



Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel

6th December 2010

Adoption of the Black Country Core
Strategy



Summary of Inspectors' Report

- JCS provides an appropriate basis for planning the Black Country to 2026
- Need to clarify wider context, including revocation of RSS (now reversed)
- Detailed changes required to policies concerning retail, office floorspace, housing (including gypsies and travellers) and the possible impact on the Cannock Chase SAC
- None of the changes *“alter the thrust of the overall strategy at all.”*



Implications of Inspectors' Report for Particular Topics



General Points

- Growth Network of Strategic Centres and Regeneration Corridors is the only realistic option
- Council must have regard to core policies
- JCS provides an appropriate framework for infrastructure delivery
- In absence of public funding, Council and partners will need to consider new ways of delivering needs



Evidence and Targets

- Technical evidence is robust and credible
- Indicative targets for housing, employment land and other requirements are supported
- Precise boundaries of development areas, such as for employment, housing, retail and mineral working should be determined through future DPDs
- No need for review of Green Belt boundaries before 2016



Housing

- Existing commitments provide enough land for housing in the early years
- Need to attract and retain higher income households. Housing such groups on peripheral greenfield sites would undermine urban regeneration
- Detailed DPDs should address type and tenure of affordable housing, and allocate sites for gypsies and travellers
- Target minimum density is appropriate



Employment

- Clear short term need to bring forward more new employment land and retain sufficient suitable employment land for smaller and larger businesses
- Walsall currently has a shortfall of readily available land for industrial investment



Centres

- Inspectors endorse strong presumption against out of centre development
- Walsall Town Centre should be focus for office development
- Inspectors anticipate that an AAP would be prepared for Walsall Town Centre
- Detailed planning for leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities will need to be considered



Transportation

- Mitigation measures are needed to deal with traffic flows at the motorway junctions, but not just the responsibility of the local councils
- Report endorses travel plans to encourage sustainable transport



Environmental Infrastructure

- Ongoing research is needed to investigate the origins of visitors to Cannock Chase to assess the impact on the Special Area of Conservation
- JCS needs to enable the protection and enhancement of existing open and green spaces within the Black Country
- JCS sets framework for other environmental issues incl. canals, nature conservation, renewable energy and air quality



Waste and Minerals

- Importance of mineral resources in Walsall area is recognised
- Inspectors recommend that Yorks Bridge area is identified as an area of search for fireclay



Delivery, Implementation and Monitoring

- Strategy is deliverable in principle. Plan has flexibility to cope with economic conditions
- Monitoring of progress will be important
- Report notes that authorities have committed themselves to a full review of JCS half way through the plan period (2016)



Issues for the Future



Challenges

- Uncertainty about future of the RSS
- New Homes Bonus
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Localism Bill
- The economy and available resources



Concluding Thoughts

- Need to plan to
 - meet housing needs
 - maintain and provide land for employment
 - protect and enhance the borough's centres
- The Core Strategy puts the Black Country in a stronger position than other places
- Cabinet and Council are recommended to adopt the JCS