

Building for Business

The business community's response to the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy partial review – at the heart of the UK

March 2007

Acknowledgements

The West Midlands Business Council would like to thank each of its member organisations for ensuring this united business community response to the Regional Spatial Strategy was made possible.

Every organisation came forward with its policy input, thoughts and ideas that led to the production of this document.

Yet again the business community has shown that it can and does speak with one clear voice on the issues that matter to business.

The West Midlands Business Council member organisations are:

Asian Business Forum
Association of Colleges
British Ceramic Confederation
Business in the Community
Chartered Institute of Building
Confederation of West Midlands Chambers of Commerce
Country Land and Business Association
EEF West Midlands
Federation of Small Businesses
Heart of England Tourism
Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators
Institute of Directors
Institution of Civil Engineers
Midland Association of Restaurants, Hotels, Caterers and Entertainment
National Farmers Union
National Federation of Retail Newsagents
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
UK IT Association
West Midlands Co-operative and Mutual Council
West Midlands Higher Education Association
West Midlands Learning and Skills Councils

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Foreword

From transport to energy the prosperity for all families across the West Midlands region can not be achieved without a planning regime that ensures the sustainable development of the heart of the nation.

We recognise the critical importance of the Regional Spatial Strategy to deliver on providing the overall approach to what business – and the economy – needs.

This submission would not have been possible without the work and commitment of every organisation that is part of the West Midlands Business Council.

We have come together because a robust Regional Spatial Strategy means a robust platform for business growth.

That is why I have the pleasure to warmly recommend the proposals in ***Building for Business***.

Barrie Williams
Chairman
West Midlands Business Council

Structure of *Building for Business*

Building for Business is a direct response to the West Midlands Regional Assembly consultation paper, *West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy – Phase Two Revisions Spatial Options*.

The review is looking at seven issues within the current spatial strategy. These are:

- Housing
- Employment
- Strategic Centres
- Offices
- Regional Casinos
- Waste
- Transport and Accessibility

Within the Assembly consultation document there are a series of questions relating to each subject area.

Therefore to align our response to this consultation document each chapter makes clear which issues are being addressed from the consultation document and which questions from the document are being answered.

This is made clear at the start of each chapter – with the italic text in the box.

Underneath the box is a brief synopsis of the key messages from that chapter.

Below is a guide to where the questions from the Assembly document are answered in each of the chapters:

Business Growth and the Planning Regime

E1 Do you agree that future employment planning land requirements should be quantified in the WMRSS?

E3 Do you agree with the principle of a reservoir of employment land?

PEL1 Should the WMRSS give more guidance on the need to retain employment sites which can contribute to the portfolio of employment land?

Economic Centres and Housing

H1 What overall level of new housing development do you think is appropriate to plan for across the region?

H3 For each of the options do you think that the balance of development between the MUAs and other areas is acceptable?

H4 Do you think the capacity of the construction industry, including house building, will be sufficient to meet the levels of house building set out in the housing options?

H5 What measures could be included in the WMRSS policy to minimise these impacts?

H6 What do you think about the overall balance of proposals under each of the Options?

H7 You may wish to consider specific parts of the Region, please set out below any comments you wish to make on any part of the region?

H9 Do you think that the currently identified sub regional foci of Worcester, Telford, Shrewsbury, Hereford and Rugby should fulfil this role, accommodating significant development on Greenfield land?

H10 Do you think that the proposed approach where the WMRSS provides a regional target and where Local Planning Authorities provide local targets through the Local Development Frameworks process is appropriate?

H12 Do you have any other ideas on how levels of affordable housing delivery can be better directed by the WMRSS?

Transport

SPR6 Is London the only "Target Destination" outside of the region that should be accessed by Strategic Park and Ride or are there others?

SPR7 Are there opportunities for Strategic Park and Ride in the West Midlands to provide access to "Target Destinations" outside of the Region?

SPR8 Which of the three approaches (Criteria based, location or target destinations) do you feel would best provide the guidance needed and why?

PS1 Does the West Midlands need to have regionally specific parking standards that are different to those set out in the national guidelines?

RUC1 Do you agree that the existing regional policy for Demand Management should remain the same until more is known of the outcome of the TIF work and the wider implications?

RUC2 Should the existing regional policy be changed to remove the reference to local charging schemes in the more congested city centres, such as Birmingham and include reference to TIF and potential national scheme?

A1 Do you have any comments on the suggested policy revision outlined on Page 81?

H8 In particular, do you think that Burton upon Trent should be a foci settlement, accommodating significant development on Greenfield land?

H5 What measures could be included in the WMRSS policy to minimise these impacts?

Crime

H5 What measures could be included in the WMRSS policy to minimise these impacts?

RL3 The Stage Two study recommends the following criteria for RLS. Do you agree?

Retail

- SC1 Do you have any comments on these levels of provision?
- SC2 Do you have any comments on the assumptions included in the Regional Centres Study?
- SC6 Do you think that WMRSS policy should support this regeneration approach?
- SC7 Do you think that WMRSS policy should support this market led/opportunity approach?

Offices and Employment Sites

- O1 Do you have any comments on Table Four that will help the RPB to develop an office provision policy?
- O4 Do you think the sequential approach to out of centre office development is the best approach?
- O5 Do you think WMRSS policy should set out maximum percentages for out of centre office development?
- O7 Do you think WMRSS policy should set out criteria for out of centre office development?
- E1 Do you believe that future employment land requirements should be quantified in the WMRSS?
- E3 Do you agree with the principle of a reservoir of employment land?
- PEL1 Should the WMRSS give more guidance on the need to retain employment sites which can contribute to the portfolio of employment land?

Water

- H5 What measures could be included in the WMRSS policy to minimise these impacts?

Energy and Waste

- H5 What measures could be included in the WMRSS policy to minimise these impacts?
- W15 Should the WMRSS include a policy which requires relevant WDFs outside of the MUAs to identify sites for the treatment and management of agricultural waste?

Waste issues relating to hazardous waste and utilising of waste that is within the terms of the partial review of the RSS

Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area

- H5 What measures could be included in the WMRSS policy to minimise these impacts?

Page 10 Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area

Cross Regional Linkages

Page 13 Neighbouring Regions

Executive Summary

This submission addresses the many challenges facing the partial review of the regional planning regime formally known as the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

In the **Business Growth** chapter, business calls for the *RSS to be linked to the clusters policy of the Regional Development Agency and for local authorities to have the freedom to ensure that land for supply chain activities and creative industries exist.*

The **Economic Centres** chapter faces the twin challenges for the review of the RSS – evidence that high value economic activity is taking place outside of the West Midlands and North Staffordshire conurbations and the signals from Government that there may be a major house building programme in the region. Business therefore calls for *consideration of developing some towns outside of the region, including Telford, to address the need to foster economic growth and to address the challenge of the Government's house building challenge.*

The **Transport** section explains in detail the litany of problems facing the West Midlands region and calls for an *integrated transport strategy and the development of the Regional Transport Delivery Plan as developed by the West Midlands Regional Assembly.*

The problem of **crime** is tackled by calling for *anti crime design principles to be written into the planning framework of the RSS.*

*Government action is called for to ensure there are **water** supplies while proposals are put forward to ensure there are **contingency energy** supplies.*

Practical proposals to ensure a *diverse **retail** base exist across the region while changes are proposed to **change the "centres first" policy for **offices**.***

Proposals are presented in response to the development of the **Milton Keynes South Midlands** growth area including *developing the capacity of Birmingham International Airport to be the long haul aviation hub for the growth area.*

The impact of **cross regional** developments is examined including the need for an *assessment of the Northern Way plans upon North Staffordshire.*

Finally, this submission looks ahead to the 2008 **Phase Three review of the RSS** with proposals for *rural one stop shop services and the development of leisure facilities* in advance of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Business believes that the proposals presented in **Building for Business** are critical for prosperity and jobs for all the people at the heart of Britain.

Introduction

Planning is critical for the business community.

The right planning regime can create the right business climate to compliment other factors in the economy such as low interest rates, low inflation and good levels of skills and Research and Development provision.

The importance of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands regional business community can not be underestimated. For, if the original intentions of the RSS are successful, then a major step change in the regional economy will have been achieved. For, as one report has stated:

Its focus is urban and rural renaissance using the planning framework to concentrate development in the region's major urban areas and reverse the outward drift that has been a feature of the region in the recent past (1)

Business believes this goal makes sense.

The commercial developments in the West Midlands conurbation and North Staffordshire conurbation should help to drive the whole West Midlands regional economy. In particular, this concept has led, in part, to political implications with councils in both of these conurbations building on this approach with the development of a City Regions strategy – driving forward commercial developments in these urban areas with the assistance of new political structures.

This partial review comes at the right time.

For despite the successes of the West Midlands Business Council in 2003/04 in shaping the RSS when it was first developed our aim of integrating the RSS with the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) – the lead economic development strategy for the West Midlands region – has yet to be achieved.

For business this is a primary concern for the economic potential of the West Midlands region can be realised when the two key strategies are linked – but the danger of mixed signals to the markets if this is not the case has to be avoided.

The challenge that is clearly predominate in this partial review is the Government's request to the West Midlands Regional Assembly as the lead body in developing the RSS to consider a massive increase in house building within the region. This has the potential to skew the whole economic development emphasis of the RSS.

This is why this submission covers a series of detailed recommendations to address this issue.

The other big challenge facing the RSS partial review is whether the strategy is practically working on the ground and if there are business trends acting against the implementation of the RSS.

The next matter is whether the RSS is robust enough to tackle the developments upon the borders of the West Midlands region. To the south of the region is the large housing led Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) growth area, to the north of the region is the Northern Way – an economic development programme around the M62 and to the west are the financial freedoms of the devolved Welsh Assembly in driving forward economic regeneration.

Last, but by no means least, are the perennial infrastructure failings that blight the West Midlands regional economy – poor transport links, poor contingency energy supplies and now, on the horizon, worries about water.

So the challenges for the business community in responding to this partial review are immense – but that is why this document provides a detailed response.

We understand that this partial review, as requested by the Government, is looking at significant issues but is part of a three stage review process.

The first stage looked at the regeneration of the Black Country and the third and final stage, which will begin in 2008, will examine rural services, leisure facilities, gypsy and traveller sites and other issues.

This submission will look ahead to the Phase Three review – with the necessity to improve public services in rural areas and the need to develop leisure facilities in advance of the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The merit of this review is that it is focusing on the nuts and bolts of the RSS and we must pass this challenge if the wealth creators are to be able to create prosperity and jobs at the heart of Britain.

Chapter One – Top Four Planning Priorities for Business

The planning issues that must be addressed in the revised Regional Spatial Strategy range from ensuring the existence of a diverse retail base to cracking crime.

These and other issues are contained in this report with detailed recommendations for action.

However, business has identified four key issues that must be tackled in the revised Spatial Strategy.

1) *Implications of over 500,000 new homes*

The decision of the Government to signal that over 500,000 new homes could be built across the West Midlands region has a direct impact on business and the economy.

Employment land for business growth could be reduced with the need to accommodate more housing and there would inevitably be an impact on the transport network and the infrastructure of the region in general.

We propose that if a house building programme is to go ahead it needs to be grounded in the economic reality of the West Midlands.

Specifically, as we now have evidence from the University of Birmingham that high growth businesses are developing around the West Midlands conurbation, then the growth of these businesses with the consequent creation of high quality jobs could be helped if the housing growth was developed to complement these developments.

However, three main tests must be passed first. These are:

- a) To decide with the construction industry if it can accommodate this level of growth;
- b) It must be categorically clear that infrastructure – from transport to the water table – could cope with this growth;
- c) This growth must factor in business developments – otherwise these housing developments will be unsustainable with the prospect of creating a legacy of sink estates.

Business will not rush to judgement on this issue – but nor will it shy away from the difficult challenges that need to be faced.

2) Transport

The house building proposals bring into sharper relief the need to improve our transport network for today and for future population growth.

The congestion bottlenecks at the heart of the country have become good fodder for stand up comedians.

But, for business, the transport failures faced day in and day out are no laughing matter.

The transport network should be one of the regional business community's greatest strengths. With business at the centre of Britain and with the region boasting some Trans European Networks, the potential to commercially utilise the transport network should exist.

However, as this report demonstrates, the long list of failings in the transport network is costing – not helping – businesses.

That is why the regional business community calls for substantive and sustained action and investment for a truly integrated transport network that is fit for purpose.

This includes extending the runway at Birmingham International Airport, major road improvements such as on the M6 between Birmingham and Manchester and substantial investment focused on further improving, and where appropriate, extending the rail network including servicing the needs of North Staffordshire and the development of Birmingham New Street Station – the rail hub for the region and the nation.

Current transport problems have knock on effects in so many areas – from ensuring just in time deliveries are on time to marketing the region as an ideal place for inward investment.

The practical proposals in this report, if implemented, should start to ensure that our transport network can serve the needs of a fast paced economy.

