

# Introduction

This is the second Annual Monitoring Report of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy<sup>1</sup> published by West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) in its capacity of Regional Planning Body (RPB). In moving towards the evolving requirements required of the RPBs in their monitoring activities, WMRA has further developed its monitoring procedures to ensure a better ability to cope with the demands of spatial monitoring within the new planning system and has moved further towards developing stronger links between monitoring, implementation and review activities. This latter point is

particularly illustrated by the intention within this document to better identify those policies which for one reason or another are either not working or are not being implemented.

The first part of this introduction is intended to give a flavour of the nature of the West Midlands Region and its challenges and opportunities. This is then followed by an assessment of progress made by the Region towards meeting the monitoring demands of the new planning system.

## 1.1 A Pen Picture of the West Midlands Region

This section briefly describes the West Midlands Region and is intended to give an outline of its main characteristics. Whilst this is done via a combination of text and data, it is not intended that this section will provide a complete exposition of available data or a full analysis. Where appropriate, other parts of this document will fulfil this requirement.

The West Midlands Region sits at the heart of England and covers an area of 12,998 sq.km, 70% of which is agricultural. The 2001 Population Census indicated a population of 5.27 million (9% of the UK total), more than half of which live in large conurbation areas. Over 2 million people reside in the Region's rural Counties, which cover three-quarters of the Region's area.

The demography of the West Midlands has a number of characteristics:

- there is a slightly younger age profile in the West Midlands than nationally;
- there is a richer ethnic mix in the Region than nationally with the Major Urban Areas in particular demonstrating this characteristic. Many areas where large ethnic minority communities reside also continue to be associated with high levels of deprivation;
- just over 6% of households are single parent which is similar to the proportion in England and Wales as a whole;
- there continues to be a lower level of educational attainment in the workforce with an over-representation of people qualified to sub-NVQ3 level.

<sup>1</sup> West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy was published as Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG11) in June 2004. Upon enactment of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 in September 2004, RPG11 assumed the status of RSS subject to an immediate partial review (presently under way).

TABLE 1.1: KEY STATISTICS FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

	West Midlands	United Kingdom
Population 2004 (000's) <sup>1</sup>	5,334	59,835
Percentage under 16 <sup>1</sup>	20.1	19.5
Percentage pension age and over <sup>1</sup>	18.9	18.6
Standardised mortality ratio (UK = 100) 2002	100.0	100.0
Infant mortality rate <sup>2</sup>	6.7	5.3
Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ grades A* - C at GCSE or equivalent <sup>3</sup>	53.5	56.5
Economic activity rate (December, 2004 percentages) <sup>4</sup>	78.0	77.5
Employment rate (December, 2004 percentages) <sup>4</sup>	74.2	73.5
Unemployment rate (December, 2004 percentages) <sup>4</sup>	4.9	5.2
Average gross weekly earnings, males in full-time employment 2004 (£)	505.2	556.8
Average gross weekly earnings, females in full-time employment 2004 (£)	384.9	420.2
Gross value added 2003 (£billion)	77.3	951.7
Gross value added per head index 2003 (UK = 100)	91.0	100.0
Total business sites 2003 (000's)	210.8	2,545.9
Average dwelling price mid-2005 (£) <sup>5</sup>	161,076	194,589
Motor cars currently licensed 2004 (000's)	2,554	25,754
Fatal and serious accidents on roads (rates per 100,000 population) <sup>6</sup>	54	59
Recorded crime rate 2003/4 (notifiable offences per 10,000 population) <sup>5</sup>	11,336	11,308
Average gross weekly household income 2001/2 - 2002/3 (£)	483	584
Average gross weekly household expenditure 2001/2 - 2002/3 (£)	363.5	402.5
Households in receipt of Income Support/Working Families Tax Credit 2002/3 (percentages) <sup>6</sup>	19	17

<sup>1</sup> Population figures are mid-year population estimates. Pension ages in men aged 65 and over and women aged 60 and over.

<sup>2</sup> Death of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births.

<sup>3</sup> Figure labelled as UK relates to England.

<sup>4</sup> Working age men 16-64 and women 16-59.

<sup>5</sup> Figures labelled as UK relate to England and Wales.

