

Issues and Options

FULL VERSION

- 
- Location of Growth
 - Housing for Everyone
 - Rural Life
 - The Local Economy & Creating Jobs
 - Shopping & Bromsgrove Town Centre
 - Learning, Leisure & Improving Health
 - A Safe & Well Designed Environment
 - Our Natural Environment
 - Getting Around
 - Preserving the Past

JUNE 2005

Bromsgrove District Council
Local Development Framework



CONTENTS

page

Introduction	2
The new planning system - A simple guide	2
A short guide to this Issues and Options paper	3
Objectives of the Core Strategy	4
Key Issue A - Location of growth	5
Key Issue B - Housing for everyone	7
Key Issue C - Rural life	9
Key Issue D - The local economy and creating jobs	11
Key Issue E - Shopping and Bromsgrove Town Centre	13
Key Issue F - Learning, leisure and improving health	15
Key Issue G - A safe and well designed environment	17
Key Issue H - Our natural environment	18
Key Issue I - Getting around	20
Key Issue J - Preserving the past	22
Appendix 1 - Glossary	24



Introduction

This document sets out the key planning issues in the District. Planning influences many aspects of our lives from where we live and work to what we do in our leisure time.

It is important that we get it right. As such we need to know how you think the District should develop and grow, the things that need to be done better and the things that need protecting.



A new planning system- a simple guide

A new planning system has been introduced by the Government. This has changed the way local authorities prepare their planning policies. Like the old planning system, the new one will be plan-led. This means that development has to accord with policies and proposals in a plan.

The new plans will therefore contain policies to guide future development in the District. For Bromsgrove there are now two levels of plan:

- Each region (such as the West Midlands) has prepared something known as a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). This sets out things such as how many homes are needed to meet the future needs of people in the region, or whether the region needs a new major shopping centre or an airport.
- At a local level, there will be a plan known as a Local Development Framework (LDF). This will be a folder of documents that sets out how your local area may change over the next few years. Local Development Frameworks are prepared by the local planning authority (Bromsgrove District Council). As well as new plans the LDF folder, will for a few years, contain policies from the 'old' Local Plan and Structure Plan. These 'old' policies will over time be replaced by policies in the new LDF plans as we produce them.

At the heart of this new LDF will be the Core Strategy. This document will contain the core district wide planning policies. It will not include policies relating to specific sites or allocate sites for new uses and neither will it contain detailed policies to control development. Separate plans will be produced to deal with all these detailed issues. While the Core Strategy will provide general guidance on what development will be allowed, a separate plan document will be produced to provide detailed criteria to guide the Council when it is deciding whether to allow or refuse new developments. This will be called the Development Control Policies Plan Document.

The old Local Plan primarily contained land-use policies. The new Core Strategy will contain spatial policies that set a broad vision for the area.

While traditionally planning policy has largely been concerned with the regulation and control of land, spatial planning takes a more holistic approach to land use and considers how use of land influences how we move around, our health, education opportunities, employment, crime prevention etc. There are three key spatial elements to the new planning system;

- Environment (e.g. countryside, buildings, the earth's resources)
- Social (e.g. housing, health, safety, transport)
- Economy (e.g. jobs, wealth)

The key aims of the Local Development Framework are to deal with the spatial issues raised by the Community Plan and spatial implications of strategies produced by other bodies such as the County Council, Health Authority or Environment Agency. Spatial planning will require more community involvement at the early stages of plan-making and throughout the process. The Council have produced a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) indicating how they will do this. As part of this early involvement we want to know from the community and other stakeholders whether we have chosen the right issues and options.

With the recent demise of MG Rover the Council will produce a document for the part of the Longbridge site which is within Bromsgrove District. The intention is that this plan, together with a similar document produced by Birmingham City Council for their corresponding part of the site, will set a framework for the future redevelopment of the areas. The Council will also be producing two supplementary documents to provide further detail on policies in the Core Strategy and 'old' policies in the Local Plan. These will be based on two key issues, the provision of affordable housing in the District and the control of new housing development. As such the Council will now be producing together with the Core Strategy the following documents;

- Longbridge Area Action Plan (Development Plan Document)
- Managing Housing Supply (Supplementary Planning Document)
- Affordable Housing (Supplementary Planning Document)



A short guide to this Issues and Options paper

This paper highlights issues affecting the District and options that could be used to tackle these issues. Later policies will be developed to implement identified options. Please remember that at this stage we are only looking to identify the key broad issues. Policies in the Core Strategy will not allocate sites or contain detailed criteria to assess development proposals. Core Strategy policies will set the broad framework for planning in Bromsgrove to 2021.

Other documents produced as part of the Local Development Framework will need to conform with the Core Strategy and provide detail as necessary.

Following a short introduction to each key issue information on the national, regional and local context of the issue is presented. This sets the background to the issue and origins. Below is an explanation of terms used during the discussion of each issue. See Appendix 1 for a full glossary of terms.

National Context

This is primarily the identification of relevant national Government planning documents. The Council must take account of these documents when writing planning policies. The main planning documents produced by the Government are Planning Policy Statements (PPS). Some guidance has not been changed for years and is still referred to as Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). Both types of documents contain the Government's current view on a particular issue such as Green Belt, Housing etc.

Regional Context

This is primarily the identification of relevant planning policies for the region (West Midlands). The primary regional planning document is the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Relevant policies from this document have been identified and the requirements of these policies discussed. The implications of the contents of other region-wide documents have also, where applicable, been identified.

Local Context

Bromsgrove has a recently adopted District wide Local Plan. Planning policies in this document together with those in the Worcestershire Structure Plan and Regional Spatial Strategy form the current planning framework for the District.

The implications of these existing policies on the production of the Core Strategy is discussed. The Core Strategy must also have regard to the views of the public in Bromsgrove.

These views are currently expressed through the Bromsgrove Community Plan.

Identification of Issues and Options

Ten key issues have been identified. A number of other more detailed sub-issues have then been identified with three options. This is not a definitive list of issues and options. If you think other issues or options need to be identified and assessed then please use the response form to express your views. The options have been selected having regard to the context, as set out above.



Objectives of the Core Strategy

The Core Strategy needs a series of objectives. Policies in the Core Strategy will aim to meet these objectives. As the Core Strategy is the key document in the LDF then the objectives below will also reflect the objectives of the whole LDF.

We'd like your help in setting the objectives. Please use the questionnaire at the back of the document to give us your views on our proposed objectives for the Core Strategy.

The objectives have been split into social, environmental and economic objectives to reflect the three main spatial elements of the new planning system.

They are based on issues arising from a study of the District's characteristics, the objectives of the Bromsgrove Community Plan and other relevant plans and strategies.