3) Employment Land

Business is concerned that the emphasis of land for housing will mean that land for jobs will lose out.

Land for jobs and homes go hand in hand and should not be seen as contradictory objectives.

We call for the regional planning regime to ensure there is a full land bank for employment needs if jobs are to be created for the people who will live in the potential new homes.

4) Infrastructure

Aside from transport, the prospect of a major house building programme highlights the need to ensure the infrastructure of the region can cope.

This is the reason for calling for technical work to find out if geological features in the region can store contingency energy supplies and to see if the National Grid could cope with increased demand.

We also call for Government intervention to help ensure the water table can cope with a house building programme within the region and a house building programme on the edge of the region in the form of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area.

The challenges are immense – but we, in business, are prepared and ready to work in partnership with public agencies and the Government to find solutions so that we can ensure prosperity for every family across the West Midlands region.

Chapter Two – Business Growth and the Planning Regime

RSS Consultation document questions answered in this section are E1, E3, PEL1

Key Messages: Creative industries, tourism and supply chain operations need to be able to be developed within Local Development Frameworks.

Business growth must be at the heart of the revised Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

For the West Midlands region – despite the diversity and strength of its business base – has undergone a series of economic shocks since the RSS was first established.

With Marconi, Jaguar and Peugeot in Coventry announcing job losses, the MG Rover collapse in Birmingham, the series of job losses in the ceramics industry in north Staffordshire through to the decision of British Sugar to close its Allscott sugar processing plant near Telford there is no denying the impact these decisions have had on the region.

For instance unemployment rates are:

Birmingham	6%
Wolverhampton	5.5%
Sandwell	5.1%
Walsall	4.5%
Dudley	3.8%
Coventry	3.7%
Stoke on Trent	3.7%
Cannock Chase	2.8%
Redditch	2.7%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	2.6%
Telford and Wrekin	2.5%
Tamworth	2.4%
Bromsgrove	2.3%

(1)

However, what is impressive about the West Midlands region is that the basic fundamental strengths of the economy are still sound. That is why the largest professional services sector outside of London is based in Birmingham and over 20% of regional GVA relates to manufacturing.

This explains why business puts a high emphasis on the need for the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) – the lead regional economic development strategy

developed under the auspices of the Regional Development Agency – and the RSS being aligned. The potential to drive up economic growth would be a powerful consequence of such an approach.

Despite the successful work of the West Midlands Business Council in 2003/04 to positively shape the RSS the differences between the two strategies are now clearer to see in 2007.

Office developments and areas of growth are two areas where differences of emphasis have emerged between the two strategies. The relationship of the RSS to the growth of specific business sectors has also not been sufficiently explored and there is also the relationship of how developments on the borders of the region relate to the RSS itself.

This challenging agenda is also complicated by the Government signalling a need for an increase in house building across the region – at the potential expense of land for economic growth and job creation.

While Government guidance in 2004 requiring the development of a common evidence base for the RES and RSS may have been made in the hope that this will lead to common policy objectives this chapter will go back to why the current RSS was formed in the way it currently is and what basic adjustments are needed for the two key strategies to be aligned.

Potsdam and the West Midlands Region

The inspiration for the current RSS came in 1994 when Ministers from across the European Union called for the:

“development of a balanced and polycentric urban system and a new urban-rural relationship”

This eventually led to Ministers across the European Union agreeing at a summit in Potsdam, in May 1999, to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

The ESDP is a non binding document with no legal force – but it has directly influenced the development of planning regimes across Europe – including the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.

What is distinctive about the ESDP is that sustainable economic growth is at the heart of its approach.

The ESDP policy framework calls for the:

Development of a polycentric and balanced urban system and strengthening of the partnership between urban and rural areas

It noted that while, in 1999, most economic activity in the European Union was around “the pentagon defined by the metropolises of London, Paris, Milan, Munich and Hamburg” other areas in the European Union fared less well.

Therefore:

The creation of several dynamic zones of global economic integration, well distributed throughout the European Union territory and comprising a network of internationally accessible metropolitan regimes and their linked hinterland – towns, cities and rural areas of varying sizes – will play a key role in improving spatial balance in Europe

(2)

This vision mirrors the aims of the current RSS – the development of the Major Urban Areas (West Midlands conurbation and North Staffordshire conurbation) as two economic development centres with complementary, but not competing, areas of economic development activity.

For business such an approach makes sense for cities are now seen as drivers of economic growth but, as the next chapter will show, the development of cities can have unexpected consequences that may not be in line with the original intentions of the RSS.

The RSS, while correct in attempting to shape and encourage the revival of cities in the West Midlands region, needs to consider, as the ESDP states, that it is the economic life of these urban areas as well as locations for housing that enable these centres to flourish.

That is why the RSS should not just be linked to two policies of the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands (AWM), with Regeneration Zones and High Technology Corridors, but also to its policy of clusters.

The concept of clusters, developed by Porter, identifies the need for firms in particular business sectors to come together to improve their competitive advantage. While the AWM policy of clusters is, rightly, not spatially defined there is no doubt that a successful realisation of a clusters strategy can have spatial implications.

Porter himself states that clusters can lead to competitive regionally based activity. Porter emphasises the links of supply chain dynamics that particularly helps SMEs to develop. Krugman made a similar point emphasising how the development of good regional supply chains in urban areas helps to drive the regional economy in accessing international markets.

That is why the West Midlands Business Council would propose that any revision of the RSS must factor in the clusters policy of Advantage West Midlands, as well as with the Agency's policy of High Technology Corridors and Regeneration Zones, so that Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), as prepared by local authorities and which must legally conform to the RSS, have a clear requirement to develop capacity for the successful development of clusters. Therefore local authorities should not rush to change the use of premises away from business purposes as a consequence of any short term measures.

This would cater for the inevitable impact of the need for land to support the supply chain dynamics for such growth to take place including links with the universities as centres for Research and Development – a critical part of the business cycle.

The growth of creative industries and tourism also inevitably impacts on the use of land. The use of culture to drive forward economic development in the West Midlands region is well known, from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Birmingham Royal Ballet to Walsall Art Gallery and Wedgwood in Stoke on Trent. LDFs should be given the freedom for these sectors to be developed, despite the land intensive nature of cultural centres, for there is no doubt that culture is:

an increasingly important tool in regional competition to attract workers and investment. Long term indirect gains may be considerable because culture helps to generate a vibrant economy, greater quality of life and superior experiences giving regions and towns a stronger external profile

(3)

We believe this general approach, if adopted in the revision of the RSS, would free up local authorities, in the development of LDFs, to consider more fully the economic potential of their areas and how this fits in with the general impact of the Regional Development Agency in their areas in encouraging business growth.

However, this, in itself, would not resolve the differences between the RES and RSS.

That is why where centres of economic growth are based is a critical consideration and will be considered in the next chapter.

Summary of Recommendations:

- 1) Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) to be free to develop land capacity for growing business sectors and related supply chain needs**

- 2) **This approach is linked to the Regional Development Agency's clusters strategy with local authorities not rushing to change the use of premises away from business purposes as a consequence of short term pressures**
- 3) **LDFs are free to develop land capacity for creative industries and tourism to lever in inward investment and promote the West Midlands region in international markets**

Chapter Three – Economic Centres and Housing

RSS consultation questions answered in this chapter are H1, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H9, H10, H12

Key Messages: We propose that if a house building programme is to go ahead it needs to be grounded in the economic reality of the West Midlands but tests on incorporating business growth in the house building plans, whether the infrastructure can cope with this level of growth and whether the construction industry is in a position to accommodate these plans must be addressed first.

Two issues have collided that require a reassessment of the policy of the RSS in respect of where economic activity takes place. Under the current Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) most major developments are ear-marked for the West Midlands conurbation and North Staffordshire conurbation.

However, the Government has signalled that an increase in house building is required across the West Midlands region while research work undertaken by the University of Birmingham has indicated that while the major urban areas (MUAs) have developed this has had unintended consequences in the location of growth industries outside the MUAs.

Government and Housing

As part of the partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy and at the request of the Government, the following scenarios for an increase in house building is being considered:

Total Build - 2001 - 2026

	Number of Households 2001 ¹	Draft Option 1: (“Business as usual”) 2001 – 2026	Draft Option 2: (“Managed growth”) 2001 – 2026	Draft Option 3: (“Growth at any cost”) 2001 - 2026
		<i>Shire districts are based on the availability of Urban Capacity ²</i>	<i>Based on Strategic Authority Advice</i>	<i>Additional 75,000 distributed to areas of high demand</i>
Birmingham	390,792	70,800	88,500	104,900
Coventry	122,353	19,000	44,000	44,000
Dudley	124,988	21,000	21,500	24,000
Sandwell	115,426	23,600	24,000	26,100
Solihull	80,930	11,000	13,800	18,800
Walsall	101,333	17,400	22,000	22,500
Wolverhampton	97,122	17,400	17,900	20,400
Metropolitan Area Total	1,032,944	180,200	231,700	260,700
Shropshire	117,301	24,800	29,100	29,100
Bridgnorth	20,925	4,300	3,200	3,200
North Shropshire	23,149	3,900	7,000	7,000
Oswestry	15,656	2,900	4,200	4,200

Shrewsbury and Atcham	40,308	10,800	9,700	9,700
South Shropshire	17,262	2,900	5,000	5,000
Telford and Wrekin	63,738	24,000	30,000	36,000
Staffordshire	328,234	51,300	67,900	77,900
Cannock Chase	37,104	6,000	7,000	7,000
East Staffordshire	42,717	7,700	15,000	15,000
Lichfield	37,501	6,500	11,000	16,000
Newcastle-under-Lyme	50,738	7,200	7,500	7,500
South Staffordshire	41,971	5,000	5,000	5,000
Stafford	50,025	9,500	12,900	12,900
Staffordshire Moorlands	37,796	5,500	5,500	5,500
Tamworth	29,382	3,900	4,000	9,000
Stoke-on-Trent	103,196	15,000	21,000	21,000
Warwickshire	210,900	39,000	52,500	67,500
North Warwickshire	25,176	3,100	3,900	3,900
Nuneaton	48,683	10,000	13,100	15,600
Rugby	36,483	7,100	13,100	23,100
Stratford-upon-Avon	47,202	7,200	9,300	9,300
Warwick	53,356	11,600	13,100	15,600
Worcestershire	223,048	31,100	47,300	62,300
Bromsgrove	35,167	7,800	4,700	7,200
Malvern Hills	30,070	3,600	6,300	6,300
Redditch	31,652	4,300	8,200	13,200
Worcester	39,060	3,200	11,800	16,800
Wychavon	46,819	7,600	11,600	14,100
Wyre Forest	40,280	4,600	4,700	4,700
Herefordshire	74,282	16,000	20,500	20,500
Shire and Unitary Authorities Total	1,120,699	201,200	268,300	314,300
Major Urban Areas ³	1,186,878	202,400 (53%) ⁴	260,200 (52%) ⁴	289,200 (50%) ⁴
Other Areas	966,765	179,000 (47%) ⁴	239,800 (48%) ⁴	285,800 (50%) ⁴
WEST MIDLANDS REGION	2,153,672	381,000	500,000	575,000

Notes:

¹ Taken from Table KS20 "Household Composition" from the 2001 Census

² Taken from the WMRA Regional Housing Land and Urban Capacity Study 2004 (August 2005)

³ MUAs include Metropolitan districts plus Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle

⁴ The totals for the Major Urban Areas and the Other Areas are shown as a percentage of the total for the West Midlands Region

Annual Build Rates

	Annual Build Rate ¹ 2001 - 2005	Draft Option 1: ("Business as usual") 2001 – 2026	Draft Option 2: ("Managed growth") 2001 – 2026	Draft Option 3: ("Growth at any cost") 2001 - 2026
		<i>Shire districts are based on the availability of Urban Capacity ²</i>	<i>Based on Strategic Authority Advice</i>	<i>Additional 75,000 distributed to areas of high demand</i>
Birmingham	3,016	2,832	3,540	4,196
Coventry	716	760	1,760	1,760
Dudley	487	840	860	960
Sandwell	927	944	960	1,044
Solihull	537	440	552	752
Walsall	537	696	880	900
Wolverhampton	501	696	716	816
Metropolitan Area Total	6,720	7,208	9,268	10,428
Shropshire	1,148	992	1,164	1,164
Bridgnorth	148	172	128	128
North Shropshire	272	156	280	280
Oswestry	221	116	168	168
Shrewsbury and Atcham	250	432	388	388
South Shropshire	256	116	200	200
Telford and Wrekin	694	960	1,200	1,440
Staffordshire	2,813	2,052	2,716	3,116
Cannock Chase	427	240	280	280
East Staffordshire	266	308	600	600
Lichfield	580	260	440	640
Newcastle-under-Lyme	207	288	300	300
South Staffordshire	248	200	200	200
Stafford	615	380	516	516
Staffordshire Moorlands	246	220	220	220
Tamworth	224	156	160	360
Stoke-on-Trent	721	600	840	840
Warwickshire	2,586	1,560	2,100	2,700
North Warwickshire	132	124	156	156
Nuneaton	572	400	524	624
Rugby	403	284	524	924
Stratford-upon-Avon	640	288	372	372
Warwick	840	464	524	624
Worcestershire	2,101	1,244	1,892	2,492
Bromsgrove	521	312	188	288
Malvern Hills	240	144	252	252
Redditch	306	172	328	528
Worcester	209	128	472	672
Wychavon	453	304	464	564
Wyre Forest	372	184	188	188
Herefordshire	588	640	820	820
Shire and Unitary Authorities Total	10,649	8,048	10,732	12,572

Major Urban Areas ³	7,648	8,096	10,408	11,568
Other Areas	9,722	7,160	9,592	11,432
WEST MIDLANDS REGION	17,369	15,256	20,000	23,000

Notes:

¹ Taken from Table KS20 "Household Composition" from the 2001 Census

² Taken from the WMRA Regional Housing Land and Urban Capacity Study 2004 (August 2005)

³ MUAs include Metropolitan districts plus Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle

Ecotec identified five reasons why the Government has considered that housing pressures across the West Midlands region are so distinct. These are:

- Demographic Change – The number of households is expected to be higher than originally expected. By 2026, it is anticipated that one third of all households will be single person households;
- International Migration – Migration, especially to the major urban areas, from eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, may have an impact on the number of households in the region;
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Aspirations – Expected to be increased demand for housing in the core urban area of the region from black and minority ethnic communities;
- Changing Aspirations – Rising aspirations for a better quality of life may lead to old housing stock being in the least demand;
- Economic Structure – As there is a strong link between the housing market and employment, there is likely to be high housing demand in the south and south east of the region and lower housing demand in the north and west of the region. (1)

For the business community house price inflation is a major economic determinate in setting the economic climate. The Bank of England, for instance, has stated that:

House price increases can stimulate spending in ways that other assets can not contribute to (2)

However, business growth is also held back by the lack of affordable homes across the region.

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce have stated "the availability and affordability of housing of all sizes and scale is a high area of concern which has an impact on the quality and availability of staff" (3) while the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) have declared "the inadequate provision of rural housing is making it difficult for rural people to afford to stay in the communities where they grew up and is frustrating the ability of the rural economy to serve the needs of the countryside and the country as a whole" (4).

There have been rising concerns across the rural business community that the current RSS militates against the need to develop affordable rural housing. With

the leadership of the CLA, within the West Midlands Business Council, the West Midlands Regional Assembly's Regional Housing Strategy was amended to enable support for an expansion of affordable housing in rural areas - though this has not yet been reflected in the RSS itself.

The Regional Housing Strategy specifically stated:

In some circumstances, it will also be appropriate to consider meeting identified local housing needs in smaller settlements provided this can be shown to contribute directly towards regenerating the rural economy or to sustaining a local community by meeting proven housing needs and where the impact on the environment and the landscape is acceptable. (5)

This principle must be taken forward in the partial review of the RSS. However, it can not end there. Local authorities and the West Midlands Regional Assembly – working with the business sector – must develop a clear framework for what allocation of proposed new housing needs to be classed as affordable.

To leave such decisions to occasional S106 agreements – a procedure where a council can oblige a developer to develop a proportion of affordable housing within a specific development – is against the interests, aims and point of establishing a long term regional approach to planning.

However, the housing scenarios, as stated above, go beyond the issue of the availability of affordable homes to the issue of where these new homes for all income groups should be built.

If the Government is determined to go down this track then it needs to be considered whether the new homes could be linked to areas which act as centres for economic activity.

It is at this point that we need to consider the work undertaken by the University of Birmingham that has shown that new economic centres have emerged in the West Midlands region.

Centres for Economic Growth

Work undertaken by the University of Birmingham for the review of the Regional Economic Strategy – the document that governs economic development decision making and is the responsibility of the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands – identified a distinctive economic growth area known as the E3I belt. This is a doughnut shaped belt around the West Midlands conurbation reaching towards the edge of the North Staffordshire conurbation.

The term E3I stands for **E**conomic, **E**ntrepreneurial and **I**nnovative dynamism combined with **E**nvironmental attributes – in other words a nice place to live – hence E3I.

This research states:

From the analysis it is apparent that the spatial patterning of economic activity in the West Midlands region is shifting away or expanding from Birmingham and the Black Country to a belt that encircles the conurbation

It added:

This belt lies between 20 km and 40 km from the conurbation and includes Stratford upon Avon, Warwick, Lichfield, Cannock, Bridgnorth and Bromsgrove. Within the belt there is an important differentiation of activities from centre to centre. This means that the region has developed an increasingly polycentric structure. This structure is being extended by innovative activity that is occurring in centres beyond the belt including Newcastle under Lyme, Stafford, Telford, Malvern and Worcester.

The authors of this report noted that part of the belt was first identified in 2002 and it seems that the revival of the West Midlands conurbation had a role to play in the development of the belt – alongside the strong influence of London:

The E3I belt is perhaps partially driven by the conurbation, but equally its drivers are elsewhere Some of the drivers are outside the West Midlands and perhaps reflect the on-going incorporation of the West Midlands into the economy of London and the South East. For example, some London commuters living in the south east of the region eventually establish local firms. These firms form around or even in homes and would not be established in the conurbation

(6)

The concept of the E3I belt also seems to have been, in part, confirmed by work undertaken by the West Midlands Regional Assembly. It stated that:

During 2003/04, the amount of (employment land) completions within the Major Urban Areas (MUAs) declined while the number of completions outside of the hierarchy increased. The MUAs, therefore, did not act as the main focus for development, contrary to the policy objectives of the RSS.

It added that this trend changed in 2004/05 but:

Development within sub regional foci and other large settlements also increased as compared to 2003/04, with the sub regional foci of Telford and Wrekin a significant source of completions (7)

Response to the Challenges

How, then, does the business community respond to the challenges set by the RSS Partial Review on housing and the emergence of evidence of new economic centres?

One way is to look again at the designation of the term “Major Urban Areas” (MUAs).

While this may sound a petty bureaucratic point to begin with, it is the aim of the current RSS that the main house building programme should be focused in the major urban areas, currently defined as the West Midlands conurbation – covering Birmingham, Black Country, Solihull and Coventry – and north Staffordshire – covering Stoke on Trent, Newcastle under Lyme and surrounding areas.

However, Telford is not included as part of the MUAs.

As the Ecotec work implies, this should be corrected. It states, *“As a New Town, Telford’s current infrastructure was designed to accommodate almost double its current population level. The area has the land and infrastructure capacity to accelerate and increase its current level of growth”*.

The report adds *“Proposals to restructure south Telford and link this with the renewal of the town centre and related employment opportunities from the M54 technology corridor will ensure that Telford is uniquely placed to accommodate the accelerated growth targets for the region”*. (8)

This issue, though, goes beyond the town of Telford. If the housing projection figures for the Government are to be accommodated without establishing a new settlement then some towns may have to be expanded and classed as part of the MUAs. This may then address the need to support the E3I belt by integrating it more into the RSS and the Regional Economic Strategy and meeting housing demands as set out by the Government.

This can not be achieved without three key matters being addressed. First, that the infrastructure development – from water to transport to energy – can meet these new demands.

Second, that such developments are planned in recognition that these plans can only be sustainable in the short to long term if business economic developments are factored in. This necessity is being recognised in the planning for the North West RSS, for instance, with the need for:

More informed anticipation and modelling of sub regional economic growth scenarios and better assessment of the implications for the level, composition and potential location of future household growth. (9)

Third, the construction industry has to be consulted to find out if, in practice, such an increase in house building can be met.

Therefore the implications of this review could prove to be significant for the people and businesses of the West Midlands region.

The West Midlands Business Council would not urge a rush to judgement on this issue – but nor should we shy away from the consequences that the twin challenges that the evidence of the E3I belt and the Government’s possible intentions for a large house building programme within the region could lead to.

But while we consider the future, there are pressing problems in the region now – not the least of which is the creaking transport infrastructure, which will be considered in the next chapter.

Summary of Recommendations in this Chapter:

- 1) The principle for the need for the expansion of affordable housing in rural areas. Local authorities and the West Midlands Regional Assembly – working with the business sector – must establish a clear framework to consider what allocation of proposed new housing needs to be classed as affordable.**
- 2) Telford to be classed as part of the Major Urban Areas (MUAs)**
- 3) Other areas to be considered to be part of the MUAs but only after infrastructure requirements have been addressed, business developments at the heart of these developments and the construction industry is consulted to ascertain whether, practically, such a house building programme is possible in line with high growth businesses being developed and have developed in the “E3I belt”.**

Chapter Four - Transport

RSS consultation document questions answered in this chapter are SPR6, SPR7, SPR8, PS1, RUC1, RUC2, H1, H8, H5 and related transport issues within the remit of the partial review pertaining to new commercial, casino, office and housing developments – This chapter should be read in conjunction with the submission from the Business Transport Group which supports the work of the West Midlands Business Council

Key Messages: With a housing building programme on the way, there is the fundamental need to ensure real improvements and co-ordinated action for air, road, rail, bus and tram. In particular there is a need to improve access to North Staffordshire conurbation, improve the capacity of the M42 box, improve capacity on the M6 between Birmingham and Manchester, runway at Birmingham International Airport being extended and improvements in rail services including development of Birmingham New Street Station.

Transport logjams – whether in road or rail – have led to serious problems for the West Midlands regional economy.

According to the British Chambers of Commerce, problems with the UK's transport infrastructure are costing each business, on average – nationally - £27,000 per year (1).

The Federation of Small Businesses state that when they surveyed their members in the West Midlands region, 8% have lost over £5,000 in revenue as a consequence of traffic congestion while 15% report losing over 100 person hours in the past year (2).

For firms in the West Midlands region – at the heart of the country – the transport congestion and poor infrastructure is being felt everyday by business. This is despite the fact that being located in the Midlands should provide geographical advantages - from just in time deliveries to developing the logistics and professional services sectors.

That is why the West Midlands Business Council would propose the following blue print for action. We recognise the clear role that the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) has in the future direction of transport policy in laying out principles and broad geographical locations for action – as well as revising its list of strategic transport projects as stated in Policy T12 of the current RSS.

The scale of the potential house building programme that is being envisaged does necessitate an overall approach to transport to be taken with the inevitable impact on the network that such an increase will cause. The Regional Spatial Strategy needs to factor in transport improvements to cope with an increase in house building.

Top Five Transport Priorities – The Case for Action

Thanks to the work of the Business Transport Group – which supports the work of the West Midlands Business Council – business is united on five top strategic transport priorities for action:

- Development of Birmingham International Airport – the main aviation hub for long haul destinations to key markets in the Asia – Pacific and North America;
- Strategic motorway investment – Tackling congestion on the overcrowded M42 box near Birmingham International Airport, the congestion on the M6 between Birmingham and Manchester and the lack of road access to key areas of the Black Country and north Staffordshire;
- Local Roads “Quick Wins” – Encouraging local authorities to make small cost effective changes to road signage and other related matters to improve traffic flow;
- Development of Birmingham New Street Station – Improving the passenger handling capacity of the station as New Street is the rail hub for the region and the nation;
- Local rail capacity – Good cross regional services are essential to improve transport flows and to reduce road congestion.

Progress has been made in all five areas:

- A master plan for the development of Birmingham International Airport has been produced;
- Active Traffic Management is being piloted on the M42 and the Government has decided to take action to unblock congestion on the M6;
- Local authorities in the West Midlands conurbation have responded to our “quick wins” local roads suggestions – but not in all of the shire counties and Wolverhampton;
- A business case for the physical development of Birmingham New Street Station has been presented to the Government
- The Walsall to Wolverhampton rail service has been restored.

The Case for Transport Integration

The key determinate for an effective transport infrastructure is integration between all transport modes – whether road, air, rail, tram and bus.

Survey work by the West Midlands Business Council has demonstrated, however, that transport integration is ineffective in the West Midlands region and that these problems would be aggravated, if not addressed, if a house building programme took place:

a) Bus Services

Bus services are not linked effectively to other transport modes. In north Staffordshire the irregular bus services means that services are not effectively tied into existing rail services.

In Worcestershire, bus services, though having recently been improved, mainly provide access into and out of urban centres. Bus services rarely operate across urban areas. For example, there is no bus service that operates across Worcester. Therefore, bus services operate in a similar pattern to rail services in providing transport in and out of urban centres – but not linking into rail services to enable passengers to leave the train and travel to different parts of an urban area by bus.

Bus services in some parts of the region start late and end early. In Shropshire, the bus services start at such a late time in the morning, that workers have to find alternative means of transport to get to work in Shrewsbury town centre.

Even in the internationally recognised city of Birmingham bus services are not effective or regular throughout the night despite the growth of business tourism and commercial activity in the city. For the hospitality sector, that needs to ensure workers have easy access, when needed, to hotels and other centres the problems with bus travel is a hindrance to the effectiveness of the hospitality sector.

