



Study Into The Future Growth Implications of Redditch Second Stage Report

January 2009



Main Report



A Study Commissioned by:

The West Midlands Regional Assembly



Worcestershire County Council



Redditch Borough Council



Bromsgrove District Council



Stratford-on-Avon District Council



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1 INTRODUCTION

The Stage I Study

- 1.01 White Young Green Planning (WYG) were jointly appointed by The West Midlands Regional Assembly, Worcestershire County Council, Redditch Borough Council, Bromsgrove District Council and Stratford on Avon District Council in May 2007 to assess the implications for Redditch of achieving each of three growth scenarios then being considered by the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Stage Two Revision. A report entitled '*Joint Study Into The Future Growth Implications of Redditch Town to 2026*' was published in December 2007 and referred to here as the 'Stage I Report'.
- 1.02 Having assessed the quantity of land required the report concluded that there was insufficient existing urban capacity to meet any of the options and that some extensions to the existing urban area would be necessary. The report then undertook a SWOT analysis of the broad alternative locations for this growth.
- 1.03 The Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3 designated three Areas of Development Restraint (ADRs) which it recognised may be needed to accommodate future growth. These sites are excluded from the Green Belt but their allocation for development is reserved for consideration by future revisions to the Development Plan (the LDF). These areas could be regarded as being sequentially preferable to other areas of open countryside that have either been considered for development (either as part of previous reviews of the Local Plan or through Section 79 Inquiry) and ruled out, or have never been considered at all.
- 1.04 The identified urban capacity plus the development of the ADRs and Winyates Triangle (an area of White Land within Stratford-on-Avon's administrative area) would be sufficient to meet Option 1 (4,300 dwellings) but further urban extensions which would inevitably involve land designated as Green Belt would be required to cater for either Option 2 or 3 (8,200 and 13,200 dwellings respectively). Much of this land would fall within the neighbouring authorities of Bromsgrove and/or Stratford-on-Avon Districts.



- 1.05 Although these assessments allowed Redditch's levels of green space to be maintained in any expansion area and would facilitate the incorporation of major landscape and ecological features, the extent of urban extension required to meet Option 2 and more particularly Option 3 would be perceived as a major incursion in to surrounding countryside.
- 1.06 The report noted that constraints imposed by the highway infrastructure are generally less to the north than to the south and west and foul drainage is less constrained to the east of the River Arrow and to the south of the town. Expansion northwards including the development of the Brockhill ADR would be relatively close to the town centre and significant savings on vehicle mileage in comparison with the more peripheral locations could be achieved particularly if improved public transportation links are incorporated into any masterplan for the area. For these reasons the report concluded that development to the north of the town would be more likely to result in a more sustainable pattern of development.
- 1.07 Subsequent to the publication of the draft Report the West Midlands Regional Assembly in January 2008 published a Preferred Option for the RSS Stage 2 revision which:
- Revised the start date from 2001 to 2006
 - Allowed for adjustments, including the possibility of compensating additions, to the Green Belt to allow for the most sustainable form of development.
 - Replaced the former designation of Sub-Regional Foci with Settlements of Significant Development which also includes Redditch thereby removing limitations to Redditch's growth imposed by the existing RSS's regional hierarchy.
- 1.08 Due to these changes an addendum was added to the report which noted that if these RSS revisions are accepted by the Secretary of State then it would be open to the three authorities to consider the most appropriate distribution for necessary growth outside the urban area based on the principles of sustainable forms of development as part of the preparation of their Local Development Frameworks. Within that context, one



potential scenario is that most, if not all, of the growth could be accommodated on land currently designated as Green Belt with other land, including that currently designated as ADR, being added to the Green Belt in compensation.

- 1.09 The Regional Assembly has agreed that as part of the RSS Preferred Option, the level of growth at Redditch for the revised plan period of 2006-2026 should be 6,600 dwellings, some of which would need to be provided on land within the administrative areas of Bromsgrove and/or Stratford-upon-Avon District Councils.
- 1.10 The report calculated that about 150 hectares of Green Belt could be required in the adjacent authorities to accommodate housing growth, together with related employment and community land uses.

