

## **16 DRAFT REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS**

**Report By: Chief Forward Planning Officer**

### **Wards Affected**

County Wide

### **Purpose**

1. To consider the response on behalf of Herefordshire Council to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's proposed changes to draft Regional Planning Guidance.

### **Financial implications**

2. No direct implications.

### **Background**

3. Work on preparing the update and roll forward of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 11) commenced in early 2000 with a tight timetable of some 30 months. Members have been kept informed and involved in the progress of the developing plan at salient points in its process:
  - Cabinet member and member attendance at regional conferences on the direction of the RPG
  - Local presentations on the first and final drafts of the emerging plan
  - Further comments on the final draft of the plan
  - The Authority was represented at the Examination in Public (EIP) of the Plan
  - Report on the EIP Panel's proposed changes
4. Following the above sequence of events the plan has passed to the Secretary of State (SoS) for final approval. The present consultation period is in response to the SoS's proposed changes to the plan with a closing date for comments of 12<sup>th</sup> December. Following the announcement of this consultation period, The Leader, Cabinet Member for Transport and Councillor B Hunt and officers have attended a regional presentation on the ODPM proposed changes. A copy of the consultation material is available for inspection in the members room.

### **Commentary**

5. Many of the proposed changes to the RPG are to be welcomed in principle, as the attempt has been made to give the document more clarity and brevity. However, in reducing the number of policies, by removing those perceived as duplications, it

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could be said that the emphasis on some elements is reduced. This is particularly the case with rural renaissance.

6. Spatial strategy Chapter 3

- The spatial strategy, based on countering decentralisation and population drift from the conurbation, has been endorsed.
- Emphasis is very much on recognising all places/settlements are important in their own right.
- Hereford remains as one of five 'sub-regional foci for development' beyond the major urban areas (along with Rugby, Shrewsbury, Telford and Worcester. Burton on Trent has been deleted from the original list).
- All the policies previously contained in this chapter have been amalgamated into the more detailed policies in the later topic based chapters

7. Rural renaissance Chapter 5

- Government has implemented all the EIP Panel's recommended changes to the Rural Renaissance Chapter. There are now just four policies in this Chapter compared to nine in draft RPG, thus:
  - RR1 is now 'Rural Renaissance',
  - RR2 is now 'Rural Regeneration Zone',
  - RR3 is now 'Market Towns' (previously draft RR5),
  - RR4 is now 'Rural Services' (previously draft RR9).

Whilst:

- Draft RR2 'Economic Development' removed and placed within PA15,
- Draft RR3 'Agriculture and Farm Diversification' removed and placed within PA16,

see comments under this chapter for detail.

- Draft RR4 'Tourism' removed and placed within PA10,
- Draft RR6 'Villages' and Draft RR7 'Open Countryside' deleted, and
- Draft RR8 and text regarding community regeneration deleted but is reflected in paras 5.6 to 5.10.
- Policy RR2: continues to feature the A49 as a corridor in the RRZ, priorities to be given to traffic management and public transport improvements to aid accessibility, this is welcomed. See Chapter 9, Transport, for further comment.

- New investment opportunities focussed on towns and villages in A49 corridor - this is very much in line with UDP proposals at Leominster, Hereford and Ross.
  - The reduction in the number of policies in this chapter does appear to diminish the importance of rural issues in the overall strategy, particularly in respect of the dominance of implementation actions outlined in the plan which are predominantly in and around the conurbation.
8. Communities for the future Chapter 6
- No change to housing figs for Herefordshire (800 dwellings per annum to 2006, then 600 to 2021). So far in UDP period, average is 870 dwellings per annum.
  - UDP figures assume existing RPG provision will be met.
  - In **Table 3 Housing on previously developed land** in the Column “2001-2011 Target % on previously developed land” on the Herefordshire line should read 63% not 44% as stated.
9. Prosperity for All Chapter 7
- The rural employment policies moved from the original Rural Renaissance chapter appear as the last two policies in the Chapter together with elements of the rural tourism policy being amalgamated into policy PA10. It is also clear that the neither the EIP Panel or the SoS have taken on board this County’s written comments in respect the range of uses suitable for rural regeneration.
  - The preamble to Policy PA15 stresses the need to broaden the economic base, reduce the over-reliance on traditional employment in order to retain local people. However, neither Policy PA15 Economic Development and the Rural Community or PA16 Agriculture and Farm Diversification take this view forward. Policy PA16 Agriculture and Farm Diversification specifies “innovative business schemes including tourism, environmentally sustainable farming, forestry and land management, new and innovative crops, on-farm processing etc.”, all largely agriculturally based added value activities.
  - This stance does not match the policy statements in PPG7 para 3.4A advice which indicates “diversification into other forms of non-agricultural activities is vital to the continuing viability of many farm businesses”. In the Council’s view this aspect is largely absent from the policy statement and should be strengthened in the wording by including examples in addition to the farm based listing set out above.
10. Quality of the Environment Chapter 8
- Suggested amendments to RPG Part 3 Minerals Policies;
    - Amend the table in policy M2 to refer to the Revised National and Regional Guidelines for Aggregates Provision 2001- 2016 issued on 10th June 2003 and the agreed sub regional apportionment. (The current RPG refers to figures contained in MPG 6 1994)