Bus services across the region, in the main, are failing to be an effective and reliable transport mode. The system of bus deregulation may have aggravated these difficulties.

b) Park and Ride

Park and Ride sites are often cited as an effective way to ease traffic congestion by enabling people to park their cars at convenient sites to a local rail station, which provides fast access to their place of work. In theory, Park and Ride sites should provide a valuable contribution to alleviating road congestion.

In reality, this policy is, in the main, not fulfilling its potential. This is often down to very fundamental reasons. For example in many of the shire counties Park and Ride sites are not considered safe after 6pm. This is clearly a peak period for travel and this problem immediately negates the point of establishing Park and Ride sites in the first place.

There is also the problem of a number of Park and Ride sites in the West Midlands conurbation – and elsewhere – that are not secure.

This leads to cars being vandalized. Without adequate security, people can not feel confident in using these sites and, again, the establishment of these sites, therefore, has a negligible effect.

Also, within the West Midlands conurbation signing to Park and Ride is inadequate and this needs to be improved for these sites to be used effectively.

In North Staffordshire the problem with park and ride sites are even worst – as no sites exist at all despite various local studies coming up with the same conclusion that sites are good for the environment, good for transport integration and good for business - enabling a boost to local retail activity.

The sites are not adequately provided at other key urban centres, such as at Worcester while the establishment of a Park and Ride site at Brinsford on the Wolverhampton to Stafford line near to the M54 is still uncertain. Without the proper supply of Park and Ride sites, a valuable method in alleviating road congestion would be lost.

c) Rail

The problems with rail services range across the region.

Routes from Herefordshire via Worcester to London are currently hampered by the lack of dual tracking via Worcester and Evesham – as well as at Oxford. This restricts the ability to expand rail services on this route. Journeys from and to Herefordshire and Worcestershire are also hampered by the lack of investment in signalling between Worcester and Droitwich.

The persistent problem with the signalling in this area is impairing capacity on journeys between Hereford and Birmingham.

There is also a need to improve the pace of work to enable the transport of freight by upgrading the routes between Birmingham to Felixstowe and Southampton, especially as a potential rise in business growth may be a consequence of the potential house building programme.

If regional integrated transport is to be taken seriously, then this must mean an improvement of rail services between Nuneaton and Coventry with through services into the East Midlands.

Rail services in Staffordshire have been severely curtailed – with cuts in local services such as the Stoke to Nottingham service. There is a growing need for the Stoke to Manchester Airport service to exist for the economic regeneration of this conurbation.

Links to regional centres are critical in driving forward economic regeneration. While such services may have led to limited custom in the recent past this was often related to the unreliability of these services. This is a matter that can be addressed with the potential of an increase in rail passengers needing to be planned for if the Government proceeds with some form of road charging programme either regionally or nationally.

Services between Stoke and London are not regular throughout the night – leading to a potential drawback for more effective communications between the capital and the Potteries.

The lack of car parking at key rail stations such as Stoke and Stafford are causing so much concern that we are aware of anecdotal reports of potential rail passengers being so frustrated at not finding a car parking space that they drive to their destination instead.

One significant improvement to improve rail traffic flows would be the introduction of the Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS). This signally style system would improve the management of services. This system has also been endorsed by Ministers across the European Union in a decision reached on 6 October 2006 to achieve genuine transport integration with the overall objective of metro trains being able to share track with conventional trains.

While the introduction of ERTMS would not necessarily mean that the long term need for four tracking to improve capacity at Birmingham New Street Station is not required, ERTMS could go a long way to improve the reliability and performance of rail services.

d) Roads

Road congestion is clearly a major issue for business – leading to negative cost implications.

For example, the need to address congestion on the A5 in Staffordshire does not just relate to this county – but also to ensuring freight traffic gets onto the M1 and through to the east coast ports. Congestion on the A438 in Shropshire is not just a county problem but is also the key link road between Swansea to Manchester.

All these issues would be aggravated, if not addressed, by a large house building programme.

Now that the Government has backed the option of M6 widening through Staffordshire this work now needs to be progressed as soon as possible as the increased capacity on the newly enhanced A500 will inevitably increase traffic volumes to junction 15 of the M6 with this junction already a concern in terms of

the number of road traffic accidents. That is why safety improvements to this stretch of road should be prioritised.

The use of B roads, especially in shire counties, is strategically important as a number of business parks and industrial estates are based around these roads. Despite their importance, B roads are not as well maintained as A roads. The neglect of B roads hampers regional business traffic flows.

There is a vital need to improve road capacity on the road network at some key junctions and along some link roads such as with the M40 Junction 15 (Longbridge), M1 Junction 19 (the junction of the M1, M6 and A14), A46/A45 Junction (Tollbar) and M6 Junction 1 to Junction 4.

Road capacity issues are particularly acute in the Black Country and this is having a direct impact on business. The issues of road capacity in the Black Country is vital not just for this area but for effective traffic flows throughout the region. Therefore for an integrated transport strategy, there is the need to improve road capacity especially in the western part of the Black Country.

River crossings are of key strategic importance for the region. There is a lack of river crossings across the River Severn in Worcestershire that severely limits road capacity. There are also severe limits on crossings from Herefordshire into Wales over the River Wyre. Therefore there should be active work in rectifying these problems.

Burton upon Trent and Transport

The proposal that Burton upon Trent should be a key area for housing development would mean, if realised, that the A38 would have to connect to new employment and housing sites.

Rail passenger services from Burton to Lichfield, Birmingham, Leicester via Ashby, Nottingham East Midlands Airport and Nottingham would be a stimulus for development. Development plans for Burton can not be considered without a robust transport network.

Road Charging

We believe that the existing policy T8 in the RSS on demand management should be altered to correspond to the outcome of the road charging studies in the West Midlands conurbation and Shrewsbury. Local authorities should press ahead with providing viable public transport alternatives to private vehicle use.

We call for the element which states that *“local authorities should be encouraged to bring forward local charging schemes in the more congested city centres, such as Birmingham, before 2011 to ensure hypothecation of charges”* to be removed

to be replaced by stating the conditions which road charging may be introduced, subject to consultation with the business community:

1. Significant investment must be made in local transport infrastructure before and after any scheme is introduced;
2. The costs do not outweigh the benefits – the overall impact on the competitiveness of the region must be positive;
3. The charges should be variable depending on the location, time and distance of travel, in addition to the level of congestion on the roads travelled;
4. Discounts/exemptions must be available to certain businesses that have no alternative but to use the road network (e.g., haulage firms and certain service businesses, such as electricians, plumbers and gas fitters)
5. Revenues from any road user charging schemes must be hypothecated back into the West Midlands transport system;
6. Any charge in the region must be accompanied by a similar charge in at least one major UK conurbation or city and must become part of a national scheme within five years.

Car Parking

While understanding the wish of the Government to reduce the demand for private vehicle journeys to strategic centres in order to decrease transport congestion and encourage the use of more sustainable public transport alternatives, business believes that sufficient good quality car parking provision must remain available within such centres. Certain types of businesses, such as sales people, those providing services and maintenance firms have no alternative but to use private vehicles in order to undertake their operations. A restriction of car parking availability would potentially damage such firms and reduce the number of areas in which they can do business.

For instance, the cost of parking in Staffordshire is having an effect beyond the region itself. It is now cheaper to park in Sandbach, across the Staffordshire border in Cheshire, than it is to park in the county itself. This has led to fears that this is contributing to yet another factor that has led to business difficulties in the county – which contributes to a negative knock on effect upon the regional economy as a whole.

It is also important that car parking availability in those strategic centres within the region that are currently not attractive to businesses, visitors and shoppers is not restricted. More stringent restrictions would make them less attractive as tourism or retail destinations and potentially reduce the impact of any regeneration initiatives that may take place during the lifespan of the revised RSS. Those business and retail centres located specifically within Regeneration

Zones should not receive further parking restrictions as a result of this revision process.

Finally, due to the region's central position within the national road network, business believes that the total number of private vehicle journeys made within the region is likely to be disproportionately higher compared to other regions. As such we call for the revised RSS to take this into account and ensure sufficient car parking provision is provided in strategic centres to take advantage of both local custom and passing trade from other regions.

Aviation

The Government's White Paper on Aviation has clearly addressed the fact that Birmingham International Airport is the main long haul aviation hub for the region. The airport is critical to sustaining a balanced economy providing jobs and prosperity.

While we note the concerns expressed by some on carbon emissions caused by air travel, the Stern Report, commissioned by HM Treasury to look at the economic implications of climate change, clearly shows that air travel is not a pressing cause of emissions compared to other causes such as lights and electrical appliances always connected to the electricity system.

Therefore air travel should not be singled out to address climate change to the detriment of ensuring a sustainable regional economy.

Business regards an extension of the runway at Birmingham International Airport to be of critical importance for the future economic success of the region. For the region to compete in an increasingly global economy, businesses and individuals must be able to have direct access to and from China, the Asia-Pacific, South East Asia and the west coast of the United States.

The Way Ahead

The problems with the poor transport infrastructure are clear.

However, some progress has been made.

The West Midlands Business Council has been successful in ensuring there is an annual action plan – known as the Regional Transport Delivery Plan – which is annually updated under the aegis of the West Midlands Regional Assembly – ensuring congestion blackspots are tackled.

Progress has been made, as stated earlier in this paper, with developments with Birmingham International Airport and Birmingham New Street Station.

We would, though, urge decision makers to pursue the following points for the good of the regional economy and prosperity for all:

- Ensuring that the departmental and agency barriers for effective public sector working on transport are removed;
- Enabling the Department for Transport and Network Rail to recognise its' responsibilities for ensuring a robust local rail network that links into local, regional and national transport modes;
- For the Government to review bus deregulation policies in order for bus services to be effectively linked to other modes of transport;
- For the RSS to address road bottlenecks such as the M6 and the M42 box to address the pressing congestion problems;
- For planning to take place as a matter of priority to fully utilise the potential of Birmingham New Street Station as the national rail hub and Birmingham International Airport as the regional long haul aviation hub;
- For all decision makers to ensure that local authorities engage with businesses on local "quick wins" solutions to improve traffic flows;
- For the RSS to engage in effective integrated transport planning for the development of effective policies such as well used Park and Ride sites and the development of arterial rail and road routes.

Only by working with business and developing a truly integrated transport policy can the disadvantage of the transport network be turned round to become a real competitive advantage for jobs and prosperity for all people across the West Midlands region.

Summary of Recommendations in this Chapter:

1) The Regional Spatial Strategy to address the following objectives:

- **Ensuring that the departmental and agency barriers for effective public sector working on transport are removed;**
- **Enabling the Department for Transport and Network Rail to recognise its' responsibilities for ensuring a robust local rail network that links into local, regional and national transport modes;**
- **For the Government to review bus deregulation policies in order for bus services to be effectively linked to other modes of transport;**
- **For the planning regime to address road bottlenecks such as the M6 and the M42 box to address the pressing congestion problems;**
- **For investment and planning to take place as a matter of priority to fully utilise the potential of Birmingham New Street Station as the national rail hub and Birmingham International Airport as the regional long haul aviation hub;**
- **For a clear funding and transport strategy for the key economic area of north Staffordshire;**

- **For all decision makers to ensure that local authorities engage with businesses on local “quick wins” solutions to improve traffic flows;**
 - **For the Regional Spatial Strategy to engage in effective integrated transport planning for the development of effective policies such as well used Park and Ride sites and the development of arterial rail and road routes.**
- 2) **For public transport networks to be improved in advance of any form of road charging being introduced**
 - 3) **For public transport networks to be improved in advance of any form of car parking restrictions being introduced**

Chapter Five - Crime

RSS Consultation document questions answered in this chapter are H5, RL3 and related issues pertaining to the remit of the partial review in terms of new commercial, office, casino, retail and housing developments

Key Messages: All developments have “design out crime” features and for secure truck parks to be established on logistics sites.

The Phase Two review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is an ideal opportunity to bring in policies to support the work of local authorities in their crime prevention work.

This consultation process – in its consideration of new housing, office, commercial, casino and retail developments- provides the opportunity to set a policy framework whereby new developments have to be designed in such a way that it helps to reduce the incidence of crime.

Design and Crime Prevention

The West Midlands region has a history of how poor design has encouraged rather than prevented crime. Housing estates across the region – with narrow alleyways and poor lighting – provides areas for criminals to exploit while holding back the life chances of people living in those areas – and consequently being a significant factor in the economic regeneration of these communities.

Retail newsagents, for instance, provide a critical service to communities but the design of the local retail area and wider estate may not provide the full security that staff and customers should rightly expect.

However, poor design in the West Midlands region is not just a contributory factor with incidents of crime in housing and community retail areas. Some trading estates have also been affected by crime and business owners in these estates have become aware of how criminals use the design of the estates to undertake their activities.

