



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

NEWS RELEASE NEWS RELEASE NEWS RELEASE NEWS RELEASE

WM3039/06

8th August, 2006

FIRST SCRUTINY OF PLANNING CORE STRATEGIES REVEALED

Examinations of the Lichfield and Stafford Core Strategies **by independent inspectors** have highlighted the need to consider the 'soundness' of new development plan documents from the outset of the process.

Neither authority satisfactorily reflected the principles on spatial planning. The Inspectors considered the strategies were unclear and lacked a firm evidence base.

Key messages for authorities preparing documents are:

- an up-to-date and robust evidence base is essential;
- realistic alternative options must be properly considered at an early stage;
- the plan must be spatial – with clear links with the community strategy and other plans;
- plans should be sufficiently flexible to be able to respond to changing circumstances; and
- monitoring and implementation frameworks must be clearly set out and delivery mechanisms agreed with relevant bodies.

The Government Office for the West Midlands is working with authorities across the region to support them in delivering sound plans.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. The new planning system, requiring local planning authorities (LPAs) to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF) came into operation on 28 September 2004.

2. LDFs comprise a portfolio of Local Development Documents (LDDs) which collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the LPAs area. These documents include Core Strategies, Land Allocation documents and Area Action Plans. Core Strategies are normally expected to be the first documents produced as they set out the longer-term strategic planning framework for the LA area.
3. The independent examination into a DPD commences on submission of a document. DPDs are required to be sound when submitted for examination.
4. PPS12 (para 4.24) sets out 9 tests of soundness against which documents will be assessed. These include procedural tests (i.e. has the DPD been prepared in accordance with the LDS, has the plan and its policies been subjected to SA), conformity tests (i.e. is it a spatial plan consistent with national policy and in general conformity with the RSS, has it had regard to the Community Strategy) and coherence, consistency and effectiveness tests (i.e. the strategies/policies/plans represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, there are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring, the plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances). A DPD is sound if it meets all of these tests.
5. Both Stafford and Lichfield submitted their Core Strategies to the Secretary of State for examination in October 2005. The opening of hearing sessions into the Lichfield examination commenced on 25 April and were held over 8 sitting days. The hearing sessions for Stafford examination commenced on 6 June and were held over 4 sitting days.

**Issued on behalf of GOWM and DCLG by Government News Network, West Midlands.
Media contact Ray Prichard Tel:0121 352 5508 Ray.prichard@gnn.gsi.gov.uk**

**Regional news releases issued by the Government News Network can be viewed at
<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/>**