

THE BLACK COUNTRY STUDY - PREFACE

THE ONGOING PROCESS

The Black Country Study has been produced by the Black Country Consortium to guide the strategic future of the Black Country. It has a wide range of functions, acting as a framework for the integrated physical, social, economic and environmental programmes that the Consortium, together with other stakeholders, are progressing towards Black Country renaissance.

One of its key roles is as the body of technical evidence substantiating the draft RSS Phase One Revision: The Black Country. The West Midlands Regional Assembly as the Regional Planning Body have recognised this role, including it in its submission of the draft Revision to the Secretary of State at the end of May 2006.

In its role as substantiation for the draft RSS Phase One Revision, there may be additional technical work to add to the Study. For example, prior to its Examination in Public (EiP) the examining Panel may request further evidence which will be incorporated into the Study. This is in order to ensure that such additional evidence is represented to maximum effect as part of the integrated land use – transport – social – economic and environmental action package. As this is completed it will be published on the Black Country Consortium website: www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk.

Another key role for the Study will be in setting the context for the four Black Country local authorities in producing a Joint Core Strategy as part of their statutory local development frameworks (LDFs).

The Study is a “live” working document. It represents work in progress on the range of initiatives that will feature in the Separate Delivery Plan.

The Study along with the forthcoming Delivery Plan will be available in loose-leaf form to ensure that both documents reflect the most up to date position of action programmes and other corporate initiatives at all times.

SUSTAINABILITY

The RSS Phase One Revision: The Black Country has been subject to a **Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment**. This has been undertaken in an independent manner and as described in Government Guidance. The process has been overseen by a Steering Group led by an independent Chair. The appraisal exercise consisted of a series of workshops led by independent consultants.

The Sustainability Appraisal has been signed off and confirms the acceptability of the package of policy changes as meeting a series of sustainability objectives against which policy performance has been judged.

As the policy revisions have emerged they have been amended to reflect, as far as practicable, the outcomes of the appraisals, and its independent consultants. Early drafts of the Black Country Study have been appraised and commentary and opinion were provided on this supporting document. The appraisal has responded positively to the draft Black Country Study as it substantiates and details the RSS Phase One Revisions.

Outstanding areas of comment are in most cases referring to issues which will be subject of future detailing in the formulation of development plan policies at the local level.

The full Sustainability Appraisal Report is on the web at:

www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk