

REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE

FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Metropolitan area -	the seven West Midlands metropolitan districts of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton
The Black Country -	the districts of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton
West Midlands conurbation -	Birmingham/Solihull and the Black Country
Central Crescent -	the zone surrounding the metropolitan area which has close links with that area (a more detailed definition is in paragraph 4.4.1)
North Staffordshire conurbation -	Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme
The shire area -	the counties of Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Herefordshire Council
The Marches -	the western parts of the counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire Council and Worcestershire
Objective 2 area 1994/96 -	the area designated by the European Commission as one seriously affected by industrial decline, and therefore eligible for Structural Funding under the European Regional Development Fund
Objective 5b area 1994/99 -	the area designated by the European Commission as one eligible for Structural Funds under the European Regional Development Fund in order to promote the development of rural areas
Assisted Area -	the area identified by the Government as experiencing particular structural difficulties, and therefore eligible for regional industrial incentives. Assisted Areas are composed of Development Areas and Intermediate Areas : in the former, higher levels of grant are available

Rural Development Area -	the rural area designated by the Rural Development Commission as an area suffering the greatest concentration of economic and social problems, and therefore eligible for support through the Commission's Rural Development process and small business support programme
Ramsar site -	a site listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance
AONB -	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Single Regeneration Budget -	a Budget to support regeneration through a package of funding measures
Transport package -	a set of transport measures put together by authorities individually or jointly, with the aim of combining highway and public transport schemes to achieve specified objectives

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands is issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment. It has been prepared by the Government Office for the West Midlands in response to the Advice¹ received from the West Midlands Regional Forum of Local Authorities (the Forum) in Autumn 1993 and, on housing, in the spring of 1997. This Guidance replaces the version of RPG11 published in September 1995. Substantial changes have been made to Section 9 (Housing) and there are minor consequential and factual amendments made elsewhere (1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.7, 3.15, 3.19, 4.2.3, 4.2.8, 4.4.2, 4.6.1, 4.8.6, 5.1, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 6.1, 7.1, 7.4, 7.11, 7.19, 7.20, 8.2, 10.23, 14.2, list of Policy Guidance Notes). Paragraph 3.15 of the 1995 version is no longer consistent with the new Guidance and has been deleted. Except in respect of Housing however a comprehensive review of the Guidance has not been undertaken and the Maps have not been updated to reflect changed circumstances.*

1.2 The Guidance shares the vision of the Advice, namely that of an advanced and competitive manufacturing Region, where development is set within a sustainable development framework, where inward investment and enterprise are encouraged, where everyone has access to a high quality of life and choice of opportunities, and where the quality and distinctiveness of the

** The Department of Transport has now become part of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.*

The National Rivers Authority (NRA) has now become part of the Environment Agency.

natural and built environment are maintained and enhanced. In order to achieve this vision it will be necessary for central and local Government, the European Union, the private and voluntary sectors and other partners to co-ordinate their programmes, responsibilities, skills and resources. A number of these programmes and responsibilities lie outside the remit of this document, but are of equal importance. They should be pursued alongside, and within the framework of, this Guidance.

1.3 The primary purpose of this Guidance is to set the framework for development plans in the Region. It covers the period to 2011, and should be taken into account by the shire counties in reviewing their structure plans, by the metropolitan districts and Herefordshire Council in reviewing their unitary development plans (UDPs).

1.4 The Guidance should be read in the context of the United Kingdom (UK) Sustainable Development Strategy² and alongside national policy guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs), Minerals Policy Guidance Notes (MPGs), circulars and other Government policies and statements. A full list of current PPGs, MPGs and RPGs is provided on pages 53-56.

1.5 Regional Planning Guidance for the Peak District National Park, part of which is within the West Midlands Region, is provided by Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the East Midlands.

1.6 References to structure plans in this document include Part I of UDPs, while references to local plans include Part II of UDPs. References to minerals and waste local plans include references to minerals and waste policies in UDPs. References to development plans include structure plans,

UDPs, local (district-wide) plans, minerals plans and waste local plans.

1.7 This Regional Planning Guidance hereby cancels that issued in September 1995.

2. THE WEST MIDLANDS REGION

2.1 The West Midlands Region occupies a central position in England (Map 1). It covers 13,000 square kilometres and includes the shire counties of Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Herefordshire, and the seven metropolitan districts (Map 2). The population of just over 5 million has increased by 2.3% between 1981 and 1995, which is below the average for England and Wales. The Region is an important manufacturing region, with 27% of the workforce employed in manufacturing. This is the highest in the UK and amongst the highest in Europe. The Region's Gross Domestic Product per head in 1995 was at £10,245 - nearly 95% of the UK average.

2.2 The Region is one of great diversity. The West Midlands metropolitan area and North Staffordshire conurbation are surrounded by smaller towns and extensive rural areas, many of them of high landscape and environmental quality. The metropolitan area is the main centre of population and employment, at the crossroads of the national motorway network and the railway network (Map 3). Its share of the Region's population dropped from 57% in 1961 to 50% 1995. In spite of this, it remains more densely populated than anywhere outside Inner London (nearly 3,000 people per square kilometre). The area has a diverse ethnic mix, with 14.6% of the population being non-white. The Index of Social Conditions from the 1991

Census ranks Birmingham and Sandwell amongst the 10 most deprived districts in the country, and there are pockets of multiple deprivation in all the districts. There are areas of high environmental quality alongside large amounts of derelict and vacant land. The area lost more than one-third of its manufacturing jobs in the recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Most of the metropolitan area is covered by Objective 2 of the European Structural Funds (Map 4).

2.3 The metropolitan area is made up of distinctive parts. The City of Birmingham is a major international centre at the heart of the Region and has attracted major facilities such as the International Convention Centre. It has one of the highest unemployment rates in the Region, with a high proportion of long-term unemployment. The industrial decline of Birmingham has led to it being granted Development Area status (Map 4).

2.4 The Black Country embraces traditional industrial towns and villages to the west and north of Birmingham, and lacks the international service sector growth enjoyed in Birmingham. It has a varied and interesting urban environment, although its industrial heritage has left it with significant environmental problems and large areas of derelict land. The whole area is within Assisted Areas, with the Wolverhampton Travel to Work Area (TTWA) having Development Area status.

2.5 Coventry lies at the centre of a string of towns running from Atherstone in the north to Warwick and Stratford in the south. The area to the south of Coventry has a high-quality environment and in recent years has experienced strong development pressures. This contrasts with significant economic and environmental problems in the coalfield areas to the north and in parts of Coventry. Map 4 shows the

different national and European programmes that are in place in these areas.

2.6 Map 2 shows the free-standing towns in the shire counties surrounding the metropolitan area. These are separated from the metropolitan area by the Green Belt (Map 5). They have a complex series of links with the metropolitan area and with each other for work, social and leisure purposes. These settlements have grown rapidly in the past 24 years. The former New Towns of Telford and Redditch have been the fastest growing settlements in the Region. Some parts of this area are included within the Objective 2 area and/or Intermediate Areas (Map 4).

2.7 The North Staffordshire conurbation, with a population of 377,000, is a relatively self-contained urban area, traditionally based on the ceramics industry; its links are with Cheshire to the north, as well as with the rest of the West Midlands. The loss of the steel-making industry, the decline of coal-mining and the decline of employment in the ceramics industry have led to a legacy of dereliction and a weak employment base. Parts of the area are covered by the Objective 2 programme.

2.8 The majority of the Region is rural, with 70% of the area being agricultural. The rural parts of the Region, particularly the Marches and North Staffordshire, exhibit signs of rural decline. This has been recognised by the granting of Objective 5b and Rural Development Area status. There are some substantial and relatively self-contained market towns, such as Hereford and Shrewsbury, within the rural areas.

2.9 The Region has a rich and varied landscape and townscape (Map 5). It includes some of the country's finest hill landscapes (as in the Peak District National Park and the several Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)); historic towns

such as Stratford, Worcester and Lichfield; evidence of a more recent industrial history (for example at the World Heritage Site in Ironbridge); and a network of important rivers and canals. There are many areas of importance for nature conservation, including the Ramsar sites of the Midland Meres and Mosses in Shropshire/Staffordshire and 11 National Nature Reserves. The Region includes a significant part of the National Forest in eastern Staffordshire.

3. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

3.1 Development and regeneration are essential to achieve economic growth, which itself generates the wealth and resources which are a key factor in maintaining and protecting the quality of the Region's environment. It is the role of the planning system at all levels to ensure that such development is sustainable*. People aspire to economic development with rising standards of living and to a safe and pleasant environment, and wish to pass both on to future generations.

* *Sustainable development is defined in the 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Report) as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". A fuller explanation of sustainable development in the context of the United Kingdom is included in Chapter 24 of "Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy"*³

Vision

3.2 Within this overall framework of sustainable development, the shared vision for the Region is:

-  to achieve **economic prosperity** throughout the Region, and to achieve a **more competitive position for the Region** in European and world markets;
-  to build on the Region's success as an **advanced manufacturing region**;
-  to maintain and enhance the **quality and distinctiveness of the Region's natural and built environment**;
-  to recognise the pattern of **diverse and distinctive sub-regions** which complement and reinforce one another to enhance the vitality of the Region;
-  to **regenerate the older urban areas** to make them places where more people wish to live, work and invest;
-  to secure the **regeneration of rural areas**; and
-  to ensure a **high quality of life and a choice of opportunities** for everyone in the Region.

Development Principles

3.3 Development plans in the Region should include policies which support the following objectives:

promoting economic growth by -

-  **maximising economic potential within the sustainable**

development framework.

Particular attention should be paid to those urban and rural areas in greatest need. Employment-led growth in the **north and west** of the Region should be encouraged in order to obtain a more equal distribution of opportunities throughout the Region. In particular, this will involve strengthening the employment base of North Staffordshire and the Black Country, in conjunction with further development of the regional role of Telford. Opportunities for economic growth will continue to arise in the **south-east** of the Region. These strengths should be built on in order to achieve a competitive position in Europe but growth must be carefully focused, and in some areas constrained, to ensure that development is not at the expense of the character of those areas;

-  ensuring that planning policies allow a **flexible and efficient response to the needs of the market**, and **encouraging initiative and innovation** in response to changes in technology and market demands;

-  encouraging the **use of energy-efficient modes of transport and maintaining and improving those inter- and intra-regional communications** which are necessary for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in line with the existing and future pattern of development in the Region;

supporting urban and rural regeneration by -

 **maximising the use of sites within the urban fabric which are derelict or no longer used (previously developed), and releasing greenfield sites only where there is no alternative.** When proposing development of greenfield sites in development plans, authorities should clearly demonstrate that there are no alternatives within the existing built-up areas, subject to the need to protect valuable open spaces. Consideration should also be given to the potential afforded by previously developed sites in the countryside, although the implication of their location for travel patterns should always be taken into account;

 **promoting a healthy rural economy, whilst integrating the development which is necessary to sustain that economy with the protection of the countryside** for the sake of its beauty and the wealth and diversity of its landscape and natural resources;

 ensuring **the vitality and viability of town centres**;

 aiming to provide **adequate housing to an acceptable standard** for all the Region's people;

promoting a sustainable pattern of development by -

 co-ordinating policies for transport and other forms of development. The aim should be to **site development at locations highly accessible by public transport** in order to limit the need to travel, and distance of travel, by private car;

 moving towards a **better balance between employment and population** within existing urban areas and in rural communities;

 encouraging **mixed-use** within settlements and on particular development sites;

 encouraging the **conservation of natural resources** through reducing demand, using renewable resources and recycling;

maintaining and enhancing the environment by -

 ensuring that **development is carried out in an environmentally sensitive manner.** The firm protection of AONBs, the best and most versatile agricultural land, the Peak District National Park and designated sites of nature conservation importance must be continued, as must the protection of the historical and cultural environment. The character of the Region's historic towns, listed buildings, parks and gardens, conservation areas and archaeological sites should be protected by the sensitive design and location of development. The quality of air, soil and water should be protected and enhanced;

 promoting a **high quality of design in town and country**;

 giving full regard to the **protection and creation of valuable open spaces.** This is particularly important in areas such as the Black Country and North Staffordshire where the overall environment needs improvement;

 ensuring a **strong, effective and permanent Green Belt**.

Environmental Appraisal

3.4 Development must be accommodated in ways which maintain and enhance the distinctive character, quality and future viability of town and country. In order to ensure that full consideration is given to the impact of policies and proposals on their surroundings, all development plans should be based on an environmental appraisal, as explained in paragraph 5.52 of PPG12. The terms of such an appraisal and the environmental objectives to be met through the plan should be set out in the explanatory memorandum (structure plans) and the reasoned justification (local plans). The Department of the Environment's Good Practice Guide⁴ gives guidance on how to undertake a systematic appraisal of the environmental effects of options.

Design

3.5 In planning for new development, local authorities, developers and others should aim for a high quality of design of both architecture and layout. They should consider the extent to which the design of proposed development contributes to the pattern of sustainable development and consider how it relates to, and can enhance, the quality of the environment, both the immediate surroundings and the wider local area. Authorities should set out in their development plans design policies which provide the basis for development control decisions.

Locational Framework

3.6 Development plans should recognise the importance of integrating transport and development. Locations for new development should be chosen that

will help to reduce the numbers and length of journeys to work, shops, leisure and recreation, education and other public facilities, especially by car. Major generators of traffic demand should be located in existing centres which are highly accessible by means other than the private car, and improved opportunities should be provided for people to walk, cycle or use public transport rather than drive. This approach is relevant in both urban and rural areas, although policies will need to reflect differences in the scale of development and the availability of public transport. Detailed advice is contained in section 3 of PPG13.

3.7 Locational policies are only one of the factors that affect the amount and method of travel. It will, at the same time, be necessary to adopt restraint policies in certain areas and to pursue improvements in public transport in order to reduce congestion. Further guidance on such measures is in Chapter 10.

3.8 Development plans should ensure that the capacities of existing urban areas are maximised in as far as is consistent with securing quality of the living environment. Development within the existing urban fabric contributes to a pattern of sustainable development by helping to reduce the need to travel; minimising the loss of greenfield sites; and maximising the use of existing infrastructure. Opportunities for re-using vacant and derelict sites within the urban fabric should therefore be taken unless the retention or creation of open spaces is important to the quality of the environment. Authorities should promote the re-use of sites by bringing forward land in their ownership. They should also, when considering the renewal of planning permissions or reviewing development plan allocations, consider whether alternative uses to those originally identified would provide a more sustainable pattern of development. For example, some sites

previously used, or allocated, for office or other uses but no longer likely to be used for such purposes may be equally suitable for well-designed housing development that would help bring vitality to town centres.

3.9 In considering locations in urban areas for housing, authorities should consider the opportunity to provide quality and affordable higher-density development in areas well-served by public transport. In such instances, authorities should be flexible in their requirements for off-street residential parking.

3.10 On sites within the urban fabric, emphasis should be placed on the creation of high-quality, mixed-use developments. Mixed use can usefully contribute to reducing the need to travel (PPG13 paragraphs 3.16-3.17) and to the diversification of town centres (PPG6 paragraphs 2.11-2.12). It is also helpful in enhancing vitality by creating local communities with their own identities and own facilities.

3.11 These principles can be best served in the West Midlands by concentrating development in existing settlements. Central to this is the need to maintain the economic and social infrastructure of the metropolitan area and the North Staffordshire conurbation. Well over one-third of the new building for housing and employment purposes should take place in these two major urban areas.

3.12 Outside these areas, most development should be focused on existing larger settlements (market towns and above) that are accessible by a choice of means of travel and provide a range of employment opportunities. The aim should be to move towards a better balance between housing and employment, so that job opportunities are provided near where people live, thus encouraging transport efficiency. The

degree of such a balance will vary from area to area: in the Central Crescent (as defined in paragraph 4.4.1), for example, there will be a continuing need to provide housing to meet the needs of those working in the metropolitan area (see paragraph 4.4.2).

3.13 In settlements outside the metropolitan area and North Staffordshire conurbation, maximum use should be made of sites within the urban fabric but there may also be some opportunity for peripheral growth. In considering the capacity for growth of free-standing towns authorities should take into account:

-  the opportunities for development within and on the edge of such settlements, whilst protecting their distinctive character, structure and environmental and amenity assets;
-  infrastructure availability;
-  the existing employment base, and the potential for future employment;
-  market demand; and
-  the existence of public transport links to and within such settlements.

3.14 Sporadic development in the open countryside should be avoided, as should the incremental expansion of small settlements if this will lead to an increase in car-borne commuting. In the rural parts of the Region, some development in existing settlements can help to sustain local services and employment. However, in many smaller settlements it will be appropriate to limit housing development to that for local needs only.

3.15 There are a number of major disused previously developed sites in the Region, including redundant hospital sites and those in the ownership of the Ministry

of Defence. The re-use of such sites can make a helpful contribution to meeting housing and employment needs, and any proposals should be brought forward through the development plan process. A mix of uses may well be appropriate. Any proposal should be assessed, in particular, in terms of its traffic and travel implications. Within the Green Belt special considerations apply, and any development or redevelopment must have regard to paragraph 3.4 and Annex C of PPG2.

Transport Corridors

3.16 The siting of new development near public transport centres or at selected locations along corridors well- served by public transport could make a helpful contribution to providing people with a choice of transport. This approach has the advantage of maximising the use of existing infrastructure, utilising spare capacity, and strengthening the role of public transport.

3.17 The corridor approach may be applicable across the Region, but will be of particular relevance in those areas which have close links, in respect of journey-to-work and other factors, to the metropolitan area. There are several public transport corridors extending through the metropolitan area to free-standing towns beyond the Green Belt. These include rail corridors with existing regular services (Maps 3 and 3A), or with the potential for the improvement or reintroduction of services; road corridors that have the potential to accommodate fast and frequent bus services; and the potential lines of Midland Metro.

3.18 Some corridors are identified in paragraphs 4.2.3, 4.3.1 and 4.4.4. However, the scope for development in **all** corridors should be assessed by the strategic authorities in preparing their structure plans and UDPs, against the following criteria:

-  the presence of sufficient locations within or at the end of corridors for dense employment, retail and entertainment functions as well as housing;
-  the scope for development to be accommodated without undermining the aims of the Green Belts, generating ribbon development, causing urban sprawl, causing unreasonable harm to the character and structure of towns, or sacrificing areas of identified landscape, agricultural or nature conservation importance;
-  the scope for development within the urban fabric, so that greenfield allocations can be minimised;
-  the presence of spare public transport capacity or the realistic potential to develop new or improved facilities and services (including park-and- ride) by both bus and train, and potentially Metro, in order to provide choice of modes;
-  the aim of maintaining accessibility while minimising the volume and distance of travel;
-  the presence of local facilities and existing infrastructure; and
-  potential impacts of additional traffic on the road network.

3.19 Within corridors, priority should be given to accommodating development within the metropolitan area and, next, at free-standing towns beyond the Green Belt, or in settlements excluded from the Green Belt. Only in exceptional circumstances, and if a significant contribution can be made to the aim of reducing the need to travel, should locations within the currently-

defined Green Belt be identified. The corridors should be drawn sufficiently widely to include locations near, although not necessarily adjacent to, public transport routes that offer opportunities for travel by a combination of modes (for example by car and bus or train, perhaps with the use of a park-and-ride facility).

3.20 Authorities should take forward the consideration of corridors through cross-boundary working. As the work develops, they should involve other interests including the transport providers and the House-Builders Federation. The corridor studies should look not only at the scope for locating new development within corridors, but also at the scope for modal change to serve existing development and at any opportunities for the improvement of public transport. Structure plans should indicate which corridors are suitable for development, and should set out the possible scale and type of development and the criteria to be used in locating development in local plans.

3.21 The corridor approach is of particular relevance in and around the metropolitan area, but may also be worthy of consideration in North Staffordshire and possibly around the larger free-standing towns outside the Central Crescent.

Infrastructure

3.22 When determining locations for development, authorities should aim to maximise the use of existing infrastructure. Rail lines in the Region (with the exception of the Birmingham-Coventry line) all have spare capacity and efforts should be made to utilise this.

3.23 The following trunk roads and motorways are running at or near capacity:

M5, M6 and M42 in and close to the metropolitan area

- A5 A38 to M69 and parts in Shropshire
- A38 Birmingham - Derby
- A45 adjacent to Birmingham International Airport and National Exhibition Centre
- A46 Coventry - Alcester
- A456 Birmingham - Kidderminster
- A500 North Staffordshire conurbation

Further improvements may be required to support major developments causing a material increase in traffic on these roads. In such cases, the Highways Agency will seek financial contributions to the cost of improvements in relation to the impact of additional traffic generated by the developments. Local authorities may wish to seek similar contributions towards improvements of local roads.

Planning at the Neighbourhood Level

3.24 The Region has a well-developed pattern of local communities. In planning for new development, the aim should be to reinforce this pattern in ways which contribute to sustainable development and to the vitality of local communities. Authorities and others should consider, within any development:

-  the possibility of a mix of uses, and the need for a wide range of facilities (including, for example, open space and shops) at a local level to minimise car use;
-  the scope for new or improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians and for traffic management measures;
-  the scope for energy-efficient design and layout; and

 the scope for reducing car parking provision at particular locations where there is a choice of means of transport.

4. **SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGIES**

4.1 The locational principles for the Region set out in the previous chapter point to the following pattern of development in the different parts of the Region. The listed sub-regions are indicative only. It will be for the strategic authorities, in preparing their structure plans and UDPs, to determine the pattern of development for each part of their area, having regard to the broad strategies set out below and to other elements of this Guidance.

4.2 **Birmingham/Solihull and the Black Country**

4.2.1 These two sub-regions make up the West Midlands conurbation. The links between the two are significant, and each has an important, and individual, contribution to make to the future of the conurbation. The main elements of the development framework are, however, similar, and are presented below in relation to the conurbation as a whole. More particular references to the two sub-regions are included in paragraphs 4.2.9-4.2.12.

4.2.2 Development should be accommodated, as far as possible, within the existing built-up area. Offices and other employment intensive uses should be located in the centres of Birmingham, Solihull and the larger Black Country towns where they are well-served by public transport. Larger retail developments should be located in town centres or on the edge of those centres unless such a location is not possible (see paragraph 7.24).

Similarly, new leisure or recreation facilities and other public facilities should be located in town centres or locations readily accessible by a range of means of transport.

4.2.3 Insofar as housing and other travel-intensive needs cannot be met in central locations, they should be located where they can be well-served by rail or other public transport and are near other community facilities. Sites near stations on the Cross-City lines from Stourbridge to Shirley/Dorridge and Lichfield to Redditch might offer opportunities for such development, as might sites on good bus routes or on the lines of the proposed Midland Metro. Suitable employment and residential uses should be juxtaposed where feasible, and mixed-use developments will often be appropriate. Larger sites, such as those in Birmingham, the Black Country and those of redundant hospitals, may also provide the opportunity for the large-scale landscaping, urban forestry and other environmental improvements necessary to attract high-quality employment uses to the inner areas.

4.2.4 Exceptional circumstances would need to be demonstrated (through development plans) to justify change to Green Belt boundaries to accommodate peripheral housing development around the metropolitan area. This would be appropriate only if a significant contribution could be made to the aim of reducing the need to travel, in locations where public transport links to the main centres are good, and where there is ready access to existing nearby employment and community facilities.

4.2.5 Wherever possible, employment sites should also be located within the existing urban fabric, and at locations well-served by public transport. Such sites should vary in size and type in order to accommodate growth and development of:

the important manufacturing sector; a range of service industries; and science and research parks, some of them linked to the sub-regions' several universities. The provision of premium employment sites is an important part of the site portfolio, and consideration may need to be given to peripheral sites in order to meet this requirement (paragraphs 7.9-7.17).

4.2.6 Within the urban areas, adequate provision should be made for open space and recreational facilities at locations near where people live. There should be a continuing emphasis on greening and other environmental improvements in order to create the conditions in which people will want to live and invest. Canals in both Birmingham and the Black Country provide an important local recreational asset and can provide a valuable focus for commercial and residential developments. Their potential should be further developed.

4.2.7 The two sub-regions experience considerable congestion on their roads. Some investment in road improvements will continue to be necessary, particularly to improve safety, bypass existing centres and provide access from employment sites to the strategic highway network. The sub-regions also include a number of important rail and bus routes. The two Cross-City lines provide well-used services and the further development of such services, and services on other lines, should be explored with the operators. There is also a number of lines, particularly in the Black Country and in the east of the metropolitan area, where the reintroduction of passenger services could, if found to be viable, make an important contribution to providing transport choice and to regeneration initiatives in the Black Country and East Birmingham. Authorities should discuss with rail operators the potential for the reopening of lines or improvement of services in the context of their corridor

studies. Any extension of services should be looked at in conjunction with traffic restraint and demand management measures, which already form an important part of the transport package for the metropolitan area.

4.2.8 Midland Metro has the potential to bring about significant shifts from private to public transport in parts of the metropolitan area, particularly where heavy rail improvements are not an option and when combined with effective demand management measures. The Government has approved resources for Line 1 (Wolverhampton - Birmingham) which is due to begin service late in 1998.

Birmingham/Solihull

4.2.9 The sub-region has, at its centre, the large and thriving city centre of Birmingham, which functions as the Regional centre. The environment of the city centre has greatly improved in recent years. Continuing high priority should be afforded to enhancing the environment and improving the accessibility of the centre in order to attract retail and business growth and further the tourism, cultural and leisure activity which Birmingham is already attracting.

4.2.10 The sub-region includes the national and international facilities of the International Convention Centre, National Indoor Arena, Birmingham International Airport and NEC. The business and tourism potential of these facilities should be further developed. The area around the NEC and Birmingham International Airport will continue to be an important focus of employment activity. However, it is important that the integrity of the Green Belt is maintained in this location, and that development has regard to the capacity of adjacent roads: for these reasons, further employment growth should be limited to

those activities that require close proximity to the NEC or Birmingham International Airport. The potential of increasing public transport access to these facilities should be further explored.

Black Country

4.2.11 The regeneration of the Black Country is important both for the economy of the Region and to provide a pattern of sustainable development in which people continue to live, work and invest in the area. The area is traditionally one of local centres where many people walk to work, and this pattern should be sustained by the provision of a range of housing and employment sites and the strengthening of local centres. Economic growth in the Black Country is of particular importance in achieving employment-led growth in the north and west of the Region and to combat the decline in the manufacturing base. The Black Country has a shortage of good-quality and readily-available employment sites. It is a particular priority to bring forward premium employment sites to meet the needs of the Black Country (further guidance on premium employment sites is in paragraphs 7.9-7.17). In addition, a range of smaller sites suitable for indigenous expansion and inward investment should be made available through development plans and through the focusing of resources, as necessary, on those derelict sites that can best meet the needs of the area.

4.2.12 The improvement of the environment is important to the regeneration of the Black Country. A number of existing initiatives such as the Groundwork Trust and the Black Country Urban Forestry Unit have already proved most successful, and such initiatives should be further developed. The Black Country has a network of green wedges and open spaces which are of particular importance to

the local community and to the environment as a whole. Continuing provision should be made for open space and recreational activities near where people live.

4.3 Coventry/North-East Warwickshire

4.3.1 This area covers the eastern part of the Region, broadly from Nuneaton and Coventry eastwards. Development opportunities are likely to arise in the sub-region as a consequence of the improved links to the Haven Ports and the Channel Tunnel (including the nearby freight terminals at Hams Hall and Crick). Employment growth should be encouraged to the extent that it is compatible with the character of the area and in those locations, particularly in the north of the sub-region, where it can contribute to environmental improvement. Housing growth in the sub-region should take place in balance with employment growth. In considering locations for growth, authorities should have regard to capacity issues on the A5 and A46 and should concentrate development on existing larger settlements rather than at free-standing locations adjacent to motorways and trunk roads. Rugby is likely to have an important role in this part of the sub-region, and has potential for growth as a balanced community. Development in Nuneaton, Bedworth and Coventry should be considered in association with the scope for reintroducing through services on the Nuneaton-Leamington rail line.

4.3.2 Many of the development principles set out in relation to the West Midlands conurbation (paragraphs 4.2.1-4.2.8) are of relevance also to Coventry, and should be taken into account in development planning. It is important that Coventry remains a focal point for community life and housing in order to reduce commuting from South Warwickshire.

4.3.3 The sub-region has become a focus for major distribution activities, and authorities should allocate adequate land for this purpose (further guidance is provided in paragraphs 7.26-7.27).

4.3.4 The A5, which forms the regional boundary with the East Midlands between Crick (Northamptonshire) and Atherstone (Warwickshire), has attracted considerable interest from the distribution industry because of its strategic location. Parts of the road are, however, operating close to capacity and authorities, in preparing structure and local plans, should concentrate any new development along the A5 corridor at appropriate sites and adjacent to urban areas, having regard to existing and planned capacity on the road network, effects on the environment and the principles of sustainable development. Local authorities in both Regions have established joint working arrangements on this issue, and close consultation should continue. Such joint working should address transport issues (both public and private) and the pattern of development in the area.

4.4 **Central Crescent**

4.4.1 The metropolitan area is surrounded by a ring of towns which are important centres in their own right, but which also (with their surrounding areas) have close economic, social and commuting links with that area. This zone of influence extends to, and beyond, Warwick/Leamington, Stratford, Worcester, Kidderminster/Stourport, Bridgnorth, Telford, Stafford, Lichfield and Tamworth, and into North-West Warwickshire. It includes towns such as Redditch, Cannock and Droitwich within that area. Research for the Government Office for the West Midlands⁵ provides further guidance on the extent of this zone of influence.

4.4.2 Settlements within the Central Crescent have seen rapid growth in recent years. The area will continue to experience locally-generated (indigenous) growth. In addition, despite urban regeneration policies, there will be a continuing, though reduced, need for this area to accommodate migrant households from the metropolitan area. Much of the growth in households in the metropolitan area will be of small households, and the provision for migrant households in the Central Crescent should reflect the needs arising from this type of household. Many members of these households will continue to work in the metropolitan area, and should thus be accommodated within the Central Crescent in order to keep commuting distances at a minimum. A significant proportion of the indigenous households will also require ready access to the metropolitan area for work and other purposes, and provision for indigenous growth should therefore also largely be met in, rather than beyond, the Central Crescent. Strategic authorities should decide where it is reasonable to make housing provision, having regard to the corridor studies (paragraph 3.20 above), the findings of the Government Office study into travel patterns and the aim of minimising travel distances.

4.4.3 Some employment provision should also be made in the Central Crescent. This should not be at a level, or of a type, which will undermine the regeneration activities of the metropolitan area, which will continue to be the centre of manufacturing (and other) activity. However, some employment land provision in the larger settlements in the Central Crescent can, if carefully matched to the employment needs of the area, contribute to a better balance between housing and employment, and therefore a reduction in commuting.

4.4.4 The area is crossed by several rail corridors which offer the potential to

accommodate housing within public transport corridors (Maps 3 and 3A). The authorities should adopt the approach set out in paragraphs 3.16-3.21 to determine which corridors could accommodate development. They should follow the principles set out in paragraph 3.19 in order to minimise impact on the Green Belt. All corridors should be examined in terms of the scope for development and for modal change. In considering corridors to the north and west of the metropolitan area, regard should be had to the concept of encouraging employment-led growth in the north and west. The corridors in this sector include the Birmingham-Tamworth-Burton line, the Cross-City lines between Birmingham and Lichfield and Birmingham and Stourbridge (and beyond), the Walsall-Hednesford line (and its possible extension to Rugeley) and the lines between Wolverhampton and Telford and Stafford (and beyond). To the south and east of the metropolitan area, corridors include those on the rail lines between Birmingham and Leamington, Stratford-upon-Avon, Redditch, and Worcester; and the line between Coventry and Leamington. There may be a need for some restraint in such corridors in order to maintain the character of the areas through which they pass, but the opportunity for development should still be considered, together with the potential for modal change.

4.4.5 Much of the Central Crescent is within the West Midlands Green Belt. The review of Green Belt boundaries to accommodate development should take place only exceptionally, and if a significant contribution can be made to the aim of reducing the need to travel. The terms of any such review should be set in structure plans and should take place in accordance with paragraph 11.3. In considering the scope for development of free-standing towns on the outer edge of the Green Belt, authorities should look carefully at the

detailed Green Belt boundaries on the sides of those settlements facing the metropolitan area in order to avoid unbalanced, and therefore possibly unsustainable, growth.

4.4.6 The M40 corridor should continue to be seen as one of movement rather than growth. Employment growth should be confined to the main settlements of Warwick, Leamington and Stratford, where some provision may need to be made for the high- technology, service and office industries that are likely to be attracted as a result of the improved road communications. Such growth should not be at a level that will result in a large increase in demand for housing in this area. Housing development should be focused on existing towns.

4.4.7 The former New Town of Telford will continue to have an important role as a regional growth centre, with the spin-off effects of recent major investments particularly important. In addition, the complementary roles of Telford and the Black Country (in relation, for example, to the portfolio of employment land) should be recognised and promoted in order to encourage employment-led growth in the north and west. Although Telford will have a role to play in accommodating migrant households from the metropolitan area, the aim should be to keep housing and employment growth in balance, with housing largely being employment-led. Telford is well placed to achieve the role of a balanced community, and this should not be put at risk by any over-provision of housing to meet the needs of the metropolitan area.

4.4.8 The potential for any further growth of the other former New and Expanded Towns in the Region (Redditch, Tamworth and Droitwich) should be examined in the light of the significant past investment in infrastructure.

4.4.9 The Central Crescent is the location of several new major infrastructure projects, including the proposed Birmingham Northern Relief Road and Western Orbital Route. These routes run entirely through the Green Belt and development should take place only in very special circumstances. As with the M40, these should be corridors of movement rather than growth.

4.5 **North Staffordshire**

4.5.1 This area has been dependent on traditional manufacturing and extractive industries, and there is a need for diversification in order to achieve economic growth. A range of attractive employment sites should be provided. Growth opportunities may arise particularly along the A500 and A50 corridors. In order to minimise the impact on the road network, any such growth should seek to balance housing and employment growth and to maximise the use of public transport. Any growth should, however, also have regard to the need for highway improvements arising from the development. Opportunities in connection with the sub-region's universities should be maximised.

4.5.2 Development should take place as far as possible within the urban fabric, and opportunities should be taken to recycle derelict and vacant land, particularly on major sites such as Sideway/Trentham. Peripheral employment sites should only be brought forward if it can be demonstrated that existing urban sites are not readily available and are inadequate in size and type (and see paragraph 7.18). There is significant scope for environmental enhancement, which can be particularly helpful in attracting development to large urban sites.

4.5.3 An adequate level and range of housing should be provided in the North

Staffordshire conurbation, both to meet local needs and to support economic growth. However, there is considerable scope for housing within the urban fabric, and major greenfield development outside the urban areas of Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme is unlikely to be required during the period of this Guidance.

4.5.4 In determining locations for both housing and employment, regard should be had to the existence of public transport opportunities, both by road and rail. The transport corridor approach set out in paragraphs 3.16-3.21 may be appropriate in North Staffordshire, and should be addressed by the strategic authority alongside the further development of the transport package.

4.6 **Eastern Staffordshire** (A38 Corridor)

4.6.1 Extensive employment land allocations have been made along the A38 corridor in anticipation of the effect of the Toyota plant at Burnaston. Considerable scope remains in the existing allocations and this, together with infrastructure constraints on the A38, indicate that no further employment land allocations should be made in the short-term. Any development in the medium/long-term must be viewed in the context of the impact of any further development of Toyota, the housing and employment needs of the districts, the capacity of the A38 and any alternative public transport capacity.

4.7 **Southern Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire**

4.7.1 This area, lying to the south of Leamington, Stratford and Worcester, is largely covered by the Cotswolds AONB and other areas of attractive landscape or high-quality agricultural land. The eastern part of the area, in particular, is poorly-

served by public transport. Housing growth in this mainly rural area should largely be confined to that for local needs in order to help limit any increase in car-based commuting. Growth in the Cheltenham-Gloucester area and improvements to the A435 and A46 may increase housing demands in the west of the area. Such demands should be resisted, although there may be scope for some limited development in existing settlements in conjunction with public transport opportunities afforded by the Worcester-Oxford line.

4.7.2 Employment growth in this sub-region can make a useful contribution to widening local job opportunities. Such growth should generally be small in scale so that it is in keeping with its largely rural surroundings and does not lead to an increase in demand for housing.

4.8 **Rural North and West**

4.8.1 In those parts of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire and Staffordshire outside the Central Crescent there are a number of towns (mainly market towns) surrounded by extensive rural areas. Most growth should be concentrated in the existing towns, where the aim should be to achieve communities with population and employment opportunities broadly in balance.

4.8.2 Employment land allocations in the market towns should largely reflect the employment needs of the local area (see paragraph 6.4).

4.8.3 These towns are generally too distant from the metropolitan area to be suitable locations for housing those who require to commute to it. People should, however, be provided with a choice of transport modes to employment and service centres in the market towns. Development outside the market towns should be

concentrated in corridors that are served, or have the potential to be served, by bus public transport (for example between Worcester and Malvern, Ledbury and Bromyard). Such lines also provide tourism and recreational benefits. There may also be opportunities to develop the potential of the local rail network by locating houses in settlements close to stations on, for example, the lines radiating from Hereford, Worcester and Shrewsbury, and links into adjoining regions (see Map 3).

4.8.4 In the rural parts of this sub-region, a reduction in agricultural and other land-based employment is associated with a lack of affordable housing, increasing isolation and poor infrastructure. The emphasis in these areas should be on the diversification of employment opportunities (see paragraphs 6.3-6.7). The sub-region has considerable potential for tourism development by virtue of its attractive countryside and historic towns, and there is also scope for small-scale business development.

4.8.5 Some parts of this area have seen rapid housing growth in recent years in response to market demand, with structure plan allocations being exceeded. Appropriate development in existing communities can help to sustain local services and employment. However, in order to limit the number and length of journeys to work and other services, housing provision in these areas should very largely be limited to that to meet needs arising in the area and linked to local employment opportunities (see paragraph 6.10).

4.8.6 Infrastructure links to and within this sub-region are often poor. Some road improvements may be required and these are under consideration in the Roads Review and in the context of bids for local transport resources. The improvement and

co-ordination of public transport is also important to rural communities (see paragraph 6.12).

4.8.7 The Government accepts the need for co-ordinated action on many fronts in order to achieve a reversal of the cycle of decline. In partnership with a number of different agencies it is itself tackling these issues through its Rural Development Programme, which operates in Rural Development Areas in the Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Marches and Staffordshire Moorlands. The European Commission has given Objective 5b status to The Marches and the Midlands Uplands (Map 4). In such areas partnership between a wide range of rural interests is important, as is the need for co-ordination of structure plans, the Rural Development Programme, European Programmes, Training and Enterprise Council strategies and rural housing programmes. The Government's Rural Challenge will provide targeted funding in the Rural Development Areas for such co-ordinated initiatives, as for example in the first approved scheme at Bishops Castle.

4.9 **Inter-regional Issues**

4.9.1 The Region has significant links with several adjacent regions. Such links should be recognised in the preparation of structure plans so that policy is complementary at a sub-regional level across regional boundaries, and so that full regard can be had to the effect of developments in adjacent regions. There are existing informal working arrangements between the East Midlands and West Midlands Fora and similar arrangements should be put in place with other adjacent regions, especially the South-East and North-West where there are particular commonalities of interest.

4.9.2 A number of rail lines cross regional boundaries. Cross-boundary working should address the contribution such links could make to increasing transport choice, reducing the need to travel and contributing to tourism and recreation objectives.

4.9.3 In the west, there is a commonality of issues across the boundary with Wales, and the issues affecting Wales are very similar to those affecting the Marches. To the north-west, the North Staffordshire conurbation has close links with Cheshire. Cross-boundary working should address the implications of any proposed changes to Green Belt boundaries, and of the emerging employment land strategies.

4.9.4 In the east of the Region there are common concerns affecting, particularly, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. Several major roads cross the boundary from the A50 in the north to the M45 in the south. Developments such as those at Toyota and along the A5 impact across regional boundaries, as do environmental initiatives such as the National Forest. Established joint working arrangements should continue, particularly in respect of the A5 corridor (see paragraph 4.3.4).

4.9.5 Warwickshire abuts the South-East Region and the completion of the M40 has established an important link between the two regions. The Regional Guidance for the South-East indicates that development pressures emerging there will be accommodated in that Region.

4.9.6 The South-West Region has links with the West Midlands along the M5 and M50, the railway to Bristol, and through the Cotswolds AONB. Some development pressures may arise along the motorways, but the motorway corridors should be seen as those of movement rather than growth, with development concentrated in existing

larger settlements. It is important that there should be a consistent approach to tourism issues in the Cotswolds AONB.

5. URBAN REGENERATION

5.1 Revitalising the regional economy and regenerating the inner city areas are key elements of a sustainable development strategy for the West Midlands. The scale of the problems in the inner city areas of the metropolitan area are greater than elsewhere in the Region, but the need for action is replicated in some estates on the edge of the metropolitan area, in the North Staffordshire conurbation, and in towns (for example Telford and Cannock) throughout the Region.

5.2 Urban regeneration is important as a counter-magnet to the long-established process of decentralisation. Urban regeneration contributes to the pursuit of sustainable development through the efficient use of land and other resources, by minimising the requirement for greenfield sites, by tackling the legacy of dereliction and decay and by contributing to a reduction in travel distances. It is also important in arresting the process of environmental, social and economic decline, and thereby in improving the quality of life of those in urban areas. Urban regeneration is not only about physical development and land-use, but they are important to most regeneration initiatives.

5.3 The achievement of urban regeneration will require different emphases in order to respond to particular local issues, but the primary aims should include:

 working with partners in the Region to create **opportunities for inward investment**. Derelict land and vacant property should be reclaimed

and recycled to secure its return to positive use, and to create an environment attractive to inward investment;



improving **environmental quality** through "greening" initiatives, through maximising the potential of rivers and canals, and through the protection of existing and the creation of new environmental assets. Such improvements will provide the climate for inward investment and accessible open spaces for local people;



ensuring a **range of housing**, of a size, type and affordability that meets the needs of all sections of the community;



improving the **quality of the existing housing stock**, through renovation wherever practicable and demolition where it is beyond repair;



promoting housing development within urban areas by the **re-use of existing land and buildings**, whilst ensuring that this does not compromise the quality of the living environment;



ensuring that the **quality of urban design** enhances the attractiveness of urban areas for both residents and business;



maximising opportunities for **mixed-use development**, and encouraging the provision of a **wide range of facilities** at the neighbourhood level;



maintaining the **vitality and viability of town centres** in order to provide a focus for retail activity,

jobs and community involvement. The strengthening of the role of local shopping centres is also important in this context;

 ensuring inner city residents are well-equipped, by virtue of **access to education and training**, to compete in the job-market;

 **reducing congestion in urban areas** by traffic management measures, public transport enhancement and by making better use of existing car-parking spaces, so that short-term parking is available for town centre visitors (paragraph 10.13);

 providing a **range of employment sites** to meet the needs of local firms and of inward investors;

 **addressing the problems of social disadvantage** that are experienced by residents of the inner city and other deprived areas, the ethnic minority communities being particularly vulnerable to high levels of unemployment and other factors of multiple deprivation;

 **maintaining and improving accessibility** through the kinds of measures outlined in sections 4 and 6 of PPG13, including provision for cycling and walking access to local facilities; and

 encouraging **sport, cultural and recreation attractions** which add to the vitality of urban areas, with particular emphasis on strengthening the role and provision of local leisure facilities. The role of business and recreational tourism should also be recognised.

5.4 It is important that a range of housing is available in urban areas so that local needs can be met and so that balanced urban communities can thrive. However, much of the housing need in the metropolitan area and other urban areas will arise from smaller households, including single people and the elderly. Housing provision should therefore have regard to the needs of such households for proximity to local facilities, public transport, adequate open space, and a safe and attractive environment; higher-density residential developments should be concentrated near public transport centres, or alongside corridors well-served by public transport (or with the potential to be so served) and close to local facilities. Housing provision in or near town centres should be encouraged.

5.5 The objectives of urban regeneration require long-term, comprehensive and imaginative solutions so that urban areas become places where people wish to live, work, visit and invest. Central and local government and the private and voluntary sectors must combine their programmes, responsibilities, skills and resources to respond to local circumstances in order to achieve these urban regeneration objectives and enable local enterprise to flourish.

5.6 The Government believes it is important to mobilise a partnership-based approach to local regeneration. The Government Office for the West Midlands is responsible for the management of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) in the Region, which brought together 20 spending programmes from different Departments into a single flexible budget and introduced the Challenge Fund. The emerging Challenge Fund bids reflect the Government's aim of encouraging new partnerships to address local needs. They cover areas in the Region not formerly part of the urban priority areas. The fourth

round of winning Challenge Fund schemes commences in 1989/1999. Over £409M of Challenge Fund grant will be distributed in the region overall between the years 1995/6 and 2004/5. The SRB Challenge Fund will be replaced by a new regeneration programme administered by the Regional Development Agency which the Government proposes to establish in April 1999.

