

# **West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Three Revision Options Consultation 29th June 2009 – 14th August 2009**

## **Consultation Questionnaire To be completed and returned by 14th August 2009**

This questionnaire is divided up into five sections each one refers to a chapter in the main Options Consultation document.

<b>Critical Rural Services</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople</b>	<b>Page 3 - 4</b>
<b>Culture Sport and Tourism</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Quality of the Environment</b>	<b>Page 6 -11</b>

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<b>Minerals</b>	<b>Page 12 - 15</b>
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Within each section there are a series of questions, each one has a unique reference (e.g. CRC1 for critical rural services). If you need more space to respond to any of the questions please attach extra sheets and refer to the question reference number.

You do not need to complete all of the sections in the questionnaire. It is acceptable to focus on the issues and topics that are most relevant to you/your organisation.

Please ensure that your details are included with your response by completing the 'Your Details' box below.

### **Your Details**

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The Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') was established by Parliament in 2004.

The Board has two statutory purposes:

- a) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB; and
- b) To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

In fulfilling these roles, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the AONB.

**The questionnaire can also be completed online. Visit the homepage of the Assembly's website at [www.wmra.gov.uk](http://www.wmra.gov.uk) for more details.**

**To be completed and returned  
by 14th August 2009**

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Please note that the West Midlands Regional Assembly has a strict policy for dealing with any offensive comments/representations. If we feel that any submission received is offensive, we will, in the first instance, contact the author and request that the comments are re-phrased before being re-submitted. If the material submitted continues to be offensive then it may be forwarded to the relevant authorities.

**Question CRC1:** Studies have shown that it is very difficult to define rural services as “important” or “critical”, and that pursuing these definitions is unlikely to be of much value. Do you agree with this view?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If no, please provide reasons and a list of those rural services that you consider to be “critical”.

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**Question CRC2:** The SQW Report identified significant service deprivation issues for people in “accessible rural” areas whose access to transport is limited (see page 21). Do you think more attention should be given to meeting the service needs of this group?

Please tick one box       No       Yes

If yes, please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**Question CRC3:** Arguments have been put forward that new development should be allowed in settlements lacking a service base in order to reverse a cycle of decline in such places. (“Planning for Sustainable Communities” – CRC; “A Living and Working Countryside” – Taylor Review). Do you agree with this view?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If yes, please provide your reasons and any relevant evidence, including identified locations, and suggestions.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board has consistently argued that the provision of new development in small rural settlements does not result in the maintenance of existing services, let alone the provision of new services. (**See Annex 1 Position statement on Housing and Development.**) The Board notes the scale of development identified in Shropshire as being required to provide sufficient new primary school pupils to justify retaining or providing additional teaching capacity. Significant development was permitted in a settlement (Coates) in the Cotswolds AONB on the 1980s but this has not resulted in the retention of existing services let alone the provision of additional services. The contrary result was achieved - more commuting to larger settlements for employment and service provision and loss of local services – shop, primary school.

However, the Board is very supportive of affordable housing development in villages which can be shown to meet a defined local need, both for housing and to meet local employment opportunities.

**See Annex 2 Employment Position Statement**

**Annex 3 Affordable Housing Position Statement**

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**Question CRC4:** Three policy Options for rural service developments are suggested (see pages 22-23). Please state if you have a preferred Option, and the reasons for your preference.

Please tick one box

- Option 1: Sustainable – Climate Change Driven
- Option 2: Community Based
- Option 3: Status Quo

Please provide reasons for your preference

The Cotswolds Conservation Board would support Option 1. This provides the best strategy for the retention and delivery of services to an extensive rural area, provided the aspirations of local communities for affordable housing to meet defined local needs and employment opportunities can also be met.

**(See annexes 2 and 3)**

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**Question CRC5:** For your preferred Option above please suggest how the Option might be delivered at the regional level, taking into account the relevant key issues and implications in the Critical Rural Services chapter.

