



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

**West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)
Phase 1 Revision – The Black Country
Secretary of State's Reasons for Changes**

Publication Date: 15 January 2008

Summary of Changes

The following issues are covered in the proposed policies, which will form amendments/revisions to the existing RSS rather than a separate sub-regional strategy:

- climate change,
- corridors for future housing and employment growth,
- designation of Brierley Hill as a strategic centre in place of Dudley,
- promotion of the Black Country Urban Park, and
- revisions to the transport priorities.

Joint Core Strategy

Once the revised policies are agreed they will form the framework for the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) which is being prepared by the Black Country authorities. The JCS will provide more detail on the broad locations for development and the anticipated phasing and delivery mechanisms.

Background

The RSS is currently being revised in three phases. The first focuses on the regeneration of the Black Country sub-region, the second on housing, employment, waste and selected transport issues, and the third mainly on environmental issues.

The Phase 1 revision was considered urgent by Ministers who wished to see action in relation to the regeneration of the Black Country, a key element of the regeneration of the conurbation at the heart of the region. The Black Country Consortium led on a ground-breaking holistic Black Country Study which analysed the sub-region and produced a vision for 2031. This provided much of the technical evidence for new policies for the RSS which will facilitate regeneration. The draft policies were submitted to the Secretary of State in May 2006, followed by a public examination in January 2007. The Independent Panel was broadly supportive of the submitted policies and made recommendations on that basis to the SoS.

An Appropriate Assessment of the Proposed Changes has been completed to ensure they comply with the Habitats Directive. The SoS has concluded that no further Sustainability Appraisal is required as the changes from the submitted draft are minimal.

Housing numbers are being considered on a region-wide basis in the Phase 2 Revision. Therefore the Phase 1 Revision does not change the current RSS housing numbers for the Black Country. The Panel also suggested some issues will need to be revisited in Phase 2 to ensure cross-regional consistency.