Social Objectives

- 1) Create communities where people want to live, work and socialise
- 2) Meet the housing requirements of all members of the community
- 3) Ensure the community has accessible healthcare
- 4) Provide leisure and educational facilities to meet the needs of all of the community
- 5) Improve quality of life through a safer and better designed urban and rural environment
- 6) Promote thriving, balanced, inclusive and sustainable rural communities
- 7) Ensure all members of the community have a viable choice of transport options
- 8) Seek an improvement in retail opportunities and choices throughout the District

Environmental Objectives

- 9) Protect our existing special natural environment
- 10) Promote biodiversity enhancement
- 11) Conserve and enhance the built heritage of the District
- 12) Promote the enhancement of existing areas of conservation
- 13) Seek to identify and protect further areas of historical and natural importance
- 14) Seek to reduce travel and promote an improvement in sustainable transport options
- 15) Promote efficient use of the earth's resources and promote renewable energy
- 16) Maintain the principles of Green Belt designation

Economic Objectives

- 17) Maintain a high and stable level of employment by supporting economic modernisation and regeneration
- 18) Improve people's access to job opportunities in new technologies
- 19) Ensure opportunities for growth are linked to meeting the needs of the community
- 20) Enable schemes that promote sustainable tourism
- 21) Ensure sufficient sites are provided to ensure sustainable economic growth
- 22) Provide positive support towards rural diversification
- 23) Encourage cross-border economic linkages



Key Issue A Location of Growth

Introduction

One of the key roles of the planning system is to ensure that future growth in the District occurs in the most sustainable locations. Over 90% of the land in Bromsgrove is designated as Green Belt and there are few large available brownfield sites. Consequently, the Local Plan had to remove land from the Green Belt to accommodate future growth. However since the Local Plan was adopted the Regional Spatial Strategy has defined Bromsgrove as a rural area that should generally only provide for local needs and not for migration from the nearby urban areas like Birmingham.

National Context

To deliver sustainable development Planning Policy Statement 1(PPS1) states that local authorities should, in respect of the location of new development;

“Promote urban and rural regeneration to improve the well being of communities. Promote mixed use developments for locations that allow the creation of linkages between different uses and can thereby create more vibrant places.

Bring forward sufficient land...taking into account issues such as accessibility and sustainable transport needs, the provision of essential infrastructure, including for sustainable waste management, and the need to avoid flood risk and other natural hazards. Focus developments that attract a large number of people, especially retail, leisure and office development, in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development. Promote the more efficient use of land through higher density, mixed use development and the use of suitably located previously developed land and buildings” (PPS1).

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2) requires that local authorities safeguard land in the Green Belt for future development needs. These areas of safeguarded land are called Areas of Development Restraint (ADRs) in Bromsgrove District. In respect of keeping control over these areas of land PPG2 states that, *“Development plans should state clearly the policies applying to safeguarded land over the period covered by the plan. They should make clear that the land is not allocated for development at the present time, and keep it free to fulfil its purpose of meeting possible longer-term development needs”.*

In respect of large previously developed sites in the Green Belt PPG2 is clear that, *“Whether they are redundant or in continuing use, the complete or partial redevelopment of major developed sites may offer the opportunity for environmental improvement without adding to their impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it”.* As such any redevelopment of sites in the Green Belt must not have a greater impact on the environment than what exists.

PPG3 provides guidance on meeting housing needs. The Government is committed, through PPG3, to promoting more sustainable patterns of development by concentrating most additional housing development within urban areas and making more efficient use of land by maximising the re-use of previously-developed land and the conversion and re-use of existing buildings.

Regional Context

Bromsgrove is a prosperous rural area subject to strong influences from the neighbouring conurbation (Birmingham/Black Country). For rural areas like Bromsgrove, Policy RR1 of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) states that, *“...the main priority will be to manage the rate and nature of further development to that required to meet local needs, whilst ensuring that local character is protected and enhanced”.*

Bromsgrove Town is not listed in the RSS as a strategic town or city centre. However, Policy PA11 recognises that other centres exist within the region that meet local needs. The Core Strategy will need to define the role of Bromsgrove Town and could set a hierarchy of settlements in the District based on the policies in the RSS

Local Context

During the process of establishing Green Belt boundaries the Local Plan removed a number of areas of land on the edge of existing settlements from the Green Belt. These are called Areas of Development Restraint (ADRs). The ADRs form a bank of land that is available to the Council if they need land for new housing, employment or other uses.

As all this land is greenfield then before it is developed the Council must first look at available brownfield sites within settlements before using any greenfield land.

As the Council has met its housing requirement to 2011 it is not anticipated that any ADR sites will be needed before then. In contrast to previous Regional Planning Guidance which required Bromsgrove to provide for migration from the urban areas, the new Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is clear that Bromsgrove should in the future be meeting only local needs. The ADRs in the Local Plan were designated in the context of previous Regional Planning Guidance when Bromsgrove was still a location for regional growth.

As such the ADRs relate to a former planning strategy and way of planning for growth substantially different to that now being promoted by the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The release of sites for development cannot be done though the Core Strategy. When required a Land Allocations document will be produced to guide release of sites.



Within the Green Belt there are major developed sites such as research and education establishments and sewage treatment works that often pre-date the planning system. If these sites become redundant they could be reused as prime sites for redevelopment. However due to their location they are usually unsustainable locations for future growth. Saved Policy SD9 in the Structure Plan promotes town centres as the foci for key uses which attract a lot of people. Mixed use development proposals including housing are also encouraged in town centres.



Issue 1 - Location for growth

When new housing or employment is needed where should it go?

- Option 1 – All growth in Bromsgrove Town, especially the Town Centre.
- Option 2 – Concentrate growth in Bromsgrove Town combined with other limited brownfield development in other settlements (i.e. Hagley, Alvechurch, Wythall).
- Option 3 – Apportion growth in respect of the size of each settlement on both brownfield and greenfield sites, including growth in Bromsgrove Town.

Issue 2 - Areas of Development Restraint

What should we do with existing designated sites removed from the greenbelt?

- Option 1 – Maintain them indefinitely as a reserve bank of land for growth.
- Option 2 – Prioritise their release with those around Bromsgrove Town being released first.
- Option 3 – If required, decide which ADR site(s) to release only after housing and employment land allocations are known.

Issue 3 - Previously developed sites in the Green Belt

What should we do with these sites when existing uses become redundant?

- Option 1 – Allow reuse of the existing footprint for the most appropriate use.
- Option 2 – Allow reuse for employment only.
- Option 3 – Allow only very limited reuse (i.e. less than the original footprint)



Key Issue B Housing for Everyone

Introduction

Ensuring the supply of the right types of housing in the right locations is a major challenge facing Bromsgrove. The District is facing a serious oversupply of housing with the result that no general housing is being allowed at the moment.

As household needs vary, we need to have a range of size of dwellings including an increasing amount of single person dwellings for those who require smaller homes. Affordability of housing is also a key issue with many local people unable to afford to buy a house. To tackle these issues the Council is producing more detailed guidance on managing housing supply and affordable housing.

National Context

One of the roles of the planning system is to ensure that new homes are provided in the right place and at the right time, whether through new development or the conversion of existing buildings.

PPG3 sets the national planning policies for housing. The Government's principle aims are that; *"everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home...that there should be greater choice of housing and that housing should not reinforce social distinctions. The housing needs of all in the community should be recognised, including those in need of affordable or special housing in both urban and rural areas."*

To promote more sustainable patterns of development and make better use of previously-developed land, the focus for additional housing should be existing towns and cities".

When looking for land on which to build new houses we need to follow a "sequential approach" starting with re-use of previously developed land and buildings within urban areas, urban extensions and finally new development around nodes in good public transport corridors. The housing should be built firstly on previously developed (brownfield) land before greenfield unless the brownfield site is unsustainable, has serious environmental constraints or lacks appropriate infrastructure. PPG3 also requires that housing be built at densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare.



