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Date: 8th December 2005

Dear Mr Hobbs

CONTRIBUTIONS TO OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION DPD - ISSUES REPORT

Thank you for sending a copy of the above document to the Government Office for the West Midlands. I have noted that consultations on the Issues Report are part of ongoing engagement in the preparation of the Development Plan Document.

There are a number of comments and suggestions which you should take into account as you prepare the DPD for submission to the Secretary of State.

Process and Community Involvement

There needs to be a more explicit statement of the nature and purpose of the Issues Report document. Some elements of the Introduction to the Balanced Housing Markets DPD could be usefully included. As with that DPD, there is a need to identify the stage of preparation which the DPD has reached. It is important at all stages in the preparation of documents, particularly for community engagement, that people are aware of the stage which has been reached. It is suggested that a brief paragraph is included outlining the stages of preparation of Development Plan Documents. To illustrate the process an adaptation of Figure 4.1 from PPS12, "Local Development Frameworks" may be helpful.

General

It is pleasing to see that this DPD is being prepared within the context of an audit of open space, outdoor sport and recreation facilities undertaken in accordance with advice in PPG17. There is a need to include reference to the provisions of the

operative Circular on Planning Obligations to ensure that they are taken into account in formulating policies in the latter stages of the preparation of this DPD.

Sustainability Appraisal

I am concerned about the reference to the DPD being set within the context of the Local Plan 1996-2011 (paragraph 2.1). As you state in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 the purpose of the DPD is both to review existing and develop new policies. I accept that the starting point may be the adopted Local Plan but the context should be the Regional Spatial Strategy (in terms of conformity) and the Core Strategy which you are preparing later.

Has a scoping study been carried out and consulted upon prior to the consultations on the Issues Report? There is a requirement to undertake a sustainability appraisal of the issues and options and this should inform decision making as the authority moves towards preparation of preferred options. You should be aware that Guidance for local planning authorities on Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks was published by ODPM in November 2005.

Finally, it may be helpful if you refer to the document, "The Environmental Economy of the West Midlands - 2001", which includes references to the benefits of open spaces for health and well-being. It also includes a section outlining the added benefits of woodland and forests.

Thank you once again for consulting the Government Office for the West Midlands on the Issues Report. I hope that these comments are helpful as you develop the contributions on the Open Space, Sport and Recreation DPD. Please contact me on the above telephone number or e-mail address if you wish to discuss any of the comments in further detail.

Yours sincerely

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Senior Planning Officer
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