

REPORT TO ECONOMY, SKILLS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY BOARD

18 January 2018

Subject:	Black Country Core Strategy Update
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Paul Moore - Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Investment
Director:	Executive Director - Neighbourhoods - Alison Knight
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Exempt Information Ref:	N/A
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DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board:

- 1.1 This report is to be considered the Economy, Skills, Transport & Environment Scrutiny Board.
- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to firstly provide a briefing relating to the Black Country Core Strategy consultation process and to then advise of the next stages.

2 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 2.1 To provide members of the Board with an overview of the consultation process and content for the Black Country Core Strategy Review Issues and Options.

3 IMPLICATION FOR THE COUNCIL'S AMBITION

- 3.1 The Black Country Core Strategy is a key component of the Council's Local Plan. As such it is fundamental to the delivery of new homes, economic prosperity, social and community facilities, access to jobs for local people and to the continued vitality and viability of our town centres.
- 3.2 The Core Strategy review will provide the updated statutory framework within which the Council should make decisions about the use and development of land. It will enable the progression of key corporate priorities including regeneration plans, transportation strategies etc. The final stage of the plan will allocate land for housing development (including affordable housing), for industry and business, including investment in strategic and town centres, as well as including policies to protect the environment and important heritage assets. As such it contributes to all of the Council's 2030 Vision ambitions.

4 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Black Country Local Planning Authorities adopted a joint Core Strategy in 2011 which sets out the overarching planning and regeneration strategy and the development priorities for the period 2006-2026.
- 4.2 When this strategy was adopted there was a clear commitment to review it after 5 years – this is necessary to ensure that the spatial objectives and strategy are up to date, and reflects local issues including the aspirations of the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- 4.3 It is crucial in terms of planning law that local authorities have an up-to-date Local Plan in place which has been passed as 'sound' by the Planning Inspectorate so that there is a framework for local planning decisions to be made and, if necessary, defended at planning appeals. The Core Strategy Review is planned to take us up to 2036 and work began on gathering evidence for the Core Strategy Review in 2016, in particular to establish future housing and employment requirements across the Black Country as a whole. From this evidence it became apparent that, whilst the majority of this growth could be accommodated on brownfield sites, there was still a considerable shortfall for both

housing and employment land that could not be accommodated on identifiable land within the urban area.

- 4.4 *The Issues and Options Consultation* - The first statutory stage of preparing Local Plans is to set out what issues need to be addressed within the Plan and consult on what options exist for addressing those issues. The overwhelming key issue facing the Black Country is the need to find a significant amount of land outside of the existing urban area to accommodate future housing and employment requirements. This issue, because of its significance, was placed at the centre of the consultation.
- 4.5 Initial calculations presented in the document showed that 56,000 additional homes could be accommodated in the urban area across the Black Country but there was a need for 78,000 new homes up to 2036; a 22,000 shortfall. In addition, it was also estimated that there was an estimated shortfall of around 300 hectares of employment land which could not be accommodated in the urban area in the period to 2036. The document was therefore clear that the Core Strategy Review, in order to comply with national guidance, had no alternative but to carry out a review of the Black Country's green belt land because the evidence was that the 'exceptional circumstances' existed to trigger such a review. The document continues to emphasise throughout that this is still a 'brownfield land first' development strategy with greenbelt development considered only as a last resort.
- 4.6 Prior to the consultation, this issue, along with an early draft of the document was reported to Black Country Leaders and Chief Executives at a meeting of the Association of the Black Country Authorities where it was agreed to seek approval from the four Black Country Local Authority Cabinets to proceed with the consultation process.
- 4.7 *The Summary Questionnaire* - The Issues and Options consultation document was by necessity long and complex with over 100 questions contained within it. In order to make the consultation meaningful and more a summary document and questionnaire to accompany the main document was produced. The questionnaire summarise the key issues of the consultation and picked out the key important questions from the document. The Summary and Questionnaire were appended to the document and both documents were subsequently approved by all four Councils during June/July 2017; Sandwell's Cabinet gave approval at its meeting on 28th June 2017.
- 4.8 *Consultation Strategy and Response Rates* - During the ten week consultation period between 3rd July and 8th September, which included a launch event for key stakeholders at the Black Country Living Museum, a range of local events were held across the Black Country and a number

of press articles and press releases were published in local newspapers. Information was also placed in local libraries and a social media campaign, including a series of videos was used to promote the consultation. This resulted in a total of approximately 1,600 formal responses and over 300 social media comments. The social media campaign had a reach of 340,000, the videos were viewed 175,000 times, and the Black Country Core Strategy website was viewed over 8,000 times during the consultation period.

- 4.9 A key part of the consultation included a 'call for sites'. This asks potential developers/land owners to suggest sites to the Councils as part of the review. Whilst the call for sites remains ongoing, to date 130 site specific submissions have been received.

5 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The review of the Black Country Core Strategy will be undertaken in key stages – all of which are informed by legislation as part of the wider statutory planning system. This report covers the first stage of the formal review and plan preparation – the Issues and Options document and its associated consultation.
- 5.2 The responses to the Issues & Options consultation and the Call for Sites are currently being collated and assessed. This will necessarily be a protracted process. The results will then be used to inform the next stage of the review – the Preferred Options stage. It is anticipated that, subject to approval by all four Councils' Cabinets, consultation on this stage will take place in the autumn of this year.
- 5.3 The current programme, allowing of the Examination in Public in late 2020 envisages the reviewed Core Strategy being adopted in autumn 2021. It should, however, be noted that the programme is subject to amendment to reflect any changes in Government policies and legislation, and to the outcome of each stage of the consultation process; it should therefore be treated as indicative at this stage.
- 5.4 Future consultation stages of the Core Strategy review will incorporate a Member Engagement Strategy so that Members across all four Black Country authorities are fully aware of the issues and recommendations going forward prior to any consultation stage.

6 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 6.1 The report concerns a consultation process. The details are all contained in section 3 above.

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1 The report concerns consultation of options. The details are all contained in the Issues & Options document at the link below.

8 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This report is for information only.

9 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 It is a statutory requirement of planning legislation that local authorities have an up-to-date Local Plan in place which has been passed as 'sound' by the Planning Inspectorate so that there is a framework for local planning decisions to be made and, if necessary, defended at planning appeals.
- 9.2 It is necessary to ensure that the Core strategy review is undertaken in accordance with various legal provisions as set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF (and associated guidance) 2012.

10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 Preparation of the Core Strategy includes the carrying out of an integrated Sustainability Appraisal at each formal stage – and at later stages an Equality Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment. The Core Strategy seeks to ensure that sufficient homes, shops and employment, social and recreational facilities are planned and provided for in that time to meet the needs of the communities in the Borough. This will include meeting the needs of children and young people by seeking to provide sufficient facilities for them as well as having a positive effect for future generations.

11 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 This report is for information only.

12 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 12.1 This report is for information only.

13 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 13.1 This report is for information only.

14 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

14.1 This report is for information only.

15 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

15.1 This report is for information only.

16 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 Report is for information purposes.

17 BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 Report to Cabinet – 28:06:17

17.2 Black Country Core Strategy Issues & Options Report

17.3 Black Country Core Strategy Issues & Options Consultation Leaflet

All three documents available at

<https://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cmis5/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/410/Meeting/36801/Committee/6063/Default.aspx>

18 APPENDICES:

None

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