5.7 There are a number of initiatives within the SRB which are targeted at particular areas within inner cities. These include the Black Country and Birmingham Heartlands Development Corporations; City Challenge (in Wolverhampton, Newtown, Walsall and Tipton); Newtown/ Ladywood Task Force; and Castle Vale Housing Action Trust.

5.8 The European Structural Funds will provide £600M during the period 1994-1999 in the Objective 2 area (see Map 4), which is concentrated on the main urban areas in the Region.

6. RURAL REGENERATION

6.1 The Region has large rural areas extending from the fringes of the conurbations to the remote areas of the Marches and Staffordshire Moorlands (more detailed Guidance in relation to these areas is provided in paragraphs 4.8.1-4.8.7). Agriculture is an important employer in much of the Region, and there is further employment in agriculture-related industries, forestry, minerals, tourism and leisure, and in a range of small businesses. Employment opportunities are, however, decreasing, particularly as a result of agricultural change. Regeneration is therefore important to provide a sound economic base, to arrest the process of social and economic decline, and to ensure rural areas remain locations where people

both live and work. As in the urban areas, regeneration cannot be tackled only by land-use measures: however, such measures are an important part of any rural regeneration strategy. Support from the European Structural Funds for Rural Regeneration in the Marches area of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire totals some £30M for the years 1994-1999.

6.2 The problems of rural areas should be tackled in a comprehensive way. Authorities should work with partners to promote activity and development in rural areas which meet legitimate economic and social objectives while maintaining and enhancing the qualities which attract people to the countryside. The particular aims should be:

 maintaining and enhancing a **healthy rural economy** that will contribute to the economic prosperity of the Region and create wider and more varied employment opportunities for local people;

 **integrating the development which is necessary to sustain the rural economy with the protection of the countryside** for its landscape, wildlife, agricultural, forestry, recreational and natural resource value;

 **strengthening the role of villages and market towns**, whilst ensuring the scale and type of development is consistent with local needs and the character of the settlement;

 **restricting new development in the open countryside** away from established settlements, and maximising the opportunities presented by land which is derelict or unused and is not of high

agricultural potential and by re-use of rural buildings;

-  ensuring that new development maintains or enhances the **quality of the rural environment**;
-  encouraging the provision of an **effective local infrastructure and services** so that rural communities can flourish;
-  ensuring an **adequate provision of affordable housing** to meet local needs;
-  ensuring local people are **well-equipped to compete in the job-market** and **encouraging job opportunities** that reflect local needs;
-  ensuring **patterns of development are consistent with the objective of reducing the need to travel** and exploring, with service providers and other agencies, the potential for **increasing use of public transport**; and
-  encouraging **opportunities for leisure, recreation, tourism and access to the countryside**.

6.3 Authorities should provide for the development and diversification of employment opportunities in rural areas, with the aim of moving towards a better balance between housing and employment. Such development should reflect the local economic needs of the area, should be in scale with its location and surroundings, and should reflect the guidance on reducing the need to travel in PPG13 (especially paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6). Authorities should, with partners, assess the specific needs and opportunities for rural diversification in different parts of their

areas, having regard to the economic differences between accessible and remote rural areas. Development plan policies should then reflect the type of development needed and likely to arise in each area, and the particular characteristics of the local environment.

6.4 Employment land allocations in the market towns should reflect the need to allow local businesses to set up and expand. The provision of some larger sites which may prove attractive to inward investment may be appropriate. In order to contribute to the objective of reducing the need to travel, such sites should be of a scale and type appropriate to local employment needs and to likely job opportunities, and readily accessible from local housing. Wherever possible, sites within settlements should be used in preference to greenfield sites.

6.5 Outside the market towns, developments which meet identified local economic development needs in an environmentally responsible way should be favoured. Authorities should, through development plans, facilitate employment growth by allowing for small-scale employment enterprises in smaller settlements, and even in the open countryside if this can largely be achieved by the appropriate conversion of existing buildings. Authorities should encourage the conversion of rural buildings for employment uses, as long as such re-use respects the character of the building and the surrounding area. Authorities should also support limited new building for employment purposes in appropriate locations, in accordance with identified local needs, with paragraph 2.10 of PPG7 and with the objective of reducing the need to travel.

6.6 The Region has a high proportion of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3A). This is distributed

throughout the Region, with a particular concentration in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. It is an important resource for the future and should not normally be built on or otherwise irreversibly developed.

6.7 In rural areas, support for the agricultural sector is important both because of the jobs it supports and because sensitive agricultural practices can help in maintaining environmental quality. Changes in agricultural support policies are bringing farmers closer to the market place and offering greater encouragement to environmentally-sustainable forms of agriculture. Local authorities can help agricultural businesses adapt to such changes by adopting a positive approach to agricultural development and farm diversification proposals. Because of changes in agricultural policies, some land is now being taken out of production. Local authorities should encourage landowners to look at a range of options for the economic use of their land. These could include tourism, leisure and recreation enterprises, expanded woodland planting (as in the National Forest and Community Forests - see paragraphs 12.6-12.8) and small scale business activity. Any such diversification proposal should be appropriate in scale and character to its surroundings.

6.8 The diversification of agricultural enterprises is as important in the Green Belt as in the countryside generally, and can help to secure the continuing stewardship of land and the objectives of the Green Belt. The re-use of buildings, with suitable safeguards (PPG2 paragraph 3.8), should therefore generally be encouraged. However, the use of such converted buildings should be clearly related to the economic and employment needs of the area and to the type and scale of activity that would be appropriate to the area, and authorities should use their development plans to introduce appropriate policies.

6.9 Authorities, working with partners, should improve the social and community infrastructure and services in rural areas so that communities can flourish and the quality of life is improved. This should be done through:

-  the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs;
-  supporting the vitality and viability of market towns and other local centres; and
-  improving public transport services.

6.10 There is some evidence that housing completions and allocations in local plans, particularly in the more rural areas, are exceeding structure plan allocations by a considerable level. In order to support existing communities, appropriate housing development which can help sustain local services and employment should be promoted. However, over-provision can lead to increases in migration from the metropolitan area and elsewhere, and a consequent imbalance in houses and jobs. It can also result in an unnecessary use of greenfield sites, pressure on small-scale infrastructure, and a pattern of development which is not sustainable. Housing numbers in the rural areas should be in balance with employment growth and in the smaller settlements, where job prospects are limited, consideration should be given to limiting housing to local needs only by the use of the rural "exceptions" policy (Annex A of PPG3) which is targeted at particular local needs. Strong arguments will be needed to support local plan housing figures which deviate from approved structure plan figures: in particular any over-provision will need to be justified by evidence of need.

6.11 The location of housing in rural areas should reflect paragraph 3.14. The amount and type of housing should be in

keeping with the character and needs of the area. It should maintain or enhance the quality of the rural environment and should contribute to the sustainability of distinct rural communities.

6.12 Transport is important in sustaining rural communities and should be addressed within development plans. Authorities should recognise the importance of bus and other local services, and should consider the development of community transport measures and their integration into co-ordinated public transport networks: the Rural Development Commission's Rural Transport Development Fund provides grants for such schemes. Rail services can play a valuable role in serving rural communities, providing commuter services into urban centres, providing freight transport and supporting recreation and tourism. The improvements to services on the Chiltern Line into Marylebone are a useful recent example. Authorities should consider, with Railtrack and the appropriate service operators, whether there is potential to improve services (or possibly re-open lines) elsewhere.

7. **ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

7.1 The economy of the Region has long been dominated by manufacturing industry. The proportion of the workforce directly involved in manufacturing has fallen to 27%, but it remains the main driving force of the economy. Restructuring has benefited certain traditional manufacturing specialisms such as motor vehicles, ceramics and brewing, and the strength of these should be consolidated. It is vital to the well-being of the Region that existing manufacturing continues to improve its international competitiveness. However, in order to

further develop as an advanced manufacturing region which can compete more effectively in European and world markets, the Region must respond to new technologies and diversify into those areas of manufacturing that demonstrate growth potential, such as plastics, the manufacture of high added-value automotive components, electronics and software engineering. There are important economic linkages and interdependencies between different parts of the Region and between manufacturing and services, and the potential of such linkages should be realised.

7.2 It is important that the employment base is widened, particularly in those areas that depend upon particular industries (including agriculture). The service sector is growing rapidly. Authorities should also consider how they can encourage further growth of those industries based around, for example, Birmingham's international facilities, and also those business services and financial institutions which support manufacturing industries. There is potential for growth based on the Region's many higher education establishments. Authorities should consider means of developing such potential, and the establishments themselves should plan to the needs of their particular localities. In rural areas, authorities should support diversification (see Chapter 6).

7.3 Authorities throughout the Region, in conjunction with the Training and Enterprise Councils and other partners, should carefully consider the characteristics and growth potential of the employment and skills base in their area, the impact and potential of new technologies, the types of employment they wish to encourage and the opportunities for local enterprise to develop in order to diversify the local economy. They will then be in a position to implement policies that encourage further

inward investment (including spin-off investment from recent investors), the expansion of indigenous firms and the setting up of new small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It is important for the development plans and economic strategies of local authorities and Training and Enterprise Councils to be co-ordinated and to take advantage of, and be consistent with, national and European programmes.

7.4 Land-use planning is only part of an overall strategy for improving the competitiveness of an area, with other factors such as the provision of new and improved training, education, skills development and innovation being essential to such a strategy to enable people to respond to the needs of employment and develop diversity in the Region. Many agencies are involved in such provision and locally-based links with the private sector, for example through initiatives such as Business Links, the Private Finance Initiative, the Training and Enterprise Councils and the proposed Regional Development Agency, are particularly important to maximise the use of local resources. Land-use planning can, however, ensure that suitable conditions exist to facilitate economic growth.

7.5 It is important that the Region has a supply of land that is readily capable of development, well-served by infrastructure, and in locations that maximise the opportunities for access by means of transport other than the car. The strategic authorities should examine the demand for, and take-up and availability of, sites in each area. Within the context of the overall strategy set out in Chapter 3, a portfolio of sites should be agreed within each shire area, to provide a range of employment sites to reflect the differing development needs of businesses and to give a choice in terms of size and quality. Some choice of location is also important, but all locations

should minimise reliance on the car for access and should provide for the juxtaposition of employment and residential uses. The metropolitan authorities should adopt the same approach for UDPs, but working with neighbouring authorities as appropriate to reflect the inter-relationship that exists for employment land provision. The release of some new land may be necessary as part of these portfolios, but should not be set at a level that would prejudice urban regeneration policies or lead to an imbalance in population and jobs. The potential contribution of previously developed sites in urban and rural areas should be fully assessed, and greenfield sites should be considered only if there are insufficient alternatives within the urban fabric. Any such sites should be adjacent to settlements.

7.6 The strategic authorities should develop the portfolios as part of the structure plan process. In doing so, they should have regard to the views of the business community and others as appropriate. They should also have regard to the study into industrial land and urban regeneration carried out by the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne⁶ on behalf of the Forum. Sites in the portfolios should come forward through development plans - in most cases, local plans will be the appropriate avenue.

7.7 Paragraphs 9-12 of PPG4 (Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms) provide detailed guidance on the locational factors which should be taken into account in preparing development plans. PPG13 (paragraphs 3.4-3.6) provides more detailed guidance on the relationship between the location of development and the objective of reducing the need to travel. Authorities should, in particular, focus activities attracting large numbers of trips (such as offices) in areas close to major public transport facilities and

in locations easily reached from local housing; conversely, they should allocate sites unlikely to be served by public transport solely for uses which are not travel - or employment - intensive. In identifying sites for uses that have a significant requirement for freight transport, consideration should be given to the opportunities for the use of rail or water, although access to the strategic highway network is likely to continue to be important.

7.8 Paragraph 3.23 of PPG6 (Town Centres and Retail Development) provides guidance on safeguarding industrial land from other forms of development, particularly retail. Authorities should have regard to this and paragraphs 3-4 of PPG4 when allocating land for industrial use in development plans. They should not, however, over-allocate employment land when there is little realistic prospect of it being developed; nor should they continue such allocations when they may be unrealistic or in locations where an alternative use might provide a more sustainable pattern of development. Existing sites earmarked for employment, particularly for travel-intensive uses such as offices, should be reviewed, and may need to be reallocated for uses which are not employment- or travel-intensive if they are not readily accessible by public transport.

Premium Employment Sites

7.9 The availability of high-quality sites is an important part of any portfolio, both to encourage inward investment and to allow for the expansion of existing firms with particular requirements. There remains a notable absence of readily-available high-quality employment sites in the metropolitan area and the North Staffordshire conurbation. There is therefore a continuing need to provide a limited amount of high-quality, peripheral

employment land. Such provision must be in the context of the overall sustainable development framework of this Guidance. It should be taken forward by joint working between the strategic authorities in each sector.

7.10 In the Birmingham/Solihull sector, up to a maximum of 100 hectares (gross*) of land may be needed in addition to Birmingham Business Park. The Secretary of State has given planning permission for part of a site at Blythe Valley Park and has accepted the principle of development of the full application site provided that satisfactory access arrangements can be made. Provision for a 40 ha site has now been made in the adopted Solihull UDP. A decision was taken not to include the Blythe Valley extension in the adopted UDP. A further site at Bassetts Pole is included in the adopted Birmingham UDP. The identification of this should have regard to the criteria in paragraph 7.14, especially in relation to proximity to the rail corridor and to the urban edge.

** Gross is defined as the "gross developable area" - ie total site size, including the provision for landscaping, less any area physically incapable of development.*

7.11 Up to a maximum of 120 hectares (gross) of land may be required to meet the needs of the Black Country. Sites at Greenfield Lane and Hilton totalling 25 ha have been granted planning permission. The area of search comprises Southern Staffordshire as well as the Black Country Districts, and several sites are being taken forward in development plans. Priority should be given to sites that allow advantage to be taken of the Development

Area status of the Wolverhampton Travel-to-Work Area.

7.12 To serve Coventry's needs, 40 hectares of land have been granted planning permission at Ansty.

7.13 These figures, and the provision for North Staffordshire (paragraph 7.18), reflect the overall emphasis in this Guidance on encouraging development in the north and west of the Region. Future reviews of Guidance will be able to re-examine the position in the light of evidence on identifying sites and their take-up.

