

2.0 RSS Policy

Purpose and Structure of this Section

- 2.1 This section provides a summary of the Preferred Option Draft West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision (abbreviated in this paper to WMRSS), which was submitted to the 'Secretary of State' in December 2007.
- 2.2 This Section seeks to summarise the key principles and strategic policy choices of the WMRSS and briefly examines the reasoning behind these principles and policy choices. The Paper does not provide a detailed analysis of each individual policy of the WMRSS.
- 2.3 This section:
1. Sets out the approach of the WMRSS to sustainability and provides a summary of its approach to spatial development. These principles inform and inter-relate with all the other sections of the WMRSS.
 2. Summarises the approach to the WMRSS in achieving an urban and rural renaissance in the Region.
 3. Deals with the WMRSS approach to housing and employment land respectively.
 4. Addresses the policies of the WMRSS which relate to the quality of the environment, specifically policies relating to the environment, energy, minerals and waste.
 5. Summarises transport and accessibility policies.

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Review

- 2.4 The existing West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy was originally published as Regional Planning Guidance in June 2004. When publishing the document, the Secretary of State indicated that an early review of certain aspects of the document needed to be undertaken. The subsequent revision of the WMRSS is being taken forward in three phases.
- 2.5 Phase One: is informed by a study of the Black Country examining the many inter-connected issues affecting this part of the Region including regeneration priorities, the strategic role of town centres, urban capacity, identification of employment land, scope for environmental improvements and improving access to regeneration sites. A Revised West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy incorporating the changes resulting from the Phase One Revision was published January 2008.
- 2.6 Phase Two: deals with housing figures, centres, employment land, centres, transport and waste.
- 2.7 Phase Three: will be looking at critical rural services, culture/recreational provision, various regionally significant environmental issues and the provision of a framework for Gypsy and Traveller sites. A Draft Project Plan has been consulted on, and work on this phase of the revision has commenced with a view to consultation on spatial options in July 2009.
- 2.8 The Preferred Option Draft West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision only incorporates the amendments that are proposed as part of the WMRSS Phase Two Revision. It does not incorporate the changes resulting from the Phase One Revision.

Sustainability

Context

- 2.9 In the early stages of developing the WMRSS, a framework of 'guiding principles' for the review was defined, which provide a framework of values to guide decisions and choices on the content of the WMRSS. Together they provide a guide towards an integrated and sustainable approach to

development (Annex A) and as a result the Vision of the WMRSS incorporates sustainability as a key theme (paras. 2.2-2.4).

- 2.10 The review of the WMRSS is also informed by the Regional Sustainable Development Framework “A Sustainable Future for the West Midlands (2006)”. Implications of the Regional Sustainable Development Framework on the WMRSS include a focus on the following, which are all important guiding principles for the WMRSS: -
- a) Addressing the relative decline in the regional economy;
 - b) Reversing the movement of people and jobs away from the Major Urban Areas (MUAs) of Birmingham/Solihull, the Black Country, Coventry and the North Staffordshire conurbation;
 - c) Tackling road and rail congestion; and
 - d) A more balanced and sustainable pattern of development (Para. 2.6).

Climate Change

- 2.11 A firm focus is placed on climate change, with a new policy on Climate Change (Policy SR1) at the beginning of the WMRSS to highlight the issue (Para. 2.21). The RPB has endeavoured to integrate these issues and any further considerations will be incorporated into the Phase 3 revision.
- 2.12 The WMRSS proposes a dual approach to addressing climate change, by both promoting measures to reduce emissions whilst ensuring new developments are adaptable to changing climatic conditions (Para. 2.7). It is noted that Policy SR3 includes some specific, quantitative criteria relating to the sustainable design and construction of medium-large sized development proposals.
- 2.13 The scale of change and development in the MUAs and Settlements of Significant development are identified as providing a particular opportunity to make a significant contribution to the reduction in growth of carbon dioxide emissions (Para 2.20 and Policy SR1).

Creating Sustainable Communities

- 2.14 The WMRSS places a very strong emphasis throughout (particularly in its Spatial Strategy – see below) on the need to stem the trend for the outward movement of people and jobs away from the MUAs. Fundamental to the WMRSS interpretation of urban renaissance, is the creation of sustainable urban communities in which people will choose to live, work and invest (Para. 4.3).
- 2.15 One part of the solution to decentralisation from MUAs is identified as providing a mix of housing within MUAs that is affordable, meets needs throughout people’s lives and is of high quality. It is argued that regeneration should also support and expand economic activity, improve the quality of the built, historic and natural environment and improve the overall quality of life (Para. 2.23).
- 2.16 However, despite this strong focus on urban renaissance, the WMRSS does recognise that the scale of proposed new development in the Region means that some significant development will need to occur outside the MUAs. The principle focus for this will be brownfield land in Settlements of Significant Development (SSD).
- 2.17 Accordingly, sustainable communities are to be created within the MUAs and identified Settlements of Significant Development. Policy SR2 brings together the need to provide for the planned levels of housing and associated employment generating activities in these locations with the provision of social infrastructure, green infrastructure networks, public transport infrastructure, and environmental infrastructure.

Spatial Strategy

- 2.18 The following summarises the main spatial strategic objectives of the WMRSS. It is noted that Chapter 3 (which is the chapter of the WMRSS providing its Spatial Strategy) does not include any actual policies.

Key Spatial Strategy Objectives

- a) To make the West Midlands MUAs increasingly attractive places to live, work and invest
- b) To secure the regeneration of the rural areas of the Region
- c) To create a joined up multi-centred Regional structure where all areas/centres have a distinct role to play
- d) To retain the Green Belt but make allowances for the adjustment to boundaries
- e) To support the regional cities and towns to meet their local and sub-regional development needs.
- f) To support diversification and modernisation of the Region's economy and ensuring opportunities for growth are linked to meeting needs and reducing social exclusion
- g) To ensure the quality of environment is conserved and enhanced across all parts of the Region
- h) To improve the Region's transport systems significantly
- i) To promote the development of a network of strategic centres across this Region
- j) To promote Birmingham as a global city.

Black Country Objectives

- 2.19 The following summarises the main Black Country Objectives of the WMRSS.
- a) To reverse out-migration accommodating within the Black Country all of the generated household growth from 2011 meeting at least the levels of housing provision identified in Policy CF3 table 1;
 - b) To raise income levels - raising demand and household incomes (average earnings, GDP per head and reducing unemployment) to the UK average by 2033;
 - c) To create an inclusive and cohesive society within the Black Country - removing barriers to opportunity changing the socio economic mix by increasing the proportion of social grades A and B to match the national profile by 2033 or earlier;
 - d) To transform the Black Country Environment - protecting and enhancing the sub-region's environmental and heritage assets and biodiversity implementing the Black Country as Urban Park concept.

Urban Renaissance

- 2.20 Urban Renaissance (in particular of the designated Major Urban Areas) is a key focus of the WMRSS' Spatial Strategy.

i. The challenge

- 2.21 The WMRSS places a particular emphasis on the implications of the outward movement of people and jobs away from the MUAs. The historic dispersal of population and activities is identified as having led to an under-use of the social and physical resources of the MUAs, creating greater social polarisation within the region and contributing to unsustainable development patterns leading to people making more and longer journeys. The scale of available residential development land in settlements close to the MUAs has contributed to the loss of investment, environmental

degradation and weakened housing markets in the MUAs, and increased development and environmental pressures in other parts of the Region (Para. 3.2 and 2.7).

ii. The identified solution

- 2.22 An integrated policy response is required. The WMRSS focuses attention on increasing the attractiveness of the MUAs so that they can retain and attract population and investment, i.e. developing the MUAs so that they can increasingly meet more of their own economic and social needs in order to counter the unsustainable outward movement of people and jobs facilitated by previous strategies (Para. 3.3 and 3.5). This is to be achieved by housing market renewal, tackling deprivation, enhancing the quality of urban environments, promoting vital and vibrant town centres and generally resisting peripheral expansion (Para. 3.10). The Spatial Strategy of the WMRSS assumes that by providing a sufficient choice of attractive residential environments within MUAs, net out-migration can be stemmed.
- 2.23 However, the WMRSS recognises that the scale of projected need is now such that the MUAs do not have the brownfield land capacity to accommodate all the necessary development (particularly housing). Consequently, in certain circumstances sustainable urban housing extensions or regionally important employment will be allowed (Para. 3.10). Therefore, some settlements and local authorities in the surrounding Shires are anticipated to provide housing beyond their own generated needs in order to meet this shortfall. Such provision is sought in ways that promote local sustainability and a greater degree of self sufficiency (Para. 3.3). Crucially, development will be required to support the urban renaissance of the MUAs (Para. 3.10).
- 2.24 Outside the MUAs, development will be focused in and adjacent to towns which are most capable of balanced and sustainable growth to complement the role of the MUAs (without attracting investment or migration from the MUAs) – in particular the ten designated Settlements of Significant Development (Para. 3.11)

Rural Renaissance

- 2.25 There is also a recognition that some rural areas suffer from insufficient economic activity and suitable affordable housing to meet local needs and to support a balanced population (Para. 3.4). More detail on this is provided in the relevant section below.

The Green Belt

- 2.26 Although the retention of the Green Belt is one of the WMRSS's spatial strategy objectives, it is made clear that the adjustment of boundaries will be allowed where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated, either to support urban regeneration or to allow for the most sustainable form of development to deliver specific housing proposals (Para. 3.9 d.).
- 2.27 When determining the most sustainable form of new development, local authorities, in their LDDs are advised to consider whether the release of Green Belt land would provide a more appropriate option than other forms of development (Para. 6.25).

Polycentric Development

- 2.28 There is a focus on creating a balanced and polycentric pattern of development where all areas/centres have distinct roles to play as part of a joined-up multi-centred Regional structure (Para. 1.19 and 3.9 c). Accordingly, the WMRSS is affording attention to exploring how the concept of polycentric development can be utilised (Para. 1.19). Although a Study to inform the WMRSS ("A Polycentric Framework for the West Midlands, ECOTEC, 2000"), provides an understanding of the Region's functional areas, polycentric development is identified as requiring further investigation (Para. 1.16).

Economic Development

- 2.29 WMRSS also focuses on diversifying and modernising the region's economy (Para. 3.5). More details on this are provided in the relevant sections below.

Transport

- 2.30 The WMRSS also focuses on modernising the region's transport infrastructure, to facilitate improvement to economic and social regeneration (Para. 3.5 and 4.13). More details on this are provided in the relevant sections below.

Environmental Policies

- 2.31 The Region's defined 'countryside character', 'natural areas' and 'historic landscapes' provide an important context for the Spatial Strategy.

Urban Renaissance

General Approach to Urban Renaissance

- 2.32 Readers should cross-refer to the Section above which outlines the spatial strategy elements of the approach of the WMRSS to urban renaissance.
- 2.33 The WMRSS promotes an approach to urban regeneration which is more comprehensive than historically, aiming to increase the overall quality across the MUAs and providing urban areas which are attractive to a broad range of people's expectations and lifestyles (Para. 4.2). This involves the restructuring of land use and transport networks in MUAs to create employment growth, new residential environments and improved environmental quality (Policy UR1). The success of the urban renaissance strategy is partially dependent on a range of factors being improved, including transport capacity, social infrastructure (specifically education provision, skills and quality health facilities) and quality environments (paras. 6.12 and 6.17).
- 2.34 WMRSS recognises that areas outside the MUAs are also experiencing decline and accordingly promotes local regeneration programmes in such locations. However, it is made clear that support for location regeneration programmes should not prejudice the need to focus resources within the MUAs. (Policy UR2).

Economic Development

- 2.35 The region faces the need for economic restructuring and reinvention, continuing a process that has been underway for some time. The WMRSS notes the clear link between successful urban renaissance and economic growth. In this respect the WMRSS particularly emphasises the requirement for the provision of adequate employment land in appropriate locations (Para. 4.9) and therefore seeks the provision of a portfolio of employment sites (Para. 4.11). In accordance with the WMRSS's spatial strategy, priority should be given to investment in MUAs.

Transport

- 2.36 The role of improvements in the Region's transport infrastructure in facilitating regeneration is identified. The approach of the WMRSS to improving the Region's transport infrastructure is summarised in Section 9.0 below.

