

RSS (RPG11) Revision process

Revised Management Plan

Updated on 22 October 2007

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In approving the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands in June 2004, the Secretary of State identified a number of policy issues that needed to be addressed in future review/revisions to the document. The 'topic areas' involved are set out in paragraph 1.33 of that document.
- 1.2 In considering the Secretary of State's requirement, the Regional Planning Partnership of the West Midlands Regional Assembly (as the Regional Planning Body) has agreed that any future revision should be brought forward on a 'multi-track' basis and that the first phase of this process should focus on the Black Country Study.
- 1.3 The aim of this outline Management Plan is to demonstrate how the phases of the RSS Revision are also intended to be brought forward and how respective work programmes of different phases will inter-relate.

2. Principles

- 2.1 It is intended that any revisions to the RSS should lead to the further development of policies to support the underlying strategy – NOT a review of fundamental underlying principles. The approved Spatial Strategy already demonstrates the approach that the Region must take if it is to move in a more sustainable long term direction. This focuses on the restructuring and renaissance of the Major Urban Areas with similar efforts aimed at meeting the renaissance needs of rural areas. These principles will therefore remain to the fore in any revision.
- 2.2 In bringing forward detailed proposals for the RSS revision, the Regional Planning Body remains committed to those same principles which were adopted at the start of the previous review process:
 - a. to develop a programme and working practices that are 'open, transparent and inclusive';
 - b. to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are integrated throughout the process.
- 2.3 These same principles have now been formally embedded in Government guidance in the form of PPS11 and the specific requirements in this guidance will therefore need to be taken into account in bringing forward detailed proposals for this current RSS revision process.

2.4 All supporting material and technical studies, minutes, membership and terms of reference of key meetings will be placed on the WMRA website.

3. **An 'outline' Management Plan**

3.1 Over the coming years, the Regional Planning Body envisages that revisions to the RSS will in practice come forward on a regular phased basis. This will allow the Secretary of State's requirements to review identified issues to be met but will also provide flexibility to respond to other issues as they arise.

3.2 The current '3 phase' revision programme is identified as follows:

Phase 1 – Black Country Study

- Launch – February 2005
- Options stage - November 2005
- Development of Preferred Option – Winter 2005/06
- Submission to Secretary of State – 31st May 2006
- Examination in Public 9th January 2007

Phase 2

- Launch – 7th November 2005
- Options stage – January 2007
- Development of Preferred Option – up to September 2007
- Submission to Secretary of State – December 2007

Phase 3

- Draft Project Plan launch – November 2007
- Final Project Plan launch – Spring 2008
- Spatial Options launch – December 2008
- Preferred Option launch – Summer 2009

More detailed timetables are set out in the Project Plans for the three phases which can be seen at www.wmra.go.uk .

3.3 Details of the issues to be examined in each of the above phases and the implications for the management of the process are further considered below.

4. **Phase 1 – Black Country Study**

4.1 The details of the issues to be examined in the Study are identified in the Project Plan launched in February 2005 which sets out:

- a. a more detailed programme and timetable;
- b. the proposed approach to community engagement;
- c. the approach to the incorporation of the requirements for Sustainability Appraisal within the process
- d. an outline of technical work being undertaken.

4.2 Further details are not therefore set out here but it should be noted that the approach to be taken in the Study, particularly with regard to community engagement and the lessons learnt from this, will have implications for subsequent phases of the RSS revision.

4.3 As the programme for this first phase overlaps with the pre-planning for the second phase (e.g. the undertaking of key technical work and research), this inter-relationship is further addressed below.

5. Phase 2 Revision

5.1 The details of the issues to be examined in Phase Two have been separately identified in the Project Plan, launched in February 2006 which sets out:

- a. a more detailed programme and timetable;
- b. the proposed approach to community engagement in the Statement of Public Participation
- c. the approach to the integration of the requirements for Sustainability Appraisal within the process
- d. an outline of technical work being undertaken.

5.2 As the Black Country Study (Phase 1) is being developed ahead of Phase 2, the RPB has agreed some general principles for managing this relationship. In particular, it has agreed that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, where a policy decision has been made by the RPB in Phase 1, then this will act as a fixed input to Phase 2. Moreover, in relation to background studies, all technical work available (i.e. whether from Phases 1 or 2) will be taken into account in coming to policy decisions in either Phase. An explanatory note was submitted to the Phase One Revision EIP Panel in October 2006, and is available on the website.

5.3 It should be noted that the approach to be taken in Phase Two, particularly with regard to community engagement and the lessons learnt from this, will have implications for subsequent phases of the RSS revision. As the programme for this second phase overlaps with the pre-planning for the third phase (e.g. the undertaking of key technical work and research), this inter-relationship is further addressed below.