7.14 When considering the need for any additional or alternative sites within the overall allocations set out above, the strategic authorities should ensure that any site meets the following criteria:

 sites must be readily accessible from the urban area by public transport, particularly rail, but also bus. Consideration should be given to limiting parking provision to discourage reliance on the car;

 a workforce should be available locally and measures should be in place, if necessary, to retrain the indigenous workforce;

 sites should be in or adjacent to the built-up areas of the metropolitan area in locations that are easily reached from local housing and that minimise the need to travel. Only exceptionally should sites separated from the urban edge be considered. Sites not in the Green Belt should be considered first. However, in the particular circumstances of the West Midlands, with its tight Green Belt boundaries and shortage of suitable sites within the built-up area, some sites may, exceptionally, need to be

in the Green Belt. The potential of major previously developed sites should be fully considered;

 although sites should be accessible by public transport, the capacity of the motorway and trunk road system to deal with potential extra traffic will need to be assessed;

 sites should be in attractive settings or offer the opportunity for environmental improvement, and should be capable of being developed to a very high standard; and

 sites of less than 15 hectares are unlikely to meet these requirements, and sites of 40 hectares or more may be best suited to the nature of the demand.

7.15 It is important that such developments do not undermine the attractiveness of town centres, and developments on identified sites should be restricted to those that cannot find the necessary site conditions in terms of size and quality within the metropolitan area. Sites should be identified and brought forward through local plans. The sites should only be used for high-quality development within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. However, evidence shows that industrial land in the Black Country has a pattern of small sites in fragmented ownership, which causes particularly difficult problems in bringing forward larger sites suitable for manufacturing activity. Therefore, to ensure that this policy is in line with the overall strategy and reflects the Development Area status of the Wolverhampton Travel-to-Work Area, high-quality development within Class B2 will be acceptable in the Black Country sector as long as the development meets the

criteria in paragraph 7.14. Retail and pure warehousing activities should not be permitted. All developments should be of a very high standard, with a particular emphasis on the quality of buildings and extensive landscaping.

7.16 Authorities should justify any limitations on the freedoms provided by the Use Classes Order (paragraphs 7 and 30 of PPG4). Office uses, in particular, could have a detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of town centres and on travel patterns. It may therefore be appropriate to exclude office development. Any exclusion should be justified with regard to the following factors:

-  the likely effect on future private investment in town centres;
-  the extent to which such development would put at risk the strategy for the town centre set out in the local plan;
-  the accessibility of such sites to the workforce; and
-  the impact of such development on travel patterns.

7.17 In each of the Birmingham/ Solihull and Black Country sectors the release of such sites should be phased to ensure that development does not commence until a need is demonstrated. The sites with planning permission should prove adequate for current requirements. Planning permission for additional sites should not therefore be given unless the joint monitoring indicates that there is a particular shortfall which needs to be addressed. Land should be protected by strong development control policies until the need for its release is demonstrated.

7.18 There is considerable evidence that there is a similar shortage of high-quality sites within the North Staffordshire conurbation. It is important that land is available to encourage inward investment and there should always be two suitable large sites available, giving a choice of locations in different parts of the conurbation. There are a number of large sites within the conurbation, such as Sideway/Trentham and those along the A500 and A50 corridor, which offer opportunities for development. Priority should be given to bringing those forward, having regard to the capacity of the road system. However, if it can be shown that the availability and quality of such sites does not match the needs of the area then provision may need to be made, exceptionally, on the outer edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme or Stoke-on-Trent. The strategic authorities should determine the nature of demand and the take-up of existing sites, and should set this against site availability to establish the balance in employment land provision to be made between inner and outer areas and the level of peripheral provision to be made. In doing so, they should have regard to any cross-boundary implications (paragraph 4.9.3). Sites should then be identified through the local plan process, using the criteria in paragraph 7.14. Uses should generally be restricted to high-quality development within Class B1 of the Use Classes Order although, if a need can be demonstrated, high-quality B2 uses will be acceptable.

Major Investment Sites

7.19 Although occupation by a single large company cannot be ruled out, the premium employment sites are designed primarily for multiple occupation by several smaller companies. In addition, the Region as a whole should, if possible, be ready to provide up to two large sites for new

industrial and commercial investment, each by a single large multi-national organisation to the major benefit of the regional economy. Each of these would require a minimum size of 50 hectares, but in other respects would be expected to meet the criteria for premium employment sites in paragraph 7.14. However, sites will not necessarily need to be adjacent to the metropolitan area, though they should be in or adjacent to existing larger settlements. The Forum has carried out a joint study to identify suitable general locations for these sites. Sites should come forward in development plans, structure plans in the first instance.

Town Centres and Retailing

7.20 Throughout the Region, town centres* contribute to economic and social life and to urban regeneration. They should remain the main foci for retail and office development and community activity. They contain high levels of investment in infrastructure, historic buildings, public facilities, shops and jobs, which encourage the most efficient use of transport. Development plans should therefore aim to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres, including the many market towns which provide an important service to their surrounding rural areas. Authorities should encourage diversification of uses in town centres by promoting mixed-use development and by encouraging the conversion of vacant property (including property over shops) to alternative uses. They should seek to improve the quality of town centres and the range of facilities they offer and they should also consider, with partners, the opportunities for town centre management. This should include consideration of traffic and parking issues (see paragraphs 10.12-10.16).

* *The term "town centre" covers city, town and traditional suburban centres which provide a broad range of facilities and services.*

7.21 Smaller towns and district centres, in particular, play an important part in providing local services, particularly for those without access to a car. Development plans should identify those centres of particular local importance and set out the policy approach to be adopted in order to support the function of such centres.

7.22 Retailing is a key element in maintaining the vitality and viability of town centres, and local authorities should develop policies aimed at facilitating continued investment in the retail sector within centres. In particular, they should seek to extend the choice of shopping in town centres, having regard to the advice in PPG6.

7.23 There is a complex retailing pattern in the metropolitan area, with Birmingham as the regional centre and other important centres in the Black Country towns, Solihull and Coventry. The Merry Hill out-of-town shopping centre, which is of a regional scale, is located within the Black Country and has a noticeable impact on many of the nearby centres. In the rest of the Region, all the larger settlements have important retailing centres, with retail parks around most of the biggest towns.

7.24 The emphasis in PPG6 that town centres will be the preferred locations for new retail development is therefore appropriate throughout the Region. However, the scope for further retailing within some existing centres is limited, and in these cases edge of town centre sites with good access to public transport should be sought. Where this is not possible,

alternative sites within the urban area may be acceptable, provided that they would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of nearby town centres, are accessible by a choice of means of transport, and accord with the policies to reduce the need to travel, to regenerate urban areas, and to protect the countryside. Authorities should, through their development plans, set out their strategy for retail development, make clear where development is expected to take place, and, where possible, identify particular sites for retail development.

7.25 The Merry Hill Impact Study⁷ has shown that an out-of-town centre on a regional scale will not be required within the area of influence of the metropolitan area. There is unlikely to be a need elsewhere in the Region.

Freight Distribution

7.26 It is important that adequate provision is made for freight distribution facilities at a variety of scales. The need for such facilities should be taken into account in the employment land portfolios (paragraphs 7.5-7.6). Sites should then come forward through development plans. Sites should be located with due regard to the impact on traffic flows and to the interchange opportunities afforded by the rail network. It may be appropriate to locate sites serving local distribution networks within urban areas. However, sites for regional and national depots may need to be located away from urban areas because of the likely impact on traffic congestion. Authorities might consider whether transshipment centres within or outside major urban areas in the Region in conjunction with other lorry and traffic management measures could reduce the impact of heavy goods vehicles on town centres, residential areas and other sensitive urban areas, allowing goods to be transported to outlets by smaller vehicles.

Paragraph 12 of PPG4 and paragraph 3.7 of PPG13 give further advice on choosing and developing sites.

7.27 The Region, occupying a central location on the national motorway and rail networks, is in a good position to provide the very large-scale distribution facilities serving a national and European market that are now emerging. The Coventry/North-East Warwickshire sub-region may provide particular opportunities for this type of development. Authorities should consider allocating, in development plans, dedicated large-scale distribution parks, which should be reserved for those warehousing uses which require them.

8. TOURISM, SPORT AND RECREATION

8.1 Sport, recreation and tourism make an important contribution to economic growth, to the diversification of employment opportunities in rural and urban areas, and to the quality of life of residents and visitors.

Tourism

8.2 Tourism is a major business in the West Midlands, worth £1.1 billion in overnight stays and associated expenditure in 1999. Business tourism has been an especially fast-growing sector, particularly through the development of facilities such as the National Exhibition Centre and the International Convention Centre. Birmingham's role as an international cultural centre will remain important. Development plans will need to address the need for high-quality accommodation to support these major facilities. In North Staffordshire, the Black Country and Coventry, there is potential for providing new facilities at a regional scale.

8.3 The Region's historic towns such as Stratford, Warwick, Worcester and Lichfield are significant tourist attractions. In examining future opportunities for tourism, authorities should have regard to the total fabric of the town, including both the major buildings such as cathedrals and the overall townscape. Paragraphs 5.17-5.20 of PPG21 (Tourism) give further guidance.

8.4 Authorities should further explore the potential of the industrial heritage of the Region, as at the Black Country Museum, Ironbridge Gorge and the pottery museums of Stoke-on-Trent. They should also encourage the development of the tourism and recreational potential of the National and Community Forests and of the many waterways in the Region (see Chapter 12).

8.5 Tourism should be balanced with the need to protect the environment. Many areas that attract tourism in the Region owe that attraction to the exceptional quality of the landscape or other qualities that need protection, such as the Peak District National Park, AONBs, and historical and archaeological sites. Local authorities should have regard to the advice in PPG21 on reconciling the economic potential offered by tourism with the protection of these areas and the countryside generally.

Sport and Recreation

8.6 The Region has many important national and regional sporting facilities. The need for further development or relocation of such facilities and of other major sporting sites should be addressed in development plans. Facilities should, where possible, be concentrated in town centres or other locations well-served by public transport. Authorities should also examine ways of improving public transport services to existing facilities -the new Hawthorns station to serve the West

Bromwich Albion football ground is a good example.

8.7 The provision of adequate local sport and recreation facilities is important to urban regeneration. Authorities should, through their development plans, make provision for attractive and accessible local play areas, public open space and other recreational facilities, and other agencies should also protect or provide open space as appropriate. Authorities need to take into account the value of open space not only as an amenity but also as a contribution to the conservation of the natural and built heritage of the area. Further guidance is provided in PPG17.

8.8 The countryside plays an important role in providing for formal and informal sport and recreation. The provision of country parks, local nature reserves and picnic areas can increase opportunities to enjoy the countryside, and can relieve pressure on sensitive areas. The provision or enhancement of towpaths, bridleways, canals and cycle routes can increase access to the countryside and discourage reliance on the private car. In providing for sport and recreation activities in the countryside, the aim should be to balance the interests of users and the local economy with the need to preserve or enhance the particular characteristics of the countryside which attract visitors.

9. HOUSING

9.1 On the basis of the advice put to him, and in the light of representations received, the Secretary of State proposes that the following additional dwellings (including replacements and conversions) should be constructed in each local authority area between April 1991 and March 2011:

	Number of Dwellings
Herefordshire	16,500
Worcestershire	41,300
Shropshire	48,000
Staffordshire	70,400
Warwickshire	40,700
Birmingham	46,500
Coventry	11,100
Dudley	12,400
Sandwell	17,800
Solihull	10,100
Walsall	10,100
Wolverhampton	10,100
REGIONAL TOTAL	335,000

9.2 In setting the regional figure, the Secretary of State accepts that, in accordance with the 1992-based household projections, there is likely to be a 295,000 increase in households for the region between 1991 and 2011. He wishes to ensure that there is adequate housing to support the economic prosperity of the region. Using Forum's estimates of existing unmet need, demolitions and vacancies, this is translated into housing provision of 335,000. These housing figures indicate regional provision at a similar rate per annum over the remaining period of RPG to that achieved in the first 5 years. Over 10% of provision should be in the form of replacements of demolished dwellings and conversion of existing buildings.

9.3 In establishing housing provision for each local authority area, the Secretary of State has taken into account:

- the levels of housing demand and housing need arising in each area;
- the number of dwellings completed since 1991;

- the identified housing land supply, including assumptions about windfalls, densities, conversions and vacancies;
- constraints to additional housing provision, both within and outside existing urban areas.

The figures will provide the basis for forthcoming reviews of structure plans and unitary development plans and there should be a presumption in favour of their adoption in these plans. In reviewing their plans, authorities should take into account what provision has already been made and the latest information on unmet need, demolitions, conversions and vacancies. They should ensure that the housing provision they now propose is both realistic and achievable. Where already allocated land or land with planning permission for residential purposes is unlikely to become available for development during the period of the plan, other sites should be allocated in order to achieve implementation of the required amount of housing. Where permissions come up for renewal, these should be reviewed in the light of current policies and where appropriate they should not be renewed.

9.4 In determining housing allocations in local and unitary development plans, authorities should make realistic assumptions about the rate at which windfall sites and other small and medium sized sites will come forward. These rates should neither be over-estimated, which would lead to a shortfall in the identification of new sites, nor under-estimated, which could result in more greenfield sites being identified than are eventually required. It is the responsibility of the strategic authorities to ensure that the windfall assumptions for individual authorities are realistic, and they should

adopt a definition of windfall sites which is consistent across the region. Further guidance on this subject will be given in the revised version of PPG3.

The Balance between Development on Previously Developed Land and on Green Field Sites

9.5 A key objective of each development plan should be to make the best possible use of previously developed land and existing buildings. This should directly contribute to regenerating urban areas, clearing up and reusing derelict, disused and underused sites, avoiding unnecessary loss of countryside, reducing the need to travel and countering long-standing trends of decentralisation, social polarisation and social exclusion. A substantial majority of the additional housing provision across the region should take the form of new housing on previously developed land and conversions within the urban areas, especially the metropolitan area, the North Staffordshire conurbation and other large settlements. Each plan should indicate the number of additional dwellings to be provided within urban areas from these categories as part of the total dwelling provision. The West Midlands Local Government Association* is asked to produce a regional target for housing on land previously built on. This should maintain and, if possible, improve on the 61% of completions in the region between 1991 and 1995 achieved on such sites.

9.6 The aim should be to ensure that land previously built on and green field sites are both developed throughout the plan period. In order to achieve this, authorities may choose to phase the provision of housing development on green field sites, which might otherwise be developed too quickly.

9.7 Both the number of dwellings to be provided from a combination of development on land previously built on and the re-use of existing buildings, and any phasing of provision on greenfield sites, may be material considerations in determining planning applications for housing development. Unless other material considerations dictate otherwise, permission for development on a green field site may be refused if the total of that type of development (including outstanding permissions expected to be implemented) exceeds that for which provision is made in the plan. (See paragraph 9.3 above in relation to renewals).

9.8 Progress should be monitored annually (see paragraph 9.23 below) so that achievement of the regional target for the development of housing on previously developed sites and conversions can be assessed. Consistent under achievement of that figure over several years would threaten overall housing provision. The local planning authority should then take action to rectify the situation.

9.9 The Secretary of State expects each planning authority to ensure that a five year supply of land genuinely available for housing development exists at all times. In assessing the housing land supply situation, regard should be had to any separate figure for provision on land previously built on and through conversions, and to any phasing of green field provision. It is important that housing land availability studies throughout the region are kept up-to-date in accordance with PPG3 and that local planning authorities and the House

* *West Midlands Regional Forum of Local Authorities until March 1998*

Builders Federation co-operate in producing them. The absence of such studies in the West Midlands Region has been a serious weakness in recent years. With the greater sophistication of the approach now proposed to developing previously developed land and green field sites, it will be particularly important that this deficiency is put right as soon as possible.

Maximising Development on Previously Developed Land and Conversions

9.10 The existing stock should be fully used, because of the contribution this makes to the quality of life, to urban regeneration and to ensuring that the requirement for additional new housing is minimised. Authorities should use available resources to modernise and bring back into repair houses in their ownership and should work with the private sector and housing associations to modernise private sector stock and bring it back into use.

9.11 Significant additions to the available housing stock can be made through:

a. bringing vacant housing units back into use. Existing vacancy rates are too high, and efforts should be made by all sectors to reduce them. Authorities should involve all key Council departments to develop an effective empty property strategy and should take advantage of the Empty Homes Agency's advisory role;

b. subdividing a larger dwelling into two or more smaller ones. This is of particular significance in view of the predicted trend towards a higher proportion of small households;

c. converting property currently in other uses into residential use. Not all redundant property will be suitable for conversion, but opportunities should be taken wherever possible. Partnership between public and private sectors is one of the most effective ways of achieving this. Conversions of office buildings in particular are likely to play an important role in developing mixed-use areas and increasing opportunities for people to live in or close to city and town centres;

d. taking a more flexible approach to the re-use of vacant sites. Some progress has already been made on this, but more remains to be done. Sites can be brought into residential use through a combination of flexible development plan proposals, public/private sector partnerships and more realistic expectations by landowners and developers. Authorities have an important part to play by giving a lead to others involved in the development plan process.

Authorities may wish to set their own targets in development plans for each of items a) to d) above.

9.12 In planning new residential development, authorities should pay particular attention to the density of development. Average densities have fallen substantially during recent decades and this has helped to produce less sustainable patterns of development both within and outside urban areas, contributing significantly to the expansion of urban areas. Local planning authorities should consider the use of minimum density policies which encourage

developers to raise the density of low-density housing schemes, especially on green field sites. Within urban areas, while it would not be appropriate to return to the high rise development of the 1960s, local authorities should adopt higher densities particularly on sites within and close to existing centres and sites well served by public transport, and those designed for smaller households. High density and high quality will be compatible in the right setting, and urban villages will have an important contribution to make in some areas. Authorities should consider the potential of each site individually rather than applying a rigid formula to all sites irrespective of circumstances, taking into account the fact that many people prefer to live in small, easy to manage dwellings in a closely-knit community. A more flexible approach should be taken to densities and car parking, in appropriate locations allowing developments with much reduced parking.

9.13 Authorities should make provision for housing development which contributes to mixed use developments in urban areas. The West Midlands already boasts good examples of this type of development, which particularly help to increase the vitality and attractiveness of city and town centres and their immediate surroundings. This good practice needs to be adopted on a wider scale. It has an important part to play in efforts to make the region's cities and towns more attractive places to live. This is a vital component of both the urban regeneration and sustainability objectives of Regional Planning Guidance.

9.14 Some previously developed sites which could be developed for housing may be difficult to develop. Authorities should therefore prepare development briefs, working closely with potential developers including, where appropriate, English

Partnerships or the Regional Development Agency which the Government proposes to establish in April 1999. Any agreements sought with developers must however meet the tests in Circular 1/97 ('Planning Obligations'). Authorities should also use their own power of land assembly where this would be beneficial.

The Location of Residential Development

9.15 In the light of the Government's commitment to sustainable development, the Deputy Prime Minister's statement on household growth and emerging integrated transport policy, the importance of locating new development in or close to existing settlements is further emphasised. The Government is consulting on the possibility of using a sequential approach to the selection of sites for the location of new housing. Authorities should continue to undertake transport corridor studies and to use the results to inform their decisions in development plans about the location of residential development.

9.16 Provision should be made for migrants from the metropolitan area to the shires largely within the Central Crescent (see paragraph 4.4.2). As far as possible the quality and character of the countryside should be preserved, but in some circumstances it may be more sustainable to develop a green field site within a public transport corridor than a previously developed site outside it which is not easily accessible to areas of employment. As a general principle, green belt boundaries should be altered only exceptionally (see paragraphs 3.19 and 11.3), but there are some parts of the region in which green belt boundaries have been drawn too tightly to allow long-term development needs to be met or constrain the creation of more sustainable patterns of development. Frequent alterations to

boundaries undermine the credibility of the green belt. Having fully explored non-green belt development alternatives, authorities should therefore satisfy themselves that the general extent of the green belt and its detailed boundaries remain appropriate in relation to long-term development needs and the principles of sustainable development.

9.17 Although new settlements can play an important part in providing for housing, the Secretary of State considers that neither a major new settlement nor a major expansion of an existing town will be required in the West Midlands during the period covered by this guidance. Smaller new settlements within public transport corridors may however have an important part to play in providing housing in some parts of the region. As far as possible, there should be a close relationship between employment-related and housing development in order to discourage commuting to other settlements.

Housing Needs

9.18 Development plans should show how future requirements for new housing can best be met, having regard to trends in household formation and market demand. A mixture of house types and sizes should be available both from the existing stock and from new provision, to cater for the needs of all sections of the community. Authorities and housing developers should have particular regard to the increasing proportions of single person and other small households expected to form in future and should promote conversions and a mix of sizes and types of housing in new developments.

9.19 Access to housing for those in greatest need is of particular importance. The planning system alone cannot guarantee that all housing needs will be

met, and planning and housing policies should be closely co-ordinated so that they reinforce one another. Estimates of the level of housing need in each local authority area should be refined in consultation with the Housing Corporation and kept up-to-date as a guide for individual authorities in the exercise of their planning and housing functions.

9.20 Although the majority of housing need arises within the metropolitan area and North Staffordshire, some of that need will have to be met in other parts of the region. This has been taken into account in the figures for overall housing provision in each authority's area, and it also needs to be reflected in the type of provision each authority makes. Structure plans and UDP Part 1's provide a link between the regional analysis and proposals in local plans and UDP Part 2's by setting down clear planning guidelines for the provision of affordable housing.

9.21 'Affordable housing' (which includes 'social housing') may be provided by either the public or private sectors, or by a combination of both. It consists of both subsidised housing and low cost market housing which is available to people who cannot afford to occupy houses generally available on the open market. Each local plan or unitary development plan authority should define the term more precisely in the context of its own area, provided this does not exclude any particular type of affordable housing, and make proposals in the plan for the provision of affordable housing, taking into account Government policy, regional estimates of housing need and the results of any local studies. Where there is a lack of affordable housing, UDP Part 2s and local plans should indicate how many affordable homes need to be provided and make proposals for their provision on particular sites as well as including a

policy setting out how an element of affordable housing will be sought in all substantial housing schemes. In rural areas, the 'exceptions' policy can contribute usefully to the supply of affordable housing.

9.22 Recent information indicates that in some parts of the region where needs exist, no gypsy sites are currently provided. Authorities should make adequate provision for gypsy sites in their development plans. They should include appropriate locational and/or criteria-based policies in plans, in accordance with Circular 1/94, which set out how proposals for such sites, whether public or private, will be treated.

Monitoring

9.23 It is important that up-to-date, publicly available information is maintained on both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of housing provision in the region. The West Midlands Local Government Association is asked to agree a list of indicators with the Government Office for the West Midlands which can be used for monitoring and annual reporting of the position in the region. They are likely to include information about:

- planning permissions and dwelling starts and completions on previously developed land and greenfield sites;
- demolitions and vacancy rates;
- land and house prices.

10. TRANSPORT

Strategy

10.1 An effective transport system, and particularly the movement of freight, make an important contribution to the national and regional economy. Transport policy can also support the attainment of sustainable development patterns by reducing the need to travel, managing the use of existing infrastructure and providing a choice of transport opportunities. In this way the reliance on the private car can be reduced and encouragement given to alternative methods of travel which have less environmental impact.

10.2 In order to provide access to facilities with less need for travel and in ways which do not place unacceptable burdens on the environment or create unnecessary barriers to disabled people, this Guidance has the following transport objectives:

 to provide for **safe and efficient movement of people and goods** in line with the existing and future pattern of development in the Region;

 to take into account the increasingly well-understood economic and environmental costs of transport and, in so-doing, to **reconcile the demand for travel with environmental concerns**, including impacts on human health and climate change;

 to reduce reliance on the motor vehicle by encouraging **a shift from private to public transport**, particularly in urban areas, and by making users more aware of the real costs of their transport choice; and

 to take account of the **interaction between transport and land use**.

Authorities should adopt transport policies which further these objectives, alongside locational policies aimed at reducing the need to travel (see Chapter 3).

10.3 In order to achieve these objectives it is important that all forms of transport are examined together. The package approach, pioneered in the metropolitan area, has now been introduced on a national basis by the Department of Transport. Authorities, particularly in urban areas, should put together package bids which draw together all forms of transport. They should also look at the possibility of producing cross-boundary bids, which may be particularly appropriate if set in the context of the corridor studies proposed in paragraph 3.20. Authorities not producing a package should still consider strategic options. Authorities should include the land-use elements of such measures in their development plans, and should include references to non land-use measures in the supporting justification. Further advice is given in section 4 of PPG13.

Public Transport

10.4 Local authorities should adopt policies which maintain and improve choice for people to walk, cycle or use public transport rather than drive. In respect of bus and rail services, they should work with the transport operators to explore the potential for maximising the use of existing services, and developing new infrastructure and services where these offer value for money. In doing so, they should consider the opportunities for joint funding arrangements for rail and bus (for example of bus or rail stations or local services). Where improvements to public transport services are necessary to allow development to take

place, a contribution from the developer would be appropriate.

Bus

10.5 Travel by bus is the dominant form of public transport in the Region. Authorities should consider the use of measures such as bus priority schemes and reservation of road space for buses. The provision of facilities for bus users, such as the new bus stations at Coventry and in the Black Country, are also important. These, if located in response to user requirements, can encourage the provision of services and help to make the use of the bus more attractive. Further guidance is provided in paragraphs 4.25-4.27 of PPG13.

Rail

10.6 The Region is at the centre of the national rail network and also has important local rail routes, particularly in and around the metropolitan area. The upgrading of the West Coast Main Line (WCML) is a high priority, both regionally and nationally. The WCML feasibility study was completed at the end of December 1994. The study recommended a core investment programme of modernisation works involving a complete resignalling and comprehensive renewal of the track, electric power supply and other infrastructure work. The Government has announced its approval for a new state of the art signalling system for the WCML.

10.7 Authorities should work with Centro, service operators, the Franchising Director and Railtrack to examine the potential, based on market demand, for increasing the use of the local rail network in and around the metropolitan area. This network has the potential to increase transport choice, and the network should thus be looked at in the context of the corridor studies (paragraph 3.20). The two

Cross-City lines provide well-used services (although there may be capacity limitations on the Lichfield-Redditch line by 2011) and the further development of such services, together with services on the extensions of those lines (to Kidderminster/Worcester and Leamington) and on other lines should be explored with the operators.

10.8 Rail issues in the rural parts of the Region are addressed in paragraph 6.12.

Cycling and Walking

10.9 A large number of journeys in the West Midlands, particularly in the urban areas, are very short. Authorities should aim to improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians as this could lead to a significant change in travel behaviour, as well as improvements in safety and well-being. The important recreational role of footpaths and cycleways in both urban and rural areas should also be recognised. Local authorities should have regard to the needs of cyclists within their development plans. This should include measures to increase the convenience, safety and enjoyment for cyclists, and should where possible include the provision of cycle routes or cycle/pedestrian routes between residential and employment areas and other destinations. The aim should be to develop a coherent network of cycle routes, which could include the use of redundant railway lines or space alongside canals. Authorities should also encourage the establishment of secure cycle parking areas, particularly in town centres and at major transport interchanges. Provision of cycle parking should be sought in all major developments. More guidance is provided in the Department of Transport's cycling statement⁸.

10.10 Local plans should include proposals to make areas and developments safer and more attractive to pedestrians

(PPG13 paragraph 4.13). They should consider the scope for creating pedestrian routes and for implementing pedestrianisation schemes, especially in shopping areas. There are a number of successful pedestrianisation schemes in the Region, as in Birmingham city centre and in towns such as Worcester and Tamworth.

Integration of Transport Modes

10.11 Local authorities can also play a part by liaising with transport operators to encourage co-ordination of public transport, for example by providing comprehensive travel information, or by facilitating interchange between bus and rail in a way that will promote the use of public transport. Opportunities should be taken to integrate public and private transport. Local authorities and Centro should work with transport operators (and developers where appropriate) to bring forward local and strategic park-and-ride schemes at existing railway stations and possibly in new locations. Authorities should look at strategic park-and-ride sites in the context of corridor studies and the metropolitan transport package. Locations should be chosen that encourage modal change and that are not likely to stimulate car use and long-distance commuting. In the circumstances of the West Midlands, with a tight inner boundary to the Green Belt, it is recognised that locations in the Green Belt may provide the only suitable sites for such facilities. Local authorities should, through their development plans, consider whether there are suitable sites for park-and-ride facilities outside the Green Belt and, if not, whether, exceptionally, suitable sites should be removed from the Green Belt. In considering planning applications for sites in the Green Belt, authorities should carefully consider whether the need for the facility in that location constitutes very special circumstances sufficient to justify development that is normally inappropriate

in the Green Belt. As well as sites at railway stations, authorities should also consider the creation of park-and-ride facilities at locations on the edge of the metropolitan area linked to high-quality bus routes.

Town Centres and Traffic Management

10.12 There are problems of traffic congestion in parts of the metropolitan area, other substantial urban areas such as the North Staffordshire conurbation and, on a smaller scale, in many large and medium-sized towns elsewhere in the Region. Traffic forecasts indicate that if demand is allowed to grow unchecked, the problems will intensify over the next 20 years, with congestion becoming more widespread and occurring over longer periods of the day. In some cases, this could impose very heavy time delays on road users and considerable damage to the environment. There will be some areas where this cannot be avoided, but in most urban areas there should be some scope for controlling the demand for road space as a means of encouraging a shift to other modes. In some cases, the deliberate reduction of road capacity - as for example in South Birmingham - or restrictions on the use of certain roads or parts of roads to specific classes of vehicles may be justified. This will normally only be appropriate as part of a package strategy for the area concerned, which also includes complementary improvements to public transport and better facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

10.13 Parking policy is an important part of an effective transport management package. The availability, location and cost of parking has a major influence on the choice of means of transport and of destination. In order to promote the commercial and social vitality of traditional town centres, authorities should ensure the provision of an adequate stock of well-

maintained parking for short-stay visitors at a reasonable cost. In providing for this, authorities should have regard both to the existing provision of on- and off-street parking under their control or influence and to the needs of proposed new developments.

10.14 Authorities should introduce plan policies which ensure that parking provision associated with new developments is kept to the operational minimum. That minimum should generally be lower in locations that are easily accessible by means of transport other than the private car (further guidance is given in paragraphs 4.4-4.11 of PPG13). Authorities may also wish to seek to discourage particular types of travel, such as private car commuting, where good alternatives exist. This might be done for instance through the scale of parking charges or the timing of parking restrictions.

10.15 Parking policy requires a strategic dimension. It should not be made a major factor in competition between neighbouring centres. Forum is asked to initiate discussions aimed at co-ordinating parking policy across the Region (and in adjacent regions) so that broadly consistent policies are adopted on appropriate parking levels and charges. Such policies must however leave some scope for local flexibility.

10.16 Traffic management measures can also be important in encouraging walking and cycling, improving the quality of local neighbourhoods and increasing safety. Further advice is provided in paragraphs 4.20-4.22 of PPG13.

Roads

10.17 Although an increasing emphasis on public transport and traffic management and restraint measures may be appropriate in national and local transport programmes, and although it is neither feasible nor

desirable to meet future levels of demand by road improvements alone, there will be a continuing need for selective investment in road infrastructure to facilitate the movement of goods, to promote road safety and in some cases to assist regeneration and environmental improvement.

10.18 The Department of Transport continues to give high priority to motorway and trunk road improvements which will facilitate improved access between goods and their markets, including those abroad, and remove congestion and pollution blackspots. In the West Midlands, the Birmingham Northern Relief Road and the Western Orbital Route will help to keep long-distance traffic out of the major urban areas and support the strategy of encouraging employment-led growth in the north and west. The Department's other priority trunk road schemes are aimed at ensuring the free movement of traffic on key routes such as the A5, A46, A49, A50 and A435. Further improvements may also be required to support major development on trunk roads such as those mentioned in paragraph 3.24.

10.19 The Department of Transport will consider supporting local road improvements which help to gain safety and economic benefits by reducing congestion on roads of more than local importance; improve access to major development sites; relieve communities, major shopping centres or important historic or tourist areas of the effects of heavy through traffic; and support major development corridors. Highway improvements in urban areas should be justified in a package context and in the context of corridor studies where appropriate. It will be important for national and local improvements to be conceived as complementary measures for improving the strategic highway network.

10.20 The location and design of new transport infrastructure projects, or improvements to existing infrastructure, should reflect the need to minimise their impact on both the natural and built environment. An environmental assessment will be required for all major transport proposals, and for other proposals if the particular development would be likely to have significant environmental effects. Further guidance is provided in paragraphs 5.15-5.25 of PPG13.

International Links

10.21 Links by rail, air and road to Europe are vital to the regional economy. The European Commission has proposed a Trans-European Network of nationally and internationally-important rail and road routes across Europe. Regional airports can relieve pressure on the heavily used air space over London and the South-East and can enhance the economic attractiveness of the Region. The recent liberalisation of services between regional airports and North America is an important step in this direction. Birmingham International Airport already has well-established links to Europe in particular. The further development of the Airport would have significant benefits for the regional economy. However, the planning, environmental and transport implications of the proposals need to be carefully assessed to ensure that they will not cause an unacceptable level of damage to the surrounding area, and that everything possible is done to mitigate harmful effects. Development plans should also take into account smaller airports and airfields and their value to the community in providing freight, business and light aviation facilities, as well as their environmental impacts. Coventry Airport is developing as an important centre for freight traffic, both domestic and to other points in Europe. The expansion of the airport should be

safeguarded while minimising its environmental impact.

Freight Transport

10.22 The movement of goods is of particular significance to the West Midlands, a region with above average reliance on manufacturing industry. Its central position dictates that its transport system also carries high volumes of goods in transit between other regions. The majority of goods travel by road and this pattern is likely to continue. However, the Government wishes to encourage greater use of rail for freight. This is likely to be particularly appropriate for bulk loads over longer distances. The Region has a number of railheads which should be safeguarded for rail use. Authorities should, through their development plans, consider the potential for designating sites for distribution and warehousing, particularly for bulky goods, near railway sidings (though access to the strategic highway network may also be important).

10.23 The Channel Tunnel opened in 1994 to through rail services between major European industrial centres and a network of UK rail terminals, including one in Birmingham. The Channel Tunnel Freight Terminals at Hams Hall (Warwickshire) and at Crick (Northamptonshire) are now in operation. Authorities should be aware of the new opportunities thus provided for rail to enter freight markets which have until now been dominated by road haulage.

Rural Transport

10.24 The particular issues of transport in rural areas are dealt with in paragraph 6.12.

11. GREEN BELT

11.1 There are three Green Belts in the Region (Map 5). Extensive Green Belts surround the metropolitan area and North Staffordshire conurbation, while the Region also contains a small part of the Burton-on-Trent Green Belt. The five purposes of including land in Green Belts are set out in PPG2.

11.2 There is no case for fundamental review of the Green Belts, which have served their purpose well and which will continue to do so. In parts of the Region, too, detailed Green Belt boundaries defined in development plans are well-founded and make adequate provision for development, both immediately and in the longer term. However, in many cases Green Belt boundaries remain too tightly drawn around built-up areas, whilst in other cases settlements, some of them sizeable, are "washed-over" by the Green Belt.

11.3 Detailed Green Belt boundaries should be altered only exceptionally. Earlier sections of this Guidance (particularly Chapters 3 and 4) have made clear that development should be accommodated as far as possible within the metropolitan area and North Staffordshire conurbation; next, within freestanding towns beyond the Green Belt or in settlements excluded from the Green Belt; and only in exceptional circumstances should changes to Green Belt boundaries be considered. In order to achieve sustainable development objectives, authorities may exceptionally need to review the boundaries of settlements excluded from and on the edge of the Green Belt; at the boundaries of "green wedges" within the metropolitan area (although these have particular value because of their nature and location); and at larger "washed-over" villages. The criteria against which any boundary re-definition should be considered should be clearly set

out in structure plans and taken forward in local plans. The Forum may wish to consider whether greater consistency of approach can be achieved in the approach to "washing-over" being adopted in structure and local plans.

11.4 When local planning authorities prepare new or revised development plans, any proposals affecting Green Belts should be related to a timescale which is longer than that normally adopted for other aspects of the plan. They should satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period. This may mean safeguarding land between the urban area and the Green Belt which may be required to meet longer-term development needs and ensure long-term protection of Green Belts. The tight Green Belt boundaries around the metropolitan area, the North Staffordshire conurbation and many of the surrounding settlements may diminish the value of local plans for making proper provision for necessary development in the future. In some locations where boundaries are tightly-drawn and where development can significantly contribute to the objective of reducing the need to travel, boundaries are likely, exceptionally, to need redrawing to make adequate provision for longer-term development. This should only take place after consideration of development opportunities within urban areas. The provision of safeguarded land should be addressed through development plans: in the shire counties, this should be done in the first instance in structure plans. Development plan policies should make clear that planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a local plan or UDP review which proposes the development of particular areas of safeguarded land. Further advice is provided in paragraph 2.12 and Annex B of PPG2.

11.5 Safeguarded land should be located where future development would be an efficient use of land, well-integrated with existing development, and well-related to public transport and other existing and planned infrastructure, so promoting sustainable development. In identifying such land, authorities should pay particular attention to locations along public transport corridors with existing or potential capacity.

11.6 Green Belts have a positive role to play in retaining land in agricultural or forestry use and in providing opportunities for access to the countryside and outdoor sport and recreation for the urban population. It is important that nature conservation interests are secured and that the landscape is conserved and enhanced. Local authorities should work with landowners and with organisations such as the Groundwork Trusts, Community Forest, the Countryside Commission and English Partnerships with the aim of enhancing the countryside, especially those areas of land on the edge of or within the urban areas which are suffering from disuse or neglect.

12. **QUALITY IN TOWN AND COUNTRY**

12.1 The UK Sustainable Development Strategy⁹ emphasises that protection and enhancement of our surroundings should go hand in hand with a healthy economy. Change and development are necessary, but such change must be accommodated in ways which maintain and enhance the distinctive character, quality and future viability of town and country. A high quality of design can contribute to this objective (paragraph 3.5). Consideration of the impact of policies on their surroundings is therefore central to this Guidance. This Chapter sets out a policy framework within which local authorities should make

decisions on the conservation, enhancement and where necessary replacement of the important environmental assets of the Region. It also emphasises that the improvement of areas of environmental degradation is equally important, both to provide a safe, healthy and attractive environment for the benefit of the community, and to ensure that the Region's environment is of a standard to attract and retain business investment, visitors and residents.

The Natural Environment

12.2 The Region has a very diverse natural environment. Many areas are given special protection by virtue of their landscape or conservation value. The Region contains several areas of high-quality landscape recognised by the designation of the Peak District National Park, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Cotswolds, the Wye Valley, the Shropshire Hills, the Malvern Hills and Cannock Chase (Map 5). Advice on planning and development control in these areas is contained in paragraphs 4.1-4.18 of PPG7. There are 11 National Nature Reserves in the Region, including the Ramsar site of the Midland Meres and Mosses, and also many Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). There are Local Nature Reserves, particularly within the urban areas, which have special significance for the quality of life of local communities. Page 5 of PPG9 lists the hierarchy of site designations which should be followed by local planning authorities, with particular emphasis given to the protection of international designations. Annex A of the PPG sets out in more detail the obligations, designations and protection afforded under conservation legislation. Local authorities are urged, through their development plans, to follow the guidelines set out in the PPG to ensure a consistent approach to nature conservation throughout the Region.

12.3 Some authorities use local designations to protect areas of landscape and nature conservation value. However, authorities should be sparing in the use of such designations, which may place unnecessary barriers in the way of rural and urban regeneration. Local designations should only be used where there is good reason to believe that the normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. They will carry less weight than national designations in making planning decisions.

12.4 As an alternative to the use of local designations, authorities should place more emphasis on identifying the distinctive character of the local landscape and other features which need to be respected or enhanced. The Countryside Character programme being worked up by the Countryside Commission and English Nature is identifying what makes areas of countryside different from each other.

Urban Open Space

12.5 The maintenance of open space within the urban areas is critical to a sustainable development approach to urban regeneration, as set out in Chapter 5. Informal small areas of open space can often be of great value to local communities, and local authorities should carefully consider how best to identify and maintain such areas. There is already an impressive number of initiatives being taken by local authorities and others in urban areas to tackle problems of environmental degradation. These include the Groundwork Trusts in Birmingham, Coventry, the Black Country and Stoke-on-Trent, as well as the Black Country (now National) Urban Forestry Unit. Local authorities are asked to use their development plans to assist the further development of such initiatives by

identifying land particularly suitable for environmental improvement.

Forestry

12.6 Forestry initiatives have an important role to play in improving degraded landscapes, assisting diversification in rural areas, and providing opportunities for sport and recreation. The National Forest, which includes parts of eastern Staffordshire, is a major national initiative. It aims to increase tree cover substantially, with particular encouragement of broad-leaved and mixed woodland, in order to create an afforested landscape, interspersed with farmland, open space, wildlife habitats and appropriate recreational uses.

12.7 The national importance of the Forest should be recognised in development plan policies. The designated area should be shown on structure plan key diagrams and the precise boundaries should be included on local plan proposals maps. Planning authorities should have regard to the National Forest strategy in their development plan policies, and should ensure that any development proposals within them should respect the Forest setting. In both the National and Community Forests, development plans should clearly indicate the nature of planting and landscaping requirements which will be expected of developers. Authorities should be flexible in their approach to negotiating such requirements. Any planting or landscaping required, whether on-site or off-site, should be directly related to the particular development proposal and should be no more than is necessary to overcome planning objections to it. Conversely, planning permission should not be granted simply because applicants are prepared to plant trees. The detailed guidance of the National Forest strategy might be a material

consideration in deciding a planning application within the Forest, but policies and proposals that are likely to provide the basis for deciding applications or determining conditions should be set out in the development plan. New buildings within the Forest area, including conversion of existing buildings, are expected to be of a high quality. The design, method of construction and building materials, and the layout of planted areas and open spaces between buildings, should all respect the woodland setting.

12.8 The Forest of Mercia covers parts of southern Staffordshire and extends into the metropolitan area. There are similar community forest initiatives in the Forest of Arden in Warwickshire and the Shropshire Forest around Telford. Development plans should include proposals which assist the implementation of these initiatives. The approach set out in paragraph 12.7 is of equal relevance to Community Forest initiatives.

12.9 Trees have an important role to play in enhancing the environment of urban areas, including woodland planting around development sites. Local authorities should continue to work with the Black Country (now National) Urban Forestry Unit to extend tree cover in urban areas.

Urban Fringe

12.10 The areas near the metropolitan area, North Staffordshire conurbation and larger towns can be subject to particular land-use conflicts and environmental problems. Local authorities should, through their development plans and through non-statutory management strategies, adopt a positive approach to planning and management aimed at securing environmental improvement, beneficial and sustainable use of land and water space and increased public access.

The Built Environment

12.11 The Region has a rich and varied built heritage, including many historic towns, smaller settlements and communities within the larger urban areas. It is important that this heritage is preserved by ensuring that development is sensitively designed and located and respects local distinctiveness. This includes the protection of listed buildings and conservation areas, and authorities should set out their policy for the protection and enhancement of such areas in accordance with PPG15. The Region also contains many sites of archaeological importance, including the World Heritage Site at Ironbridge. Authorities should use their development plans to set out policies for the protection of such sites in line with the guidance in PPG16.

Renewable Resources

12.12 As a densely-populated, industrial Region, a reduction in energy consumption can make a major contribution towards a pattern of sustainable development. The patterns of development proposed in this Guidance, which aim to reduce the need to travel, will help in energy conservation.

12.13 Authorities and other organisations should also aim to produce and use energy more efficiently. As an example, the potential for combined heat and power schemes should be explored.

12.14 The development of renewable energy resources should be encouraged where there are prospects of them being economically viable and environmentally acceptable. The advantages of having a clear renewable energy resource which can contribute to local, regional and national requirements, and the benefits to the local economy, should be weighed against other environmental impacts. Full account

should be taken of the need to minimise any harm to the environment, and of the special features of designated areas. The resources potentially available in the Region include:

-  biofuels. The use of wood fuel should be looked at in association with the National and Community Forest initiatives;
-  solar radiation;
-  wind energy (in the hillier areas); and
-  small scale hydro-power, although as a low land catchment area, only low head schemes are possible.

12.15 Further advice on renewable energy is contained in PPG22.

12.16 Other sections of this Guidance cover efficiency of use in respect of minerals (paragraphs 13.10-13.12); waste (paragraph 13.17); and land (paragraph 3.8).

Water

12.17 The three main river systems in the Region are the catchments of the Severn, Trent and Wye. The principal rivers are shown on Map 2. The Severn, together with the Elan Valley reservoirs and the Triassic Sherwood sandstone aquifers, are the key potable water resources for the Region, with the potential of the Trent being examined by the National Rivers Authority (NRA). The Wye provides water mainly for South Wales. Maintenance of an adequate potable and industrial water supply of suitable quality from sustainable and environmentally sound water resources schemes is necessary to allow development to take place, and development should not be allowed if it would have an unacceptable effect on the availability of existing water supplies. A good-quality water supply is

also important to other interests, including nature conservation, recreation and agriculture. Further guidance is provided in PPG23.

12.18 The Region is forecast to have a potential shortfall in water supplies by 2021 if no further water resources are developed. In order to minimise the need for major new strategic water resource schemes, measures should be taken to manage demand (including the installation of water meters in new property) and to increase the efficiency of water use (for example by reducing leakage and exploring opportunities for re-use).

12.19 Development plans should assist in protecting the availability and quality of water supplies. Local authorities, in the preparation of such plans, and the NRA, in river catchment management plans, should work together (with the water companies) to ensure that water supply sources are protected and that rates of development do not exceed the capacities of existing or planned infrastructure. Authorities should have regard to NRA Regional Water Resources Strategies¹⁰.

12.20 Policies should also address the issue of the protection of groundwater. Authorities can contribute by encouraging development outside source protection zones, and preferably off major aquifers, in accordance with the NRA's statement "Policy and Practice for the Protection of Groundwater" (December 1992). There is a particular problem of rising groundwater in Birmingham and the Black Country, which must be tackled jointly by the local authority, the NRA, the water company and landowners.

12.21 Local authorities should not use development plans to duplicate pollution controls which are the statutory responsibility of other bodies (including

local authorities in their non-planning functions). They should set out planning policies which focus on land-use and take full account of land-use effects on the water environment by effective integration with NRA's catchment management plans. The provision of adequate sewerage and sewage disposal are most important and authorities should liaise closely with the NRA and water companies.

12.22 The canals and river navigations of the Region are a valuable heritage, environmental, tourism and recreational resource. Local authorities should adopt policies to protect this asset. They should continue to build on their progress of the last 10 years in developing, in association with British Waterways Board, the NRA and other (river) navigations and other interests, policies to maximise the potential of the canal and river network for nature conservation and recreational use. The urban waterways of the Region, particularly those of Birmingham and the Black Country, can provide an important focus for environmental improvements and development schemes. Authorities should work in partnership with British Waterways and other interests to consider whether particular canal corridors require enhancement. The Region is also threaded by several large rivers, particularly the Severn, Wye, Avon and Trent and many minor ones. Authorities might wish to consider, in association with the NRA, whether particular river corridors might provide a useful focus for consideration of issues such as the recreational and amenity use of water, the conservation and enhancement of the aquatic environment and the protection of life and property from flooding. The consideration of such issues will assist authorities, in conjunction with others, to reconcile possible competing uses through appropriate policies in development plans.

12.23 In some parts of the Region, derelict canals exist. Where possible and viable the opportunities for restoring the canals should be explored, including provision for long-term maintenance, in order to develop tourism and other economic benefits.

Flooding

12.24 Flood risk is an issue in low-lying areas near watercourses and, in particular, for sites on the flood plains of major rivers such as the Severn, Avon, Trent and Wye. It is therefore important to take flooding and the need to retain flood plain storage into account in the planning process, and ensure that development takes place where it can have an adequate standard of protection against flooding and does not cause or exacerbate the flood risk to existing property. Development plans should include policies relating to development in flood risk areas, and proposals maps should indicate where such policies will apply. Circular 30/92 "Development and Flood Risk" (and the associated Memorandum of Understanding) gives advice on these matters. Authorities should have regard to these and should liaise closely with the NRA in the preparation of development plans.

Contaminated Land

12.25 The Region contains significant amounts of contaminated land, particularly in the Black Country and North Staffordshire. Where practicable, such sites should be recycled into new uses. Guidance to local authorities on dealing with contaminated land is set out in section 4 and Annex 10 of PPG23.

Unstable Land

12.26 Parts of the Region contain areas of potentially unstable land. These include:

-  mined ground, especially in the coalfields and the old limestone mines in the Black Country and parts of eastern Shropshire;
-  areas of former brine pumping operations around Droitwich;
-  natural underground cavities, principally in the limestones of northern Staffordshire, and associated with gypsum dissolution in parts of West Midlands and Warwickshire; and
-  landslides, mainly associated with natural or excavated steep slopes in southern Shropshire, the Severn Valley near Ironbridge, the coal measures of northern Staffordshire, Lias clays in Warwickshire, the Inferior Oolite limestones of Bredon Hill, and on the northern and western fringes of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

12.27 These factors seldom preclude safe development of land, but precautions may be needed to avoid delays to development or subsequent damage to structures. PPG14 gives further advice.

Air Quality

12.28 Air pollution from industry and domestic sources has reduced considerably over the last few years. Some of the Region's older and often more heavily-polluting industries, such as the foundry industry, have declined and cleaner processes introduced. Tighter controls have been applied to a wider range of industrial plant, most recently by the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and most urban housing now lies within smoke control areas. With the growth in road traffic, vehicle emissions are now the major source of air pollution. This particularly affects the

metropolitan area. Catalytic convertors on new vehicles and stricter emission control will help bring about improvements in the next few years, but a continued growth in new vehicle ownership may outstrip gains provided by the technology.

12.29 The Government's document "Air Quality: Meeting the Challenge"¹¹ sets out its plans for improving air quality both in the long and short term. These include giving local authorities a greater role in managing air quality at the local level. New legislation will shortly be introduced to enable authorities to check the air quality in their area regularly and, where it is found to be poor, to prepare a remedial plan. Neighbouring authorities will be encouraged to act together where air pollution extends across local boundaries.

12.30 However, local authorities already have duties to control air pollution from industry and domestic sources and also have responsibility for transport and land-use planning which, if used appropriately, can make an important contribution to securing improvements in air quality. Authorities should, for example, consider the following:

-  local policies which encourage greater use of public transport, walking and cycling and which can reduce unnecessary car journeys and exhaust emissions;
-  sustainable plans which avoid concentrating different polluting activities from different sources in one area; and
-  separation of potentially polluting and other land-uses to reduce conflicts.

12.31 Advice on the relationship between planning and pollution control is contained in PPG23.

13. MINERALS AND WASTE

Minerals

13.1 In 1993 the West Midlands Region produced 19.25 million tonnes of primary aggregates (9% of the England and Wales production). This figure included 8.4 million tonnes of crushed rock and 10.85 million tonnes of sand and gravel. The Region is a substantial producer of clay products and a significant coal producer.

13.2 The minerals industry in the Region is important in promoting economic growth, creating and maintaining employment, and supporting the construction industry. However, it is important that minerals planning reflects the following objectives of sustainable development:

-  to conserve minerals as far as possible whilst ensuring an adequate supply to meet the needs of society;
-  to minimise production of waste and to encourage efficient use of materials, including appropriate use of high-quality materials, and recycling of waste;
-  to encourage sensitive working practices and to preserve or enhance the overall quality of the environment once extraction has ceased; and
-  to protect designated areas of landscape or nature quality from development, other than in exceptional circumstances.

13.3 Structure plans should set out the broad policy framework for minerals within the national and regional context. Minerals local plans should develop in more detail the policies and proposals of such plans and relate them to identifiable areas of land.

The Secretary of State urges authorities to take forward the preparation of such plans, for which there is as yet limited coverage in the shire counties. Authorities should have regard to Minerals Planning Guidance Notes (MPGs) when preparing development plans and considering individual applications.

13.4 The Government's policy on aggregates provision is operated with the assistance of the West Midlands Regional Aggregates Working Party (WMRAWP) and is set out in MPG6, which provides guidance on the levels of provision from the various sources of construction aggregates. Development plans should contain sufficient provision to meet the apportionment of the regional guidelines in MPG6. The practicality and environmental acceptability of the apportionment figures can then be tested through the development plan process. In drawing up their development plans, authorities should carry out an environmental appraisal of the policy options (paragraph 3.4). This will enable them to demonstrate that all options have been assessed and that those selected represent the best balance of economic, social and environmental cost, bearing in mind the principles of sustainable development and the need to maintain an adequate supply of minerals. Plans should ensure that a sufficient stock of permitted reserves (a landbank) is maintained for all aggregate minerals.

13.5 MPG3 provides guidance on coal extraction generally and the disposal of colliery spoil. Mineral planning authorities will need to give careful consideration to the environmental implications of coal extraction, although there is no planning case for further restrictions on coal production than is necessary to secure full and proper protection of the environment. Local plans should have regard to the advice in MPG3. They should indicate

those areas where coal extraction and the disposal of colliery spoil is likely to be acceptable in principle, as well as those areas where working or disposal is unlikely to be acceptable.

13.6 Development plans should include policies for the working of other minerals in line with the guidance set out in MPG1 and, for silica sand, MPG15 for cement minerals MPG10; for oil and gas development, Circular 2/85. Development plans should provide for development in a way which avoids unnecessary sterilisation of significant mineral resources by other development, or where unavoidable, allows for the prior extraction of the minerals.

13.7 Structure plans may include policies which consider the extent to which current or future mineral extraction sites may provide suitable landfill sites for disposal of controlled wastes. More detailed policies or proposals on this topic may be included in minerals local plans; and it is open to authorities to prepare combined minerals and waste local plans.

13.8 Mineral planning authorities should set out the criteria to be applied in determining planning applications for mineral development, which should include an assessment of environmental considerations, the effect on any local communities and requirements for site restoration and aftercare. Further guidance is contained in MPG1, MPG2 and MPG7. Minerals local plans should also set out the nature of information to be included in planning applications; policies for ensuring high standards of site operations, satisfactory landscaping, restoration and aftercare of sites to beneficial after-use; and measures to minimise adverse environmental impacts through agreed working schemes, the attachment of conditions to planning permissions or the use of planning obligations. When

considering the allocation of land for mineral development where this affects agricultural land, the agricultural implications must be considered together with the environmental and economic aspects, and the standard of reclamation likely to be achieved. In some cases amenity or forestry after-uses may be more appropriate than restoring sites to agriculture, but on the better land the methods used in restoration and after-care should enable the land to retain its longer-term potential as a high-quality agricultural resource. Mineral planning authorities (and the industry) should take into account the need to protect the quantity and quality of surface water and groundwater to ensure that any changes as a result of minerals extraction or the disposal of mineral waste do not adversely affect water resources.

13.9 It is important that plans seek to minimise the adverse effects on the environment and on communities caused by the transportation of minerals. The rail network should be used to transport minerals wherever possible. Where this is not possible provision should be made for the use and improvement of lorry routes which minimise the impact on communities and environmental disturbance. Mineral planning authorities should, jointly or individually in their development plans, make every effort to identify, safeguard and where appropriate make provision for suitable locations for rail depots to receive and distribute imported aggregates.

Efficiency of use

13.10 Producers, specifiers and consumers of aggregates all have a role to play in achieving more efficient use of aggregates. They should aim to minimise waste, and avoid the use of higher quality materials where lower grade materials would suffice. Ways in which the demand for primary

materials can be minimised also need to be considered.

13.11 A sustainable approach to the supply of aggregates requires that recycled and secondary materials should be used in construction wherever possible. The use of alternative sources of aggregates will also become more important as constraints on resources of primary aggregates increase. For the West Midlands, MPG6 assumes that, by 2006, 55 million tonnes of aggregates will be provided from secondary and recycled material. In order to meet this target, mineral planning authorities should include policies in their development plans which encourage increased use of secondary and waste materials where there are environmental benefits to be gained. They should also identify sources of raw waste material on which the construction industry can draw. Further guidance on recycling and the use of secondary materials is provided in paragraphs 32-41 and Annex E of MPG6.

13.12 Planning authorities should consider the need for recycling plants, and make any necessary provision for such sites.

Waste

13.13 Increases in the regional standard of living have coincided with increases in the production of waste, the disposal of which, in terms of cost, land- take and resultant pollution, is an increasingly serious problem. It is estimated that controlled wastes amount to 12 million tonnes per annum in the Region, with most of it going to landfill sites in the shire counties. By volume the largest net flows are of household and industrial waste from the metropolitan area to landfill sites in the surrounding counties, but there are also significant reverse flows with special wastes being treated within the metropolitan area, particularly in Walsall.

13.14 The Government's approach to waste management is based on a hierarchy of:

-  reduction;
-  re-use;
-  recovery (including energy recovery, recycling and composting);
-  safe disposal.

Development plans should place greater emphasis on options at the top of the hierarchy and less reliance on simple disposal without recovery.

13.15 It is important that the work being undertaken by the West Midlands Waste Regulation Joint Advisory Committee is completed, so that information is available on the amounts and flows of waste within the Region. This will form an important basis for the co-ordination of waste disposal planning, which should have the overall aim of the Region being self-sufficient in waste disposal.

13.16 Authorities should proceed with the preparation of waste management plans on a consistent basis with a targeted completion date of December 1995. These plans should set out requirements for waste management facilities based on forecasts of expected future amounts and types of waste, and priorities for the methods of disposal or treatment of waste (having regard to the hierarchy outlined above). These plans and the regional assessment will assist with the preparation of waste local plans and UDPs. Development plans should identify sufficient sites or areas of search to satisfy the requirement for sites for recycling, treatment and disposal to meet demand over the plan period, and to provide a development control framework which will enable planning applications for facilities to be dealt with. In identifying sites for waste management, authorities should have regard

to the "proximity principle", under which waste should be disposed of (or otherwise managed) close to the point at which it is generated. Where waste cannot be disposed of close to its source, priority should be given to the use of water or rail transport where this would reduce the overall environmental impact and is economically feasible. The identification of sites should have regard to environmental, geological, hydrogeological and access constraints.

13.17 Measures to encourage the minimisation of waste, the recycling of materials and the recovery of energy generating potential are important elements of a sustainable development strategy. Planning policies should encourage methods of waste management that have the least environmental impact, taking into account the potential for energy or materials recovery. Within the larger urban areas, incineration with energy recovery may be able to make an important contribution to beneficial re-use of waste. Part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 extends and reinforces the waste regulatory system and as part of that local authorities are required to produce waste recycling plans. These should aim to recycle at least 25% of household waste by 2000.

13.18 In drawing up development plans, authorities should have regard to PPG23 and to the European Community Framework Directive on Waste¹².

14. MONITORING

14.1 This Guidance should be kept under regular review, both to inform its future and to identify any changes in circumstances which might justify action through the development plan process. The Forum has identified ten strategic objectives emerging from the Advice, together with key indicators to enable those objectives to be

monitored. Such monitoring should be taken forward in partnership with the Government Office for the West Midlands and other partners as appropriate.

each development plan contributes to this objective.

14.2 The Secretary of State will, however, have a particular interest in the outcome of monitoring in respect of:

-  the **availability of employment land** in the Region and, in particular, the bringing forward of premium employment sites;
-  **housing**, planning permissions and dwelling starts and completions on previously developed land and green field sites; demolitions and vacancy rates; land and house prices;
-  **waste disposal**, and particularly the cross-boundary implications;
-  **reducing the need to travel**, including corridor studies and the bringing forward of strategic park-and-ride proposals;
-  **the approach to "washing-over" settlements** in the Green Belt;
-  **parking standards and charges**; and
-  **rural issues**, including rural transport, diversification and affordable housing.

14.3 In carrying forward these monitoring requirements, and in monitoring the achievement of the regional strategy as a whole, the authorities should have regard to the aim of achieving a more sustainable pattern of development in the Region. The strategic authorities and the Forum will wish to build on work carried out in the preparation of Advice, and to ensure that

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