- In Policy M3 the requirement to "develop better systems" to improve the way in which alternative sources of materials are used in construction projects", although necessary are quite beyond meaningful influence by planning authorities. Recommend the deletion of these words from the policy
- Minerals Output Targets and Indicators
  - Amend M1 by adding the word "only" after "To" in the first sentence. As drafted the Target appears to actively promote the development of mineral sites in AONB's
  - Remove the ref to 0% sterilisation in the third target wording as being impossible to implement, if retained this would prevent any development on known mineral reserves, many of which may never be worked but which cover most of the county.

#### 11. Transport and Accessibility Chapter 9

- RPG includes the regional transport strategy. This sets priorities for investment to support the regional strategy.
- In Herefordshire this would include the role of the A49 as summarised above in the context of the RRZ.
- By issuing RPG, the SoS will be committed to taking forward those transport proposals for which central government is responsible subject to statutory procedures and viable schemes that represent good value for money.
- Herefordshire Council should seek the following changes to RPG to recognise the fact that the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study has been concluded and makes specific recommendations:
  - a. RPG para 9.69 be re drafted. Proposed wording:
 

*"The A49 in Hereford is subject to increasing congestion. This has a number of implications for sub-regional land use development and regeneration. To address this issue a Local Multi Modal Study has been carried out. The study identifies a package of measures to release travel capacity needed to accommodate development and regeneration and to allow Hereford to fulfil its identified role as a sub-regional centre. This role includes supporting long term balanced sustainable growth. Where appropriate, elements of the recommended package are included as priorities for investment in policy T12."*
  - b. An additional line in table policy T12: *"Hereford outer distributor road as recommended by the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study"*  
  
(This should appear following reference to "A500 City Road & Stoke Road junctions"); or,
  - c. Addition of an entry at the end of table policy T12: *"Implementation of recommendations from the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study"*.
  - d. Amend Fig 6 on p. 141 to show A417 Hope under Dinmore to Gloucester as 'primary route' providing alternative to travelling through Hereford on A49 in

times of flood. De-priming could be accepted if Hereford outer distributor road can be progressed.

## Conclusions

12. The proposed changes to the RPG provide a positive base for the development of local development plans in the County in the future. However, a stronger commitment to measures to enhance rural renaissance and positive assistance in respect of the A49 transport needs will be of significant benefit to the County and its future ability to meet its local needs and fulfill its regional potential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the following comments on the proposed changes to the RPG be recommended to the Cabinet Member (Environment):**

- (a) **Rural renaissance Chapter 5 - Concern is expressed in respect of apparent diminution of the importance of this aspect in the RPG.**
- (b) **Amend Table 3 Housing on previously developed land in the Column "2001-2011 Target % on previously developed land" on the Herefordshire line should read 63% not 44% as stated.**
- (c) **In policy PA16, the encouragement to development plans to include positive policies for farm diversification should be strengthened to include the possible use of non-agricultural developments in the wording.**
- (d) **Quality of the Environment Chapter 8 - Amend the table in policy M2 to refer to the Revised National and Regional Guidelines for Aggregates Provision 2001- 2016 issued on 10th June 2003 and the agreed sub regional apportionment. (The current RPG refers to figures contained in MPG 6 1994)**
- (e) **In Policy M3 the requirement to "develop better systems to improve the way in which alternative sources of materials are used in construction projects", although necessary are quite beyond meaningful influence by planning authorities. Recommend the deletion of these words from the policy**
- (f) **Minerals Output Targets and Indicators - Amend M1 by adding the word "only" after "To" in the first sentence.**
- (g) **Remove the reference to 0% sterilisation in the third target wording as being impossible to implement.**
- (h) **Transport and Accessibility Chapter 9**
- (i) **RPG para 9.69 be re drafted. Proposed wording:**

***"The A49 in Hereford is subject to increasing congestion. This has a number of implications for sub-regional land use development and regeneration. To address this issue a Local Multi Modal Study has been carried out. The study identifies***

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*a package of measures to release travel capacity needed to accommodate development and regeneration and to allow Hereford to fulfil its identified role as a sub-regional centre. This role includes supporting long term balanced sustainable growth. Where appropriate, elements of the recommended package are included as priorities for investment in policy T12.”*

- (ii) **An additional line in table policy T12: “Hereford outer distributor road as recommended by the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study”**

(This should appear following reference to “A500 City Road & Stoke Road junctions”); or,

- (iii) **Addition of an entry at the end of table policy T12: “Implementation of recommendations from the Hereford Local Multi Modal Study”.**
- (iv) **Amend Fig 6 on p. 141 to show A417 Hope under Dinmore to Gloucester as 'primary route' providing alternative to travelling through Hereford on A49 in times of flood.**