City, Town and District Centres

- 2.37 It is clear that the focus on revitalising city and town centres is driven by the potential for this to contribute to urban renaissance and in particular to play a role in attracting people into urban areas

(Para. 4.15 and Policy UR3). Flagship schemes and cultural projects are seen as providing a catalyst for regeneration in this respect (Para. 4.17). There is also a focus on the strong polycentric (multi-centred) pattern of development found in the region, which drives the analysis of the WMRSS in developing its hierarchy of centres – urban centres are to be enhanced according to their function and role in the Region (Para. 4.16 and Policy UR3).

Rural Renaissance

- 2.38 The main focuses of rural regeneration are; the improvement of choice in housing (especially by the provision of affordable housing); the diversification of the rural economy (tackling unemployment, under-employment and social exclusions); better transport links; and improvements in community facilities and services (Policy PR1 A).
- 2.39 The geographical focus for rural regeneration is the Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ) designated by Advantage West Midlands, which covers those parts of the Region under greatest threat from economic change and other associated pressures (Para. 5.9 and Policy RR2). Market towns are the focal point of rural regeneration in most parts of the region including the RRZ, by providing a focus for economic and housing development and by providing services (Para. 5.14 and RR3).
- 2.40 There is a recognition that many of the actions necessary to achieve the rural renaissance will be small scale and specific to the locality (Para. 5.2) and that there needs to be regard to the inter-relationship between urban and rural areas (Policy PR1 C).

Communities for the Future (Housing)

Location of housing

- 2.41 The distribution, location and type of new housing development are all identified as having an important role to play in delivering urban and rural renaissance. The strong emphasis placed by the WMRSS on urban renaissance is particularly evident in respect of the proposed distribution of housing. A concentration of new housing development is sought within the MUAs, which will receive a significant higher level of housing than historically (Para. 6.10 and 6.23).
- 2.42 Significant action and investment, (including where appropriate large scale redevelopment), is proposed to be targeted within those parts of the MUAs where the housing market is weak, particularly in the Market Renewal Pathfinder areas and housing market intervention areas (Policy CF1 E).
- 2.43 It is noted that excessive development on greenfield sites outside the MUAs could fundamentally undermine the process of urban renaissance (Para. 6.2). However, as established by the Spatial Strategy, the WMRSS accepts that new housing provision will need to be made outside the MUAs to meet housing demand. Parts of this provision will be focused on named settlements capable of balanced and sustainable growth but provision will also be made for a spread of development to meet the requirements of other settlements, market towns and rural areas (Para. 6.3).

i. Housing within the Major Urban Areas

- 2.44 The potential for new housing within the MUAs is to be maximised, subject to the need to maintain a balance between employment prospects and housing development and secure environmental safeguards (Policy CF1). The housing figures provided by Table 1 for Birmingham, Solihull (that part within the MUA) and the Black Country Boroughs are minima figures (CF3).
- 2.45 The increased housing provision in the MUAs will require major restructuring of the urban fabric in some areas which may, for example, involve consolidating employment and surplus open space uses to release land for housing development (Para. 6.11). This will require careful balancing against other policies in the WMRSS e.g. relating to protection of employment land and environmental protection.

2.46 This reasoning behind this policy choice reflects the aspirations of the WMRSS for residential environments to be provided within the MUAs which provide more attractive choices of home and community environments, so that they can increasingly retain economically active and independent households (Para. 6.2 and 6.7).

2.47 The WMRSS recognises the role Housing Market Pathfinders in seeking to address localised housing market failure (Para. 6.7) and thereby contributing to meeting housing requirements and creating sustainable communities (Para. 6.8).

ii. Housing beyond the Major Urban Areas

2.48 The WMRSS recognises that attractive and sustainable communities need to be developed and maintained across all parts of the Region to enable communities to grow and change and housing demands to be met, including through greenfield extensions where appropriate. Crucially, however, development is required not to undermine the urban renaissance of the MUAs (Para. 6.19).

2.49 Beyond the MUAs, strategic housing development is required to be concentrated in and adjacent to the ten 'Settlements of Significant Development' identified by Policy CF2 of the WMRSS, which are recognised as being sub-regional service centres capable of accommodating balanced and sustainable growth which meets a number of other criteria identified by Policy CF2.

Windfall Sites

2.50 WMRSS emphasises the important contribution which windfall sites in providing a source of new housing supply, particularly within the MUAs. Such sites are recognised as making a vital contribution to urban renaissance and encouraging patterns of sustainable development. WMRA states that there are circumstances within the Region which require an acknowledgement of the important role of windfall sites in future land supply, but acknowledges that this is contrary to the general advice in PPS3 (Para. 6.62-6.63).

Type of housing

2.51 In order to create a variety and choice of good quality housing within the MUAs, there is a focus on improving the quality of existing stock as well as increasing the scale and range of new housing development opportunities in appropriate locations, creating an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures and ensuring the provision of appropriate affordable housing (Policy CF1).

2.52 The need for affordable housing is identified as affecting all parts of the region (Para. 6.6 and 6.43), with Policy CF7 requiring the delivery of a minimum of 6,000 affordable housing units each year.

2.53 In line with the aspirations of WMRSS that the wealth of MUAs is increased and out migration from these areas is stemmed, there is recognition that some areas require a higher proportion of more 'upmarket' houses to attract professional and managerial workers (Para. 6.58).

Phasing of housing development

2.54 The WMRSS acknowledges that there will be a tension between ensuring the delivery of urban renaissance within the MUAs and allowing greenfield developments (which could undermine this renaissance but would increase the overall level of house building) to proceed (Para. 6.30). Its proposed phasing of development affords priority to increasing development within the West Midlands conurbation early in the plan period with development in the rest of the Region occurring at a slower rate (Policy CF4).

The Re-use of land and buildings for housing

2.55 Unsurprisingly, the WMRSS affords priority to the development of brownfield land and re-use of existing buildings in sustainable locations before allocations on greenfield land are released for development. However, whilst Policy CF5 gives priority to the development of brownfield land,

LPAs need to balance the requirement for making efficient use of brownfield land against the requirement to build in sustainable locations (Para. 6.37).

- 2.56 Particular consideration is required to be given to the release of employment land for housing. Although WMRSS identifies that large areas of previous employment land is suitable for housing development, it needs to be ensured that the most important and versatile sites are protected for employment related uses (Para. 6.64 and 6.39).

Making efficient use of land

- 2.57 Although there is a focus on making the most efficient use of available housing land, in order to reduce the amount of greenfield land developed and to support urban renaissance, WMRSS is clear that development must also meet design standards, enhance the environment and ensure a mix of housing (Para. 6.41).

Prosperity for all (Employment)

Location of Employment Development

- 2.58 The WMRSS seeks to ensure the continuing provision of an appropriate portfolio of sustainably located employment sites which reflect the priorities set out in the Spatial Strategy, are attractive to developers and operators and appropriate to market needs. Spatial focus is given to linking new economic growth with population and housing growth through, several measures, including the identification of regeneration zones, high technology corridors and a network of strategic town and city centres (Para. 7.3).

i. Economic Development within the Major Urban Areas

- 2.59 In accordance with the spatial strategy, the MUAs will be the primary focus for additional investment in economic growth, particularly the regeneration areas. The five urban Regeneration Zones identified by Policy PA2 are the primary focus for meeting much of the Region's new development needs with particular emphasis given to the provision of high quality employment sites and regeneration of town centres (Para. 7.13). This is to encourage urban renaissance, reversing decentralisation.

ii. Economic Development beyond the Major Urban Areas

- 2.60 Although investment will be focused on the MUAs, sustainable economic growth will also be promoted in the rest of the Region including the Settlements of Significant Development. An appropriate balance between new housing and new employment land provision will be sought. Where growth opportunities are provided outside the MUAs economic development will be required to meet at least one of a list of criteria identified by Policy PA1 C.
- 2.61 Development proposed on greenfield sites (including those on the edge of the MUAs) will be required to meet a number of criteria identified by Policy PA1 D including that there are no suitable alternative sites available on previously developed land or buildings.
- 2.62 The economic development priorities in rural areas are to broaden the economic base, reduce over-reliance on traditional employment and provide a wide range of local job opportunities (Para. 7.93).
- 2.63 In all cases, the scale and nature of development will be controlled to ensure that it meets local needs and does not encourage a further decentralisation of people and jobs from the MUAs (Para. 7.93 and Policy PA14).

