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9th May 2008

Mr Stephen Hay
Area Manager – South Birmingham
Development Planning and Regeneration
PO Box 2470
Alpha Tower
Suffolk Street Queensway
Birmingham B1 1TU

Our ref RSS12.28

Dear Mr Hay,

**BIRMINGHAM LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
LONGBRIDGE AREA ACTION PLAN DPD – SUBMISSION DOCUMENT**

Thank you for consulting the Regional Assembly on the above Document which was received on the 1st April 2008.

In providing this opinion under the provisions of the Regional Planning Body's Conformity Protocol, the Chief Engineers and Planning Officers Group (CEPOG), has coordinated the response, undertaken an assessment of general conformity and provided advice to the Regional Assembly. The advice, in the form of a letter and related Conformity Assessment, is attached for your information. As you will be aware, through CEPOG, the Assembly has provided detailed input into the earlier stages of the preparation of this Area Action Plan with regard to its alignment with the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.

Having considered the advice prepared on behalf by CEPOG we accept the views that the Submitted Document is in **general conformity** with the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. The detailed explanation which supports this position is contained within the Assessment/Evaluation section of the attached Conformity Assessment.

Whilst the Regional Assembly welcomes the proposed Park and Ride facility it considers it is vital that this is properly connected to public transport in the wider area through the Longbridge Transport Interchange. The Assembly is supportive of Delivery, Implementation and Phasing proposals contained within the Area Action Plan as these will be critical to the successful redevelopment of this area.

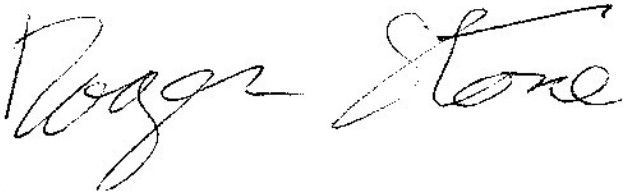
Yours sincerely,



Councillor Bob Badham
Vice Chairman Regional Planning Partnership



Roger Evans
Vice Chair Regional Planning Partnership



Roger Stone
Vice Chair Regional Planning Partnership

Enc – CEPOG letter dated 1 May 2008 and Conformity Assessment

Cc Mike Dunphy – Bromsgrove District Council
 Ray Colbourne - Government Office West Midlands
 Andy Donnelly – CEPOG Support Team
 Paul Maitland – Worcestershire County Council
 Mark Williets – Advantage West Midlands
 Neil Hansen – Highways Agency

CEPOG

Support Team

Chair: **John Anderson**

Please reply to:

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Tim Williams
West Midlands Regional Assembly
Partnership Centre
Albert House
Quay Place
92 – 93 Edward Street
Birmingham B1 2RA

Date: 09 May 2008

Dear Tim

Longbridge Area Action Plan (AAP) – Submission Version

Attached is a Conformity Assessment of the above prepared on behalf of the West Midlands Chief Engineers and Planning Officers Group (CEPOG).

As is apparent from the analysis, the AAP is considered to contain policies and proposals that support the implementation of the RSS, especially the Urban Renaissance objective.

Of particular note are employment and economic diversification proposals in support of the High Technology Corridor strategy, including the welcome identification of a Regional Investment Site. These are complemented by proposals to deliver nearly 1500 dwellings on previously developed land and identification of a site to accommodate a rail based strategic park and ride.

Consequently, the AAP is considered to clearly be in *General Conformity* with the RSS and the WMRA is urged to advise the City Council that this is the case.

If you have any further queries, please contact Andy Donnelly on 0121 214 7338 in the first instance.

Yours sincerely

John Anderson
Chair of CEPOG

CC: By email: Metropolitan RSS / Reserve RSS Conformity Advisors, Ray Colbourne

RSS Regional Conformity Assessment

Application/ Document Title:	Longbridge Area Action Plan - Submission Document
Application No./ Council reference	
RPB File Ref.	RSS 12.28
Local Planning Authority:	Birmingham City Council
County/Group/PAG:	Principal Assistants Group / CEPOG
Regional Conformity Advisor:	Andrew Donnelly
Date Sent to the RCA:	3 rd April 2008
Assessment to the RPB from RCA :	30 th April 2008
Date Opinion Required :	9 th May 2008

Refer to the RSS General Conformity Assessment Dossier Sheet to complete the section/s above. The information for example the dates should be consistent with the dossier sheet.

Description of Development Plan Document/Regionally Significant Planning Application

The Longbridge AAP Submission Document was submitted for independent examination towards the end of March 2008. It covers an area of 195 ha in total and includes the former MG Rover Plant, Cofton Park, the Austin Sports and Social Club and its playing fields as well as several smaller sites.

Although the majority of the former MG Rover site is now vacant, Nanjing Automotive Corporation occupy part of it and in July 2007 the first phase of the new Technology Park opened in 2007.

The AAP area is traversed by the River Rea which is a key wildlife corridor and also comprises part of the Millennium Cycle Route.

The A38 Bristol Road South runs through the AAP area and is one of Birmingham's principal arterial and key strategic highway routes linking the city centre (7 miles north) with Junction 4 of the M5 (4 miles to the south west). Longbridge rail station serves the area; the rail line forms part of the main Midlands-South West link and is an important cross-city commuter route.

The AAP area is situated within the A38 Central Technology Belt (CTB), which stretches from Malvern to central Birmingham. The overall aim of the CTB is to foster the development of the high technology sector.

The majority of the AAP area is within Birmingham City Council's administrative area although a small portion to the south is within Bromsgrove District. The AAP has been submitted on behalf

of both authorities.

Relevant Planning History

At the closure of MG Rover in April 2005, some 6500 highly skilled people were directly employed at the works. This closure led to the release of the North, West and East Works sites, with Nanjing Automotive subsequently occupying the South Works site. Birmingham's Unitary Development Plan (2005), supports continued use of land at the Longbridge car plant for employment purposes.

The preparation of the AAP commenced in April 2006 and has comprised the following stages

- Pre Issues and Options Newsletter – Spring 2006
- Issues and Options – October 2006
- Preferred Option – February 2007
- Submission Option – March 2008

A series of options were initially put forward and the West Midlands Chief Engineers and Planning Officer's Group (CEPOG) has provided WMRA with comments at each stage. These comments have repeatedly stated the need for the AAP to be employment led and to reflect the principles of the *High Technology Corridors (Policy PA 3)*. Copies of previous correspondence are attached by means of context.

The Submission Option can be summarised as follows:

- A new local centre comprising 13,500 sqm retail (8,500 sqm comparison 5000 sqm convenience); 10,000 sqm offices, 5000 sqm leisure, 24,000 sqm college educational facility for Bournville College, 400 residential units, other service and commercial uses and live/work units.
- A 25 ha Regional Investment Site (RIS) comprising at least 15 ha to provide a minimum 100,000 sqm B1b/B1c light industry and B2 (general industrial and high quality technology uses); a maximum of 25,000 sqm offices that complement the high technology sector and a maximum of 10,000 sqm ancillary uses.
- Further land for more general employment uses and support for continued manufacturing activity on the Nanjing Automotive site
- A further 700 dwellings on the East Works Site and 350 on part of the West Works site.
- A 1000 space rail based strategic park and ride site.
- Environmental enhancements including opening up of the River Rea and River Arrow as linear corridors to support biodiversity / enhance the natural environment.

Copies of the following plans are attached in order to provide further context:

- Plan 1: Longbridge AAP Plan Area
- Plan 2: Longbridge AAP Context Plan
- Plan 3 a and b: Longbridge AAP Proposals Map

The description of the Development Plan Document or Regionally Significant Planning application should be a clear concise accurate and precise account. Consider in Development Plan Documents for example the status of the document; its relationship to previous plans any related planning history considered under the new planning system or is it in transitional stages was there a first deposit draft). Consider in the case of Regionally Significant Planning applications for example, the type, scale, size and nature of the proposed development and its planning history.

Regional Spatial Strategy Objectives (Para 3.14 a-j)

- (a) to make the MUAs of the West Midlands increasingly attractive as places where people want to live work and invest**

The policies and proposals in the AAP clearly contribute towards this objective through seeking to provide a range of new homes and attract investment following the closure of MG Rover in 2005.

- (b) to secure the regeneration of the rural areas of the Region**

Not applicable

- (c) to create a joined up multi centred Regional structure where all areas/centres have distinct roles to play**

The AAP proposes a new local centre to serve Longbridge.

- (d) to retain the Green Belt but to allow an adjustment of boundaries where this is necessary to support urban renaissance**

No adjustments to Green Belt boundaries are proposed.

- (e) to support the cities and towns of the Region to meet their local and sub regional development needs**

The policies and proposals within the AAP make a contribution towards meeting housing and especially employment needs following the closure of MG Rover.

- (f) to support the diversification and the modernisation of the Region's economy while ensuring that opportunities for growth are linked to meeting needs and reducing social exclusion**

The policies and proposals in the AAP support the creation of a range of employment opportunities, including opportunities in the high technology sector, to compensate for job losses at MG Rover. It is anticipated that successful implementation of the AAP will create some 10,000 employment opportunities.

- (g) to ensure the quality of the environment is conserved and enhanced across all parts of the Region**

The AAP contains a suite of policies seeking to enhance the environment; in the main these seek to open up the River Rea and River Arrow providing links between the Major Urban Area and its rural hinterland.

- (h) to improve significantly the Region's transport system**

Proposals are included for a strategic park and ride site at Longbridge Station.

- (i) to promote the development of a network of strategic centres across the Region**

The AAP includes proposals for a new local centre.

- (j) to promote Birmingham as a world city**

The effective regeneration of Longbridge, through the policies and proposals contained within the AAP, is imperative to raising the profile of Birmingham.

RSS Spatial Strategy Policies : Topic Chapters

Urban renaissance (Policy checklist: UR1 UR2 UR3 UR4)

Policy UR1: Implementing Urban Renaissance – MUAs
Policy UR4: Social Infrastructure

Rural renaissance (Policy checklist: RR1 RR2 RR3 RR4)

Not applicable

Communities for all (Policy checklist: CF1 CF2 CF3 CF4 CF5 CF6)

Policy CF1: Housing within the Major Urban Areas
Policy CF3: Levels and distribution of housing development
Policy CF4: The reuse of land and buildings for housing
Policy CF5: Delivering affordable housing and mixed communities

Prosperity for All (Policy checklist: PA1 PA2 PA3 PA4 PA5 PA6 PA7 PA8 PA9 PA10 PA11 PA12 PA13 PA14 PA15)

Policy PA1: Prosperity for All
Policy PA3: High Technology Corridors
Policy PA5: Employment Areas in Need of Modernisation and Renewal
Policy PA6: Portfolio of Employment Land
Policy PA7: Regional Employment Sites
Policy PA11: The Network of Town and City Centres
Policy PA12: Birmingham's Role as a World City

Quality of the Environment (Policy Checklist: QE1, QE2, QE3, QE4, QE5, QE6, QE7, QE8, QE9, EN1, EN2, M1, M2, M3, M4, WD1, WD2)

Policy QE1: Conserving and Enhancing the Environment
Policy QE2: Restoring degraded areas and managing and creating high quality new environments
Policy QE3: Creating a high quality built environment for all
Policy QE4: Greenery, Urban Greenspace and Public Spaces

Transport & Accessibility (Policy checklist: T1 T2 T3 T4 T5 T6 T7 T8 T9 T10 T11 T12)

Policy T2: Reducing the need to travel
Policy T3: Walking and cycling
Policy T5: Public Transport
Policy T6: Strategic Park and Ride

Consider how the proposal relates to the key RSS objectives (refer to Chapter 3 para. 3.14 of the RSS) which provide the context for the RSS policies. Ensure that the case is considered against the RSS Objectives and are referred to in this section. Consider the case against all the RSS topic chapters: Urban renaissance; Rural renaissance; Communities for all; Prosperity for all; Quality of the Environment; Transport & Accessibility. The relevant policies to the case should be referred to in this section and how they will be considered in the overall assessment.

Comments Received

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None

All Comments received for example from the RSS Policy Leads; The RA's Strategic Advisors and the Other Stakeholder Groups and the Business Council to be recorded in this section.

The Assessment/Evaluation

Introduction

The effective regeneration of the Longbridge area is imperative to delivering the RSS's Urban Renaissance policy objective. Given the loss of jobs at MG Rover it is vital that the policies and proposals within the AAP are employment led and contribute towards the diversification of the Region's economy through the implementation of *Policy PA3 High Technology Corridors*. The AAP area is situated within the Central Technology Belt (CTB). These issues have been repeatedly raised through the 'frontloading' arrangements when providing informal comments at previous consultation stages.

This, however, is not to the exclusion of all other uses, housing uses as proposed, are especially welcome in the context of the Region's Major Urban Area's having to meet a higher proportion of their own needs.

Prosperity for All

The AAP Area is within the CTB, which stretches from central Birmingham to Malvern. *Policy PA3 High Technology Corridors* supports cluster developments closely linked to the Region's critical research and development capability and Longbridge comprises part of a key node within the CTB.

Furthermore, *Policy PA7* specifies that each High Technology Corridor and Regeneration Zone should make provision for a *Regional Investment Site* to support *diversification and modernisation* of the economy. The identification of a 25 ha site, therefore, is welcome as it meets the requirement to identify an RIS within the CTB. In the light of precedent set elsewhere in the Region, i54 Wobaston Road for example, the range and mix of uses proposed on the RIS is acceptable.

Elsewhere, further employment land is identified for more general use, which supports the wider *Prosperity for All* policy objectives and also more specifically contributes towards Birmingham's *Portfolio of Employment Land Policy (PA6)* and *Policy PA5: Employment Areas in Need of Modernisation and Renewal*.

The level of office floorspace proposed in the new local centre exceeds the 5000 sqm limit suggested for locations not within the network of strategic centres (*Policy PA11: Network of Strategic Centres*). This, however, is viewed as a guideline and it is understood that Birmingham, Worcestershire and Bromsgrove Councils are satisfied that the levels proposed will not detract from the implementation of *Policy PA11*.

Furthermore, Longbridge is highly accessible by public transport which is a further criterion to consider in relation to office proposals outside of strategic centres as introduced by *Policy PA13B: Large-scale Office Development Outside the Strategic Centres* in the RSS Phase 2 Revision that was submitted to the Secretary of State towards the end of last year.

Communities for the Future

The identification of land for a minimum 1450 new dwellings supports the broad Urban Renaissance policy objective whereby Major Urban Areas are required to meet an increasing proportion of their own needs. More specifically it implements RSS policies *CF3: Levels and distribution of housing development* and *CF4: The reuse of land and buildings for housing* as the land identified is exclusively previously developed.

Proposals for 35% of the dwellings to be affordable are particularly welcome (*Policy CF5: Delivering affordable housing and mixed communities*), as RSS monitoring suggests that the delivery of affordable housing is below the indicative regional target.

Transport

The inclusion of a rail based strategic park and ride site at Longbridge station is especially welcome. This supports implementation of *Policy T6: Strategic Park and Ride*. The aforementioned RSS Phase Two Revision Preferred Option specifically identifies Longbridge as a potential location.

Elsewhere the AAP proposes improvements to public transport and incorporates provision for pedestrians and cyclists in accordance with *Policy T5 Public Transport* and *T3 Walking and Cycling*.

Quality of the Environment

The AAPs proposals in their entirety will enhance the built environment through bringing previously developed land back into active use. More specifically there are comprehensive proposals to opening up the River Rea and River Arrow, providing wildlife corridors and linking the MUA with its more rural hinterland. Proposals are also included for neighbourhood / local parks to complement the new residential development.

It is considered that these proposals satisfy the requirements of relevant RSS Quality of the Environment policies especially *Policy QE1: Conserving and Enhancing the Environment*, *Policy QE2: Restoring degraded areas and managing and creating high quality new environments* and *Policy QE4: Greenery, Urban Greenspace and Public Spaces*.

An overall assessment and evaluation should (i) highlight the key relevant issues of the development plan document or regionally significant planning application with the RSS; (ii) relate them against the relevant RSS objectives and the RSS policies; (iii) consider all the comments received from for example the Policy Leads etc. (iv) summarise all the issues and comments received and weigh up the critical factors in reaching a 'balanced view' of the circumstances and (v) provide a clear logical 'step by step' assessment of the particular case.

Conclusion and Opinion of General Conformity

It is considered that the policies and proposals contained in the AAP support several RSS policy objectives as outlined above. Most notably, they support the implementation of High Technology Corridor policy and the creation of up to 10,000 employment opportunities and the potential for a minimum 1450 dwellings to be accommodated on previously developed land within the Major Urban Area.

These proposals complement those elsewhere within the CTB, such as the new University of Birmingham Hospital and the redevelopment of the former Pebble Mill site for high technology uses.

As such, the AAP is in General Conformity with the RSS and its effective implementation will

contribute towards the urban renaissance aspirations for both Birmingham and the wider Region.

The opinion of general conformity should be based on the overall assessment and sound judgement and provide a clear and unambiguous opinion of whether the case is in general conformity with the RSS or whether it will significantly harm the implementation of the RSS.

Regional Conformity Co-ordinator ----Andy Donnelly----- Date ---1 May 2008-----

On completion of all of the whole assessment form please sign/type your name and date the form and return it to the RPB by email by the date agreed on the dossier form.