

Black Country Core Strategy

ISSUES & OPTIONS LAUNCH EVENT REPORT

Wednesday 11th July 2007
Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton

Back Ground/Context:

This event was used to launch the Issues and Options consultation on the Black Country Core Strategy. Its purpose was to introduce stakeholders to the work the four Black Country authorities had produced and the questions and involvement we needed from them to help shape the strategy.

The format of the event was fairly structured and involved the presentation of the key information emerging in the Issues and Options document. It also allowed for a question and answer session, the results of this are contained in this report. The event was attended by 52 people.

Contents:

1. Introduction and Welcome
2. Issues and Option Presentation
3. Questions and Answers Session

1. Introduction and Welcome – Councillor Bob Badham, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Chair of Black Country Joint Advisory Group
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“I would like to start by welcoming you all to the light-house for this key event in the development of the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country. I hope this morning proves useful to you in finding out more about the Joint Core Strategy. The event today is a chance to share with you the work we have been doing on what we think might be some of the key issues that the Joint Core Strategy needs to address and what some of the options might to address those issues.

This morning is only part of what has been, and will be, a continuous process of engagement and consultation on the Joint Core Strategy. Some of you I am sure will have been at the launch event we had at the Hawthorns in December last year, and since then we have had further events either jointly or locally. We have listened to what we have heard at these events and studied comments that have been submitted to us. This has been important in helping to shape the Issues and Options document

I hope you will find time to look in detail at the Issues and Options document we have published over the next few days and weeks and let us have your views by August 10th. Whilst as I mentioned earlier there will be other opportunities to help shape the Joint Core Strategy, we do need your views at this early stage of preparation as part of the front loading process. In addition to today's event local events have also been set up in each of the local authorities.

I would just say that as Chair of the Joint Advisory Group that has been set up to coordinate at member level the development of the Joint Core Strategy I am really pleased at the way the officers and members of the four local authorities have pulled together to prepare the Issues and Option document. I think this sets us up well for the later stages of the Joint Core Strategy. We are of course building upon the approach of the Joint Core Strategy on the Black Country Study and the RSS Phase 1 Review and this has given us an excellent starting point in terms of a direction of travel, some agreed objectives and a comprehensive evidence base.

It is important that we all recognise that the Joint Core Strategy is a new type of plan and that it has to be spatial in its approach rather than just looking at land use. It will have to demonstrate the way housing, transport, the economy, employment, education, health and the environment come together. This is a real challenge for us all but I do think we have a better chance to make this work by doing this jointly for the Black Country. All of you here today will be important in making this Joint Core Strategy work.

You will now be seeing a presentation from Richard Wassell. Richard is one of the Lead Planning Officers on the Joint Core Strategy and is vice chair of the officers steering group. In his presentation Richard will highlight the Issues and Options that we have set out in the document.

We will then provide you with the opportunity to ask questions and give any initial feedback on what you have heard.

I do hope that you find this event useful and that you continue to work with us as we move forward later this year to prepare the next stage of the Joint Core Strategy – the Preferred Options stage”.

2. The Issues and Options – presentation by Richard Wassell, Head of Planning Policy and Urban Design, Wolverhampton City Council
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Black Country Core Strategy Issues & Options

Richard Wassell
Head of Planning Policy and Urban Design
Wolverhampton City Council



Vision

- Starting point – RSS and the Black Country Study
- 30 Year Vision
- 4 broad objectives
 - Reverse out-migration
 - Raise income levels
 - Create an inclusive & cohesive society
 - Transform the Black Country environment
- Spatial Strategy
- RSS Phase 2 Review
- Link to Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)



Role of the Core Strategy

- Respond to climate change
- Define regeneration corridors
- Transform the environment
- Set out broad amount & location of housing development
- Protect high quality local employment land
- Define role of centres
- Identify need for community facilities & infrastructure
- Develop strategy to address transport issues
- Address minerals and waste issues



What are the main issues?

What are the main choices and options?

The Environment

- Environmental transformation
- Climate Change
- Minerals and Waste



The Economy

- Need for land use restructuring
- High quality sites for high technology businesses, manufacturing and logistics
- Local employment areas
- Office growth

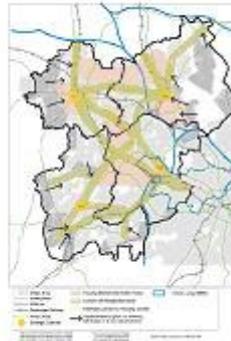


Centres

- 4 Strategic Centres
- RSS Phase 1 requirements
- Managing additional growth
- Other centres – meeting local needs

Housing

- Balanced mix of open market and affordable housing
- Between 59-600 – 66,400 new dwellings (gross)
- Significant change in land use patterns required
- Housing renewal
- Attracting higher income households