Portfolio of Employment Sites

- 2.64 WMRSS promotes a 'portfolio' of employment sites, to seek to ensure that desirable employment development is not lost due to lack of site availability (Policy PA6). The portfolio of employment

land is to be developed in accordance with the Spatial Strategy, although there is a recognition that some greenfield development for employment purposes may be necessary (Para. 7.31).

- 2.65 LPAs are required to make provision for a continuing five-year reservoir of readily available employment land, with Table 4 providing district level requirements. In the MUAs, the five-year reservoirs are to be treated as minima (Policy PA6A).

Types of Economic Development

- 2.66 WMRSS places a particular focus on the following types of economic development: -

- a) High technology clusters of activity within the three identified high-technology corridors (Policy PA3);
- b) The appropriate expansion of the Region's higher education and research establishments which identified as important sources of innovation (Policy PA4 and Para. 7.24).
- c) The development of the Region's cluster priorities and other activities which support the diversification and modernisation of the Region's economy at Regional Investment Sites (Policy PA7).
- d) Accommodating very large-scale investment by single users with an international choice of locations in order to help diversify and restructure the Regional economy at Major Investments Sites (Policy PA8)
- e) The concentrated development of warehousing and distribution uses at Regional Logistics Sites (Policy PA9)
- f) The further development of tourism and culture as a key element in the diversification of the Regional economy including through the further development of identified key tourism and cultural assets (Policy PA10 and Para. 7.47).
- g) The network of town and city centres identified by Policy PA11 is the preferred location of major retail development, uses which attract large numbers of people and large scale office developments. Mixed use developments incorporating a range of uses are particularly encouraged in these centres (Para. 7.55). These centres should not be undermined by large-scale out-of-centre retail development (Para. 7.75).

Town and City Centres

- 2.67 There is a Network of 25 strategic centres identified in the RSS, of which Birmingham is the Regional capital (Policy PA12) and continues to be developed as major key player within this Network. The ten centres within the MUAs have a key role to play in achieving Urban Renaissance and should be priorities for investment to support this. The centres outside the MUAs should play a complementary role (Para. 7.57). The comparison retail floorspace requirements for 2006-2026 for which Local Authorities should plan are set out by Policy PA12A.

- 2.68 The main focus of the non-strategic centres will be on meeting local needs, although in some cases there may a justification for a more extensive level of provision. As a general principle it is not expected that requirements for additional comparison retail floorspace in non-strategic centres will exceed 10,000 sq.m gross (Para. 7.72-7.74).

Office Development

- 2.69 In 2003-2005 only 31% of office completions in the West Midlands were in town centre locations. WMRSS states that it is important to shift the focus of new office development towards town centres or at least to locations within the urban areas accessible by pedestrians, cyclists and public transport (Para. 7.79) and this is reflected in Policy PA13B. However, WMRSS is clear that an element of new out-of-centre office development is likely to continue to be required. This is to prevent the loss of investment to other areas at the detriment of the regional economy (Para. 7.80).

Protection of Employment Land and Premises

- 2.70 Employment land and premises which make an important contribution to the portfolio within an authority's area will be protected from competing uses. However, employment land will be regularly reviewed and some sites may be released for development as a mixed use (the preferred option) or for an alternative use (Policy PA6B).

Quality of the Environment

- 2.71 Conserving the quality of the environment and the prudent use of natural resources are key elements in the achievement of sustainable development and the implementation of the Spatial Strategy. The underlying philosophy of the WMRSS in respect of policies on the environment is that whilst in some instances the environment may act as a constraint on certain types of development, overall it should be regarded as a major asset supporting wider economic and social aspirations and acting as a key component in regeneration (Para. 8.2).