While businesses, the police, local authorities, the Regional Development Agency, the Home Office and other agencies work together to address these current problems, the RSS provides an opportunity to prevent further problems with new developments and with the physical regeneration of other areas in the region as a consequence of the partial review.

Thanks to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) there are basic design principles that exist that can be incorporated in all new developments and in regeneration work.

We believe this work should be incorporated as a policy framework within the RSS to be considered when new developments and improvements to areas are being considered. This would include learning from best practice in the region, such as Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's *Design for Community Safety – Supplementary Planning Guidance* which provides detailed advice on how future developments should be laid out. These include:

- Performance Criteria for a Safer Environment
- Arrangements between buildings, streets and gardens
- Car Parking
- Mixed use developments

That is why we believe anti crime design principles should be incorporated in the RSS so that the negative legacy that too many businesses and people have had to cope with in some areas of the region are not repeated in the future.

Truck Parks

Truck crime is a growing problem which has a direct impact on the West Midlands regional economy.

Home Office statistics record that theft of and from vehicles is a problem in the West Midlands region – but that other regions have a more serious problem with this form of crime.

The statistics demonstrate that this form of crime was registered at a rate of 13 recorded crimes per 1000 population in 2004/05.

However, more recent statistics by Truckpol – a Home Office sponsored truck crime monitoring unit - produced for the period April to June 2006 shows high levels of truck crime.

The figures for the West Midlands region, by police force area, are as follows:

Police Force	Attempted Theft	Deception	Hijack	Theft (Other)	Theft from Vehicle	Theft of Vehicle	Misc	Warehouse	Total
West Midlands	3	2	3	3	6	36	0	7	60
West Mercia	9	0	2	6	14	26	1	0	58
Staffordshire	2	0	0	1	2	12	0	0	17
Warwickshire	0	0	1	0	5	3	0	0	9

The scale of this form of crime could have an impact on the business community in the West Midlands region as the logistics sector is key for the regional economy. With the region at the crossroads of the UK, the logistics industry aids the development of key manufacturing and rural based industries.

According to the West Midlands Regional Assembly's Regional Logistics Study, produced in 2006, approximately 1 million square feet of warehouse space will be built in the near future in the West Midlands region. The study shows that the logistics sector is closely tied to a number of sectors, in particular, with the manufacturing sector, with 486,000 people employed in manufacturing across the region. This equates to 20% of the region's workforce.

Therefore if truck crime becomes prevalent and with the inter-dependence of logistics and manufacturing, this form of crime could not just harm the haulage industry but also the wider regional economy.

Secure trucks parks have been shown to be effective in helping to prevent this form of crime. Therefore we would propose, in the consideration of the location of logistics sites, that these sites also accommodate space for secure truck parks.

Not only would this be cost effective for businesses but, in helping to prevent this form of crime, would help to safeguard the security of truck drivers.

Summary of Recommendations in this Chapter:

- a) **The policies as stated by the Association of Chief Police Officers be integrated for all new developments and all regeneration work withy lessons learned from the successful work of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council in this area**
- b) **Logistics sites also accommodate secure truck parks**

Chapter Six – Retail

RSS consultation document questions answered in this chapter are SC1, SC2, SC6, SC7

Key Messages: A diverse retail offer needed for quality of life for the people of the region and for sustainable economic development.

Many of the shopping areas around the region demonstrate the diversity and local characteristics of the West Midlands.

From the traditional English culinary fare offered in shops in Ludlow to the Soho Road shops in the Handsworth area of Birmingham selling a range of goods from saris to South Asian inspired jewellery.

However, concerns have been expressed that large retail chains, such as Tesco, is gradually taking away the local character of a number of towns and suburbs thereby creating a position where small retailers can not compete on a level playing field with larger businesses. As a consequence there have been calls to reform the planning system.

The National Federation of Retail Newsagents (NFRN), for instance, has stated:

Local authorities and local communities need to be empowered to assess all applications on a case by case basis which need to focus on identifying whether there is a local 'need' for that development (1)

The Chair of the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee, Dr Phyllis Starkey MP, has stated there is a need for a diverse retail base:

The planning system at the local, regional and national levels works well if it is based on sustainable development principles. Within this there needs to be a balance of retail provision between different types of operators (2)

The West Midlands Business Council would endorse this approach and urge for the principle of a range of retail operators to be written into the regional planning framework of the RSS.

Local shops are also key to ensuring areas are seen as attractive for investment and for areas of work for skilled people. This was recently highlighted by respected Midlands architect, Glen Howells, in respect of Birmingham, who said "the real challenge facing this city is keeping talented young people who are likely to move to Manchester, New York or Singapore.

Mr Howells added that one of the features to attract highly skilled people to an area is, in part, the retail offer – “We are totally overwhelmed by chains. Where are the small independents, the small retail outlets, the small music venues? What we want is more small things” (3).

This is not because large retail chains do not provide an important role in local economic regeneration as the investment by Westfield at Merry Hill has shown, including the decision by Westfield to financially contribute to improving the transport infrastructure of the Black Country.

However, local shops such as retail newsagents and convenience stores, are essential to the neighbourhoods they serve. They allow people to shop at hours convenient to them without using public transport or travelling by car and offer a range of essential services. Local shops also offer flexible employment to members of the community, especially those who need to fit their working hours around family and other commitments. Research commissioned by the NFRN has also shown that locally owned shops usually lead to locally generated income staying in the local economy.

It is therefore critical that the revised RSS clearly state the importance of local retail outlets in suburbs, towns and villages – the sub regional foci – and the need to ensure there is a diverse retail base to enable local economic sustainability, a wide range of options for local consumers and the need to reduce the requirement to travel by car to shop to enhance the environment.

This would include the Regional Spatial Strategy urging local authorities not to rush to a change of use of premises away from retail if that is to dilute the critical importance of the retail base in an area.

The role of town centres are also important in ensuring that a diverse retail offer can be presented to consumers. That is why the Government decision, in May 2005, to publish Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 6 is so important. This document emphasises the need to develop the retail offer in town centres as opposed to an earlier focus on out of town shopping centres.

While some commentators have expressed concern that the emphasis on economies of scale and retail productivity in PPS 6 may harm the interest of local retailers we would urge that the revision of the RSS highlights instead how these provisions can be interpreted to highlight how a diverse retail offer from local shops and large retail chains can serve local communities.

The need for a diverse retail offer has not been a key measure of the RSS though, for the people of the West Midlands region, this is a key quality of life indicator.

We believe the recommendations from this chapter would rightly value the contribution that the retail sector provides to the people of the region and to the strengthening of the regional economic base.

Summary of Recommendations in this Chapter:

- 1) **Principle of the aim of a diverse retail base stated in the revised RSS**
- 2) **Revised RSS to state the importance of sub regional foci to possess a diverse retail offer for consumers**
- 3) **PPS 6 to be interpreted in revised RSS to highlight how a diverse retail offer can provide economies of scale and meet retail productivity requirements**
- 4) **RSS to urge local authorities not to rush to change the use of premises use away from retail usage**

Chapter Seven – Offices and Employment Sites

RSS Consultation Questions answered in this chapter are O1, O4, O5, O7, E1, E3, PEL1

Key Messages: Employment Land should be protected. The objective of offices located in urban centres should be an aim rather than a prescriptive policy.

The RSS consultation paper rightly lays down the challenges of future policy on office developments and employment land sites.

We see these two issues as integrately linked and we would propose that the policy in respect of office developments is changed.

Offices

The principle that office developments should be focused in urban centres, as stated in the current RSS, is a laudable objective. It would help to reduce the impact upon the environment with reductions in travel to work times and it would help to revive urban centres into areas of economic activity.

However, in practice this policy has severe limitations. According to a West Midlands Regional Assembly study only 44% of all potential office developments could be developed in urban centres.

However, this target may be difficult to meet because, as discussed earlier in this submission, of the decision by the Government to signal a large house building programme. This could lead to intense competition for land being allocated for offices and new housing.

Then there is the important economic and social service provided by local retail outlets. As discussed in the last chapter, shops hold communities together and strengthen the economic sustainability of local areas. Inevitably, therefore, there is competition for land from the retail sector while the RSS policy states that offices should be located in urban centres.

Last, but by no means least, was the realisation in 2006 that this policy could hold up essential economic development initiatives and clash with the aims and aspirations of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) – the lead economic development strategy as developed by the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands (AWM).

An application by AWM to develop the Wobaston Road site, known as the i54 development, near Wolverhampton, faced objections by the West Midlands Regional Assembly – the Regional Planning Body charged with ensuring

planning applications conform to the RSS. This was because the plans for i54 included a significant development of office facilities. While the Agency believed this application was in compliance with the RSS policy of developing a portfolio of Regional Investment Sites and met the economic development criteria of the RES, the Regional Assembly considered that the scale of office development contradicted its “centres first” policy.

A way forward was eventually found to address this particular situation but this case demonstrated how the offices policy was becoming inimical to the interests of essential economic regeneration with the aim of providing jobs and attracting inward investment.

This is not to say that the aim of the “centres first” offices policy was not aimed to develop economic activity but the implementation of this defined and specific policy had unintended effects which was not the intention of the original policy.

Therefore, we would propose that this policy should not be discarded but is amended as an aspiration which should be met if all other circumstances allow. This would provide some flexibility, especially for local authorities in developing their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), to consider potential economic developments without recourse to a strictly defined policy which goes beyond setting a broad planning framework.

The West Midlands Regional Assembly would still be free, in such situations, to highlight where it considers office developments should be developed in centres where local authorities and developers have clearly not taken due cognisance of this policy – but the necessary freedoms and flexibilities to adapt to specific local circumstances would be maintained.

Employment Land

Chapter Three on Economic Centres directly addresses employment land issues and should be read with this chapter.

With the significant level of house building that could occur if the higher Government suggestion for house building was followed, there is concern in the business community that such an approach would encroach on existing investment and employment sites – which are critical to cater for much needed future economic growth.

The current RSS states that six categories of sites are needed to accommodate and sustain economic growth. These are:

- Regional Investment Sites
- Major Investment Sites
- Regional Logistics Sites

- Sub regional employment sites
- Good quality employment sites
- Other employment sites

Each category has a different planning purpose but all share one characteristic – the need for land to be available to develop the regional economy and create jobs.

A growth in housing – while addressing demographic changes and house price tensions – can not be sustainable if the land for future economic development is not available to sustain and create jobs for the rising population.

We also understand the view that Major Investment Sites – intended for a major employer to develop a large base in the region – may be unrealistic with the current trend to smaller scale niche high value manufacturing. However the business community has noticed that the Indian conglomerate, Tata, has expressed interest in investing in part of the Major Investment Site at Ansty near Coventry.

Therefore the business community has taken the stance that unless further evidence is produced the current availability of employment and investment land should remain in place. We await the research work being produced by the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands, in this area with interest.

Summary of Recommendations in this Chapter:

- 1) That the “centres first” offices policy is changed so that it is an aspiration for offices to be developed in centres but that wider local circumstances can be considered within the context of the development of Local Development Frameworks**
- 2) That the current portfolio of employment and investment sites are maintained in advance of research material being presented by the Regional Development Agency**

Chapter Eight – Water

RSS Consultation document questions answered in this chapter are H5 and related water issues pertaining to the remit of the partial review relating to new commercial, office, casino and housing developments

Key Messages: There is a critical need to ensure the water table can cope with increasing pressures – which may lead to the need for direct Government action to safeguard water supplies

Water is clearly a basic prerequisite in any planning strategy.

However, the decision by the Government to signal a major house building programme in the region could lead to severe strains on water supply if forward planning is not undertaken. The nearby development of the Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) growth area could also impact on water supply.

That is why the work of the West Midlands Regional Assembly with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water plc to consider how water supplies can be maintained if there was an increase in house building in the region is critical. We await the report of this working party with interest.

However, it is the Government that may have to intervene to ensure that water supplies can be maintained if the signals that the Government has sent out on house building are practically met. One way forward has already been indicated by the recent Panel Report for the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). It stated:

The Government will work with the Environment Agency, water companies and regional stakeholders to ensure that the development provided for in the Spatial Strategy is matched with improvements in water efficiency so as to effect savings of at least 25% compared with 2006 levels of water use in all new development and savings of at least 8% in existing development. This will be pursued through a co-ordinated programme of measures including changes to the Building Regulations and other appropriate regulatory regimes, fiscal measures, incentive schemes and other measures to reduce water consumption and wastage.

Clearly such a strategy would be needed in the West Midlands region and we await with interest the proposals that the Government has which are indicated in this report.

However, it is not just the possible house building programme that could lead to strains with the water supply in the region. The Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) growth area, which is discussed in further detail in this submission, is a large housing led development that stretches toward the Warwickshire border

across to Milton Keynes. It is planned that the population of this growth area will eventually be twice the size of Birmingham.

