

RSS UPDATE

Phase Two Revision

Issue 2 - August 2006

Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Update - your source for news and information on the development of the RSS Revision.

This newsletter focuses on the progress of Phase Two. Visit www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=56 for further information.

Phase Two Headline News

- Adjustment to the Timetable agreed.
- Development of Spatial Options in progress.
- Spatial Options public consultation to take place in early January 2007. (*Launch Event - date/venue TBC*)

The Overall RSS Revision

The Regional Spatial Strategy was published in June 2004. At that time, the Secretary of State supported the principles of the strategy but suggested several issues that needed to be developed further. This Revision process is in three phases:

- Phase One** - The RSS Draft Phase One Revision was submitted to the Secretary of State at the end of May 2006. The Assembly has accepted the Black Country Study as the supporting document. The Examination in Public is due to begin on 9th January 2007. For further information visit www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk
- Phase Two** - Launched in November 2005, issues being examined include housing figures, employment land, centres, transport and waste. An eight week public consultation on the Spatial Options for future development across the Region will begin in early January 2007.
- Phase Three** - Due to begin in 2007, this will look at critical rural services, recreational provision, regionally significant environmental issues and the development of a framework for provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites. Keep an eye on www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=54 for more details.

Adjustment to the Phase Two Timetable

On 28th July 2006, the Regional Planning Partnership agreed the following adjustment to the Phase Two timetable:

Spatial Options public consultation	January 2007
Development of Preferred Option	March 2007 onwards
Submission to Secretary of State	December 2007

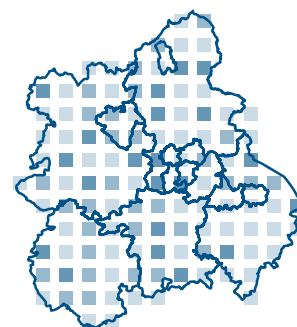
Key reasons for the adjustment were as follows:

- To provide more time to consider the implications of the revised household projections (published by Government to help assess and plan for the Country's housing needs), which were only published in April 2006 and were far higher than expected.
- To allow further time for discussion with the West Midlands Strategic Authorities regarding their planning advice to the Regional Planning Body (RPB).
- To allow for greater alignment with the Regional Economic Strategy Review timetable and policy formulation.

Phase Two Revision:

What has happened so far?

- The Draft Project Plan launched in November 2005.
- The Final Project Plan was published in March 2006, following a public consultation.
- The Assembly (as Regional Planning Body) sent out Section 4(4) Briefs to the 14 Strategic Authorities in the West Midlands in February 2006. The Briefs set out the topic areas that the Assembly was seeking sub-regional advice on. The briefs and returned advice can be seen at www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=208



What is happening now?

- The responses to the Section 4(4) Briefs are being used by the Assembly to develop the Spatial Options.
- RSS Reference Groups covering subjects such as: Housing, Health, Transport, Urban/Rural, Environment, Equality and Diversity, Culture, Europe and Business are meeting in mid September to feed their views into the drafting of the Spatial Options. For more information on the Reference Groups please visit www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=133

What happens next?

- A public consultation on the Spatial Options will take place in early January 2007 for eight weeks. (*Launch Event - date/venue TBC*)
- Consultation responses will be analysed and used to inform the development of a Preferred Option setting out revised policies and proposals for the RSS relating to the issues addressed in Phase Two. This will be the option that will be submitted to the Secretary of State as the draft Revision to the RSS in December 2007.
- Once the Preferred Option has been submitted, there will be another chance for you to have your say in a consultation led by the Government Office for the West Midlands.
- An Examination in Public (EIP) will follow the submission. It provides an opportunity for discussing and testing the Revision before a panel appointed by the Secretary of State. This is expected to take place in mid 2008.

How can I get involved?

The West Midlands Regional Assembly is committed to preparing the RSS on the basis of partnership working and community involvement. A Statement of Public Participation, setting out how the Assembly will engage with regional stakeholders and the public, is included within the Project Plan which can be downloaded here:

www.wmra.gov.uk/download.asp?id=872

Getting involved with the Spatial Options Consultation

- Everyone on our consultation database will receive a copy of the Spatial Options as well as an invitation to attend the launch event.
- You will then have eight weeks to send us your comments on the Spatial Options (either by post or via the website) and help shape the future of the Region.

Regional Economic Strategy Review (RES)

The Assembly is working closely with Advantage West Midlands to ensure that the Revision processes for the RSS and the West Midlands Economic Strategy, which sets out what the Region needs to do to improve its economic performance, are complementary.

- The 18 month RES Review process was launched in March 2006.
- Four evidence base strands of the RES Review are now complete.
- AWM have commissioned Regeneris Consulting to take forward the policy development stage of the Review.
- All reports should shortly be available on the website: www.advantagewm.co.uk/wmesreview.html

And finally...

- The Rural Services Review 2006 has just been published by DEFRA – it identifies key standards that affect people living and working in the countryside. This will act as an important input into Phase Two. Download at: www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/services/rural-services-review-2006.pdf
- The Local Housing Market Areas Study is nearing completion. Its main objective is to advise the RPB on implications for the development of strategic planning policy as to how local housing market areas relate to each other both now and in the future. Contact: ada.wells@staffordshire.gov.uk

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All consultation documents and technical work regarding the RSS Revision can be found on our website: www.wmra.gov.uk

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