The Stage II Study

- 1.11 Following publication of the Preferred Strategy Government Office west Midlands (GOWM) commissioned Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners to undertake a study to provide the Panel undertaking the Examination in Public with further options that could deliver higher housing numbers.
- 1.12 The study was published on 7th October 2008 and, whilst it does not recommend allocating any additional growth to Redditch Borough, it suggests that 2,500 units from Bromsgrove's additional growth could be associated with the town. This Stage II study will therefore consider two growth options based on 6,600 and 9,100 dwellings.
- 1.13 The study will review the findings of the 2007 study and consider in more detail how best to distribute the required growth scenarios to Redditch's existing urban area including land within Bromsgrove and Stratford on Avon District Council areas.
- 1.14 This study builds upon the Addendum to the Stage I Study and is an objective appraisal of the most appropriate way of accommodating the growth options not constrained by the administrative boundaries of the local authorities or policy designations of Green Belt or Areas of Development Restraint (ADR). For these reasons the report's findings differ to those of the prevailing Local Plans, the emerging LDF core strategies and the



2006 Masterplan for North West Redditch which considered the development of the Brockhill ADR and proposals for the redevelopment of the Abbey Stadium.

- 1.15 This study will review what existing capacity exists within the Redditch urban area to accommodate new development, consider the advantages and disadvantages of alternative growth patterns and identify potential sites to meet the growth requirements.
- 1.16 Redditch Borough Council (RBC) are undertaking a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which will evaluate the sources of residential capacity. As part of this study we have carried out a partial review of RBC Open Needs Assessment which has identified some potential surplus open space which has been fed in to the SHLAA. The preliminary findings of the SHLAA have been taken into account in this study.
- 1.17 RBC are also carrying out an assessment of employment land. The findings of this study are not available and we will therefore use the employment land requirements for Redditch from the Preferred Option of the RSS and calculations of existing employment land capacity.
- 1.18 The study considers what land requirements will be required as sustainable urban extensions (SUEs) to meet the two growth scenarios taking into account these identified capacities and making allowances to provide open space, education and community services such as local shops and community facilities.
- 1.19 We have also considered the likely form and character of these urban extensions. Redditch has a unique urban form stemming from its design as a New Town. It is characterised by large areas of banded tree planting and landscaping associated with the principal distributor roads which shield and separate the individual districts and neighbourhoods.
- 1.20 This raises the issue as to whether these urban extensions should continue this form and character or should higher densities be adopted to minimise the extent of these incursions into the surrounding countryside. There is clearly a balance that must be



struck and the study is based on achieving a minimum density of 35 dwellings per hectare.

1.21 This equates to 22.75 dwellings per gross developable area which allows for open space, and principal distributor roads. This is higher than the density of 30 dph adopted by RBC's SHLAA but should enable sufficient flexibility in the design and layout of the expansion areas to maintain the established characteristics of Redditch. By incorporating land that is less suitable for development, such as that at risk of flooding, for amenity use the extent of these incursions into the surrounding countryside will be minimised.

1.22 In considering the issue of sustainability we have had regard to the following factors:

- Proximity to town centre
- Proximity to employment opportunities
- Proximity to transportation corridors and routes
- Quality of landscape
- Visibility of development
- Relationship with existing urban form
- Cost and availability of infrastructure
- Opportunity to develop critical mass to support local services

1.23 These factors are reflected in the Sustainability Matrix contained in Appendix 3 and in the individual site assessments in Section 5.



2 URBAN CAPACITY

2.01 A Review of Existing Residential Land Capacity

2.02 Redditch Borough Council are undertaking a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which has calculated capacity from the following sources:

Total dwellings at a density of 30 dph	1121
Total dwellings in windfall allowance	432
Total dwellings identified through SHLAA	1553
Completions 06 to 08	690
Sub Total	2243

2.03 We are of the opinion that 30 dph used in the local authority’s SHLAA is not sufficiently ambitious and does not reflect densities that have been achieved by actual site assessments and developments. We have therefore increased the assessment to 35 dph which equates to an additional capacity of 187 dwellings.

Additional dwellings @ 35 DPH	187
Total	2430
RSS Target	3300
Shortfall	870

2.04 The Stage I report contained an assessment of urban capacity which amounted to 736 from surveyed capacity, and 805 from trend based capacity (from Table 3) and 1050 from the Webheath and Brockhill ADRs. Therefore the capacity from undeveloped assets has reduced from 2591 to 2003 largely through the deletion of Webheath which accounts for 600 dwellings. In addition the RSS requires an additional 3,300 dwellings to meet the ‘needs’ of Redditch to be provided within Bromsgrove and/or Stratford-on-Avon District Council areas.



A Review of Open Space

- 2.05 Redditch is a planned new town that incorporates good levels of open space including Arrow Valley Park which is regarded as a regional facility. There are large areas of landscaping to the principal roads leading to a perception of high levels of green space.
- 2.06 The Council commissioned Scott Wilson to undertake a Review of Open Space in 2005. The report concluded that the present levels of Open Space which amount to 7.48 hectares per 1000 population should be maintained. This standard of provision was incorporated into the land requirement calculations contained in the Stage I report.
- 2.07 As there is insufficient urban capacity available to accommodate any of the growth scenarios extensions to the urban area are inevitable. In order to minimise the extent of these incursions into the surrounding countryside a partial review of the Scott Wilson report was undertaken to ensure that there was no underutilised green space that should more properly be assessed to see if additional capacity for housing could be identified.
- 2.08 A review of two typologies; 'Amenity Open Space' and 'Semi-Natural Open Space' was undertaken. Six sites were identified and included for assessment as part of the SHLAA by the Borough Council. Capacity for an additional 147 dwellings was identified. The full assessment is included in this report as Appendix 1.



3 LAND REQUIREMENTS

Residential

3.01 Our assessment of the quantities of land required to meet the levels of growth over and above existing urban capacity are based on achieving a net density of 35 dwellings per hectare. As this development will be provided on large sites we have allowed 35% of the land to be used for open space, estate roads and primary schools. This equates to 22.75 dwellings per hectare gross. This figure is within the range first advanced by 'Tapping the Potential' in 1999 and this approach has not been subject to contrary advice since.

3.02 We have revised the potential residential capacity from the SHLAA. This is outlined in paragraph 2.01 above. Allowing for an existing urban capacity of 2,430 dwellings the net requirements to meet the two growth scenarios are 4,170 and 6,670 dwellings. Therefore at a gross density of 22.75 dph the land requirements will be 183 ha and 293 ha.

Employment

3.03 The RSS preferred option says that 51 ha of employment land will be required of which 24 ha will be provided within Bromsgrove and/or Stratford-on-Avon and therefore 27 ha will be in Redditch.



3.04 According to Redditch Borough Council's 'Employment Commitments in Redditch Borough' total commitments in April 2008 amounted to:

Allocated Sites in LP3	5.55 ha
Post LP3 adoption	12.84 ha
Ravensbank	4.67 ha
Completions 2006-08	7.65 ha
Total	30.71 ha

3.05 Therefore to meet an increase of 6600 dwellings an additional 20.3 ha of employment land will need to be identified. In the absence of a more accurate assessment of the employment land required to support the higher growth option of 9,100 dwellings we have made pro rata increase in employment land amounting to 39.6 ha.

Open Space

3.06 The gross residential density figure of 22.75 dwellings per hectare allows for a proportion of developable land to be utilised for parks and playing fields and no separate allowance has been made.

Other Uses

3.07 Allowance has been made for sufficient land to provide for a High School and two Middle Schools amounting to 14 hectares which would service both growth options. This is based on the assumption that growth is largely concentrated as a single urban extension. First Schools are included within the 35% discount referred to in paragraph 3.01 above.



3.08 An allowance has also been made for a District Centre providing convenience retailing and local services together with community uses such as church facilities should be allowed for at 0.8 ha hectare per 1,000 dwellings. Again, this assumes that most of growth is concentrated in a single location.

	RSS PREFERRED OPTION	NLP GROWTH OPTION
Growth Option (dwellings)	6,600	9,100
Urban Capacity	2,430	2,430
Net Requirement	4,170	6,670
Residential Area (@22.75 dph)	183.3 HA	293.2 HA
Employment (Net)	20.3 HA	39.6 HA
Education	14 HA	14 HA
Retail & Community (0.8ha/1000 dwellings)	3.3 HA	5.3 HA
TOTAL	220.9 HA	352.1 HA

3.09 The tables on the following pages compares the land requirements assessed by the Stage I study with those now being proposed. There are a number of reasons for the variations between the studies:

- The amount of identified urban capacity which has decreased from 4,173 to 2,430.
- The Stage I study maintained the existing open space standard of 7.43 ha per 1000 population. This study has used a more commonly accepted standard of discounting net density.
- The Stage I study used a basic formula to calculate employment land requirements. This study is based on the Revised RSS figure which we



have increased pro rata for the higher growth option which generates a higher figure. This matter will be further refined by the RBC Employment Study which is being undertaken which may result in modifications to the figures used.

- We have used higher estimates for other uses to accommodate secondary schools within the expansion area. Whilst these schools may not be required in the early phases of development, one of the principles of a sustainable urban extension is the provision of services and facilities on a local basis and we are of the opinion that sufficient land capacity should be allowed on this basis.

For these reasons the figures contained in this report should be regarded as more robust than the more strategic assessments in the Stage I report.

Stage I Study

	RSS Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Dwellings	4,300	8,200	13,200
Net Residential Land (ha)*	5.73	181.46	406.81
Employment (ha)	8.2	15.62	25.14
Other uses	1.79	3.4	13,84
Total	17.82	200.48	445.43

* Allowing for existing urban capacity. Residential and Open Space figures from 2007 Report amalgamated for comparison purposes.



Stage II Study

	Preferred Option	+ Growth
Dwellings	6,600	9,100
Net Residential Land (ha)	183.3	293.2
Employment (ha)	20.3	39.6
Other uses	17.3	19.3
Total	220.9	352.1

3.10 All of these options with the exception of the RSS Option 1 in the Stage I study require significant extensions to the urban area.



4 CONSTRAINTS ON DEVELOPMENT

4.01 In this section we consider factors that will influence the choice of location including prevailing policy issues and the provision of infrastructure.

Policy Issues

The Areas of Development Restraint

4.02 The review of the RSS has opened the door to alterations to the Green Belt Boundary in order to accommodate necessary growth in the most sustainable form. Therefore this report will evaluate the ADRs alongside other potential urban extensions which are currently Green Belt and the eventual selection made on which option best meets objectives such as sustainable development. This may alter the balance of land to be found within and beyond the boundaries of the Borough Council.

The Green Belt

4.03 Any alterations to the established Green Belt are likely to be controversial and will require careful consideration and justification. Before contemplating any variation to the existing boundaries and whether the modification to boundaries in one direction would be inherently more harmful than another it is necessary to consider the original objectives of Green Belts.

4.04 Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts (PPG2) states the purposes of Green Belts to be:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.



- 4.05 A common objective of many planning policies and recent development plans seek to prevent the unnecessary sprawl of urban development by giving priority to the redevelopment of brownfield sites and other sites within the urban area before looking at extensions and in so doing this assists in safeguarding the countryside. Redditch is not a historic town and does not have significant areas of brownfield land. Therefore the principal aim of the Redditch Green Belt is to prevent neighbouring towns coalescing, to prevent unnecessary sprawl and to safeguard the countryside.

Landscape

- 4.06 Landscape quality and character will impose constraints on any strategy for developing outside the existing urban area of Redditch. The Bromsgrove Local Plan designates Landscape Protection Areas and Areas of Great Landscape Value and the Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan designates Special Landscape Areas. These are qualitative designations and should carry significant weight when assessing the relative merits of potential areas of development.
- 4.07 Worcestershire County Council published a document and on-line assessment tool entitled "Planning for Landscape in Worcestershire: Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment: Process, Products and its Role in the Planning System" in June 2008.
- 4.08 The areas around Redditch fall into two main landscape types. These are the "Wooded Estatelands" and the "Principal Timbered Farmlands". The Wooded Estatelands type covers land to the north of the town, from Bromsgrove Highway in the west to Icknield Street in the east, including the Brockhill and Bordesley areas. It also covers land to the south of the town including the land between Redditch and Studley and as far west as the A441. The general description of this landscape type is:

"A large scale, wooded agricultural landscape of isolated brick farmsteads, clusters of wayside dwellings and occasional small estate villages. Key visual elements in this landscape are the many large, irregularly shaped ancient woodlands, often prominently situated on low crests. It is a landscape that can appear rather functional, due to its scale, it can lack intimacy and warmth."



4.09 The "Principal Timbered Farmlands" type is to be found to the west and south west of Redditch including land to the west of the Bromsgrove Highway and the Webheath area and also land to the east and north east of the town, including the Mappleborough Green area and the area around Beoley. The general description of this landscape type says:

"This is a complex, in places intimate landscape of irregularly shaped woodlands, winding lanes and frequent wayside dwellings and farmsteads. It is a landscape of great interest and exception, yet also one of balance. The Principal Timbered Farmlands are characterised by a mosaic of agricultural land cleared directly from woodland, on a piecemeal basis, together with land enclosed from former localised areas of open fields, resulting in the dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages and lack of strong settlement nuclei."

4.10 Other smaller areas include "Riverside Meadows" - a narrow strip of land along the Arrow Valley to the south of the town, and "Principal Wooded Hills" – the hillside to the northeast of the Ravensbank employment area.

4.11 Interrogation of the mapping system (available at <http://gis.worcestershire.gov.uk/website/lca/viewer.htm>) provides more localised information on key features such as woodlands and tree belts, ponds and streams. The land take we have assumed for the alternative growth options allow for key features to be preserved and these should be taken account of at the detailed masterplanning stage.

4.12 Allowance can be made for major landscape features in calculating gross development areas and detailed site masterplanning would take account of more localised features such as valuable hedgerows and specimen trees. The analysis interprets the attributes of the landscapes in a descriptive and non judgmental way and does not attempt to provide a comparative assessment of the relative importance or merits of each landscape type. As a result the analysis does not preclude development per se nor does it assist in evaluation of the relative qualities of the areas.



Transport

- 4.13 The Summary of Key Issues affecting Redditch from the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011 states:

Redditch, located in the north of the county, has relatively few problems relating to traffic congestion or air quality, which is in large part due to the highway network within the town being developed as part of the New Town expansion from the 1960's. However, accessibility can be a problem in some areas of the town, despite a reasonable bus network, and there are significant community safety concerns regarding use of the footpath and subways network. There is a proposal for a major commercial leisure development at Abbey Stadium, to the north of the town, which has significant transport implications. This was the subject of a Public Inquiry in November 2005, and if planning approval is granted it is likely to be built during the LTP2 period. This development would have a major impact on travel patterns within Redditch, as detailed below. A Bus Quality Partnership has been established within the town, and this has successfully secured funding for investment in public transport facilities within the town. Rail access to the town is via a single-track line from Barnt Green. Whilst a reasonable service is provided from Redditch to Birmingham as part of the Cross-city line, interchange with rail services to other parts of the County are poor. The main concern over traffic congestion relates to the highway network in the south-eastern area of Redditch, and the confirmation that the A435 (T) Studley Bypass will not go ahead means that alternative solutions to such congestion will need to be identified.

- 4.14 Whilst the Abbey Stadium proposals referred to did not receive planning permission paragraph 4.8.2 of the plan gives a clear indication of the highway requirements for a major development to the north-west of the centre.



4.15 If the proposal ultimately secures planning approval, it is programmed for construction during the LTP2 period. The Transportation Assessment for the development identified the impact of the additional travel demand upon the local highway network, and following discussions with the County Council and the Highways Agency the following transport strategy was agreed:

- Construction of the A441 Bordesley Bypass along with associated junction improvements on the A441 at the Riverside Roundabout in Redditch, and at the M42 Junction 2.
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive site Travel Plan, including improvements to the local walking and cycling networks to provide direct access between the site and surrounding residential areas, the town centre (including bus and rail stations), and the National Cycle Network. Bus services including a shuttle bus between the site and the town centre would also be provided.
- Introduction of traffic management measures on the Bypassed section of the existing A441 through Bordesley village, to deter through traffic, improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, and to improve facilities for bus passengers. If the development goes ahead, this package would be primarily funded by a partnership of Redditch Borough Council and the developer. Although the A441 Bordesley Bypass is a recognised new road proposal within the Worcestershire County Structure Plan, it is not a scheme of regional significance and under current traffic conditions is not considered a priority for the County Council. However, the County Council has agreed to make a contribution of up to £1 million towards the construction costs of the Bypass to ensure that the road is built to a dual carriageway standard as this is considered the most appropriate and safest standard of road for the forecast traffic flows.



- 4.16 A considerable amount of information was collected during the preparation of the 2007 WYG Report. In addition consultants Mott MacDonald have carried out a strategic assessment for the Regional Assembly.

Rail

- 4.17 The aim of the RSS is to meet local and sub-regional economic and social needs in the most sustainable way without attracting investment or migration from the MUAs (Para 3.11 of RSS Phase Two – Preferred Option, December 2007). One of the main principles of sustainable development is to reduce the need to travel particularly by car. It will therefore be necessary to balance new housing and population growth with employment opportunities. Conversely the conurbation will continue to rely on towns such as Redditch to provide some of its labour requirements and some level of out commuting is inevitable. It is therefore important to provide, where possible, a realistic alternative to the private car for journeys to work.

- 4.18 Redditch is the terminal station on the line from Birmingham New Street. The capacity is limited to half-hourly services because it is a single track from Barnt Green to Redditch. There are proposals to develop a second platform at Redditch station which will enable capacity to be increased to a 20 minute service.

Services Infrastructure

- 4.19 A considerable amount of information and analysis was collected and carried out in the preparation of the 2007 Report. The conclusion was that with the exception of foul drainage that services could be provided without abnormal expenditure to all areas around Redditch.
- 4.20 Royal Haskoning have been jointly commissioned by Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council to carry out a Water Cycle Strategy and a draft report was published in September 2008. The report considers water and drainage infrastructure requirements to meet the RSS Stage Two Revision Preferred Option based on the development of existing urban capacity and the Brockhill, Webheath and A435 ADRs.



4.21 With regards to the supply of potable water paragraph 6.4.1 of the report says:

Consultation with STW identifies that, with the improvements to water supply listed in Section 6.3.3, water supply should not be a problem in Bromsgrove and Redditch as there is sufficient headroom in the system. They also stated that it is unlikely that the timing of development will prove a restriction on water supply and that the size and duration of the deficits would be substantially reduced through water efficiency measures and design in both new and existing development, point 5 in Section 6.3.3. However, it is a concern that the system is already shown as being in deficit within this area of the WRZ and is reliant upon the improvements mentioned in such a short time scale. In addition, STW did indicate that if development targets were increased dramatically beyond those stated in the Draft WMRSS, shortfalls of water supply may become much more problematic, although it was the location of the higher development predictions that were most limiting.

Section 6.3.3 refers to planned improvements to the supply infrastructure throughout the Sever Trent region

4.22 The study area is served by two sewage treatment works. Their catchments are divided by a ridge of higher ground running from northeast to southwest through Redditch. Land to the north of this ridge drains to the Sprenal sewage treatment works catchment area, whereas the area to the south of the ridge drains to the Priest Bridge sewage treatment works. Sewage from parts of the Priest Bridge is pumped over this ridge to the Sprenal STW.

4.23 There are two main foul sewers systems through Redditch and both are operating at capacity which is exceeded during storms. The problem is especially critical between Batchley and Ipsley Church Lane.

4.24 There is no capacity within the sewage system of Redditch Borough for any surface water flow and it will be necessary for any development to incorporate suitable SUDS systems to attenuate and balance any surface water runoff. Because of geological conditions open storage is preferable where practical.



4.25 Since the publication of the Stage I report the government has announced that a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) may be introduced on future developments. This is intended to secure contributions to a wide range of both social and physical infrastructure investments that would be required to support the growth of towns. The provision of Infrastructure Plans which will deal with the implementation of proposals will be part of the LDF process. Given the scale of developments proposed we have no reason to believe that the provision of infrastructure to the preferred locations would be abnormal such as to affect the viability of proposals.