The Environment Agency has acknowledged that the issue of the impact of the MKSM growth area upon the water table needs to be addressed:

Water resources for the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area are currently being examined through the review of the East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. We are recommending that further studies are undertaken in areas of growth to determine existing capacity and additional resources. Current proposals are to increase the use of Rutland Water reservoir to supplement supplies to Northamptonshire and surrounding growth areas (1)

We would propose that the West Midlands Regional Assembly considers the overall water supply issue in conjunction with the potential impact of the MKSM growth area upon water supply in the West Midlands region as the potential impact of water supply being impacted by the twin issues of a house building programme in the region and a house building programme next to the region is significant.

Innovative thinking is needed as a consequence of pressures being placed on the water table. This could include technical work on the view that effluent water reuse is a relatively untapped way of providing drinking water to meet growing long term needs – where methods of treatment and safety issues would be paramount issues in the technical work.

Safety issues will also need to be considered with the idea of water transfer from the canal network.

Summary of Recommendations:

- 1) Direct Government intervention, including via the use of building regulations, to help ensure water supply needs**
- 2) West Midlands Regional Assembly to work with the Environment Agency to consider the impact of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area upon the water supply needs of the West Midlands region**
- 3) Technical work needed on viability of effluent water re-use and potential of water transfer from the canal network**

Chapter Nine – Energy and Waste

RSS Consultation document questions answered in this section are H5, W15, and related energy and waste issues pertaining to the remit of the partial review with the commercial, casino, office and housing developments

Key Messages: Problems over the lack of contingency energy supplies must be addressed. With the need to address the reduction in carbon emissions and to ensure security of energy supplies action is proposed in a range of areas – from encouraging biomass production to developing clean coal technology. Waste can be a useful resource for energy generation.

Energy

Energy is a key West Midlands issue. With energy intensive users in manufacturing needing reliable energy supplies and the profitable potential for biofuels to help to revitalise the rural economy, energy needs are high up on the business agenda.

The most pressing energy issue is the consistency of supply. For the land locked West Midlands, which can not fully benefit from the immediate effects of wind and wave power and the region widely seen as the centre for UK manufacturing, any disruption in energy supplies is detrimental not just to the regional economy but also to the national economy.

Contingency Energy Supplies

The need for adequate contingency energy supplies is also complicated by concerns as to future power sources for the region. As the Institution of Civil Engineers report, referring specifically to the West Midlands region, states of the Regional Energy Strategy:

Another is its failure to tackle the issue of how West Midlands' coal fired power stations should be replaced. The bulk of the region's energy needs will have to be met by either carbon fuelled power stations or nuclear facilities. This needs to be acknowledged by both national and regional government if they are to develop a clear strategy for securing future power supplies (1)

The West Midlands regional business community is concerned at the threat to power supplies for energy intensive manufacturing businesses and these concerns could be accentuated, if matters are not addressed, by pressures on the national grid by a potential house building programme and that is why the business community would welcome the opportunity to work closely with regional bodies and Government to explore how the lack of adequate contingency energy supplies could be addressed.

In particular we would encourage the West Midlands Regional Assembly, as part of its work in the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) to undertake an analysis of the geological features of the region to ascertain whether there are any features that could act as storage for contingency energy supplies.

Bio-energy

Bio-energy is an energy source that could be ideally suited to the West Midlands region – with 80% of the land mass of the region devoted to the rural economy.

The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), for instance, sees biomass as a potential energy source for West Midlands' regional businesses. In their *State of the Region* report (2005), ICE West Midlands states (3):

The region does offer 50,000 hectares of set aside land that could be converted to biomass production.

The Food and Farming Team of Advantage West Midlands – based in Worcester – with Marches Energy Agency – has produced a highly recommended report in June 2005 which clearly lay out the potentially large biomass opportunities for business.

That is why we support and welcome the England Rural Development Programme's Energy Crop Scheme and the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation in developing this market.

The potential for a long term sustainable bio-energy sector in the West Midlands is considerable. We believe the regional planning regime should address the infrastructure developments for the growth and sustainable development of the sector, especially as the need to secure energy supplies to a growing regional population will be critical.

We would therefore encourage specific reference in the revised Regional Spatial Strategy to the need to develop the biomass sector and for practical work to develop with the industry the capacity for the development of the sector.

Coal

The Staffordshire and Warwickshire coal fields are one of this region's greatest natural resources. However, the industry has gone through a steep decline but the pressing energy needs of the country provide new opportunities for coal.

The commercial requirements for coal production relate to the calorific value of the coal and its chemical characteristics particularly in relation to chlorine and sulphur contents. The markets seek to reduce to reduce the contents of both chemicals to minimise corrosion of heating systems and carbon emissions levels.

This normally leads to a process where coal from different sources is blended to meet the quality criteria and avoid unnecessary waste of high quality minerals.

Therefore from a commercial potential perspective there are real opportunities to be gained from the coal fields. This is especially so as a result of concerns regarding energy shortages combined with the need to secure energy supplies to an increased regional population.

The decision of the Government to convene a Coal Forum – bringing together electricity suppliers and coal producers to help find solutions to secure the long term future of domestic coal production could be a significant step forward for the commercial viability of the coal fields. This development followed the 2006 Comprehensive Energy Review where the Government stated the importance of the long term contribution of coal fired energy generation.

However, concerns have been expressed about coal due to carbon emissions causing climate change. Nonetheless, clean coal technology now exists to address these issues and in November 2006 plans for a new clean coal fired power plant in Norway was announced which, it was claimed, would capture 95% of all greenhouse gases that are emitted.

In the light of these developments we would encourage the West Midlands Regional Assembly and other regional public bodies with the business community to positively engage with the new Coal Forum to see if there is any actions – from the point of view of the planning regime – to help fulfil the potential of the coal fields which would help meet the country's energy needs.

There are commercial opportunities for the coalfields for coal seams that are unminable.

In an attempt to address the issue of carbon emissions, the concept of carbon sequestration has been developed. This means that carbon dioxide is injected into deep, unminable coal seams. A particular advantage of coal seam sequestration is that coal seams can store several times more carbon dioxide than the equivalent volume of a conventional gas reservoir because coal has a large surface area. Another advantage is that as this process displaces methane this can be recovered as an energy source and sold to offset costs.

We would therefore encourage the West Midlands Regional Assembly to explore how we could develop this market which would help with the wider regional economy and reduce carbon emissions, especially in terms of developing the correct planning regime for this sector to develop and meet environmental needs as part of the revised RSS.

Waste

Waste is an important energy source. In the Institution of Civil Engineers' State of the Region report, they state:

One major failing of the West Midlands Regional Energy Strategy is that it does not address waste to energy, which could make a vital contribution if planning objections can be overcome.

To assist the development of a comprehensive waste generated energy source, we would propose that the definition of waste is amended. We are concerned that waste, as defined by statute, such as the Environmental Protection Act, defines waste in such a way that wood, for instance, could be viewed as "hazardous". Such a definition leads to market concerns and such market signals increases the industry cost to utilising waste for energy purposes.

We believe that a more pragmatic approach to the definition of waste is needed – to ease the regulatory pressures on businesses – and to encourage a more sustainable waste sector for energy generation.

We believe the revised RSS could take a lead in this respect.

Agricultural Waste

Identifying specific sites for agricultural waste would not be the most effective way to deal with this issue. The identification of sites will constrict the ability of farmers to meet their own and neighbours' needs by diversifying into waste management, as well as ensuring a larger carbon footprint being generated in rural areas with agricultural waste being carried by road across significant distances to potential agricultural waste centres.

There is a very wide range of materials that will be generated and many of these wastes will go into existing waste disposal and recycling sites. However there are difficulties as rural areas often do not have access to the waste collection services that cater for businesses in urban areas.

Farmer led collection schemes are developing and they offer a sustainable approach to collecting the small quantities of recyclable wastes that are generated. They can cut down on the need to transport waste. They may not provide a service to all farms therefore Local Authority recycling centres should accept small quantities of waste from farmers.

In some cases councils will not allow agricultural vehicles (Landrovers and trailers) onto sites. Allowing the disposal of these wastes at these sites will cut down on the need to travel with small quantities of waste and recognise the dispersed nature of the holdings that generate the waste.

Summary of Recommendations:

- 1) Contingency energy supply issues to be tackled as a matter of urgency including an analysis of geological features in the region which could hold contingency energy supplies**
- 2) Develop planning regime for the development of the biomass sector**
- 3) Redefine definition of waste to allow new opportunities in energy generation in the revised RSS**
- 4) Viability of the coal fields to be addressed by the West Midlands Regional Assembly and others actively engaging with the Government's Coal Forum**
- 5) West Midlands Regional Assembly and the business community to explore whether carbon sequestration in unminable coal seams can be developed as a new market with the correct planning regime**
- 6) Developing farmer led waste collection schemes and local authorities allowing agricultural vehicles to take agricultural waste to local authority recycling centres**

Chapter Ten – Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area

RSS Consultation document questions answered in this section are H5 and Page 10 – Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area

Key Messages: With the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area inevitably impacting on the regional economy the regional planning regime should adopt a range of policies that would make this development work for the people and businesses of the West Midlands region – not against it.

The West Midlands Business Council has long argued that the Government's decision to make Milton Keynes and its surrounding area – known as the Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) growth area – to be twice the population size of Birmingham – is bound to have a practical economic impact on the West Midlands region – with the development a stone's throw from the Warwickshire border and Milton Keynes itself just 70 miles from Wolverhampton (1).

The Ecotec report for the West Midlands Regional Assembly confirms this analysis. It states there is a "potential threat" from this growth area to new jobs and infrastructure in the Coventry area. It adds, however, that if planned properly, Coventry and Warwickshire could be developed "as a location of housing choice through housing and business investment" for those firms and people attracted to the MKSM area (2).

The Government is moving ahead with its MKSM plans in response to the affordable housing crisis in London and the Home Counties. However, while the need to ensure there is affordable housing for the South East is important – especially as London is the driver of the British economy – the impact upon the West Midlands region can not be ignored. That is why we welcomed the invitation of the West Midlands Regional Assembly to form the MKSM Working Group to consider the implications of this development upon the region.

The West Midlands Business Council has already presented an action plan to the West Midlands Regional Assembly which, if acted on, would help ensure sustainable housing developments in the Midlands and good economic linkages between MKSM and the West Midlands. Good transport links is key to delivering these aims. We therefore propose that our action plan is incorporated in the revised Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – especially as the impact of a potential house building programme within the region will require a re-appraisal of how the West Midlands region needs to adopt and fully utilise its enhanced population and its geographical position to the MKSM growth area.

In summary the action plan recommendations, which relate specifically to planning, while it also covers the other key issue of economic linkages, are:

Midlands Way

The former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had offered to consider integrating the conclusions of the Regional Planning Partnership's work with MKSM into the emerging Midlands Way strategy and that this has been noted by consultants developing the Midlands Way consultation document.

It is proposed that the West Midlands Regional Assembly accept this invitation and request that any other possible emerging cross regional strategies incorporate the MKSM recommendations and developing plans.

Economic Analysis

The work of the MKSM Working Group has been hampered by the lack of an economic analysis of the impact of the MKSM growth area upon the West Midlands region.

However, in June 2006, the MKSM Working Group received a verbal report from the West Midlands Regional Assembly and Advantage West Midlands that joint working will be undertaken in this area.

We welcome the decision of the Agency to undertake this work and believe it must adopt a holistic approach to this issue.

Cross public agency and departmental co-operation

Despite the written statement of the then Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP, for active co-operation across regional borders between public agencies, this has operated on a very limited basis. Therefore, the Department for Communities and Local Government, as a party to the revised RSS, could establish a clear mechanism, as part of its existing MKSM structures, for an effective way to achieve cross public sector co-operation.

West Midlands Representation

West Midlands regional public agencies and the business community are not included on the Inter Regional Board and other planning bodies of the Department for Communities and Local Government with the development of the MKSM growth area.

The Department for Communities and Local Government, as a party to the revised RSS, could ensure this omission is rectified, so that issues, such as housing, can be addressed.

Monitoring

The need for effective monitoring of the impacts of the MKSM growth area upon the West Midlands region is critical and in June 2006 the West Midlands Regional Assembly's Regional Planning Partnership made the decision to establish a cross regional monitoring framework for this analysis to take place.

The Government formally endorsed this decision when it stated:

Monitoring is clearly important to provide an evidence base on which future policy decisions can be based – the cross regional approach is therefore to be welcomed. The Department (for Communities and Local Government) maintains a range of databases which may be able to support the monitoring work and I understand Regional Monitoring Officers already have good links with the relevant teams in this Department who will provide access to the data (3)

The West Midlands Business Council therefore proposes that the provisions of the monitoring framework is referred to within the revised RSS so that there is flexibility within the strategy to respond to evidence based developments as a consequence of the MKSM growth area.

Rail Services to and from Birmingham International Airport

For the revised RSS to include an increase in the regularity of services between the region and Milton Keynes to take into consideration the population implications of the development and the potential house building plans in the West Midlands.

An increase in the regularity of services would also enable Birmingham International Airport to be the aviation hub for long haul destinations to the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area and enable the region to be a housing centre for the growth area.

