

# RSS UPDATE

## Phase Two Revision

### Issue 1 - February 2006

#### Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Update. Your source for news and information on the development of the RSS Phase Two Revision.

These newsletters are designed to inform those interested both on the progress and of opportunities to be involved in development of the strategy. Further updates will be distributed at key stages in the process.

#### Headline News

- Consultation on Phase Two Draft Project Plan complete.
- Section 4/4 Briefs agreed (This is a process of obtaining sub-regional advice from the strategic authorities, in order to develop the RSS Revision).
- Consultation on Sustainability Appraisal - Draft Scoping Report (27th February - 3rd April 2006).

#### The Revision as a Whole

When the Spatial Strategy was published in 2004, the Secretary of State supported the principles of the Strategy but suggested several issues which needed to be developed further. Given the range of matters to be considered, it was agreed that the Revision should be looked at in three phases.

- **Phase One** in the form of the Black Country Study, is well underway. The Study is developing and testing a plan for long term change and development of the whole of the Black Country. For more information visit: [www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk) or call 0121 569 2396.
- **Phase Two** was launched in November 2005 and is examining housing figures, employment land, transport and waste. This newsletter focuses on the progress of Phase Two.
- **Phase Three** is due to begin in Winter 2006 and will cover regionally significant environmental issues, critical rural services, recreational provision, gypsies and travellers plus any other areas subsequently identified as requiring Revision. Keep an eye on [www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=54](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=54) for more details.

#### Phase Two Revision:

##### What has happened so far?

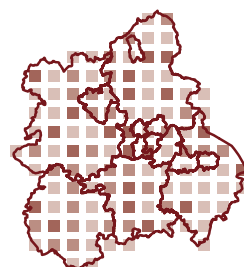
- The Phase Two Draft Project Plan was launched on the 7th November 2005 with the consultation period running until 31st December 2005. The Project Plan sets out how the Phase Two Revision process will be carried out and identifies which topic areas will be considered.
- All the consultation responses were thoroughly analysed and a Final Project Plan will be published by March 2006 and distributed to everyone on our consultation database. A summary report, highlighting the key changes will soon be available on the WMRA website.

##### What is happening now?

- The West Midlands Regional Assembly (as Regional Planning Body) has sent out Briefs to the Strategic Authorities in the West Midlands. The Briefs set out the topic areas that the Assembly is seeking sub-regional advice on. The responses will then be used to develop the Options (a range of proposals that will help guide future development across the West Midlands.) To view the Briefs see [www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=56](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=56)
- A number of RSS Reference groups have been set up. They will be overseeing specific pieces of technical work that will contribute to the Options stage.

##### What happens next?

- The response to the Briefs are expected in mid May 2006, this will be followed by a 3 month period developing the Options.
- A public consultation on the Options is due to commence in September 2006.
- Following the formal consultation period the Strategic Authorities will be closely involved in developing the Preferred Option in November 2006.
- Phase Two of the RSS Revision is due to be submitted to the Secretary of State in June 2007.



## ↙ Sustainability Issues

Sustainable development is central to the new planning system. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Revision has to be carried out in order to promote sustainable development through better integration of social, environmental and economic issues. An SA Steering Group, chaired by Bernard Doyle of Sustainability West Midlands has been established to guide the process.

In November 2005 Urban and Rural Sustainability (URSUS) consultants were appointed to undertake the SA on behalf of the West Midlands Regional Assembly.

### Consultation

**A Sustainability Appraisal – Draft Scoping Report** (which assesses the broad environmental, social and economic characteristics of the Region and identifies key issues that the SA and RSS Revision should address) has been produced and you have an opportunity to comment during a five week consultation period, **27th February - 3rd April 2006**. For more information visit [www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=56](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=56) or contact Chris Blakeley: [c.blakeley@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:c.blakeley@wmra.gov.uk)

## ↙ 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 Phase Two Draft Project Plan and can be downloaded via the Assembly website.

### West Midlands Regional Assembly

Regional Partnership Centre  
Albert House  
Quay Place  
92-93 Edward Street  
Birmingham B1 2RA

Tel: 0121 245 0200  
Fax: 0121 245 0201  
Email: [rss@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:rss@wmra.gov.uk)

[www.wmra.gov.uk](http://www.wmra.gov.uk)

## ↙ And finally...

### Other important news:

- ↘ The West Midlands Annual Monitoring Report will be published at the end of February 2006. The Report will highlight the progress of RSS policies.  
Contact Paul Bayliss: [p.bayliss@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:p.bayliss@wmra.gov.uk)
- ↘ The Rural Services Scoping Study (an early piece of research to inform Phase 3) will be published very shortly.  
Contact Kate Docherty: [k.docherty@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:k.docherty@wmra.gov.uk)
- ↘ Comments are welcomed on a revised Regional Sustainable Development Framework (which sets out sustainable development objectives for the Region and shows how they can be incorporated into policies, strategies and plans.) The consultation period finishes on 27th March 2006.  
Contact Fran Austins: [f.austins@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:f.austins@wmra.gov.uk)
- ↘ The West Midlands Regional Assembly in conjunction with the planning Cooperative, has developed a suite of training modules focusing on the development aspects of the new planning system. For more information contact Tim Williams: [t.williams@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:t.williams@wmra.gov.uk)

All consultation documents and technical work regarding the RSS Revision can be found on our website. However, if you do not have access to the internet please get in touch and we will send you paper copies via post.

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