Regional Context

Before adoption in 2004 of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Bromsgrove was required to provide housing for those wanting to migrate from the major urban areas (i.e. Birmingham, Black Country).

This is now seen as unsustainable so the majority of future housing provision will now be provided in the Major Urban Areas (particularly the conurbation) to support regeneration. This approach is emphasised by Policy CF2 of the RSS which states that; *"In rural areas, the provision of new housing should generally be restricted to meeting local housing needs and/or to support local services, with priority being given to the reuse of previously developed land and buildings within existing villages enhancing their character wherever possible"*.

Policy UR3 relates to enhancing the role of City, Town and District Centres. As a Town Centre, Bromsgrove Town should be encouraging more people to live in or close to the town centre through the reuse of sites, development of mixed-use schemes, the conversion of property and initiatives such as "living over the shop".

The RSS contains annual rates of housing provision for the major urban areas, unitary authorities and county councils. Unfortunately it does not contain detailed requirements for districts like Bromsgrove. These figures will come through a partial review of the RSS before 2010. As such the only figures available to the Council to 2011 are contained in the Worcestershire Structure Plan. The new disaggregated figures will need to be incorporated into the Core Strategy once they have been adopted at the regional level.

The Regional Housing Strategy characterises southern districts such as Bromsgrove as having a predominance of moderate to high priced neighbourhood zones and a lack of social housing provision within settlements.

Local Context

The Worcestershire Structure Plan contains housing requirements for the District to 2011. It also contains a phasing target to 2006. The District have exceeded the phasing requirement and have enough dwellings with permission to significantly exceed the 2011 requirement. As such the District does not need to allow any further housing to meet its housing requirements as set out in the Structure Plan. Supplementary Planning Guidance was adopted in 2003 which has effectively placed a moratorium on the granting of permission for new general market housing proposals. As existing housing supply decreases as properties are built, the Council may have to begin to allow targeted proposals so as to maintain a constant supply of housing for the District.



Within Bromsgrove the resident population reflects National characteristics with reducing household sizes and an increasing elderly population. By 2016, it is estimated that 80% of new households will be single person households, arising from divorces, separations, young people setting up home and people living longer. Government guidance states that plans should encourage mixed and balanced communities, with policies that cater for single person households and avoid the creation of large areas of housing of similar characteristics in new housing developments. We also need to provide for an ageing population. Increasing sheltered accommodation for the elderly could lead to the freeing up of larger homes for families.

New housing development in England is currently built at an average of 25 dwellings per hectare. The Government advises that plans should encourage housing development which makes more efficient use of land (between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare). However, in doing this, a balance needs to be struck between increasing densities and protecting the character of areas.

The Government is committed to ensuring the maximum and efficient use of land. One of its key objectives is that as much new housing is built on previously developed land or 'brownfield' sites. The WCSP has set a brownfield target for Bromsgrove of 40% (minimum). At present 93% (Housing Land Availability, April 2005) of all new housing development is taking place on brownfield land. The presumption is that brownfield sites should generally be developed before greenfield sites. However, this approach should not lead to town cramming or loss of important urban open spaces.



Issue 1 - Type of housing

In the future what type of housing will be required in Bromsgrove?

- Option 1 – Priority given to smaller dwellings but also ensure adequate family housing to support local schools and facilities.
- Option 2 – More specialised housing for our ageing population.
- Option 3 – Ensure all schemes have a needs assessment for the type of dwellings being proposed but against clear guidelines with respect to 1 and 2.

Issue 2 - Provision of affordable housing

How should we ensure further affordable housing provision?

- Option 1 – Allocate land for affordable housing particularly Council or County Council owned land including school and town centre sites.
- Option 2 – Allow limited general housing on brownfield sites with a high level of affordable housing provision, ensuring mixed developments.
- Option 3 – Use Green Belt land adjacent to villages and Bromsgrove Town (including land removed from the Green Belt e.g. Areas of Development Restraint)

Issue 3 - Location of affordable housing

More affordable housing needs to be provided in the District. Where should it be located?

- Option 1 – Mainly on brownfield sites in Bromsgrove Town as the District's largest settlement
- Option 2 – Concentrate adjacent to rural settlements to support rural schools and services
- Option 3 – Spread across the District.

Issue 4 - Supply of housing

The Council is currently not allowing any new general market housing as enough houses have already been allowed in relation to requirements placed upon the District. In future should we continue to allow a modest but steady supply of housing or keep the restriction going and allow only affordable housing?

- Option 1 – Allow no more general market housing but allow affordable housing and sheltered housing where a need has been identified.
- Option 2 – Allow only conversions of redundant buildings outside the Green Belt and as part of mixed use schemes to support regeneration of Bromsgrove Town Centre
- Option 3 – Allow development on all brownfield sites below a certain size.



Key Issue C Rural Life

Introduction

Bromsgrove is a predominately rural district containing a number of rural communities. Rural areas have faced a steady decline in farming and related industries and increased diversification of the rural economy.

House prices in the District's villages have climbed out of reach of young people wanting to stay, work and live in our rural villages. The District has seen a rise in commuting out of the District to work, leading to dormitory villages and a decline in local rural facilities. The Local Development Framework needs to promote rural communities where people can live, work and access essential local facilities.

National Context

The Government through the Rural White Paper aims to deliver an improved quality of life for everyone in the countryside whilst still ensuring its protection. The paper aims for thriving rural communities, access to public services in rural areas and a diverse rural economy.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 seeks greater protection of important rural areas, like Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), stronger wildlife protection and improved public rights of way.

Through Planning Policy Statement 1, 'Creating Sustainable Communities' the Government is committed to developing strong, vibrant and sustainable communities and to promoting community cohesion, well being of communities, improving facilities, promoting high quality and safe development and creating new opportunities for the people living in those communities.

PPS7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas', requires that planning policies support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas but particularly provide a positive framework for facilitating sustainable development that supports traditional land-based activities and makes the most of new leisure and recreational opportunities that require a countryside location. However, planning authorities should still continue to ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and, where possible, enhanced.

PPS7 also requires that planning authorities adopt a positive approach to planning proposals designed to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities, e.g. village shops and post offices, rural petrol stations, village and church halls and rural public houses, that play an important role in sustaining village communities.

Many rural areas face particular difficulties in securing an adequate supply of land for affordable housing for local needs. PPG3 'Housing', states that local authorities are required to meet affordable housing needs in rural areas.

Where there remains a lack of affordable housing to meet local needs (as demonstrated by up-to-date assessments of local housing need) which cannot otherwise be met by means of provision in the plan, local planning authorities in rural areas can consider including a 'rural exception policy' in their plans. An exception policy enables the authority to grant planning permission for small sites, within and adjoining existing villages, which may be subject to policies of restraint, such as Green Belt, and which the local plan would not otherwise release for housing, in order to provide affordable housing to meet local needs in perpetuity.

General market housing, or mixed developments consisting of high-value housing used to cross subsidise affordable housing on the same site, are inappropriate on exception sites.

Regional Context

The renaissance of the Region's rural areas is one of the key objectives of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Policy RR1 of the RSS differentiates between the needs of rural areas like North Worcestershire (i.e. Bromsgrove) and other rural areas further away from the major urban areas (i.e. Herefordshire).

Policy RR4 of the RSS states that; *"Improving the range and quality of services available to rural communities is a key component of rural renaissance. Some services will be improved by bringing them closer to where people live, some may need to be concentrated in towns and other centres accessible from the surrounding area, and some can be provided jointly."* As shown by this policy it is not just about ensuring that rural areas have a range of facilities but also enabling better access to major service centres such as Bromsgrove Town.

It may be more appropriate to locate a service in a major settlement and provide improved access than provide smaller versions of the service throughout the District.

The RSS requires Bromsgrove through its LDF to take account of the likely implications for the provision of services and facilities for housing and other forms of development, including the extent to which new development may help support the provision of local services. The RSS also requires the LDF to set out how services will be provided for in rural areas, taking full account of the need to retain essential community services and to facilitate and provide for appropriate new and innovative forms of service delivery.

In respect of the rural economy Policy PA14 of the RSS stresses the need for local authorities to support the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy through the growth of existing businesses and the creation of new enterprise.

This should be undertaken in ways that meet local employment needs, maintain viable and sustainable local communities, conserve and enhance environmental assets and respect local character and distinctiveness.

Priority should be given to economic activity with strong links with the rural area, including businesses ancillary to farming, tourism and leisure.



Local Context

A sustainable agricultural industry will in the future need to be assisted by farm diversification, for example conversion of rural buildings to offices, workshops and expansion of existing industries in rural areas.

Also many modern businesses no longer need a high profile and accessible office but can just as effectively conduct business from a remote rural location due to increased communication via the internet.

Access to services in rural areas was an important issue that was identified at the community workshop in March 2005. People felt that rural communities were lacking in many basic facilities such as local shops, schools and GPs especially services available to older people.

Access to the services people need is one of the most important determinants of quality of life in rural areas.

A village shop, school, doctor's surgery and bank are likely to be important to most households, but many other services will be 'essential' to particular people, depending on their circumstances and stage in the life cycle.

Where services are not provided locally, public transport to a service centre may be a vital lifeline.

Many of the District's villages are of important historic and architectural value, or make an important contribution to local countryside character.

The Council need to ensure that what development is allowed, whether it be affordable housing or reuse of existing rural buildings, respects and, where possible, enhances these particular qualities.

Existing planning policies in the Local Plan support both farm diversification schemes and where appropriate the conversion and reuse of rural buildings.

The Core Strategy will contain our vision for the future of the District's rural areas.

Policies in later documents will expand on this vision and contain detailed planning policies that can be used to achieve the vision set out in the Core Strategy.



Issue 1 - Access to services in rural areas

How should we ensure our villages contain a range of essential services?

- Option 1 – Resist change of use of all existing facilities in villages.
- Option 2 – Identify mixed-use village centres for local services.
- Option 3 – Locate key services in the main settlements and improve transport links.

Issue 2 - Village growth

Should we allow villages to expand?

- Option 1 – Only allow affordable housing for identified local needs
- Option 2 – Consider characteristics of village and supporting infrastructure before allowing new development.
- Option 3 – Allow a wider mix of housing in rural locations to ensure essential facilities are maintained or become viable.

Issue 3 - Supporting the rural economy

How should we support businesses in rural areas?

- Option 1 – Only allow conversion of rural buildings to employment use.
- Option 2 – Allow limited extension of any existing businesses within villages with adequate infrastructure.
- Option 3 – Only allow agricultural related industries in rural areas and support the relocation of other business to the main settlements.

Issue 4 - Getting about without a car in rural areas

Accessibility is an issue in rural areas, how can we improve access to services?

- Option 1 – Ensure villages have a range of facilities.
- Option 2 – Support improved transport links to the main service centres like Bromsgrove Town.
- Option 3 – Provide a balance of the above options with only limited facilities in villages.



Key Issue D The Local Economy & Creating Jobs

Introduction

The District has a diverse economy. Historically the District's economy has been based on farming. While this does continue, over time as new employment areas have emerged then the economy has changed. Manufacturing is still the most common form of employment with 21% still employed in this sector, although real estate, education, and health and social care now cater for 15%, 11% and 15% of the workforce respectively (Census 2001).

Unemployment in the District is low with only 2.1% of the population currently unemployed in 2005 which compares favourably to the national average of 3.3% (WCC, 2005). However, the District has one of the lowest average incomes in the County for those working in the District, and it is also below national levels. Conversely income levels for the residents of Bromsgrove are generally considerably higher than the rest of the County and national figures indicating that the higher salaries are earned outside the District.

National Context

At the moment main Government planning policy relating to the local economy is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 4 (PPG4) – Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms. Planning Policy 7 (PPS7) – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, deals with the rural economy. In respect of local Development Plans PPG4 states that they offer the opportunity to:

- Encourage new development in locations which minimise the length and number of trips, especially by motor vehicles;
- Discourage new development where it would be likely to add unacceptably to congestion;
- Locate development requiring access mainly to local roads away from trunk roads, to avoid unnecessary congestion on roads designed for longer distance movement. (PPG4, para 29)

PPS7 together with the Rural White paper encourages economic activity and diversification in rural areas.

“Planning activity should support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas” (PPS7, para 31). PPS7 also supports the re-use of buildings in the countryside for employment purposes with re-use for economic development usually being preferable to other uses such as residential.

Farm diversification is encouraged by PPS7 especially in areas where farms are becoming less viable. It is important though that farming is maintained as it is a vital rural economy and contributes significantly to the quality of the landscape.

So it is important to allow farmers to diversify, to provide more income and not to be replaced by new businesses unrelated to rural life. Acceptable uses could include farm shops, bed and breakfast, holiday lets etc.

The Government's Sustainable Communities plan seeks high and stable levels of economic growth and employment to support inclusive communities.

Regional Context

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) together form the regional economic policy framework for the West Midlands.

Policy PA1 of the RSS requires that economic growth should, wherever possible, be focused on the Major Urban Areas (MUAs). Where growth opportunities are provided outside the major urban areas emphasis should be given to locating development where it can help meet the needs of the MUAs and promote positive linkages with them in areas accessible by public transport.

Economic growth is also promoted where it can help meet the needs of rural renaissance, especially market towns by helping to create more sustainable communities through providing a better balance between housing and employment.

In order to encourage the diversification of the Regional economy, three High Technology Corridors (HTC) are identified within which developments cluster, that is economic development closely linked to the Region's critical research and development capabilities and advanced technologies. Bromsgrove is within the Central Technology Belt.

A new technology park in Aston Field's, Bromsgrove, on the former Garrington's/UEF site is being promoted as being part of this new technology belt.

Part of the former MG Rover site is also a location where new development proposals focus on the introduction of new businesses which reduce the dependence on the automotive industry. This dependence has been brought sharply to attention with the unfortunate demise of MG Rover this spring. This loss is a major blow to the regional and local economy. It requires a thorough review of how the Longbridge area can be supported and ultimately transformed to ensure new jobs and opportunities are made available.

The RSS also requires that the LDF recognises the continuing importance of the agricultural sector by including positive policies to promote agriculture and farm diversification. The District is also required to maintain a portfolio of available employment land to meet the needs of the local economy and businesses wanting to relocate to Bromsgrove. A range of sites must be provided to suit the needs of different types and size of business.

In respect of the tourist and cultural economy the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) requires that Development plans should generally encourage both the improvement of existing provision as well as the creation of new facilities, subject to the capacity of infrastructure and the environment to accommodate new facilities and visitors associated with them.



Local Context

There appears to be an imbalance between the type of jobs and pay available in Bromsgrove compared to the average wages of its population. Industries with higher paid jobs need to be encouraged to stay or locate in the District to correct this imbalance and reduce the daily flow of the population to other employment centres which is unsustainable.

The redevelopment of part of the Garrington's/UEF site to a high technology park will provide a valuable economic boost for the District.

The demise of the MG Rover plant will have implications for the local economy both in terms of local people from Bromsgrove who worked there and through availability of land for employment use. The Core Strategy will need to take into account the possible release of this land for employment or its potential for other uses.

As the majority of employment areas are near completion there could be pressure on the District to release new sites for employment growth. If new sites are required then they will be released through an 'Allocations' plan. This plan will be produced once new housing and employment figures are released through the Regional Spatial Strategy, probably late 2008. As the Council has already identified employment land to meet its current requirements to 2011, as taken from the 'old' Structure Plan, then there is no pressing need to allocate further land until new requirements are known.

The tourist economy is important to the District. The LDF needs to play a role in encouraging and facilitating expansion of this economy by trading on the District's assets including its landscape features.

The existing Local Plan does not contain any policies relating to home working, which the Government is now promoting, due particularly to the advances in information technology. Home working can reduce the need to travel to separate work places so reducing the environmental impact of the business.

However problems can and do occur particularly through the impact of noise and general disturbance on adjacent residents.



Issue 1 - The future of the Bromsgrove economy

Bromsgrove has a high incidence of commuting out of the District to work. Should we concentrate the local economy on service industries to support the growing commuter population and encourage tourists or should we try to diversify our economy and attract new high technology industries?

- Option 1 – Increased emphasis on service industries to support a growing population and promote tourism, i.e. shops, restaurants, leisure and tourist facilities.
- Option 2 – Develop business parks to encourage new high technology and other industries.
- Option 3 – Keep the balance as it is with a mixture of economies.

Issue 2 - Location of new employment opportunities

If required where should new employment land be generally located?

- Option 1 – Small areas of employment within main settlements (i.e. Bromsgrove, Hagley, Rubery) to support starter businesses and small scale local firms.
- Option 2 – Balance provision in Bromsgrove Town by developing large business parks on greenfield ADR sites to west of Bromsgrove (land removed from the greenbelt for future development needs).
- Option 3 – Redevelop and extend existing sites to southeast and south of Bromsgrove.

Issue 3 - The rural economy

How should our rural economy be developed?

- Option 1 – Concentrate on Green Belt compatible businesses based around existing farming activities, tourism and leisure.
- Option 2 – Encourage reuse of rural buildings to provide small scale office accommodation.
- Option 3 – Encourage new business to locate in main settlements but still continue to support existing businesses in the rural areas.

Issue 4 - Reuse of redundant employment sites

Occasionally large employment sites become available for re-use. How does the Council best look to reuse these sites?

- Option 1 – Retain sites for traditional employment uses only.
- Option 2 – Promote a mix of employment generating activities (e.g. tourism, retail)
- Option 3 – Consider reuse for non-employment uses.



Key Issue E Shopping & Bromsgrove Town Centre

Introduction

While town centres continue to act as the main focus for retail activity, over recent years the pattern of retail activity has altered. Larger food stores provide for one-stop shopping trips on a reduced frequency.

Retail warehouses selling DIY goods, electrical appliances, carpets, furniture and other bulky goods have been developed. This has seen the decline of some town centres.

There has also been a marked decline in the number of village shops and other local facilities in rural areas.

Bromsgrove Town Centre is still the main retailing location in the District. Other minor retailing centres exist throughout the District to serve local needs.

Shopping patterns in the District are strongly influenced by the location of nearby shopping centres.

The Council need to determine the future role of Bromsgrove Town Centre and also other smaller localised shopping locations in the District.

National Context

The Government's planning policy on retail development is set out in PPS6 'Planning for Town Centres'.

The Government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability by:

- planning for the growth and development of existing centres; and
- promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development in such centres and
- encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

To achieve this the Government wants to see enhanced consumer choice by making provision for a range of shopping, leisure and local services, which allow genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community.

They also want to see improved accessibility, ensuring that existing or new development is, or will be, accessible and well-served by a choice of means of transport.

While the Town Centre is still seen as the primary place for new retail development opportunities must be found for large-format retailers such as DIY stores and electrical appliance retailers, especially those who sell white goods like fridges and washing machines.

The Government want these to be located if possible on edge-of-centre sites which could combine retail, leisure and mixed-use development. This is so large format stores don't compete with town centres but instead support them.

Regional Context

While Bromsgrove has expanded significantly over recent years it still could be classified as a Market Town as it is a focus for sustainable economic and housing development and provides services and facilities to its rural hinterlands.

Policy UR3 of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) requires that strategies are developed to maintain and enhance the underpinning of all centres to serve their local communities in terms of retail provision, access to services and cultural and leisure facilities.

The role of Bromsgrove Town Centre is not to provide retailing facilities for those from other districts but to serve the needs of the Town's population and nearby rural settlements.





Local Context

As the major centre in the District Bromsgrove Town has a role to play in providing a comprehensive range of facilities to serve the needs of not just the town's residents but also nearby smaller settlements.

Not all the District's residents will use Bromsgrove Town Centre as their primary shopping location.

Those living closer to other centres such as Redditch are more likely to travel there than to visit Bromsgrove.

There is a clear hierarchy of shopping centres within Bromsgrove District consisting of town, local and village centres.

Bromsgrove town centre offers the widest range of retail stores, and services. The local centres of Rubery, Wythall, Hagley, Barnt Green and Alvechurch offer a more limited range of shops and services close to their residential communities, reducing the need to travel to larger centres.

Some rural communities also have village shops and post offices with local centres providing basic goods on larger housing developments.

The Core Strategy will need to strengthen and protect this hierarchy and the important roles of each level of retail provision.

An issue highlighted at the community workshop was the lack of shops in Bromsgrove town centre.

The development of major shopping facilities in Birmingham City Centre and Merry Hill and the attraction of smaller but significant locations like Worcester, Redditch and Solihull has impacted on Bromsgrove.

A recent Town Centre Study undertaken by the Council identified capacity for growth within Bromsgrove Town Centre both in terms of the need for shops and the underdevelopment of parts of the Town Centre.

The Core Strategy will need to establish the framework within which Bromsgrove Town Centre can be improved and expanded within the retail context of North Worcestershire.

Issue 1 - The role of Bromsgrove Town Centre

What should be the future role of Bromsgrove Town Centre?

- Option 1 – Promote its expansion so as to compete with other centres like Redditch and Kidderminster.
- Option 2 – Promote it as a specialist shopping location to attract tourists.
- Option 3 – Promote modest expansion to serve local needs.

Issue 2 - The future of Bromsgrove Town Centre

What uses should we try and provide for in Bromsgrove Town Centre?

- Option 1 – Increased shopping opportunities and larger stores.
- Option 2 – More emphasis on providing for the leisure needs of local people (pubs, restaurants etc)
- Option 3 – A mix of uses with shopping being the main use.

Issue 3 - The role of other local centres

How should we ensure the viability of other local shopping centres (Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Aston Fields, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall)

- Option 1 – Keep local shopping centres only for retail uses.
- Option 2 – More emphasis on providing for the leisure needs of local people (pubs, restaurants etc)
- Option 3 – A mix of uses with shopping being the main use.





Key Issue F Learning, Leisure & Improving Health

Introduction

Our attractive rural environment provides an excellent ready-made resource for both leisure and tourism opportunities in Bromsgrove District. Informal leisure and tourist facilities such as countryside footpaths, canals, nature reserves and the use of more formal facilities such as the Avoncroft Museum, sports centres and children's play areas provide opportunities for both local residents and visitors.

The provision of good and accessible leisure facilities is also vital to achieving a healthy population.

Government initiatives aimed at promoting a healthy population have raised awareness of the importance of recreational and tourist facilities in urban areas and the increasing use of the countryside for leisure and tourism purposes.

The County Council is the Local Education Authority.

As such they are responsible for all state schools in the District including large areas of playing fields attached to the schools. The District also contains the Bromsgrove campus of North East Worcestershire College.

The Local Development Framework represents an opportunity to reassess the current provision of leisure and tourist facilities within the District and to encourage sustainable proposals that improve the quality and range of leisure and tourism opportunities. The initial purpose of the Core Strategy will be to set the context and key principles.



National Context

The Government through PPG2 'Green Belts' promotes Green Belt designation as having a positive role to play in providing opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population and providing opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas.

As such Bromsgrove's Green Belt is an ideal location in which to promote leisure and recreational activities for the benefit of both local residents and visitors.

Government guidance on open space, sport and recreation is contained in PPG17. This PPG describes the role of the planning system in assessing opportunities and needs for sport and recreation provision and safeguarding open space which has recreational value.

The Local Development Framework must ensure that adequate land is allocated for organised sport and informal recreation. In deciding how much more recreational land we need we must take account of the community's need for recreational space, having regard to current levels of provision and deficiencies. We are also required to resist pressures for development of open space which conflict with the wider public interest. Planning Policy Statement 1, 'Delivering Sustainable Development', requires that Development plans promote development that creates socially inclusive communities including supporting the promotion of health and well being by making provision for physical activity.

Regional Context

Recreational resources are an important component in the overall quality of life of the region. Policy QE4 of the Regional Spatial Strategy requires that local authorities assess local needs for open space and develop appropriate strategies to ensure appropriate provision of high quality greenspace in settlements. Adequate protection needs to be given to key public leisure facilities such as parks, footpaths, canals and open spaces.

The West Midlands Cultural Strategy sets out the region's vision and aims for culture in the West Midlands. It seeks to promote the West Midlands as a region that people want to visit because of its cultural attractions.

Objectives of the strategy include, ensuring the economic potential of cultural activities, promotion of cultural education, promoting access to cultural activities and the preservation and renewal of cultural activities.

Policy RR3 of the Regional Spatial Strategy requires that development plans prioritise policies to facilitate the developing role of higher and further education, for example through the development of local centres and the use of shared facilities. It also requires that policies are developed to improve access to health facilities and enable their integration with social and other service provision.



Local Context

The Council are responsible for the majority of sport pitches and play areas throughout the District.

They are also responsible for the maintenance of allotments. As such they have control over the majority of open space within our urban areas.

The existing Local Plan contains a number of policies that promote the retention of open space and provision of new open space as part of the development of new housing.

The Council have also produced detailed guidance on open space requirements in new housing developments.

Open spaces also do not just serve as recreation areas but also wildlife corridors that contribute to the rural feel of the District.

A major programme of work will take place over the next two years to improve schools with inadequate or poor facilities. These schools are mostly in Bromsgrove town and work will have started before the Core Strategy is adopted. The NEW College is also undergoing a comprehensive redevelopment programme including the provision, in cooperation with the Council, of an arts centre for both college and public use. The local community through the Community Plan have highlighted a need for more local hospital services, GPs and dentists.

Issue 1 - Provision of open space and green areas

We need to protect existing open spaces for the benefit of the whole community and seek to where appropriate improve or provide new areas of open space.

- Option 1 – Target poorly provided wards and parishes in the District.
- Option 2 – Prioritise improvement of larger areas and their expansion.
- Option 3 – Provide a larger number of smaller easily accessible areas.

Issue 2 - Provision of health facilities

Where should health facilities be located?

- Option 1 – Safeguard key accessible sites for future health service provision.
- Option 2 – Seek the enhancement of existing key health service sites.
- Option 3 – Maintain existing facilities.





Key Issue G A Safe and Well Designed Environment

Introduction

Good design is now a fundamental part of the planning process and is not just restricted to the historic environment.

As such the promotion of good design will flow through the preparation of all Local Development Framework documents.

Good design can also lead to a safe local environment.

Feeling safe is important to the well being and quality of life of all communities throughout the District.

Bromsgrove is a safe place to live compared to the nearby conurbation and the rest of Worcestershire.

However a countywide survey in 2004 identified levels of fear of crime in Bromsgrove to be the highest in the County.

National Context

Planning Policy Statement 1, 'Delivering Sustainable Development', requires that planning facilitates and promotes sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by: ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities.

In particular development plans should promote development that creates socially inclusive communities and deliver safe, healthy and attractive places to live.

Hence it is a requirement for all policies produced as part of the Core Strategy and subsequent Local Development Framework documents to take account of their impact on community safety and the design of our built environment.

Regional Context

The Regional Spatial Strategy requires that local authorities ensure the highest standards of design, building on the existing character and identity of areas. Policy QE3 specifically requires that plan documents produced by the local authority secure a high quality townscape, urban form, building design and urban spaces, through the use of architecture, urban design and landscape design, which respects regional and local character, culture and history.

Particular attention should also be given to the creation of safer environments which discourage crime and promote community safety.

Local Context

Design has an important role in promoting sustainable development and protecting local distinctiveness. There is a need to place an increased emphasis on promoting sustainable design for new development in terms of location, layout and integration with the existing environment. However any design policies will need to avoid being over prescriptive and allow inefficient flexibility, variety and innovation.

The existing Local Plan does not contain any policies on crime prevention. Current thinking is that encouraging 'street life' by increasing residential densities, connecting roads and footpaths and removing back alleyways etc will enable the identification of strangers and assist in reducing crime. Issues such as siting, design and layout of new developments can have an important impact upon the levels of criminal activities and general fear of crime.

The Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership have produced a Community Safety Strategy called, 'Keeping Bromsgrove Safe'. The Local Development Framework and initially the Core Strategy will have regard to the priorities of this document. The strategy identified 5 key priorities; reducing crime; keeping communities feeling safe; achieve cleaner, greener and safer public spaces; reduce the harm of drugs and alcohol; and realise the potential of our young people.

Issue 1 - Safer communities

Planning has a role to play in ensuring safer communities. How can we do this?

Option 1 – Improve lighting in both urban and rural areas.

Option 2 – Seek dispersal of night time entertainment uses (i.e. pubs, clubs, restaurants).

Option 3 – Promote designing out crime initiatives.

Issue 2 - A better designed local environment

Planning is key to a better designed buildings, streets and towns. How can we promote better design?

Option 1 – Reduce conflict between car users and pedestrians through better design.

Option 2 – Produce enhancement schemes for key locations and promote designs which reflect local character.

Option 3 – Reduce signage and clutter in streets.





Key Issue H Our Natural Environment

Introduction

The District sits within the rural West Midlands Green Belt, which has contained the expansion of the conurbation and protected the rolling, undulating landscape of larger settlements farmland and wooded areas.

The north of the District is characterised by ridges that form a barrier between the District and the Birmingham plateau. These ridges include the Clent Hills, Waseley Hills and the Lickey Hills.

While there is much to celebrate regarding our biodiversity and landscape we also face some difficult challenges.

The District's and also the wider Region's plants and animals have suffered major declines in recent decades, and there are continuing pressures from changing land uses and more indirect factors such as climate change.

National Context

A number of national policy documents and Acts provide instruction and guidance to how the natural environment is managed in the District. For example the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 gives greater protection to SSSIs, stronger wildlife protection and increased public access to registered common land.

Green Belt policy is contained in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 2 and was published in 1995 and is due to be revised soon. Through PPG2 the Government seeks to protect the Green Belt with only limited development allowed including recreational facilities and conversion of existing buildings. PPG 9 'Nature Conservation' seeks to protect England's special natural environment by promoting biodiversity and minimising the effect of development on wildlife where conflict is unavoidable.

The Governments policy is to reduce the risks to people and the developed and natural environment from flooding. This policy is expressed through Planning Policy Guidance Note 25. It looks to local planning authorities to ensure that flood risk is properly taken into account in the planning of developments to reduce the risk of flooding and the damage which floods cause.

Regional Context

The West Midlands Region contains a wide variety of wildlife and landscapes, adding greatly to it's character and attractiveness.

'Restoring the Region's Wildlife - The West Midlands Biodiversity Strategy' is the key regional document in respect of the protection of our natural environment. It aims to focus attention on the most important priorities for biodiversity in the region which include; maintaining and improving the condition of habitats, species and ecosystems, developing an area based approach to restoring wildlife, monitoring the condition of habitats, species and ecosystems and re-connecting and integrating action for biodiversity with other environmental, social and economic activity.

As such the protection of the District's biodiversity should be at the heart of the new planning system.

In respect of specific regional planning guidance, Policy QE7 of the Regional Spatial Strategy requires that all plans produced by local authorities should encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the Region's wider biodiversity resources with specific reference to the protection and enhancement of, species and habitats identified in the Biodiversity Action Plans, statutory protected sites and other areas of biodiversity enhancement identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The West Midlands Sustainable Development Framework, a key document in the promotion of sustainable development in the West Midlands, seeks protection and enhancement of the environment as a key objective of sustainable development.





Local Context

The Green Belt has existed for over 40 years with approximately 90% of the District covered. For the first time, in January 2004, the Bromsgrove District Local Plan established detailed Green Belt boundaries around the main settlements in the District. The establishing of Green Belt boundaries will provide certainty over the exact location of where Green Belt policies are applicable.

The Bromsgrove District Biodiversity Action Programme was adopted in 2000. This programme highlights a number of issues that need to be addressed in the District.

The LDF must build on this Action Plan not only protecting important landscape features but also to provide opportunities to improve the biodiversity of the area.

Existing Local Plan policies provide protection for designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Wildlife Sites.

The loss of quality and range of habitats is an issue which needs to be addressed.

Although there are no major watercourses within Bromsgrove District many smaller watercourses do pass through it.

These are prone to flooding which has caused considerable damage and disruption in recent years.

Government guidance asks local planning authorities to show the areas of flood risk on proposal maps where specific policies are to be applied to minimise and manage the risk. However, this should be done in the knowledge that flood defences can only reduce the risk of flooding, rather than eliminate it.

Flooding also occurs when land is concreted over leading to increased run off when it rains heavily.

This type of flooding can put a strain on rainwater sewers and lead to increased localised flooding.

Currently there are 8 separate Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSIs). The majority of these sites are either in favourable or unfavourable condition but recovering.

There are also 96 Special Wildlife Sites (SWS) and 5 Landscape Protection Areas in the District.

These sites are varied in their nature ranging from whole valleys and hills such as the Lickey, Clent and Waseley Hills, to canals, protected ancient woodlands and reservoirs which all serve as habitats for many species of plants and animals. The identification of wildlife corridors through urban areas can also enable the movement of animals between sites.

Issue 1 - The Green Belt and our rural environment

We need to protect our rural environment, especially the Green Belt as a rich source of natural biodiversity.

- Option 1 – Critically assess the impact of developments acceptable in the Green Belt on the natural environment.
- Option 2 – Restrict disruptive outdoor leisure uses in rural areas.
- Option 3 – Prioritise the protection of the natural environment above social and economic objectives.

Issue 2 - Flooding and water run-off

We need to protect our existing watercourses and reduce harm caused by flooding especially flooding resulting from development and an increase in run-off.

- Option 1 – Require all new developments have sustainable drainage systems.
- Option 2 – Promote buffer zones around watercourses.
- Option 3 – Encourage schemes that minimise water run-off.





Key Issue I Getting Around

Introduction

Good transport and accessibility is vital if you want a good quality of life. Without it, it would be very difficult to get to work, school, shopping or visit friends.

As Bromsgrove is a largely rural District the car remains the main choice of transport.

However the continuing growth and use of the motor car can only be harmful to the environment not only globally through climate change but also at the local level through increased air pollution.

One of the key objectives of the Local Development Framework will be to seek to reduce travel and promote an improvement in sustainable transport options as a viable alternative to car use. However this will not be easy due to the dispersed population of the district.

National Context

The Government through its 10 year transport strategy, 'Transport 2010 – The Ten Year Plan' is intending to deliver the Government's priorities of reduced congestion, better integration and a wider choice or quicker, safer, more reliable travel by road, rail and other public transport.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG13) is the key national policy document in relation to transport issues.

It states that; *"Our quality of life depends on transport...; we need a safe, efficient and integrated transport system to support a strong and prosperous economy. But the way we travel and the continued growth in road traffic is damaging our towns, harming our countryside and contributing to global warming"*.

Land use planning has a key role to play in promoting more sustainable travel by shaping the patterns of development and influencing the location, scale, density and mix of land uses. As PPG13 states; *"Planning can help reduce the need to travel, reduce the length of journeys and make it safer and easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling"*.

Regional Context

The West Midlands is at the centre of the national road and rail network. This gives rise to competing demands between local, regional, national and international movements often using the same elements of the network.

The Regional Transport Strategy is incorporated into the Regional Spatial Strategy.

In respect of Bromsgrove District the strategy seeks to improve accessibility and mobility in urban areas and rural areas so that more sustainable means of travel are encouraged and local regeneration initiatives are supported.

This is combined with the need to encourage behavioural change, such as reducing the need to travel, across the entire Region.

Policies in the Transport Strategy should not be viewed in isolation from the rest of the Regional Spatial Strategy with the importance of transport reflected in planning policies throughout the Spatial Strategy which guide developments to appropriate locations and seek to minimise the impact of transport on the environment.