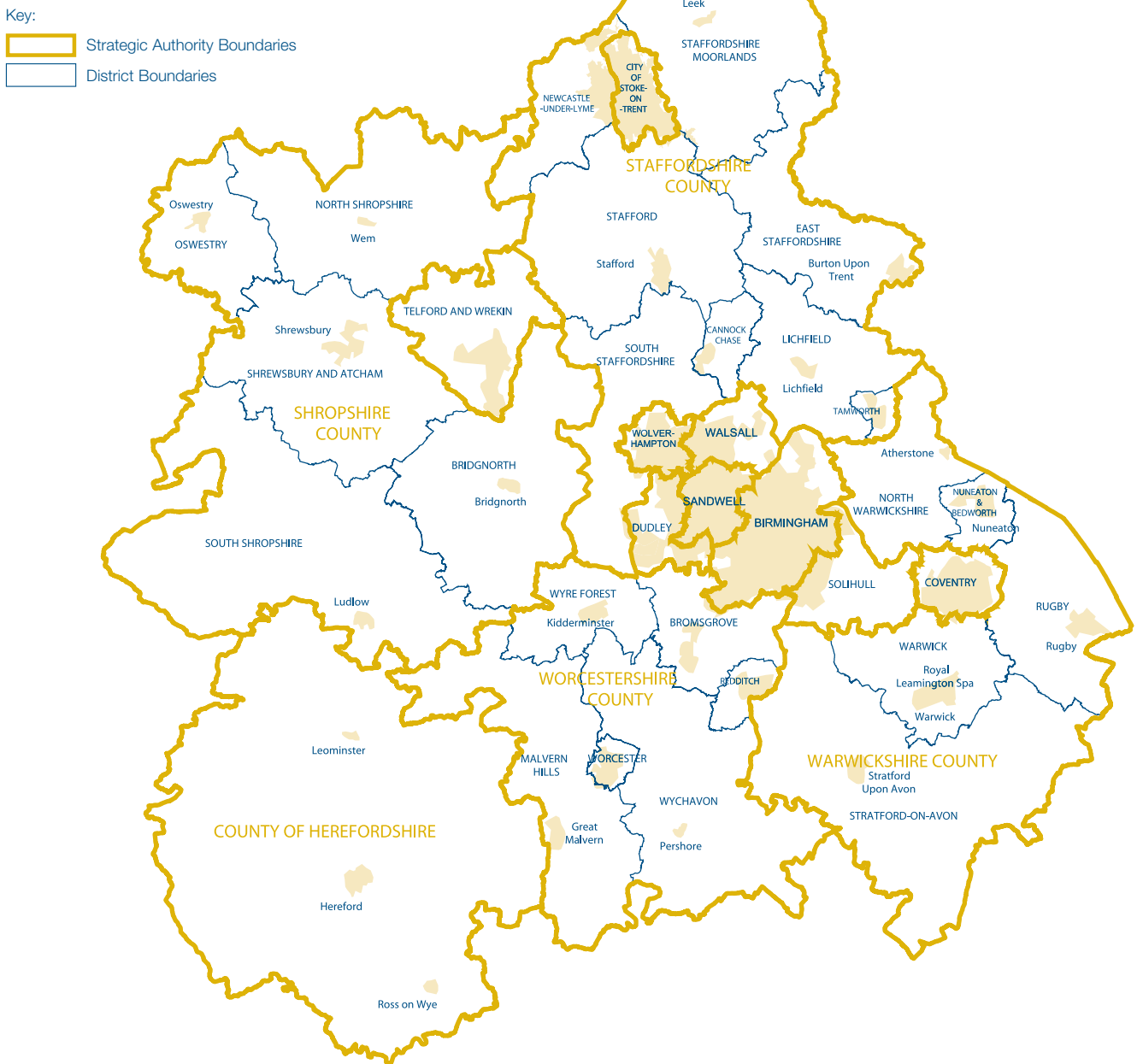
<sup>6</sup> Figures labelled as UK relate to Great Britain.

In administrative terms, within the Region, there are four Shire Counties, three Unitary Authorities and seven Metropolitan Authorities (together defined as the Strategic

Authorities). Within the Shire Counties a total of twenty four Shire District Authorities are contained. These are shown by Map 1.

Map 1: The West Midlands Region

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The West Midlands is at the heart of the country's road and rail network: motorways linking the North with the South East and South West meet in the Birmingham and Coventry area; the main west coast line between London and the North West of England and Scotland passes

through Birmingham and Coventry. The Region also has a light rail system, Midland Metro, which serves part of Birmingham and the Black Country. Birmingham International Airport, the UK's fifth largest is situated 4.5 miles to the South-East of Birmingham.

Whilst more widely perceived as an industrial region, the West Midlands is home to five Areas of Outstanding Beauty and part of the Peak District National Park. It offers diverse cultural experiences including the Ironbridge World Heritage Site in Shropshire and the unique assets of Shakespeare Country in Warwickshire, as well as 32,000 listed buildings and many historic houses, parks and major sporting facilities.

Over the past two decades, the West Midlands economy has undergone significant restructuring. Consequent to this, since 1995, the West Midlands Region has lost over 140,000 jobs in manufacturing industries. The sector still remains a very important element in the economy, accounting for 18% of all regional employment and 21% of regional GDP. At the same time, the service sector has expanded, increasing by over 300,000 jobs and now represents 76% of the Region's employment.