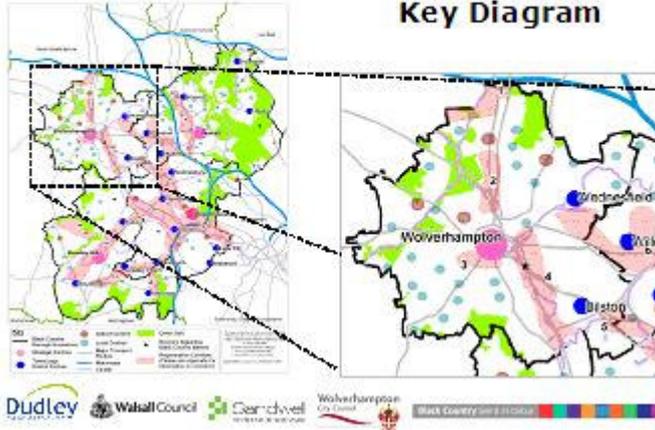


Transport and Accessibility

- Getting to and around the Black Country
- Accessibility to employment areas
- Meeting the transport needs of the Strategic Centres



Key Diagram

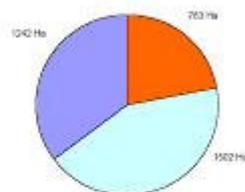


Key Spatial Options

- Retention of high quality employment land
- Retention of existing local employment land
- Development of new homes to meet targets
- The right type of houses in the right locations to meet balanced need
- Environmental transformation
- Provision of local facilities

Spatial Option 1

- Concentrate housing development at higher densities in accessible locations
- Safeguard local employment to a greater degree



Option 1 - continued

Advantages

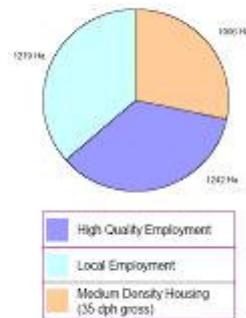
- Helps protect local firms and safeguard lower skilled jobs in medium term
- Helps to meet housing need for local people by providing smaller, more affordable homes
- Because sites would cover smaller area, they could take less time to assemble and develop
- Maximum use is made of accessible locations providing greatest opportunity for public transport use

Disadvantages

- The need to achieve high density housing may compromise ability to create high quality housing environment to attract AB households
- The more local employment land that is retained, the greater the risk that 'bad neighbour' uses will limit the quality of design of the new housing developments

Spatial Option 2

- Housing development at generally lower densities is spread out throughout the regeneration corridors
- Safeguards local employment to a lesser degree



Option 2 - continued

Advantages

- Lower densities and greater freedom for high quality design means an increased chance of attracting AB households
- There is increased scope for major environmental transformation

Disadvantages

- Less protection of local jobs
- Greater dependence on high quality employment land and new office uses in the Centres
- Could take longer to assemble and develop
- Public transport would be less able to serve new housing

Example – Bilston Corridor

- Potential redevelopment of poorer quality employment land for residential-led mixed use development
- Focus around canal corridor
- Major opportunities to improve existing open space
- Retention of significant areas of local employment land to provide jobs for local communities
- Potential to spread regeneration benefits to surrounding areas
- Coordinate with potential housing market intervention activity



What are the particular issues you see facing your area?

Next Steps

- Consider response to Issues & Options paper
- Feedback response, Autumn 2007
- Consult on Preferred Options, January 2008
- Continuous process/engagement
- Updates available on website:
<http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk/>

1. Tim Sunter – Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership

- Q. a) What is the relationship between the Core Strategy and Area Action Plans, for example the Brierley Hill AAP?
b) What happens to the Core Strategy process if there is delay on the Regional Spatial Strategy review? What are the pitfalls between the Core Strategy and RSS timetables?

- A. a) Consultation on the preferred options for the Core Strategy will take place in January 2008 with submission in the Autumn. The Brierley Hill AAP and other planned AAPs are following a similar timetable to the Core Strategy.
b) We do not foresee any major pitfalls. The panel report for the Phase 1 RSS review was generally positive. This is a continuous process and we will reassess the timetable if problems arise. It will be kept under review. We have started to look at the implications of the Habitats Directive so that we are not caught out in some way.

2. Izeham Che Dan – RIBA

- Q. In reference to the comment during the presentation that a consequence of Option 1 is that the quality of design may be compromised. Has this been assessed? Have organisations like RIBA been asked to comment on this?

- A. Information gathered to date has indicated that Option 1 may have an impact on the quality of design achievable. The objective of this consultation is to ask these questions. We will be consulting with relevant bodies.

3. Duncan Nimmo – Wolverhampton History and Heritage Society

- Q. a) Pleased that recognition has been given to built heritage and to local character and distinctiveness within the document. However, the role of these needs to be clarified and greater emphasis placed on this. What is the link to objective of transforming the environment? To what extent does the built environment come under this objective e.g. is it included within the Urban Park concept and the Landscape Action Plan?
b) Has the decision over the location and nature of the beacons already been decided?
c) Has there been an analysis of local character?

- A. a) The purpose of the consultation is to ask whether we have the right balance. Have to recognise that the Core Strategy only goes so far and that greater detail will be contained within other local development documents prepared by each authority. The Urban Park concept and the LAP do address some of the issues raised.
b) The beacons are general at this point. More work is needed before a final decision is made.
c) The outcome of the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study will feed directly into the work on the Core Strategy and other plans.

4. Denise Craig – Federation of Small Businesses

Q. Requested a commitment to clarify the position of manufacturing. Small businesses still engaged in manufacture in the Black Country but not at the same level of employment. Must be a balance of employment opportunities. Need to consider manufacturing and smaller businesses. Want commitment to retain significant manufacturing base. Concerned about housing driving small businesses out.

A. We accept this. A balance is to be found between housing and employment and also within employment. Recognising the characteristics of businesses is a key issue.

5. Richard Hammersley - West Midlands Planning Aid Service

Q. Support the idea of focusing development in regeneration corridors and centres but what of those areas not within the regeneration corridors? What will be their role and future?

A. There will be a role for these other areas.

6. Gerald Kells – Campaign to Protect Rural England

Q. a) Endorsed the point about heritage. The intensification of housing needs to be sensitive to existing heritage and communities. Build on existing cultural heritage.

b) Welcome the inclusion of climate change but needs to be referred to within each theme e.g. transport and centres. Weave throughout and across the agenda, not just within the environment section. This would help to achieve the objective.

A. a) It is intended to build on successes.

b) Agreed. Need to look at feel and look of the document. Climate change is a key part of the document.

7. John Hale – JPE Holdings

Q. To what extent will plans for housing be overtaken by the Prime Ministers announcement?

A. The number of houses needed will be decided through the Regional Spatial Strategy revision and it is an important decision. An increase in the number of houses will open up big questions e.g. housing in the green belt. We will look at the Black Country position and possible response to the Government. We have to make sure we have the evidence to support our position. Work being done now will give us a strong position when responding to the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase2 revision. The Core Strategy should be able to adapt to changes.

8. Hugh Sherriffe – Barnados

Q. The document refers to local facilities. What type of local facilities?

A. A whole range of facilities would be required to support new housing e.g. GP and health facilities, schools, shops, open spaces, banks etc.

9. David Dunn – Federation of Small Businesses

Q. Must protect land for small businesses. Existing road networks are poor, increasing housing provision will require road improvements. Design out crime in construction.

A. The need for a good transport system to support policies and achieve objectives is acknowledged. The whole approach to design takes into account crime as a matter of course.

9. Stephen Spencer – The Ramblers Organisation / The Ettingshall Village Association

Q. The document refers to all Black Country citizens. Need to make sure that the Core Strategy delivers social inclusion and cohesion. What are our views to deliver this? There was and to some extent is social cohesion.

A. Accept that the Black Country as a whole has a good community. There tends to be less conflict compared to other areas. We must build in equality of opportunity and choice. Each authority is working on a Sustainable Communities Strategy. Community cohesion is a key workstream in this process. Each authority is working closely with their Local Strategic Partnerships and also working in partnership with the Local Strategic Partnerships on linking the Core Strategy and the Sustainable Communities Strategies.

10. Mary Garner – Blakenhall Leisure and Community Association

Q. The Council always asks people to come to us. What about the Council going out to the communities? Also, the Council needs to provide training in public speaking to its staff.

A. All four authorities have a Statement of Community Involvement in place and are committed to engaging with local communities. Each authority is also undertaking local events on the Core Strategy to engage the general public and communities. We are willing to go out into communities.

11. Frank Sharman – Wolverhampton History and Heritage Society

Q. Had not encountered any problems getting planners out. The Core Strategy is based on the assumption that the world will go on much as it is but the world is changing. These changes will generate infrastructure needs.

A. Acknowledged the point about the need to provide supporting infrastructure necessary to accommodate change.

What Happened Next?

This event was supported and followed up by other local events in each of the four Council areas throughout the consultation period.

More specifically, the results of the question and answer session will have been considered and help inform the work being carried out for the production of the Joint Core Strategy.

Upon the end of the consultation, the results will be analysed and reported back to people. In addition ongoing engagement will continue to support the preparation of the Core Strategy. All this will help inform the Preferred Options document due for consultation January 2008.