Birmingham International Airport – Through Ticketing

We encourage Birmingham International Airport and Network Rail to enable rail through ticketing to be provided at the airport for easy access to the region and the growth area as a consequence of Birmingham International Airport being seen as the aviation hub for long haul journeys for the growth area.

Road Capacity

The implications of the MKSM growth area upon the road network, especially with an increase in housing, are still unclear. Therefore we would encourage the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the Highways Agency, as a key stakeholder to the revised RSS, to undertake a feasibility study into this matter to inform future decision making.

It should be noted that the MKSM Working Group had raised the need to improve Junction 19 of the M1 near Rugby – the interchange for the A14 – and the Department for Transport has responded positively. There is a need for the strategic role of the A14 to be recognised in the context of linkages between the growth area and the region within the revised RSS –especially as population pressures in the West Midlands region, as a consequence of the house building programme, will necessitate robust cross regional transport links.

Environmental Impacts

Water issues are referred to in the last chapter.

Energy infrastructure issues in the West Midlands region could be affected by the development of the MKSM growth and the potential house building programme in the West Midlands region. Therefore we propose that Energy West Midlands and the Department for Trade and Industry study this issue to produce recommendations that can be included in the revised RSS.

Summary of Recommendations in this Chapter:

- 1) **For the revised RSS to call for cross regional strategies to address the implications of the MKSM growth area**
- 2) **For the business community to be invited to be part of the economic analysis study examining the implications of the MKSM growth area upon the region to be widely distributed**
- 3) **For the West Midlands Regional Assembly to proactively work for cross public agency and cross departmental working on the implications of the MKSM growth area upon the region**
- 4) **For the West Midlands Regional Assembly to formally request representation on the Department for Communities and Local Government's MKSM Inter Regional Board**
- 5) **To state within the revised RSS that the cross regional monitoring framework to consider the impact of the MKSM development – which the Assembly has agreed to and which the Government has offered to play a part in – is referred to in the revised RSS to enable some flexibility to respond to evidence based developments as a consequence of the MKSM growth area**
- 6) **For the revised RSS to state the need for an increase in rail services between Birmingham International and Milton Keynes Central**
- 7) **For the West Midlands Regional Assembly to undertake representations to Network Rail and Birmingham International Airport for through ticketing to rail services**
- 8) **For the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the Highways Agency to undertake a feasibility study into the road capacity issues as a direct consequence of the MKSM growth area**

- 9) **For the A14 to be specifically referred to in the revised RSS as a strategic road connection for the region especially as a consequence of the MKSM growth area**
- 10) **For Energy West Midlands and the Department of Trade and Industry to consider the impact on energy supplies for the region as a consequence of the MKSM growth area**

Chapter Eleven – Cross Regional Linkages

RSS Consultation document questions answered in this chapter is Page 13 – Neighbouring Regions and H5

Key Messages: Develop closer links with all regional agencies on the borders of the region to drive up the economic performance of the West Midlands.

With the West Midlands region at the heart of the UK it would be a retrograde step for the people and businesses of our region if we only concentrate on policy changes within the region without considering how our place in the UK can be utilised to boost our economic performance.

Wales

The long regional border with Wales is potentially one of the greatest opportunities to generate co-operation – due to the significant powers that devolution has provided to the National Assembly of Wales.

Currently the institutional relationship between the Welsh Assembly and West Midlands institutions is very poor with occasional complaints from Welsh MPs and the Welsh Assembly when the West Midlands Regional Assembly takes transport decisions which are seen to be against the interests of Wales. However we welcome the work of the Rural Affairs Forum, which meets under the aegis of the Government Office for the West Midlands, to develop a concordat to establish a working relationship between Welsh and English public agencies.

The opportunities that close working could deliver for the West Midlands economy is significant. In 2006, a new Government of Wales Act entered the statute book providing the Welsh Assembly with stronger powers to set secondary legislation.

How, then, could Welsh devolution work for the West Midlands economy and, therefore, in enhancing the regional planning regime?

There needs to be a recognition that there are areas in the region that are the main economic centres for a number of Welsh border areas. Shrewsbury is a good example of a town that, essentially, is an economic centre for much of Powys. This needs to be factored in the revised RSS so that a full assessment of the implications of RSS can be considered combined with a potential house building programme in the area.

There are two specific areas that could benefit by close co-operation. These are:

- Transport
- Biomass

As we have seen earlier in this submission there is a significant lack of bridge crossings between England and Wales. There is also a need to improve some road connections while rail connections require improvement.

These developments would not just be positive for the West Midlands regional economy. For Wales does not contain a rail service that runs north to south without travelling via England.

Therefore it is in the interests of the people and businesses of Wales and the West Midlands region that the West Midlands regional institutions, including the West Midlands Regional Assembly, work closely to develop practical proposals to improve transport links. These proposals can be included in the revised RSS.

Wood biomass production is an area that could benefit from co-operation with the Welsh Assembly. As stated earlier in this submission, the opportunities from biomass production in the West Midlands region are significant. For the Welsh Assembly this is also an interesting area especially as it has decided that Wales will be a genetically modified (GM) free zone – despite the unhappiness with this policy from the UK's Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

So, wood biomass production could be, for some Welsh farmers, a step forward which could reach new markets in industrial areas of the West Midlands. For West Midlands farmers, co-operative working across a larger area may make the production of biomass far more competitive and enable it to effectively bid to supply new markets. Further discussions would be required to explore this specific area.

South East and London

Links with the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area and London has been explored in this submission. This demonstrates the very significant pull of the London and South East economy.

It is critical that close contacts are maintained with relevant South East bodies as policies developed in the West Midlands region which is divorced from the economic engine of London which drives the British economy, would prove to be counter productive.

North West

Economic links with the North West are critical for the long term sustainability of the West Midlands economy. In 2005 the Confederation of West Midlands Chambers of Commerce led in brokering a meeting between leading business figures from both regions at Sandbach in Cheshire in recognition that co-

operation on transport issues could prove to be beneficial to both business communities.

Since then the Northern Way concept, which would lead to business developments around the M62 and is led by three northern Regional Development Agencies, is moving ahead.

The impact of the Northern Way upon the West Midlands regional economy, especially on North Staffordshire, has to be considered as a pressing concern. Some of the issues surrounding the Northern Way are similar in nature to those matters encountered with the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area. They are:

- West Midlands regional institutions and businesses are not involved in the planning for the Northern Way – despite the impact on north Staffordshire and the wider region;
- There has been no economic analysis of the potential impact of the Northern Way on the West Midlands regional economy.

The West Midlands Business Council would strongly urge that such an economic assessment takes place and that regional institutions and businesses are invited to be involved in the planning of the Northern Way. This should include an assessment of how the Northern Way will impact, in planning terms, in the revised RSS – especially combined with a house building programme and the consequences of this in the West Midlands region.

The opportunities for close working exists on transport, including with the need to move forward with improvements to the M6 and links between Birmingham International Airport and Manchester Airport combined with improved rail services between North Staffordshire and the North West. These issues could be included as issues that need to be addressed in the revised RSS.

South West

There is no doubt that the Gloucestershire economy is closely tied to the West Midlands regional economy.

One of the ways to be able to identify a concept such as the West Midlands regional economy is the ability to track economic flows. When it comes to Gloucestershire – in economic terms – these same economic flows means that this county can be seen as an important component of the West Midlands regional economy. A brief look at the housing market demonstrates this.

An Ecotec report for the West Midlands Regional Assembly clearly demonstrates that the Gloucester and Cheltenham housing market is intricately linked to the other housing markets that operate in the West Midlands region (1).

Due to the significance of the Gloucestershire economy to the basic economic importance of the wider West Midlands economy, we would propose regular links are maintained between both sets of regional institutions and Gloucestershire County Council. These talks could also consider planning implications for the review of the RSS.

East Midlands

The economic links between Leicester, Nottingham and Derby with the West Midlands regional economy are strong with the links between West Midlands firms and the Rolls Royce plant in Derby being one such example. Part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area, as discussed in the last chapter, also lie in the East Midlands region.

In an attempt to discover if there was any merit in finding whether aspects of the economic development work from each region would benefit from joint working plans for the Midlands Way strategy were developed.

Therefore the West Midlands Business Council will provide a more detailed response to the Midlands Way consultation process.

City Regions

The Local Government White Paper published in November 2006 stated that the prospective policy of City Regions was under review. Until the Government's intentions on City Regions are clear it is difficult for the business community to come to a considered view on this matter.

Summary of Recommendations in this Chapter:

- a) **Talks should commence between regional institutions and the Welsh Assembly to seek co-operation on planning policy with transport and wood biomass production**
- b) **Regional institutions should instigate talks with all neighbouring regional agencies to consider planning policy to improve the transport infrastructure**
- c) **Regional institutions and regional businesses should be involved with the planning of the Northern Way**
- d) **An economic assessment of the impact of the Northern Way upon the regional economy should take place with a planning assessment of the impact of the plans included in the revised RSS**
- e) **Links with Gloucestershire County Council should be established to monitor the impact of the county's economic activity upon the West Midlands region in terms of planning policy**

Chapter Twelve – Phase Three of the RSS Review from Rural Public Services to Sport

Key Messages: Leisure facilities to be allowed to be developed and the establishment of one stop shops to access public services in rural areas

The business community believes that Phase Three of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) review, which will begin in 2008, is critically important and we will respond more fully at that time.

However, there are two issues we would like to highlight for the West Midlands Regional Assembly to consider in advance of the start of the Phase Three review.

Leisure and Sporting Facilities

When the International Olympic Committee President, Jacques Rogge, announced in Singapore on 6 July 2005 that London was to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games the impact on the West Midlands planning regime may not have been the first thought that would have come to mind.

However, the decision that Britain will host the Games, dubbed as the greatest show on earth, is likely to lead to a greater demand for use of leisure facilities. This demand will not occur by accident but be a direct consequence of public policy relating to the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

For as London 2012 have stated:

The country will change and be changed, as the 2012 project and its range of related economic, social and sporting benefits become reality

While Lord Coe, Chair of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games has said:

Our vision is to stage an inspirational Games that capture the imagination of young people around the world and leave a lasting legacy (1)

As these statements make clear the aim will be to use the impending Games to encourage people, especially young people, to get engaged in sport and improve their health. With worrying trends of ill health in the West Midlands region this public policy is endorsed by business.

Therefore the demand for leisure facilities will rise and will lead many local authorities across the region to consider locations for new or enhanced facilities to be developed. This was one of the key discussion points, for instance, at the

Stoke and Staffordshire 2012 Summit, hosted by the Stoke on Trent Mayor, Mark Meredith, in November 2006.

We would therefore encourage the West Midlands Regional Assembly to consider how leisure facilities could be developed as part of its Phase Three review.

However, there is also another Olympic issue that will relate to Phase Three – Olympic training camps. The West Midlands Regional Assembly commissioned a study in 2005 that demonstrated that a number of facilities could be adapted to either ensure training camps for Olympic and Paralympic teams are established or at least the venues could be used for specialist training.

In March 2007, Birmingham City Council announced that the United States track and field team would base their training camp for the 2012 Games in the city.

These activities would boost the regional economy and create jobs and, as planning may have a part to play in the development of these activities, we would encourage the West Midlands Regional Assembly to consider this issue so that the planning regime helps these developments – not hinders it.

Rural Public Services

The provision of rural public services for the 80% land mass of the region devoted to the rural economy is essential.

The West Midlands Business Council has already put forward detailed recommendations for the provision of rural public services in relation to two Government established projects – the Shropshire Pathfinder and the Peak District Pathfinder.

Pathfinders, according to the then Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary, the Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP, in 2004 had a clear aim:

“Local authorities have a vital role as community leaders in joining up and delivering quality services. I therefore intend to look at innovative mechanisms for devolving delivery even closer to rural communities.

Over the course of this year we will set up a pathfinder in each region to explore more joined up and flexible approaches at local level in rural areas, including to join up services and funding at the point of delivery”.

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has described Pathfinders in the following way:

“They will investigate how to improve co-ordination of rural delivery at local level, how to get more value out of the wide range of funding streams available and how to bring strong local leadership to bear in tackling rural disadvantage”.

As indicated in these statements, the aims of the Pathfinders has equal applicability across all rural areas as the rural economy has particular needs which is distinct from the urban economy – in particular the diverse nature of rural areas where public services need to be delivered.

Therefore the majority of this chapter contains recommendations which have equal applicability in Pathfinder and non Pathfinder areas.

In particular this Chapter calls for the establishment of one stop shop processes in localities across the rural West Midlands. Simplifying the service provision available to businesses and ensuring that business can play its’ full role in the community is fundamental. This service should be linked to the regional business support structure.

Businesses in rural communities are not just the wealth creators for local prosperity and local jobs – fundamental though that is. It is the rural business community that provides the social glue that tie disparate rural communities together.

Therefore any consideration of the work of rural public services delivery must have the role of the rural business community at the forefront of its consideration.