The West Midlands is a major exporting Region, accounting for approximately 7% of the national total by

value. It has also proved successful in attracting foreign direct investment – attracting nearly 2,000 overseas companies to set up facilities here, with the main centres being Birmingham, Coventry and Telford.

Despite this diversification, the Region is still dealing with the economic, social and structural consequences of its past dependence on traditional industries. This is reflected in its poor performance across a range of indicators. As a result, there are wide regional variations in relative terms of deprivation. Over a quarter of the Region's Super Output Areas (SOAs) fall within the 20% most deprived in England under the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004, 15% fall within the most deprived 10%.

Significant clusters of deprivation exist within the main conurbation areas, but there are also some smaller pockets of deprivation in other districts, including some rural areas. Eighteen of the Region's local authorities have Super Output Areas within the 10% most deprived in England.

## 1.2 Challenges and Opportunities

Under the new planning system, the RSS and LDFs will cover wider social, environmental, economic and physical objectives. This will enable the integration of the Regional Strategies, e.g. the RSS, Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) to deal with the challenges facing the Region. These challenges are summarised below:

### Economy

- To at least maintain the West Midlands economic position relative to other English Regions and to aspire to reduce the differential in GVA between the West Midlands and the Greater South East Regions.
- Within the Region, to bring together opportunities and areas of need with the aim of reducing internal inequalities.
- In the face of continuing economic restructuring to enable a strong balanced economy to evolve.
- To provide an environment able to support and encourage business creation, development and innovation.

### Labour Force

- To enable the creation of greater regional wealth by ensuring high levels of employment and good levels of productivity.
- To create an appropriate workforce able to contribute to the attraction and retention of high value added industry.

- To create a sufficiently appealing employer base to enable the Region to retain and attract from elsewhere graduates and other high quality members of the workforce.

### Physical

- To ensure a sufficiently attractive urban area to stem and ultimately reverse economic and population migration.
- To enable the creation of socially balanced, self contained communities where the need for travel is minimised.
- To ensure everyone has access to decent housing that they are able to afford.
- To reclaim derelict land and to put it back into productive use. Owing to the recent EU Directive, this is particularly difficult/expensive where contamination issues exist.
- To reduce greenfield land take and promote sustainable, previously developed sites for development.
- To ensure that the limited natural resources available to the Region do not suffer as a result of economic pressure.

### Transport

- To impact on attitudes and decisions so that the need to travel is reduced.
- To ensure that public transport becomes an attractive proposition.
- To create a transport infrastructure that will support the need of individuals and business to travel.

- Through the RSS to create an urban environment that is sufficiently attractive to reverse the outflow of migration of people and business from the conurbations and therefore contribute to the reduction in journey lengths.

The implementation priorities of the strategies are geared to have maximum impact on these key challenges and to be increasingly complementary.

### 1.3 Progress Towards a New Monitoring System

Whilst perhaps not the most immediately obvious challenge placed upon Regional Assemblies and Local Authorities via the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA), significantly greater emphasis is now placed on the activity and outputs of monitoring and the support that it offers to its associated activities of strategy implementation and review. This emphasis is reflected through both Regulations and the requirement for increasingly demanding monitoring activity which is being expressed through, for example, the current RSS Core Output Indicators (ODPM March 2005)<sup>2</sup> and the recently published RSS Good Practice Guidance<sup>3</sup>. The most visible aspect of these requirements is the production of an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) by Regional Assemblies.

It is important for West Midlands Regional Assembly to respond positively to these challenges since robust monitoring is essential to establish what is happening now, what may happen in the future and then compare these trends against existing policies and targets to determine what needs to be done. As such monitoring helps to address questions like:

- Are policies achieving their objectives and in particular are they delivering sustainable development?
- Have policies had unintended consequences?
- Are the assumptions and objectives behind policies still relevant?
- Are the targets being achieved?

Monitoring provides a crucial feedback loop within the cyclical process of policy-making.

At the time of the drafting of this report, the new Good Practice Guidance for the preparation of regional AMRs was still being developed. Therefore the basis for this document's preparation is:

- the broad approach adopted for the preparation of the 2004 AMR (published February 2005). This has been adjusted to take account of feedback received to that document and emerging messages arising from discussions with ODPM in respect of the forthcoming guidance along with the principles expressed through the LDF Monitoring Good Practice Guidance released in 2005;
- emerging good practice from within the Region and experience gained;
- the March 2005 ODPM Core Output Indicators. These may be reviewed in the future.

This edition of the AMR represents an enhancement over the 2004 AMR (published February 2005) achieved through the attempt to identify policies not being implemented and to consider what the Regional Assembly intends to do to rectify the situation. This development is in response to a specific requirement of the regulations which accompanied the PCPA.

As the implication of the new Good Practice Guide and any new Core Output Indicators become apparent, these will be considered by WMRA with a view, where possible, to accommodating their requirements. Particular challenges will be posed to the monitoring system as we consider how to take forward the linkages with monitoring required by recent guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisals.

<sup>2</sup> RSS Core Output Indicators: [http://www.odpm.gov.uk/embedded\\_object.asp?id=1050746](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/embedded_object.asp?id=1050746) (URL correct at 1/11/05).

<sup>3</sup> RSS Monitoring: A Good Practice Guide. ODPM January 2006.

## 1.4 The Need for Spatial Monitoring

A feature of the new planning system is that Development Documents will be 'spatial'. This approach, reflecting its sustainable development origin, embraces wider social, environmental, economic and physical objectives rather than being focused purely on land-use. As such the RSS and Local Development Frameworks:

- provide a mechanism for delivering sustainable development objectives by addressing social, economic and environmental issues and relating them to the development and use of land;
- consider the needs, issues and aspirations of communities and the key spatial drivers of change within an area;
- adopt an integrated approach which informs and takes account of other strategies and policy;
- facilitate and encourage new forms of partnership with a range of bodies including communities, stakeholders and commercial interests; and
- focus upon implementation, setting out agreed delivery mechanisms that have regard to the investment and operational plans of relevant infrastructure and service providers. An RSS must therefore include an implementation plan which sets out for each policy and priority proposal how, by whom and when it is to be implemented.

The demands of spatially-focused monitoring are more extensive than those historically encountered and are being addressed by WMRA through a range of initiatives including:

- Moving towards tighter deadlines for the provision of

monitoring data by the Local Authorities.

- Moving towards a system employing point data so that the use of Geographic Information System by WMRA and Local Authorities can be maximised and the success (or otherwise) of spatial policies assessed.
- Moving towards a more rapid assimilation of data as it becomes available from local authorities and other partners into the monitoring system and process.
- Assimilating where possible parallel requirements of other strategies (e.g. RES and RHS) and demands (e.g. SEA, SA) to maximise benefit of monitoring spend.
- Increased collaboration with stakeholders and regional partners to ensure that a full range of data sources are employed.
- Increasingly active consultation with stakeholders, Local Authorities and sub-regions to ensure implications of the monitoring activity are properly picked up and reflected in the analysis.
- Closer links between monitoring, implementation and review to ensure that monitoring outputs are fully assessed and their implications fully appreciated and acted upon by the Regional Assembly.

The timetable permitted by Government for the preparation of the AMR is extremely tight since the document, which has a deadline for production of 28 February, is required to incorporate data and analysis for the preceding year ending 31 March. In view of this, and the space limitations within this document West Midlands Regional Assembly will continue with its practice of producing at least two supplementary monitoring reports every year. These permit a more detailed consideration of specific policy areas.

## 1.5 Review of the West Midlands RSS Monitoring Framework

In common with other Regional Strategies within the West Midlands, the RSS has a focus on the twin objectives of Urban and Rural Renaissance. The RSS currently proposes that these should be monitored via the Headline Indicators which are summarised in Chapter 10 of that document. The consequent analysis is summarised in Chapter two of the previous and current AMR.

It is recognised by regional partners that there is need for a more robust approach to the wider contextual monitoring and the outcomes that might be anticipated

from the urban and rural renaissance policies. Therefore a contextual monitoring study has been commissioned one output of which will be the proposal of a revised monitoring framework for the assessment of progress towards the policies connected with these objectives. It is hoped that this study will help influence future activity in this area of monitoring in the West Midlands. Further, that along with the new guidance and evolving practice of monitoring in the West Midlands described above, it will contribute to a revised Monitoring Framework forming part of Phase 2 of the current RSS Partial Review.

## 1.6 Structure of this Document

This document is broadly arranged around the structure of the RSS. Chapter 2 examines the key messages from the monitoring of the RSS policies and is intended to move towards an assessment of the Headline Indicators (RSS, Chapter 10, p133) and gives a flavour of the progress being made towards the policies in the urban and rural renaissance chapters. Subsequent chapters look at policies contained within the Topic Chapters of:

- Communities for the Future
- Prosperity for All
- Quality of the Environment
- Transport & Accessibility

Each of the four Topic Chapters described above are formatted around an assessment of progress toward the policies (or clusters of policies) contained within that chapter. The tables below define the policies contained within each chapter and where, in the following pages, the data and its interpretation can be found. More detailed tables of supporting information are included in the Appendix on the CD within the back cover of this report.

Annex 1 lists the West Midlands Spatial Strategy Objectives and Annex 2 gives the data required for the ODPM's RSS Core Output Indicators (ODPM, March 2005).

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