



> **Environmental** – The references in Policy UR1A to the Urban Park and Landscape Action Plan will contribute very positively to objectives relating to the landscape, biodiversity, heritage and local environmental quality. Whilst there will be growth in traffic resulting from the policies the overall approach of corridors and centres plus public transport investment will help in delivering the transport objective. The effects on other objectives covering natural resources, waste and climate change are considered to be positive although they are dealt with in more detail by other policies in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

#### **How could the Draft RSS Phase One Revision policies be improved?**

The Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft RSS policies has shown that they perform positively against most of the sustainability objectives. As a result of the Appraisal, a number of measures were

taken to enhance the performance of the policies. These are as follows:

- > **Communities** – Policy UR1A could be enhanced by specific reference to the role of local communities in delivering urban renaissance within the Black Country. (this is already included in RSS policy UR4).
- > **Environment** – Additional reference has been made, including environmental priorities for Brierley Hill, to Policy PA11A to help set the context for future growth of the centre and balance social, economic and environmental factors.

Appropriate cross referencing has been made to other environmental policies, including resource efficiency and sustainable construction, where they are outside the scope of Draft RSS Phase One Revision.

> **Transport** – Reference to the importance of cycling and walking has been accommodated.

> **Other Strategies** – The Black Country Study, which covers non-spatial initiatives, identifies the importance of skills, education and health as an integral part of strategy for the Black Country.

#### **Where can I get further information?**

This leaflet represents a summary of the Sustainability Appraisal process to date. For further information please refer to the following report:

#### **Black Country Study Sustainability Appraisal Report - April 2006**

This report, together with the Draft RSS Phase One Revision, the Black Country Study and supporting technical documents are available on [www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk)

## Consultation and next steps

### Public consultation on the Draft RSS Phase One Revision

To make **representations** on any part of the Draft RSS Phase One Revision, please send your response form by post or email, by 23 August 2006 to:

#### **RSS Panel Secretary**

c/o Government Office for the West Midlands 5 St Philips Place, Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2PW  
wm.panelsecretary@gowm.gsi.gov.uk

To make an **online response** (your response will be sent directly to the Panel Secretary), by 23 August 2006, please visit [www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk) and follow the links to the Draft RSS Phase One Revision.

The Draft RSS Phase One Revision and submission reports are available

- online at [www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk)
- as printed documents

Requests for translation, interpretation, large text and audio tape will be dealt with on an individual basis, and should be directed to: [blackcountrystudy@blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](mailto:blackcountrystudy@blackcountryconsortium.co.uk) or by telephone 0121 569 2396.



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## Entec

This document forms part of a suite of material, which is available on [www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk) or contact 0121 569 2396 for hard copies.

1. Draft RSS Phase One Revision: The Black Country
2. **Summary Leaflet: An Independent Sustainability Appraisal**
3. Pre-submission Consultation Statement and Appendices
4. Draft Implementation Plan and Monitoring Framework

This submission is supported by the publication  
The Black Country Study Report

This report and the consultation comments on it will be taken into account at the Examination in Public on the draft RSS Revision in January 2007.

All supporting technical documentation is on the website.

# 2

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY  
FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS  
DRAFT PHASE ONE REVISION:  
**THE BLACK COUNTRY**



## An Independent Sustainability Appraisal of the Black Country Study

May 2006



**Entec**



Summary Leaflet: An Independent  
Sustainability Appraisal **The Black Country**  
MAY 2006

# What is a Sustainability Appraisal?

Sustainability Appraisal is a process that identifies and reports on the likely significant effects of a plan and the extent to which it will achieve social, environmental and economic objectives.

## Why is it needed?

Under Government legislation an objective for the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is to contribute to the goal of sustainable development. The purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal is to promote and integrate sustainable development into the preparation of plans.

A Sustainability Appraisal is required for the Draft RSS Phase One Revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy and at the same time an Appraisal has been carried out on the Black Country Study which informs the draft Revision. The process must also fully meet the requirements of the European Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive which came into force in 2004.

## Who carries it out?

The Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out by consultants under the guidance of the Sustainability Appraisal Steering Group set up with an independent

chair, Professor John Glasson. The Steering Group includes representatives from a range of partner organisations including the West Midlands Regional Assembly, the Government Office for the West Midlands, Sustainability West Midlands and local authorities.