6. Phase Three

6.1 By implication, those issues identified by the Secretary of State not included within Phase 2 will be addressed in this third phase of the RSS revision. A Draft Project Plan for Phase Three was agreed by the Regional Planning Partnership on 22 October 2007 for launch in November 2007. The Draft Project Plan sets out

- a. a more detailed programme and timetable;
- b. the proposed approach to community engagement in the Statement of Public Participation
- c. the approach to the integration of the requirements for Sustainability Appraisal within the process

d. an outline of technical work being undertaken.

6.2 The Draft Project Plan identifies the following topic areas for Phase Three of the RSS Revision:

- **Rural services:** To identify and prioritise the services that are critical to the sustainability of rural communities, and to identify mechanisms for promoting their provision;
- **Housing:** To identify the number of pitches required for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople;
- **Culture:** To identify and address gaps in the provision of international, national, regional and sub-regionally significant cultural assets;
- **Environment:** To further develop environmental policies in the WMRSS, including flood risk, air quality, renewable energy and Green Belt;
- **Minerals:** To develop policies on safeguarding mineral resources and the future supplies of construction aggregates and brick clay.

7. Sustainability Appraisal

7.1 Sustainability Appraisal/SEA is an integrated part of the Revision process. Details can be found in the Project Plans for each phase.

8. Rural Proofing

8.1 Phase Two Revision was subject to Rural Proofing at the Spatial Options stage, more information can be found on the website.

9. The Role of Strategic Authorities

9.1 The Planning Act allows for Strategic Authorities to provide the RPB with advice with regard to the development of 'first detailed proposals' in the development of RSS revisions where this involves the development of sub-regional policies and proposals for their area.

9.2 Regarding Phase Two: Following consultation with the Strategic Authorities to explore the approach that they will wish to take to this matter, the Planning Partnership decided to follow an informal route which takes into account the formal requirements. Briefs were been drafted by the RPB through RSS Policy Leads and the RSS Task Group during Winter 2005 and were issued on the 16th February 2006.

9.3 The Strategic Authorities had 12 weeks to respond and the responses helped to inform and develop the Options stage of the Revision process. Following the formal consultation period on the Options, the Strategic Authorities will also be closely involved in developing the Preferred Option.

9.4 It is anticipated that the same process will be applied for Phase Three.

10. 'Smart Growth – Midlands Way'

- 10.1 Proposals relating to this new initiative are currently emerging. For the West Midlands, these will be consistent with the approved Regional Spatial Strategy and will focus on the implementation of key themes within this.
- 10.2 Depending on the output from the three revision phases, there may be some implications for the 'Smart Growth – Midlands Way' these implications will be addressed in the Spatial Options stage.

11. The City Region

- 11.1 A City Region initiative is being promoted by the Metropolitan authorities of the Black Country, Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry and Telford. Along with the development of a similar initiative in North Staffordshire, this is being supported by the WMRA. Work is still going on to determine the exact nature of these initiatives but broadly they will aim to improve strategic co-ordination, prioritisation and decision making. It is conceived as being consistent with and helping to deliver the existing RSS. Any development aspirations arising from the City Region that have significant implications for the Spatial Strategy will need to be tested through the RSS revision process.

12. Partnership Arrangements and Working Structures

- 12.1 The Regional Assembly is committed to organising the RSS Revision process in an open, inclusive and transparent way. More information about structures are detailed in the Project Plans.
- 12.2 In the previous RPG Review process, these principles were supported both through a number of extensive consultation stages but also through appropriate working structures; including the establishment of a series of Partnership Reference Groups.
- 12.3 Since then, the Regional Assembly has developed a series of formal Partnerships to support its various functions and these groups should be fully engaged in the RSS revision process, although other forms of partnership working will also be appropriate to ensure that there are opportunities for all interests to fully engage.
- 12.4 In the case of the Black Country Study, the Project Plan identifies how the above principles will be achieved and includes a diagram showing how the various groups involved in the process will inter-relate and interact.
- 12.5 Regarding Phase Two and Three, the Assembly Partnerships have set up RSS Reference Groups to inform the Revision process. In all cases, every effort will be made to ensure that an acceptable balance is achieved within these various groups between different interests. The RSS Reference Groups will report to the RSS

Task Group. All notes of the RSS Reference Groups will be placed on the WMRA website.

- 12.6 The RSS Steering Group has been set up in accordance with the requirements of the PPS11 and consists of:

Richard Carr (Chair) – Wolverhampton City Council
David Marr – Government Office for the West Midlands
Rose Poulter – West Midlands Regional Assembly
Peter Langley – Other Stakeholders Group
Tim Gebbels – Advantage West Midlands
Roger Stone – Business Sector Group
Meredith Evans – Chair of the RSS Task Group
Ron Hilton – Chair of the Regional Advisory Group & County Councils
Paul Watson – Vice Chair of RAG & Metropolitan Authorities
Malcolm Cook – Highways Agency

- 12.7 The RSS Task Group reports to the RSS Steering Group and is chaired by Meredith Evans, Telford and Wrekin Council. On occasion the RSS Task Group sets up task and finish groups for example the RSS/RES Working Group. The same principles of open and transparent working apply to such groups.