Environment Policies

- 2.72 The effect on natural, historic and built environment assets and the need to create new assets will be an important consideration in implementing policies in the WMRSS (Para. 8.5). This is because environmental improvement underpins the overall quality of life and supports wider economic and social objectives. Policy QE1 sets out the ways in which the environment should be conserved and enhanced.
- 2.73 Although the protection of environmental assets should have a high priority, WMRSS does recognise that where there are over-riding social or economic reasons for development, some reduction of less sensitive assets may be justified providing wherever possible appropriate measures are taken to mitigate and/or compensative for the loss (Para. 8.7).
- 2.74 The section on environmental policies within the WMRSS places a particular priority on: -
- a) Restoring degraded areas and creating high quality new environments (linking to the focus of the Spatial Strategy on the reuse of derelict land) (Policy QE2);
 - b) Creating a high quality building environment (linking to policies on high quality residential development and sustainability considerations) (Policy QE3);
 - c) Requiring local authorities and other agencies to develop appropriate strategies for greenspace (access to quality greenspace can contribute to the Region's urban renaissance and overall quality of life) (Policy QE4);
 - d) Requiring the identification, protection, conservation and enhancement of the Region's diverse historic environment, with a focus on identifying regeneration potential (linking to the WMRSS's focus on an urban renaissance) (Policy QE5)
 - e) Requiring the conservation, enhancement and where necessary restoration of the quality, diversity and distinctiveness of landscape character (Policy QE6);
 - f) Protecting, managing and enhancing the Region's biodiversity and nature conservation resources (which also promotes social and economic benefits) (Policy QE7, Para. 8.27).
 - g) Encouraging tree cover in the Region to be increased where appropriate and existing woodlands to be protected (which also provides contributions to health, recreation and regeneration objectives) (Policy QE8 and Para. 8.32);
 - h) Maintaining and enhancing river and inland waterway corridors as key strategic resources, particularly helping to secure the wider aims of regeneration, tourism and the conservation of the natural, built and historic environment (Policy QE9);
 - i) Flooding is to be examined as part of the review of the WMRSS (Para. 8.43).

Energy Policies

- 2.75 Throughout the WMRSS there is recognition of the need to respond to climate change as a key challenge facing the Region. This priority is clearly shown in the energy policies of the WMRSS, including: -
- a) its encouragement of proposals for renewable energy generation (Policy EN1)
 - b) its requirement that Development Plans include measures to minimise energy demands from development and encourage the use of good quality combined heat and power systems and district heating schemes (Policy EN2);
- 2.76 However, no quantitative targets are established by the above two policies.

Mineral Policies

- 2.77 Mineral extraction is an important part of the Region's economy and the WMRSS includes policies requiring appropriate provision to be made for mineral working and apportioning provision for aggregates between the West Midlands' sub-regions (Policies M1, M2 and M4). However, the important relationship between mineral exploitation and the environment is also emphasised (Para. 8.56). Furthermore, Policy M3 seeks to reduce the reliance on land won primary aggregates by increasing the contribution of alternative sources of material in meeting the Region's requirements.

Waste Policies

- 2.78 When it is approved by the Secretary of State, the revised WMRSS will become the Regional Waste Strategy for the West Midlands.
- 2.79 The WMRSS recognises the strong links between waste policies and sustainability. The WMRSS places a strong focus on driving waste management up the waste hierarchy 'in line with the National Waste Strategy for England', addressing waste as a resource and looking to disposal as the last option. The WMRSS also provides a framework in which each Waste Planning Authority is required to seek to manage an equivalent tonnage of waste to that arising within its boundary (Para. 8.77, Policy W1).
- 2.80 In accordance with the Spatial Strategy of the WMRSS, sites and areas for new or enhanced waste management facilities should be in, or in close proximity to, the MUAs, Settlements of Significant Development and other large settlements identified in the Broad Locations for Waste Management Facilities Diagram (Policy W3). New Waste Management Facilities are required to meet a number of additional criteria identified by Policy W5.

Transport and Accessibility

- 2.81 This chapter sets out the West Midland's Regional Transport (RTS), which provides the regional framework for Regional and Local Transport Planning.

Key Objectives

- 2.82 The key policies within the WMRSS Chapter on Transport and Accessibility promote:-
- a) Improving access within the Region in a way which reduces the need for travel, tackles congestion, expands traffic choice and improves safety (in other words avoids past trends of increased car traffic) (Policy T1).
 - b) Reducing the need to travel; land use changes can have significant implications for the demand for transport for example by promoting a balanced provision of uses and requiring developments which generate significant traffic demands to be accessible by public transport (Policy T2).
 - c) Providing greater opportunities for walking and cycling (Policy T3).

- d) Promoting travel awareness of alternative travel choices (Policy T4).
 - e) Public transport improvements across the West Midlands are identified as being crucial to supporting regeneration and enhancing the quality of life for both urban and rural communities. An integrated hierarchy of public transport will be developed with the highest priority given to investment supporting the regeneration of the MUAs (Policy T5 and Para. 9.59).
 - f) Management and development of the highway network (Policy T9).
 - g) Improving the efficiency of freight movement and supporting the development of Regional Logistics Sites (Policy T10).
 - h) Continuing to develop Birmingham International Airport as the Region's principle airport, with future growth requiring an extension of the main runway (Policy T11).
- 2.83 It is of note that in addition to referring to 'traditional influences', the section on Demand Management refers to the potential to introduce local road charging in the Region to help to manage future travel demand (Policy T8 and Para. 9.85).

Cross cutting themes

- 2.84 Transport is a key cross cutting theme and as such it is also included within wider regional policies and objectives, particularly those that support sustainable development, address the challenges of climate change and housing and economic growth.

i. Delivering Spatial Strategy objectives

- 2.85 The development of a better transport is identified as being essential for key components of the Spatial Strategy, including: -
1. Concentrating development and investments in the MUAs will require accessibility and mobility in these areas to be maintained and in some areas, significantly enhanced.
 2. Diversifying and modernising the regional economy will require improved access for goods and services, particularly across national networks.
 3. Urban and rural renaissance will only be successful if fully supported by appropriate transport policies, where improved access must be a key component of an improved quality of life.
 4. Conserving and enhancing the environment will require land use decisions which reduce the need to travel, behavioural change initiatives to encourage more sustainable patterns of travel, and adequate mitigation for any unavoidable effects of building new infrastructure (Para. 9.9).

ii. Transport and the Economy

- 2.86 The development of an efficient transport is a key priority for the region's economy. Improved transport and accessibility will contribute to improving economic structure and productivity whilst addressing economic exclusion (Para. 9.10).
- 2.87 A major transport challenge for the Region is balancing the needs of new housing and the economy against increasing levels of congestion on the strategic network. As a consequence a cross-cutting theme of the RTS in the West Midlands is the need to manage the increasing demand for travel. Locational policy has a key role to play in maximising the use of public transport with residents of urban areas being significantly more likely to use public transport (Para. 9.11).

National and Regional Networks

- 2.88 The RTS identifies a network of strategic corridors, important routes to/from, within and across the West Midlands. The RTS supports the objective of maintaining accessibility along these corridors which are to be managed as part of a national and international network (Para. 9.18, 9.19 and 9.23).

Sub-Regional Networks

2.89 The West Midlands' MUAs and many of the Settlements of Significant Development are directly adjacent or in close proximity to the national transport networks. The RTS seeks to balance the competing needs and interests of a diverse range of users, particularly the demand generated by housing and economic growth (Para. 9.35).

I. Major Urban Areas

2.90 Enhancing accessibility and mobility are vital components of the urban renaissance of the MUAs. Within each of the four MUAs improving the quality of transport is identified as having the potential to make significant contributions to reducing social exclusion, improving economic performance and facilitating a more sustainable pattern of development. With a greater concentration of population in the MUAs, there are better opportunities for public transport to provide an attractive alternative to the car (Para. 9.37).

II. Other Urban Areas

2.91 As in MUAs, in many of the Region's other settlements improving the quality of transport is identified as having the potential to make significant contributions to reducing social exclusion, improving economic performance and facilitating a more sustainable pattern of development. Integrated transport solutions are particularly promoted (Para. 9.41-9.42).

iii. Rural Areas

2.92 Developing sustainable transport in rural areas is identified as a major challenge; an innovative approach is needed that provides services that are sustainable in the long term, supported by land use policies that seek to retain employment, the local provision of rural services, and reduce social exclusion (Para. 9.47).