## How is it carried out?

The Sustainability Appraisal process is iterative and seeks to influence the Draft RSS Phase One Revision throughout its preparation.

## There are a number of key stages:

- 1 Scoping – identifying baseline information and key sustainability issues and setting a framework for the appraisal.
- 2 Developing and refining options - assessing their effects and how they could be prevented or reduced.
- 3 Preparing a Sustainability Appraisal Report suitable for public consultation.
- 4 Consulting on the Sustainability Appraisal Report and the Preferred Option.

- 5 Monitoring the significant effects of the Preferred Option.

## Who is consulted and when?

Both the Scoping Report and Sustainability Appraisal Report must be subject to consultation. The latter must involve consultation with the public as well as other agencies and groups. In addition consultation has been carried out at key stages in the process.

## What's been done so far?

In March 2005 a draft Scoping Report was published for consultation with the Environment Agency, Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage and other key organisations. As a result of consultation responses and new information the Scoping Report has been revised.



One of the main outputs of the Scoping stage is the Sustainability Framework. This is a set of 23 social, economic and environmental objectives which have been used for the Appraisal. These are a modified version of a set of objectives for the West Midlands Region, known as the Regional Sustainable Development Framework.

An appraisal of the Potential Directions of change and the preferred spatial option for the Black Country was undertaken using the Sustainability Framework. The Sustainability Appraisal looks at effects over time and for different spatial areas as well as looking at secondary and cumulative effects. Detailed comments are also included in the framework report. The appraisals were carried out through a series of workshops involving consultants, officers involved in the Draft RSS Phase One Revision and individuals from a range of organisations from across the Black Country. These have included, for example, Highways Agency, Environment Agency, Localise West Midlands, Public Health Policy Unit, CENTRO and local authorities.

### Sustainability Appraisal Framework – example (detailed comments not included)

	Geographic Scale		Timescale			Cumulative, Synergistic Secondary and Temporary effects		
Potential Directions of Change								
Sustainable Development Objectives and Criteria	Overall effect	Local	Sub-Region	Effects outside the sub-region	Short Term (0-5 yrs)	Medium term (6-- 20 yrs)	Long term (20 + yrs)	e.g Level of housing delivered under this option would result in insufficient land for employment
	e.g. To provide the opportunity for everyone to live in a decent home which reflects individual needs and preference							
	++	++	++	+	++	+	++	

++	Strongly positive impact	+	Positive impact	N	No impact or relationship	-	Negative impact	...	Strongly negative impact	?	Uncertain – Impact unknown
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# What are the key sustainability issues which the Black Country needs to address?

Emerging sustainability issues from the Sustainability Appraisal are:

- > Some areas with high levels of deprivation including poor health, crime, housing quality, education and skills.
- > Some areas with poor quality environment including biodiversity, soil, air and water quality.
- > Traffic growth and the impact on climate change.
- > Modernising and diversifying the economy.
- > Improving the quality and range of housing stock.

## What are the key findings of the Sustainability Appraisal?

### Appraisal of Potential Directions of Change

The appraisal of potential directions of change resulted in two key conclusions.

Overall Potential Directions of Change based on Centres and Corridors performed well against many of the sustainability objectives. It was recommended that a

hybrid approach, combining centres and corridors should be considered, with particular attention being given to transport implications, the balance of employment and housing and the delivery of environmental improvements.

The Potential Direction of Change based on planned dispersal performed poorly against many of the sustainability objectives and for this reason it was recommended that it was removed from further consideration. However there were some potential benefits to this approach including the emphasis given to local centres, potentially less congestion in the centres and the ability to deliver employment land requirements.

### Appraisal of the Draft RSS Phase One Revision Policies

The appraisal considered the Draft RSS policies for the Black Country as they were being developed. The significant social, economic and environmental

effects of the Draft RSS policies are:

- > **Social** – The policies contribute positively to social objectives covering crime, poverty, housing, education and health by focusing development on centres and corridors where the highest levels of deprivation occur. Whilst there are concerns about morale and negative perceptions in some sections of the community, the major changes envisaged by the policies offer potential for encouraging community involvement.
- > **Economic** – There are positive benefits on objectives relating to the economy including those relating to jobs, skills and new technology from the Draft RSS policies. The policies provide a clear framework for economic regeneration with the focus on the four centres and employment land investment corridors. There are close links to other strategies relating to education and skills and innovation.