The West Midlands Business Council would therefore propose that the following issues should be integral actions to be considered in this regard:

- Public Procurement Opportunities
- Skills
- One Stop Shop for Services

Rural businesses are often the best source for fulfilling local public procurement contracts. The businesses are ideally suited to meet orders in areas which – for larger urban based businesses – may be considered as hard to reach localities. The knowledge of the local area means that value added services and products are provided to the public sector. Finally, the business produced by sourcing public procurement contracts locally can help produce local prosperity and jobs in rural communities.

That is why a one stop shop service is needed to provide an easy to use access point to gain knowledge of available public procurement contracts.

Poor skills levels are holding back the rural economy – whether in land management, agri-business, tourism or a range of other business sectors.

Recent research undertaken by Harper Adams University College for the West Midlands Business Council also reveals that this skills gap is being accentuated by demographic changes in rural areas with a proportional increase in the number of older people in rural areas.

The West Midlands Business Council has already stated its belief that actions need to be adopted by the public sector and business to utilise the experience and skills base of older workers.

A one stop shop service could bring the Learning and Skills Councils and training providers – including from business representative organisations and higher and further education institutions – to come together to offer an easy to use access point for accessing skills training provision combined with the regional business support structure.

Such a one stop shop service will help develop skills programmes that meet the needs of the demand side in the regional rural economy.

This approach would enable skills training opportunities to be advertised to young people – informing them of the potential high value jobs in the rural economy.

With the continuing trend for young people to leave rural areas, such a one stop shop service can also advertise the training courses that would lead to high value jobs in the rural economy.

The business community would call for business support services to be an integral part of the facility providing access to public services.

Marketing is critical to ensure the success of such a service and business representative organisations could be an ideal and cost effective vehicle to publicise this service to the rural business community.

Planning issues are likely to arise when considering the roll-out of such service provision and, therefore, we would encourage the West Midlands Regional Assembly to consider this issue in advance of commencement of the Phase Three review.

Summary of Recommendations in this Chapter:

- 1) Phase Three review to consider the development of leisure facilities**
- 2) Phase Three review to consider the planning issues surrounding Olympic and Paralympic training camps**
- 3) Phase Three review to consider the planning issues relating to the provision of rural one stop shop services**

Conclusion - The Way Ahead

The recommendations in this report, when taken together, are a clear blueprint for action.

Progress has already been made across the West Midlands region to strengthen the economic base of the region.

However, so much more needs to be achieved and this can only happen if business works in partnership with the West Midlands Regional Assembly and other bodies to ensure that action is taken.

The West Midlands Business Council does not plan to be a bystander in this work.

Our hands on approach have already led to a range of successes including:

- The UK's first action plan to tackle congestion black spots
- More exporters from the region
- New crops to be grown in the Midlands

However the issues identified in this report demonstrate the scale of the challenge – and the commercial opportunities that exist at the heart of the UK.

That is why the West Midlands Business Council will be working to encourage these recommendations to be implemented in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The West Midlands Business Council – together in partnership with its member organisations – will work together to achieve a vision that is realisable – the West Midlands region becoming a world class centre for home, work, leisure – and business.

Summary of all Recommendations in this Submission:

Chapter Two – Business Growth and the Planning Regime

- 1) Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) to be free to develop land capacity for growing business sectors and related supply chain needs
- 2) This approach is linked to the Regional Development Agency's clusters strategy with local authorities not rushing to change the use of premises away from business purposes as a consequence of short term pressures
- 3) LDFs are free to develop land capacity for creative industries and tourism to lever in inward investment and promote the West Midlands region in international markets

Chapter Three – Economic Centres and Housing

- 4) The principle for the need for the expansion of affordable housing in rural areas. Local authorities and the West Midlands Regional Assembly – working with the business sector – must decide what allocation of proposed new housing needs to be classed as affordable.
- 5) Telford to be classed as part of the Major Urban Areas (MUAs)
- 6) Other areas to be considered to be part of the MUAs but only after infrastructure requirements have been addressed, business developments at the heart of these developments and the construction industry is consulted to ascertain whether, practically, such a house building programme is possible

Chapter Four – Transport

The Regional Spatial Strategy to address the following objectives:

- 7) Ensuring that the departmental and agency barriers for effective public sector working on transport are removed;
- 8) Enabling the Department for Transport and Network Rail to recognise its' responsibilities for ensuring a robust local rail network that links into local, regional and national transport modes;
- 9) For the Government to review bus deregulation policies in order for bus services to be effectively linked to other modes of transport;
- 10) For the RSS to enable road bottlenecks such as the M6 and the M42 box to address the pressing congestion problems;
- 11) For planning to take place as a matter of priority to fully utilise the potential of Birmingham New Street Station as the national rail hub and Birmingham International Airport as the regional long haul aviation hub;
- 12) For a clear funding and transport strategy for the key economic area of north Staffordshire;
- 13) For all decision makers to ensure that local authorities engage with businesses on local "quick wins" solutions to improve traffic flows;
- 14) For public agencies and the Government to engage in effective integrated transport planning for the development of effective policies such as well used Park and Ride sites and the development of arterial rail and road routes.
- 15) For public transport networks to be improved in advance of any form of road charging being introduced
- 16) For public transport networks to be improved in advance of any form of car parking restrictions being introduced

Chapter Five – Crime

17) The policies as stated by the Association of Chief Police Officers be integrated for all new developments and all regeneration work with lessons learned from the successful work of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council in this area

18) Logistics sites also accommodate secure truck parks

Chapter Six – Retail

19) Principle of the aim of a diverse retail base stated in the revised RSS

20) Revised RSS to state the importance of sub regional foci to possess a diverse retail offer for consumers

21) PPS 6 to be interpreted in revised RSS to highlight how a diverse retail offer can provide economies of scale and meet retail productivity requirements

22) For the RSS to urge local authorities not to rush to change the usage of premises away from retail

Chapter Seven – Offices and Employment Sites

23) That the “centres first” offices policy is changed so that it is an aspiration for offices to be developed in centres but that wider local circumstances can be considered within the context of the development of Local Development Frameworks

24) That the current portfolio of employment and investment sites are maintained in advance of research material being presented by the Regional Development Agency

Chapter Eight – Water

25) Direct Government intervention, including via the use of building regulations, to help ensure water supply needs

26) West Midlands Regional Assembly to work with the Environment Agency to consider the impact of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area upon the water supply needs of the West Midlands region

27) Technical work to consider the potential of the re-use of effluent water and harnessing water supplies from the canal network

Chapter Nine – Energy and Waste

28) Contingency energy supply issues to be tackled as a matter of urgency including an analysis of geological features in the region which could hold contingency energy supplies

29) Develop planning regime for the development of the biomass sector

30) Redefine definition of waste to allow new opportunities in energy generation in the revised RSS

31) Viability of the coal fields to be addressed by the West Midlands Regional Assembly and others actively engaging with the Government’s Coal Forum

32) West Midlands Regional Assembly and the business community to explore whether carbon sequestration in unminable coal seams can be developed as a new market with the correct planning regime

33) Developing farmer led waste collection schemes and local authorities allowing agricultural vehicles to take agricultural waste to local authority recycling centres

Chapter Ten – Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area

34) For the revised RSS to call for cross regional strategies to address the implications of the MKSM growth area

- 35) For the business community to be invited to be part of the economic analysis study examining the implications of the MKSM growth area upon the region to be widely distributed
- 36) For the West Midlands Regional Assembly to proactively work for cross public agency and cross departmental working on the implications of the MKSM growth area upon the region
- 37) For the West Midlands Regional Assembly to formally request representation on the Department for Communities and Local Government's MKSM Inter Regional Board
- 38) To state within the revised RSS that the cross regional monitoring framework to consider the impact of the MKSM development – which the Assembly has agreed to and which the Government has offered to play a part in – is referred to in the revised RSS to enable some flexibility to respond to evidence based developments as a consequence of the MKSM growth area
- 39) For the revised RSS to state the need for an increase in rail services between Birmingham International and Milton Keynes Central
- 40) For the West Midlands Regional Assembly to undertake representations to Network Rail and Birmingham International Airport for through ticketing to rail services
- 41) For the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the Highways Agency to undertake a feasibility study into the road capacity issues as a direct consequence of the MKSM growth area
- 42) For the A14 to be specifically referred to in the revised RSS as a strategic road connection for the region especially as a consequence of the MKSM growth area
- 43) For Energy West Midlands to consider the impact on energy supplies for the region as a consequence of the MKSM growth area

Chapter Ten – Cross Regional Linkages

- 44) Talks should commence between regional institutions and the Welsh Assembly to seek co-operation on planning policy with transport and wood biomass production
- 45) Regional institutions should instigate talks with all neighbouring regional agencies to consider planning policy to improve the transport infrastructure
- 46) Regional institutions and regional businesses should be involved with the planning of the Northern Way
- 47) An economic assessment of the impact of the Northern Way upon the regional economy should take place with a planning assessment of the impact of the plans included in the revised RSS
- 48) Links with Gloucestershire County Council should be established to monitor the impact of the county's economic activity upon the West Midlands region in terms of planning policy

Chapter Eleven – Phase Three Review of the RSS from Rural Public Services to Sport

- 49) Phase Three review to consider the development of leisure facilities
- 50) Phase Three review to consider the planning issues surrounding Olympic and Paralympic training camps
- 51) Phase Three review to consider the planning issues relating to the provision of rural one stop shop services

Notes

Introduction

- 1 *Adding Value to the Regions*, Regeneris (2006) commissioned by the English Regions Network, Page 27

Chapter Two – Business Growth and the Planning Regime

- 1 *Assessment of the Regional Economy*, West Midlands Regional Assembly, October 2006
- 2 *European Spatial Development Perspective*, European Union, May 1999, Pages 19-20
- 3 Danish Ministry of Trade and Industry and Danish Ministry of Culture, 2001

Chapter Three – Economic Centres

- 1 *Study into the identification and use of local housing market areas for the development of the RSS*, Ecotec, commissioned by the West Midlands Regional Assembly, August 2006
- 2 Bank of England Monetary Analysis Unit, Summer 2006
- 3 Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce submission to Herefordshire County Council, 24 April 2006
- 4 *Housing Provision in Rural Areas*, Country Land and Business Association, 15 March 2005
- 5 *Regional Housing Strategy*, West Midlands Regional Assembly, June 2005, Para 3.41
- 6 *Functional Economic Geography of the West Midlands*, University of Birmingham, commissioned by West Midlands Regional Observatory for Advantage West Midlands, 2006, Pages 53-54
- 7 *2005 Regional Employment Land Study*, West Midlands Regional Assembly, Page 7, 2006
- 8 *Study into the identification and use of local housing market areas for the development of the RSS*, Ecotec, commissioned by the West Midlands Regional Assembly, August 2006
- 9 *Rethinking the North West Spatial Economy (Strengthening the evidence base of key economic and spatial strategies in the North West)* commissioned by North West Regional Development Agency prepared by Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures, University of Salford, Centre for Policy Studies, University of Manchester, Institute for Political and Economic Governance, University of Manchester, Salford GIS, September 2006

Chapter Four – Transport

- (1) *Getting Business Moving* (British Chambers of Commerce, February 2004)
- (2) *Lifting the Barriers* (Federation of Small Businesses, April 2006)

Chapter Six – Retail

- 1 National Federation of Retail Newsagents Media Release, *NFRN Responds to Barker Review*, 11 December 2006
- 2 Association of Convenience Stores Media Release, *Leading MP Sparks Planning Debate at ACS Event*, 11 October 2006
- 3 *The Creative Economy* – Birmingham Post supplement, 7 December 2006 with Culture West Midlands and West Midlands Business Council

Chapter Eight – Water

- 1 Letter from Mr Ron Linfield. Area Manager (Northern), Environment Agency to Geoffrey Robinson MP dated 22 November 2006

Chapter Nine – Energy

- (1) *State of the Region* (Institution of Civil Engineers, 2005)
- (2) *ibid*

Chapter Ten – Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area

- 1 *Study into the identification and use of local housing market areas for the development of the RSS*, Ecotec, commissioned by the West Midlands Regional Assembly, August 2006
- 2 Based on an assessment of the figures from the 2004 documentation produced for Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Spatial Strategy (Exam 59 paper) produced by the East of England Regional Assembly, East Midlands Regional Assembly and South East of England Regional Assembly and on figures contained in the report *Milton Keynes and South Midlands Study* (September 2002) as prepared by Roger Tym and Partners/Halcrow/Three Dragons and compared with current census data on the number of households in the Birmingham area.
- 3 Letter from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government, Baroness Andrews OBE, to Peter Luff MP, dated 17 November 2006

Chapter Eleven – Cross Regional Linkages

- 1 *Study into the identification and use of local housing market areas for the development of the RSS*, Ecotec, commissioned by the West Midlands Regional Assembly, August 2006

Chapter Twelve – Phase Three Review of the RSS from Rural Public Services to Sport

- 1 *Be part of 2012*, London 2012, 6 July 2006