Local Context

Bromsgrove District is well served by the national road network, with two major motorways passing through the District (M42 and M5), several major A-roads (A38, A435, A441) and an extensive rural road network linking the main urban areas in the District with rural villages.

However congestion on motorways is consuming an increasing proportion of the working day.

Traffic attempting to avoid motorway congestion then diverts to unsuitable local roads, resulting in a deterioration of conditions across a wide area.

Congestion can also effect the reliability and hence take-up of public transport options.

Car ownership in Bromsgrove is higher than the national average especially those households having two or more cars or vans.

There are currently a number of bus services operating within the District. These mainly serve the main urban areas as well as linking to neighbouring settlements such as Birmingham, Worcester and Kidderminster. Many rural areas are poorly served with unreliable and infrequent bus services.

The District is reasonably well served by the rail network, although Bromsgrove train station suffers due to its isolation from the Town Centre, limited facilities and the length of its platform. Other stations that provide a commuter service into Birmingham are situated at Barnt Green, Alvechurch, Wythall and Hagley.

Within Worcestershire, 71% of all journeys made are less than 5 miles. To encourage cycling and walking, safe and convenient routes should be promoted both within existing and new developments and particularly to local facilities.

Initiatives such as safer routes to schools, which provide for a network of cycle and pedestrian routes for new and existing housing areas, linking to new and existing schools should be encouraged. The development of recreational routes into the countryside to complement the existing provision including the national cycle network can be promoted.

The Local Transport Plan for Worcestershire is currently under review and will when published form the basis for future transport development in the County. New documents produced as part of the Local Development Framework will need to link to the Transport Plan to try and reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable means of travel.



Issue 1 - Reducing the need for travel

Reducing the need to travel is a key part of ensuring access for all of the community.

Option 1 – Locate jobs and houses together.

Option 2 – Ensure better access to everyday facilities.

Option 3 – Encourage more working from home and live-work units.

Issue 2 - Transport options in rural areas

It is recognised that the car often provides the most convenient and comfortable door to door means of travel and for many rural residents there is at present little real alternative

Option 1 – Ensure better access to major service centres like Bromsgrove Town.

Option 2 – Seek the retention of essential rural facilities.

Option 3 – Seek to locate services in larger village service centres.

Issue 3 - Improving public transport options

As part of a development proposal, measures to encourage and facilitate the use of public transport can be investigated.

Option 1 – Require green travel plans for all new major developments.

Option 2 – Target key public transport interchanges as locations for new development.

Option 3 – Improve facilities at public transport sites.

Issue 4 - Cycling, walking and motorcycling

Cycling and walking are the most sustainable modes of travel for short journeys. For longer journeys the motorcycle is seen as a more sustainable alternative than car use.

Option 1 – Require new developments contain cycling and motor cycling facilities and improved pedestrian access.

Option 2 – Enhance existing facilities within and between settlements.

Option 3 – Ensure better linkages between new developments.



Key Issue J Preserving the Past

Introduction

Our historic past needs to be valued and be a central part of our cultural heritage and our sense of national identity.

Our historic environment is an irreplaceable record which contributes, through formal education and in many other ways, to our understanding of both the present and the past.

Our historic environment also adds to the quality of our lives, by enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness which is so important an aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages and countryside.

The protection of our heritage is also of immense importance for leisure and recreation and the effective conservation and reuse of historic buildings is at the heart of regeneration and sustainability.

National Context

PPG15, 'Planning and the Historic Environment' lays out government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment.

The frequently close link between controls over 'listed' buildings and conservation areas and planning decisions means that development and conservation generally need to be considered together.

The PPG does not just address the identification and recording of the historic but also the impact of the historic environment on economic prosperity, visual impact of buildings, building alterations and the affect of development on the character of conservation areas.

Regional Context

The distinctiveness of different parts of the Region has evolved largely as a function of their past history and changing cultural traditions. The West Midlands State of the Environment Report shows that whilst the Region's most valued historic heritage is protected by statutory designations (listed buildings) it is important to consider historic landscapes and townscapes as a whole to understand what gives an area its sense of place and identity.

Policy QE5 of the Regional Spatial Strategy requires that plans produced by the Council identify, protect, conserve and enhance the Region's diverse historic environment and manage change in such a way that respects local character and distinctiveness.

Of particular significance for Bromsgrove is the Spatial Strategy's identification of historic rural landscapes and their settlement patterns, listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, conservation areas and historic parks as of particular significance in the West Midlands.

Development plans need to recognise the value of conservation led regeneration in contributing to the social, spiritual and economic vitality of communities and the positive role that buildings of historic value can play as a focus in an area's regeneration.





Local Context

There are over 474 Listed Buildings in the District, which receive special statutory protection. These buildings are an important local cultural resource, reflecting the historic heritage of many settlements and farmsteads.

A number of other important local buildings exist that are not listed and for different reasons e.g. alterations or age, are unsuitable for statutory listing. These buildings could form a local list of locally important buildings.

Bromsgrove's long and complex past has left a rich legacy in the form of buried archaeological remains, monuments and buildings, which has helped to shape many of today's settlements.

The Government's commitment to the re-use of previously developed land will mean that we have to be much better informed and prepared in relation to archaeological matters than before, with potentially an increase in the regularity of new development affecting sites of archaeological interest. Through the use of various techniques such as management agreements, enhancement of District owned sites and the use of display material, archaeological sites can provide a valuable recreational and educational resource.

Bromsgrove has 10 Conservation Areas which have been designated to reflect their special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to conserve or enhance.

As the Council has a duty to review its Conservation Areas it may be appropriate to amend existing boundaries, create new conservation areas or even remove certain ones within the context of the Local Development Framework process.

Issue 1 - Designating and enhancing Conservation areas

The District has 10 Conservation Areas. Do we need more or should we enhance the existing areas first?

- Option 1 – Seek to designate new Conservation Areas as a priority.
- Option 2 – Seek enhancement of existing areas before designating new ones.
- Option 3 – Take action first in areas where the threat to the historic environment is greatest.

Issue 2 - Protecting locally important buildings

The District has many locally important buildings that are unsuitable for full national listing. We need to ensure these locally important buildings are protected.

- Option 1 – Produce a list of only historic locally important buildings.
- Option 2 – Prioritise action to protect locally important buildings that are not currently within Conservation Areas.
- Option 3 – Ensure policy encourages viable reuse of locally important buildings.





Appendix 1 - Glossary

Local Development Framework (LDF)

The LDF will provide the framework for delivering the planning strategy and policies for Bromsgrove District.

Development Plan Documents (DPD)

These will contain development plan policies and be subject to independent examination.

As such policies in these documents will carry significant weight when making decisions on new developments.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

These will cover many issues and will provide additional guidance for policies in the DPDs. They are not a part of the development plan and they are not subject to independent examination.

Local Development Scheme (LDS)

This document is a 3 year project plan for the production of documents in the LDF.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

This sets out the standards which the planning authority has to achieve and its proposals in relation to involving the community in plan-making.

Core Strategy

The key planning policy document for the District. It will guide development in Bromsgrove to 2021. All other documents produced as part of the LDF must conform with policies in the Core Strategy.

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

This document contains the planning policies for the West Midlands. The Core Strategy must have regard to policies contained in the RSS.

