion of the Region's new homes built in the Major Urban Areas will increase from 40% now to 50% in 2007, and further to 60% in 2011, with corresponding reductions elsewhere.

For the Region as a whole, 76% of new housing will be on **'brownfield'** land (policy CF4).

Creating balanced communities means providing a range of different housing with different tenures.

Affordable housing is particularly likely to be an issue in areas where fewer new houses will be built in the future. Although there will be many local variations in the need for **affordable housing** (policy CF5), the general picture is of a lack of choice in the Major Urban Areas and not enough provision in the south and east of the Region.

Whilst more new homes will be built in the **Major Urban Areas** (policy CF1) these will need to be of a high-quality if they are to retain the economically active people needed for balanced communities. Action is proposed to strengthen the Region's weaker housing markets in the **Market Renewal Areas** covering parts of **North Birmingham and Sandwell and Stoke-on-Trent**,

**Newcastle-under-Lyme & Staffordshire Moorlands**, as well as more localised action in some other urban areas.

Outside the Major Urban Areas (policy CF2), longer-term strategic housing will be met in what are called **Sub-Regional Foci**. Linking with the town centre policies (policy PA11), these places are also intended to act as sub-regional service centres, and have the potential to balance housing and employment to create sustainable communities.



## Sub-Regional Foci

Worcester	Hereford
Telford	Rugby
Shrewsbury	

(Work is underway to assess the precise role of each focus and to investigate whether Burton-on-Trent should have a similar role)

## Other Large Settlements

Stafford	Tamworth	Bromsgrove
Rugeley	Nuneaton	Kidderminster
Burton-on-Trent	Leamington Spa	Droitwich
Cannock	Stratford-upon-Avon	
Lichfield	Redditch	

The role of other large settlements is to meet the needs of their local area. Where this results in pressure to build housing on the edge of these places, such developments will generally be directed to the Sub-Regional Foci.

Elsewhere, particularly in rural areas, the emphasis is very much on targeting new housing to meet local needs and/or to support local services.

# Prosperity for All

Improving the economic performance of the Region and improving people's access to job opportunities is a key part of the Spatial Strategy. To deal with this, this chapter covers **employment sites, tourism and culture, town and city centres, out-of-centre retailing** and the **rural economy**.

The approach taken to employment sites is to provide a **portfolio of sites** (policy PA6) which are attractive to developers and operators, and which support the Spatial Strategy. This includes a first tier of **Regional Investment Sites** (policy PA7 - 25-50 hectares), **Major Investment Sites** (policy PA8 - approx 50 hectares occupied by a single user) and **Regional Logistic Sites** (policy PA9 - approx 50 hectares+) and a second tier of sub-regionally and locally important sites.

The Strategy requires these sites to be closely related to the five urban **Regeneration Zones** (policy PA2) that act as a key focus for Advantage West Midlands' (the Regional Development Agency) regeneration activities, and the three **High Technology Corridors** (policy PA3) aimed at broadening the Region's economic base. The policy on development related to **Higher/Further Education and Research Establishments** (policy PA4) continues the strong links with the Regional Economic Strategy.

## The Regeneration Zones

East of Birmingham and North Solihull  
 North Black Country and South Staffordshire (Future Foundations)  
 North Staffordshire  
 Coventry and Nuneaton  
 South Black Country and West Birmingham (Arc of Opportunity)

## The High Technology Corridors

Birmingham to Worcestershire (Central Technology Belt)  
 Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire  
 Wolverhampton to Telford

The Region's **town and city centres** (policy PA11) play a vital role. This is reflected in the network of places providing the focus for large-scale retail, commercial and leisure developments - acknowledging **Birmingham's** (policy PA12) special position as regional capital and promoting its European and world standing.



## Network of Centres:

Birmingham	Lichfield	Sutton Coldfield
Burton-on-Trent	Newcastle-under-Lyme	Tamworth
Cannock	Nuneaton	Telford
Coventry	Redditch	Walsall
Dudley	Rugby	West Bromwich
Hanley (Stoke-on-Trent)	Shrewsbury	Wolverhampton
Hereford	Solihull	Worcester
Kidderminster	Stafford	
Leamington Spa	Stratford-upon-Avon	

The Black Country Study will help determine whether the important regional shopping destination at Merry Hill should have a role in this network in the future.

# Quality of the Environment

This chapter covers two broad themes: **environment** and the **use of resources**



The **environment** section aims to protect high-quality areas and improve quality elsewhere. Although environmental considerations may sometimes prevent development, development can also enhance or create new environmental assets.

The environment plays a big part in social and economic regeneration (policy QE1). It also provides physical links between places, such as along canals and rivers and between town and country.

With these linkages in mind, there are specific policies on creating a high-quality **built environment** (policy QE3), **landscapes** (policies QE1 & QE6), improving and enhancing **urban greenspace and public spaces** (policy QE4), the **historic environment** (policy QE5), **restoring degraded land** (policy QE2), increasing **forestry and woodland** (policy QE8) and areas for increasing **biodiversity** (policy QE7).

The prudent use of resources is an important part of becoming a more sustainable Region. The Spatial Strategy takes a positive approach to **renewable energy** (policy EN1) and **energy conservation** (policy EN2) - drawing distinctions between the different types of renewable energy and providing guidance on criteria for their location.

The Region has significant reserves of minerals and aggregates. The approach to extracting (policies M1 & M4) and husbanding (policy M3) these resources is set out in the **minerals** section along side the amount of **aggregates** (policy M2) to be provided, by county area.

Rounding off this chapter, the **Waste** section sets **regional targets** (policy WD1) for **waste reduction and recycling**, outlines the approach to providing new **waste management facilities** (policy WD2), and indicates where these might be needed (tables 4 & 5) and the **criteria** for locating them (policy WD3).





# Transport and Accessibility

Transport is important for the economic and social future of the Region. As the **Regional Transport Strategy (RTS)**, this chapter ensures that **transport policy and investment (policy T1)** supports the Spatial Strategy.



The Strategy seeks to reduce the need to travel, and to make the best use of existing infrastructure, while targeting investment at areas in a joined up way across the different types of transport. The Region's central location also requires the identification of nationally important projects.

The Strategy sets the framework for regional and local transport priorities and investment. It ensures that this is reflected in plans and strategies such as local authorities' **development plans and local transport plans (LTPs)**.

The need to change people's **attitudes to travel** is a central theme, requiring a consistent approach across a range of measures. As a result, **reducing the need to travel** (policy T2) or using alternatives to the car feature strongly, with policies on **walking and cycling** (policy T3), **promoting travel awareness** (policy T4), **public transport** (policy T5) and **strategic park and ride** (policy T6). These policies go hand-in-hand with the approaches to **car parking** (policy T7) and ways of influencing the demand for car travel (**demand management**, policy T8).

This chapter also sets out the approach to investing in and making the most of the Region's strategic **road** (policy T9) and **rail** (paragraph 9.75) **networks**, and the specific schemes and **investment priorities** (policy T12) needed to support them.

The Region's economy needs efficient transport, moving people and freight swiftly around and through the Region. This chapter also sets out the approach to **freight** (policy T10) and the location of related development (policy PA9).

The government's recent Air Transport White Paper requires the section on **airports** (policy T11) to be reviewed. At present the policy highlights the importance of Birmingham International Airport (BIA) as the West Midlands' principal airport, and sets out how proposals to expand BIA will be dealt with. It also sets out the approaches for dealing with the complementary development of other airports and airfields.



# Making it Happen

Making this happen requires the active contribution of many national, regional and local partners and stakeholders. Our combined actions, policies and investment decisions will help deliver the Strategy.



At the outset, this means raising awareness about the Spatial Strategy, and building a wider understanding of its implications. These may be in deciding where to locate a new hospital, invest in property or set up a new business. This user guide is an important tool for a range of interested people.

The Regional Assembly is working with partners to produce a **Regional Implementation Framework**, to help apply the Strategy and to overcome any potential barriers to its success. Work is already under way on four related themes:

- **Awareness** - promoting the Spatial Strategy so that people know what's in it and what it means for them
- **Aligning** other strategies, action plans and programmes to it, ensuring that they are consistent with the Spatial Strategy
- **Actions** - identifying what needs to be done to smooth the path of the Spatial Strategy and remove barriers to implementation
- **Advocacy** - promoting the Spatial Strategy, particularly to central government and other bodies outside the Region.

Local authority **development plans** and **local transport plans** will play a major role in delivering the Spatial Strategy. The Regional Assembly is working with local authorities, ultimately giving an opinion on whether development plans generally conform. Related to this, the Regional Assembly will also give its opinion on **regionally important planning applications**.

The procedures for dealing with general conformity and major planning applications will be published separately.

The Spatial Strategy includes a range of targets and indicators. These are used by the Region's well established **monitoring** systems to check the progress of each policy and the Strategy as a whole, with the **Annual Monitoring Report** being used to fine tune implementation and inform any future review of the Strategy.





## Finally

The West Midlands Spatial Strategy is an important but complex document with legal status. This guide is intended to help you find your way around it, to see whether there might be something of interest in it for you: it has no other status. If you need to know more please refer to the actual document, which you can get from:

The Stationery Office - 0870 600 5522

Alternatively download it from the Government Office for the West Midlands or West Midlands Regional Assembly websites:

[www.go-wm.gov.uk/RPG/stories/storyReader\\$68](http://www.go-wm.gov.uk/RPG/stories/storyReader$68)

[www.wmra.gov.uk/regional\\_planning.htm](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/regional_planning.htm)



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and Regional Transport Networks
- T10 Freight
- T11 Airports

# Useful contacts

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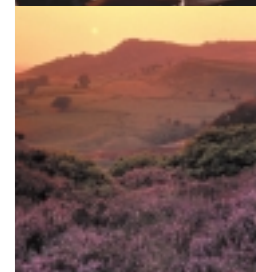
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