The RSS needs to identify the critical issues relating to climate change in the region, and develop an approach which is consistent with national policies and addresses global targets. The delivery of rural services needs to be considered alongside services in urban areas as the two are clearly linked. We consider that the Critical Rural Services section should build on Policy SR2 *Creating Sustainable Communities* by developing more of a vision for rural communities in the region and highlighting in the policies the interdependence of urban and rural areas.

It is essential that the RSS provides strategic direction, so that more specific localised policies can then be developed by local strategic partnerships, Community Strategies, LDFs, LDPs etc. The policy needs to include an element of Option 2 to ensure these issues are addressed at a local level.

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## Gypsies and Travellers

**Question GTQ1:** Do you agree with the total residential pitch requirements (939 pitches), as identified by the sub-regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If no, please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board considers that it is essential that the Gypsy and Traveller Community are consulted regarding the possible allocation of sites.

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**Question GTQ2:** Do you think the three Options on page 35 for the provision of residential Gypsy and Traveller pitches provide a good range of solutions?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If no, do you think there is another Option which could be explored? Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question GTQ3:** Which of the three Options on page 35 for the provision of residential Gypsy and Traveller pitches do you prefer and why?

Please tick one box       Option 1       Option 2       Option 3

Please provide reasons for your preference.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question GTQ4:** You may wish to consider the need for residential pitch requirements in specific parts of the West Midlands Region (for example in a particular city/sub-region/county. Please state where and provide any comments on this specific area and explain your reasons.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question GTQ5:** Do you think the numbers allocated in Table 2 on page 40 for Transit provision (244 pitches) will meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If no, please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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## Gypsies and Travellers continued

**Question GTQ6:** Do you think the geographical distribution of pitches for Transit provision indicated in Table 2 on page 40 will meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If no, please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question GTQ7:** Do you think the draft Policy for Transit provision should be strengthened? (see page 39).

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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## Travelling Showpeople

**Question TSQ1:** Do you think the numbers allocated in Table 3 on page 42 for Travelling Showpeople (118 plots) during the five year period of 2007-2012 will meet their accommodation needs?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If no, please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question TSQ2:** Which of the two Options in Table 3 on page 42 for the distribution of additional plots for Travelling Showpeople do you favour?

Please tick one box       Option 1       Option 2

Please provide reasons for your preference or if you think there is another Option which could be explored please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for you answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question TSQ3:** Do you agree that the plot numbers for Travelling Showpeople should be allocated on a County basis, rather than down to district level?

Please tick one box       Allocated on a County basis       Allocated on a District basis

Please provide reasons for your preference.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question CST1:** Which of the Options on page 53 do you think should be used as a basis of revising Policy PA10 Part A and why?

Please tick one box

Option 1: Remove the portfolio

Option 2: Update portfolio to include all regionally significant assets

If you have chosen Option 2, what assets (see B.O.P. report, item 11 on page 59) do you think should be added/removed and explain why you think they are or are not of regional significance.

The portfolio approach overstates the importance of major facilities and attractions. For many people in the region, more local assets will be of more significance in daily life.

Equally, a sustainable approach to tourism will encourage people to explore the locality they are in, minimising travel and maximising experience.

However, if it is proposed that the portfolio approach is adopted, then the Board would wish to see all the region's AONBs referred to, which would mean adding the Wye Valley, the Shropshire Hills and Cannock Chase. The Board is pleased that these have been identified as cultural assets on Figure 7 on page 55 and we would like to see this map included in the updated RSS.

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**Question CST2:** Do you think that Policy PA10A should “protect”, as well as improve existing strategic cultural assets from development?

Please tick one box

Yes

No

If yes, please provide reasons for your answer and suggest how the WMRSS could protect the assets.

Cultural assets in particular may be harmed by inappropriate development, and the RSS could ensure that development takes account of potential impact on any assets affected directly or indirectly.

**Question CST3:** Which of the Options on page 57 do you think should be used as a basis for revising Policy PA10 Parts B and C to address any gaps in strategic culture, sport and tourism assets provision in the Region?

Please tick one box

Option 1: Retain existing PA10 B & C

Option 2: Update existing PA10 B & C

Option 3: Develop a new policy in addition to PA10 B & C

If you have selected Option 2 or 3, what new criteria do you consider are important to add and why?

The social benefits of culture, sport and tourism are very important and this option would give greatest opportunity for them to be recognised. The potential for the countryside to provide an excellent asset for culture, sport and tourism should be emphasised. The social and economic benefits from this are of particular value in rural areas where other

assets are often sparse. A modest scale of provision may be necessary to secure benefits from this, e.g. on-site interpretation, self-guided routes and information, appropriate events, but the cost of these is usually minimal compared to many larger scale facilities.

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**Question CST4:** Do you agree with the strategic gaps identified in the Burns Owens Partnership (BOP) report? (see page 54).

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If no, are there any other strategic gaps which you consider exist and what evidence exists to support your case?

The gaps identified focus too much on large facilities, as in answer to CST1 above.

The map of cultural assets in the County which will include Madresfield Court. Broadway Tower - Arts and Craft movement - William Morris connection, Pershore Abbey etc needs to be completed as identified in the 3 points below :

The map could be expanded to include heritage assets not relating to buildings and areas of work in progress:

Heritage Gardens - a general point - such Gardens need to be recognised as part of the approach to the historic environment.

Existing gardens that are not yet listed are

- a. Parsons Garden - around 1895 - 1900 - High Street, Broadway
- b. Parsons Garden - 1895 - 1900 - Springfield Lane, Broadway
- c. Prentice Garden - Arts and Craft, 1925 - High Street, Broadway
- d. Reginald Blomfield Garden - Arts and Crafts period around 1925 recreated and saved - Springfield Lane Broadway

**Art Heritage includes:**

The Broadway Arts Festival Trust is set up to biennially raise awareness of the Arts Heritage in Broadway:

The Broadway Colony: Millet, Abbey, Parsons, Sargent - Farnham House, Herbert Jones, Edmond Gosse

Laurence Alma tadema, Henry James and the Finzi and Elgar connections plus the work going on towards the creation of a Heritage Museum and supporting embryonic creative industries for local young people and those changing career.

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**Question CST5:** Do you think the Options on pages 53 and 57 could help to address poor quality and access issues in relation to culture, sport and tourism assets?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

What suggestions do you have as to how the WMRSS can best address quality and access issues, and any others, which you might think are relevant for culture, sport and tourism? Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence for your suggestions).

Incorporating social aspects into the consideration of tourism and culture should help to address poor quality and access issues. It is essential to know the demand for different types of facilities in terms of quality and accessibility and then to assess whether the existing provision meets this demand. Gaps in provision could be addressed through LDFs and associated studies on sport and recreation, as promoted by PPG17.

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There is statistical evidence that after Agriculture the Equestrian and Horse tourism industry brings in the next largest substantial tranche of income - feed, tack, vet services, etc

The Rights of Way system is ignored in the plan and the value of horse tourism in terms of access to the Countryside, health and wellbeing is ignored in the strategy.

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## **Policy QE2 – Restoring Degraded Areas and Managing and Creating High Quality New Environments**

**Question ENV1:** Do you agree with the suggested list of issues a – f on page 65 that a revised Policy QE2 could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which you think a revised Policy QE2 should not include? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

The development of brownfield land is unlikely to be of strategic importance within the AONBs. Brownfield sites are likely to be small scale and their redevelopment would be addressed through more local policies in LDFs.

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Are there any additional issues which you think a revised Policy QE2 should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

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**Question ENV2:** Which Option on page 65 would you prefer Policy QE2 to follow, and why?

Please tick one box       Option 1: Needs Led  
                                          Option 2: Growth Led  
                                          Option 3: Competitiveness Led

Please provide reasons for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

.....  
**Question ENV3:** Are there any other strategic options that you think we should consider in relation to restoring degraded areas and managing and creating high quality new environments?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If yes, please explain your option(s) and provide reasons for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question ENV4:** Which, if any, of the means for implementing Policy QE2 outlined in a - c on page 66 do you think would be most appropriate, and why?

Please provide reasons for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

## **Policy QE4 – Greenery, Urban Green Space and Public Spaces**

**Question ENV5:** Do you agree with the list of issues a – f on page 67 that it is suggested Policy QE4 could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which a revised Policy QE4 should not include? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

The Board welcomes all the issues suggested for the revised policy. We consider that green infrastructure is important within settlements in providing alternatives to visiting 'honeypot' sites in the AONBs, where overuse could lead to erosion problems. Green infrastructure is not just an issue with urban areas and growth points, it should also be considered in rural settlements. Linking areas of greenspace such as footpaths and cycleways can provide important local facilities.

The policy could also promote the social aspects of green infrastructure, such as providing access to healthy exercise, outdoor play and meeting places.

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Are there any additional issues which you think a revised Policy QE4 should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

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## **Policy QE5 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment**

**Question ENV6:** Do you agree with the list of issues a – j on page 68 that it is suggested Policy QE5 could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which a revised Policy QE5 should not include? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

The Board welcomes the recognition of the importance of historic landscapes and the proposed strengthening of the requirements for historic landscape characterisation. These are particularly important in promoting local distinctiveness and developing a sense of place.

In relation to the AONBs, it is particularly important that key historic landmarks are recognised and protected from inappropriate development. Along with the natural environment, they help to create the natural beauty that forms the basis for AONB designation and attracts visitors to the areas.

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Are there any additional issues which you think a revised Policy QE5 should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

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## **Policy QE6 – The Conservation, Enhancement and Restoration of the Region’s Landscape**

**Question ENV7:** Do you agree with the list of issues a – i on page 69 that it is suggested Policy QE6 could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which a revised Policy QE6 should not include? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

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Are there any additional issues which you think a revised Policy QE6 should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

Supporting text for the landscape policy needs make clear the broad, integrative and holistic concept which landscape is. In the structure of the document, Landscape sits alongside Biodiversity and Historic Environment as if these were somehow an equivalent level of consideration. In reality, landscape encompasses biodiversity and the historic environment, and needs to be seen as a more overarching section. This could be achieved by placing it second in the order, after the new QE1 Integrated Approach. A diagrammatic approach indicating the ‘layers’ of influence on a landscape is especially effective at conveying this idea. When landscape is placed on an apparent level with other more specific topics such as biodiversity and historic environment, it is much more often misinterpreted too narrowly as being only about visual aspects. This misinterpretation is commonly found in the planning system and is contrary to the approach outlined in the European Landscape Convention. The WMRSS should take an active approach to avoid and correct this misinterpretation.

The comments above are also relevant to the proposed placing of protected landscapes policy within landscape. This is likely to exacerbate a commonly observed but unhelpfully narrow perception of what protected landscapes are about. The purposes of AONB designation are broad, as most recently defined by the Countryside Agency in 2001:

- *The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.*
- *In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.*

- *Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.*

It is notable that these purposes do not include the word 'landscape'. National Park purposes are similar, but with a recognised remit for promoting enjoyment and understanding. The Cotswolds Conservation Board has promoting the understanding and enjoyment of the Cotswolds AONB as a second statutory purpose. Recent thinking highlights the need to expand further the purposes of protected landscapes to recognise the broad range of benefits delivered by protected areas. A number of extracts below from Natural England's Draft Protected Landscapes policy July 2009 support this:

*"There is now an increasing expectation that protected landscapes should help deliver a range of ecosystem goods and services including assisting species migration and habitat connectivity as well as increasing the public's enjoyment, contribute to sustainable development and further understanding, health and wellbeing, particularly targeting socially excluded individuals and groups. This will need to be achieved alongside the conservation and enhancement of the nationally important qualities for which protected landscapes are designated."*

*"This highlights a need to engage, demonstrate and promote how England's protected landscapes, through sustainable development, can deliver a wide range of conservation objectives alongside economic and social ones."*

***"Protected landscapes are capable of delivering more for the nation."***

*"A range of environmental and societal benefits flow from our landscape designation system, including links to public health, education and economic agendas. Society as a whole should reap even greater rewards from public investment in landscape and nature conservation. Widening the role of protected landscapes to maximise their contribution to deliver a healthy natural environment, opportunities for public enjoyment and benefit, and contribute to sustainable development should be vigorously explored."*

*"Important improvements to the way protected landscapes deliver environmental and social benefits can be achieved without recourse to amended legislation and we will explore all possible ways, within existing legislation, to help AONBs and National Parks push at the boundaries of their role."*

While the broad, modern concept of landscape is useful in relation to the designation of protected areas, considerations of their management need to go broader still, to include economic activity, transport, tourism and communities, in a sustainable development framework. **We consider therefore that there is a strong case for the protected landscape policy element to be included within the new overarching environmental policy QE1 or preferably a new policy (see below), rather than here in landscape.**

The AONBs in the Malvern Hills, Wye Valley and Cotswolds cross regional boundaries, with parts of their areas being within the South West Region. The South West RSS, published in final draft in 2008 contains a specific policy relating to protected

landscapes. The Countryside Agency in national guidance on planning in relation to AONBs advocated that where AONBs cross administrative boundaries, policy should as far as possible be consistent throughout the AONB. **In common with other protected landscape organisations in the region, we would like to see a policy included in the West Midlands RSS that is consistent with that in the South West RSS, but importantly includes reference to AONB Management Plans in the policy, as in the SE Plan.**

The South West policy is as follows -

***Policy ENV3 Protected Landscapes***

*In Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks and the 14 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the region, the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage will be given priority over other considerations in the determination of development proposals. Development will only be provided for where it would:*

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or*
- Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park, or*
- Foster the social or economic well-being of the communities within the National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, provided that such development is compatible with the pursuit of National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty purposes*

*Consideration will also be given to proposals which promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Particular care will be taken to ensure that no development is permitted outside the National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which would damage their natural beauty, character and special qualities or otherwise prejudice the achievement of National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty purposes.*

Similarly, the South East Plan, published in May 2009 included the following specific policy on AONBs. The Cotswolds AONB is also partly within this region.

***Policy C3: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty***

*High priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the region's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and planning decisions should have regard to their setting. Proposals for development should be considered in that context. Positive land management policies should be developed to sustain the areas' landscape quality. In drafting local development documents, **local planning authorities should have regard to statutory AONB***

**Management Plans. (Board's emboldening)**

*In considering proposals for development, the emphasis should be on small-scale proposals that are sustainably located and designed. Proposals which support the economies and social well being of the AONBs and their communities, including affordable housing schemes, will be encouraged provided that they do not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.*

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**Policy QE7 – Protecting, Managing and Enhancing the Region's Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Resources**

**Question ENV8:** Do you agree with the proposed targets for improving priority habitats set out in Annex C on page 123 and if not, why?

Please tick one box       Agree with proposed targets       Disagree with proposed targets

If you disagree, please provide reasons for your answer.

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## **Policy QE7 – Protecting, Managing and Enhancing the Region’s Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Resources (continued)**

**Question ENV9:** Do you agree with the list of issues a – i on page 70 that it is suggested Policy QE7 could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which a revised Policy QE7 should not include? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

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Are there any additional issues which you think a revised Policy QE7 should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

The Board welcomes the reference to delivering habitat improvements on a landscape scale. This provides the opportunity to integrate with improvements to landscape character and to address visual impacts.

However, it needs to be made clear how these habitat improvements would be brought about in practice through the planning system. There needs to be recognition of the importance of European sites and how the requirements of the Habitats Directive relate to the planning process. Also there are a number of other mechanisms for delivering habitat improvements that could be incorporated into the supporting text.

The text should provide greater explanation of why regional habitat targets are included in the WMRSS, and what the contribution of planning might be to delivering these, as opposed to other types of mechanism (such as conservation ownership, agri-environment schemes and partnership/ community projects).

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**Question ENV10:** Should the focus of Policy QE7 be mainly on the existing Biodiversity

Enhancement Areas, or alternatively those areas identified in the Regional Opportunities Map (on page 72), and why?

Please tick one box       Existing Biodiversity Enhancement Areas  
                                          Areas identified in Regional Opportunities Map

Please provide reasons for your answer.

Though the Regional Opportunities Map may have some shortcomings (relating mostly to the comparability between counties of the data underlying it), it is a much more refined process than the relatively crude Biodiversity Enhancement Areas approach. It takes better account of the detailed distribution of biodiversity resources around the region and is a much better basis for the policy. An attempt should be made when the map is revised to correct the inconsistencies in mapping approach, as the extent of shading across Warwickshire compared to the Shropshire Hills seems unjustified when data on

biodiversity assets are examined. The definition of the term 'Landscape areas' (as found on the accompanying page in the Background paper) should be included with the map on page 72. Without it the meaning of this term is unclear and indeed confusing given that this is within the biodiversity rather than landscape section of the document.

## **See Annex 4 Biodiversity and Planning Position Statement**

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### **Policy QE8 – Forestry and Woodlands**

**Question ENV11:** Do you agree with the list of issues a – i on page 73 that it is suggested Policy QE8 could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which a revised Policy QE8 should not include? If so, please tell us why do you think they should be excluded.

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Are there any additional issues which you think a revised Policy QE8 should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

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### **Protection of Agricultural Land**

**Question ENV12:** Do you agree with the list of issues a – f on page 74 that it is suggested that the text relating to the Protection of Agricultural Land could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which revised text for Protection of Agricultural Land should not include? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

The title 'Protection of Agricultural Land' makes this section hard to place within the structure of the document. The greatest value of agricultural land is in production of food and other products - a social and economic benefit of great importance to sustainability, especially in the context of climate change. While reference needs to be made to the environmental value of farmland, this section perhaps does not belong in the Environment chapter, and may be better titled 'Food and Agricultural Production'.

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Are there any additional issues which you think revised text on the Protection of Agricultural Land should include?

If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

Further explanation is needed on some of the issues, e.g. a) the importance of agricultural land regionally, especially for food security; f) variations in agricultural

importance, including upland areas which may be more marginal economically, but where livestock farming is of great social and environmental importance.

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## **Policy QE9 – The Water Environment**

**Question ENV13:** Do you agree with the list of issues a – i on page 75 that it is suggested Policy QE9 could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which a revised Policy QE9 should not include? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

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Are there any additional issues which you think a revised Policy QE9 should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

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## **Air Quality**

**Question ENV14:** Do you agree with the list of issues a – d on page 76 that could be included in text relating to Air Quality?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues that you think should not be included in revised text for Air Quality? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

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Are there any additional issues which you think revised text for air quality should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

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## **Integrated Approach to the Management of Environmental Resources**

**Question ENV15:** Do you agree with the list of issues a – i on page 79 that it is suggested Policy QE1 could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which a revised Policy QE1 should not include? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

The concept of an over-arching policy on Integrated Management of Environmental Resources is a good one. The list of issues includes many of the important elements,

but the overall clarity of the section could be improved. Examples of delivery mechanisms under issue (i) would aid understanding.

The placing of this section in the consultation document is confusing. As the overarching environmental policy it should be placed at the beginning of the Quality of the Environment section. As outlined above under ENV7, this policy should include the main policy reference to protected landscapes, which represent areas where a particular concentration of benefits derive from a high quality environment.

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Are there any additional issues which you think a revised Policy QE1 should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

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**Question ENV16:** Which Option on page 79 would you prefer Policy QE1 to follow, and why?

Please tick one box

- Option 1: Environment Led
- Option 2: Development Led
- Option 3: Spatial Strategy

Please provide reasons for your answer.

As an environmental policy, this option seems most likely to deliver. The Development Led option would not give adequate recognition to the high quality assets of the region. The explanation of Option 3 is unclear, and the reasons behind the implications cited for all three options are not clear, even after reading the background paper. The clarification of delivery mechanisms mentioned above may help with this.

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## Flood Risk

**Question ENV17:** Do you agree with the suggested list of issues a – 1 on page 84 that a new Flood Risk Policy could include?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Are there any suggested issues which a new Flood Risk Policy should not include? If so, please tell us why you think these issues should be excluded.

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Are there any additional issues which you think a new Flood Risk Policy should include? If so, please tell us what issues you think should be included and why.

This section needs to be tied more closely to the Water Environment section, or may perhaps be better combined within it. Issues c) and i) on catchment-wide flood management and appropriate land management are particularly important. Further attention needs to be given to how these can be delivered. They are not new ideas, and represent the common sense approach of tackling cause rather than effect, but recent practice seems if anything to have veered further away from this approach more towards reactive hard defences.

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## Energy

**Question ENV18:** Do you think that Policy EN2 in the existing WMRSS should be revised to encourage improvements to the energy efficiency of existing buildings as opportunities arise?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Please provide reasons for your answer, including any views you may have on how a regional policy on energy efficiency could be implemented.

Improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings is crucial to achieving carbon emissions targets. All possible levers should be used to support this, e.g. making grants conditional on the conduct of an energy audit and the carrying out of actions according to the energy hierarchy.

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**Question ENV19:** Which of the Renewable Energy Target Options do you think should be used in the WMRSS to promote the development of renewable energy and low carbon technologies in the West

Midlands? (see page 90).

Please tick one box       Option 1: Adopt national target for renewable energy  
                                          Option 2: Adopt Regional Energy Strategy targets for renewable energy  
                                          Option 3: Sub-regional targets for renewable energy

Please provide reasons for your answer.

The Regional Energy Strategy targets pre-date the Climate Change Act mandatory CO2 emissions targets of 80% cut by 2050, and are almost certainly not challenging enough. However the 2010 milestones of either the national or regional target are unattainable from the position now in 2009, and the focus should now be on 2020 targets. The variation in renewable energy potential between sub-regions is probably not significant enough to justify Option 3. If the case can be made that the region has significantly less potential for renewable energy than other parts of the country, a target less than the national one could be justified. For the region to maintain a pro-active stance on climate change however, this may need to be balanced by a higher than average target for carbon savings from energy efficiency.

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**Question ENV20:** Do you think that the WMRSS should set regional targets for specific renewable energy and low carbon technologies such as biomass, combined heat and power (CHP), ground source heat, landfill gas, solar, wind etc?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Please provide reasons for your answer.

Such targets would prove too restrictive and inflexible.

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**Question ENV21:** Do you think that the WMRSS should retain the existing Policy EN1 on Energy Generation (Option 1) or should it set out clear regional criteria to assess whether planning applications for renewable energy and low carbon technologies are appropriately located (Option 2)?

Please tick one box       Option 1: Retain existing Policy EN1  
                                          Option 2: Criteria-based policy to ensure that renewable energy is appropriately located

Please provide reasons for your answer. If you answered Option 2, please also answer Question ENV22.

In this rapidly developing field, greater clarity is needed.

It is agreed that ‘areas with national designations in particular need to be protected from inappropriate development’. However, the key test proposed of ‘the extent to which they (proposals) might affect the integrity of the designation’ is very far from clear. In the case of an AONB, the designation is a legal process which it is hard to see any single development overturning (if this is what is meant by ‘affecting the integrity’). It is the qualities of the area which would be affected more than the designation itself, and with a range of human influences found already, impacts will be by degree and the concept of integrity is a difficult one to apply.

**See Annex 5 Renewable Energy Projects in the Cotswolds AONB.**

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**Question ENV22:** If you think the WMRSS should include clear criteria for assessing applications for renewable energy and low carbon technologies (Option 2 above) please tell us which are the most important factors in assessing where renewable energy and low carbon technologies would be most appropriately located. Please rate each factor on a scale of 0 - 5.

Score (0 is not important, 1 is the least important and 5 is the most important).

Contribution to the global environment

Contribution to the local economy

Impact of fauna, flora and animal life

Noise

Odour

Traffic Implications

Visual Impact

Other factor(s) (please specify below)

Effectiveness of the technology and overall carbon benefit could be added. Subject to other considerations, renewable energy should be located as far as possible where it will be most effective, or else a higher level of development overall will be needed. This may have similar meaning to the first criterion of 'Contribution to the global environment', but is clearer.

Community benefit should also be included, alongside contribution to the local economy. There is plenty of established good practice on the benefits of integrating renewable energy with community benefits.

The criteria identified are on the whole appropriate, but it is felt that a simple scoring process is too crude. The relative weight attached to different criteria may need to vary according to the setting, e.g. in an AONB greater consideration should be given to visual impact, in a tranquil area or close to population greater consideration to noise, etc.

**See Annex 5 Renewable Energy Projects in the Cotswolds AONB.**

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## **Positive Uses of the Green Belt**

**Question ENV23:** Should the WMRSS develop a policy to secure positive use and improvements of the Green Belt and urban fringe (Option 1), or rely on the guidance in national Green Belt policy (PPG2) and the environmental enhancement policies (Option 2), and why?

Please tick one box       Option 1: Develop a Regionally Specific Green Belt Policy  
                                          Option 2: Apply PPG2

Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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## Safeguarding Mineral Resources

**Question M1:** Which Option on page 103 do you think will provide the most effective means of safeguarding the minerals the Region needs for the future? Please state why you have chosen a particular option and provide any evidence that you have to support your view.

Please tick one box       Option 1: Safeguard **Key** Minerals and Infrastructure  
                                          Option 2: Safeguard **All** Minerals and Key Infrastructure

Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question M2:** Do you think that the WMRSS should provide for a higher level of policy protection for Etruria Marl through the designation of a specific regional safeguarding area?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If yes, please provide reasons for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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If no, why do you think a higher level of protection is not required?

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**Question M3:** In relation to issues related to Safeguarding Areas (see page 99), should there be a different approach for safeguarding in rural and urban areas?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If yes, what should the approach be for urban and rural areas? Please explain the different approaches you would use and how you think they could be operated in those areas.

**NO RESPONSE**

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If no, please give reasons for your views.

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**Question M4:** What should the threshold for development be when consulting on non mineral developments in Minerals Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) / Mineral Consultation Areas (MCAs) An example could be as follows:

Non-Mineral Development in a MCA comprising more than:

5000 sq metres for offices/retail/tourist/leisure/development  
2 hectares for any Use Class B1, B2, B8  
1 hectare for any residential development

Should the threshold be based on end use or developable areas in hectares? Should it be set at different levels for different minerals? Please provide your views and your reasons for them.

**NO RESPONSE**

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## **Safeguarding Mineral Resources continued**

**Question M5:** What minerals related infrastructure should be safeguarded in the Region? These could be for example:

Sites / facilities for concrete batching  
the manufacture of coated materials  
other concrete products

the handling, processing and distribution of substitute, recycled and secondary aggregate material using local rivers, inland waterways and rail.

Please state your reasons and provide evidence to support your view. Please provide a list of key sites/facilities that should be safeguarded.

**NO RESPONSE**

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What mechanisms should be used to safeguard these sites and facilities? For example, defining a buffer zone around each facility/site. Please state your reasons and provide evidence to support your view.

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**Question M6:** Do you think that minerals resources should be safeguarded in areas covered by national designations for landscape, wildlife conservation and cultural heritage?

Please tick one box       Minerals resources should be safeguarded in designated areas  
                                          Minerals resources should not be safeguarded in designated areas

Please provide reasons and where possible provide evidence for your answer.

Safeguarding mineral resources does not necessarily imply working of these minerals within a foreseeable time frame. Minerals are mostly sterilised by other forms of development. This is less likely within a designated area, but if anything the safeguarding of minerals may reduce the threat to the designated area from other forms of development.

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**Question M7:** Is there a need for a regional safeguarding policy on coal? Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) to support your view.

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If yes, what matters should the policy address?

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question M8:** In updating Policy M4 (Energy Minerals) in the existing WMRSS is there a need to place more emphasis on realising the opportunities available from existing technologies to release energy sources from worked and unworked coal seams in the coalfields of the West Midlands? