



Association of Black Country Authorities
Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton

Our Ref: HP/CW
Date: 8 February 2019
Please ask for: Christine Williams
Direct Line: 01922 652089

Shropshire Council
Planning Policy & Strategy Team
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

By email - planningpolicy@shropshire.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

**Shropshire Local Plan Review:
Preferred Sites Consultation: November 2018**

Thank you for consulting the Black Country authorities on the Local Plan Review.

This letter contains the response of the Association of Black Country Authorities (ABCA) to the Preferred Sites Consultation.

You will recall that we wrote to you in July last year regarding the issue of housing and employment need across the Black Country and how it could be met. In summary, our most recent evidence tells us that we cannot accommodate all of our identified needs within the urban area of the Black Country. This view is supported by our current work reviewing the urban capacity of the Black Country (<http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk/t2/>) and the Birmingham and Black Country HMA study. Even by increasing densities and looking to other sources of urban land supply we estimate that we have a shortfall in the region of 22,000 dwellings and 300ha of employment land.

The letter asked for information on your Plan-making programme and to understand the opportunity for housing and employment development proposals identified in your Plan to meet needs arising from the Black Country. Your response to this letter recognised a functional economic relationship between Shropshire and the Black Country and that there may be an opportunity for a proportion of the Local Plan housing allocations to be attributed to meeting needs arising in the Black Country whilst at the same time achieving Shropshire's strategic growth aspirations.

Within this context our comments on the Preferred Sites consultation document are set out below:

1. We support the references in the Preferred Development Strategy to 'supporting the growth aspirations of neighbouring areas' and within this context the spatial focus on

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the north and east of the County. For the reasons set out above, this approach builds on existing physical and functional relationships between the Black Country and Shropshire, and recognises the opportunity for the Plan to accommodate mutually supportive cross-boundary growth needs in a sustainable manner.

2. We understand that the Council has commissioned a Study into the economic potential of the M54 Corridor and that this work will inform the next stage of the Local Plan review. We await the findings of this Study with interest. The Corridor has been long-recognised as a strategic growth opportunity and it may be appropriate to refer to it directly within the Preferred Development Strategy. This would be particularly the case if the Corridor contains strategic housing and employment sites which we understand will be the subject of a subsequent consultation.
3. Para 4.35 refers to opportunities in the Cosford area for major mixed-use strategic development and we are aware of aspirations for large scale development being promoted in this location. We recognise the important role of RAF Cosford and the opportunity for further investment in this location to strengthen the economic role of the M54 Corridor and support the nationally significant clusters of aerospace and high technology manufacturing activity in the Black Country around M54 Junction 2. The area benefits from strong physical connections to the Black Country in the form of the M54 and rail line and could be well placed to directly meet a proportion of the unmet employment land and housing needs arising from the Black Country and wider HMA.

We trust you find these comments helpful and look forward to further discussions with you as the work progresses, especially around opportunities in the M54 Corridor. In the meantime, if you would like to discuss any of our responses please contact Ian Culley, Lead Planning Manager at Wolverhampton Council on 01902 555636 or via email ian.culley@wolverhampton.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully

Councillor Qadar Zada
Leader
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Councillor Mike Bird
Leader
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Councillor Steve Eling
Leader
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Councillor Roger Lawrence
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Wolverhampton City Council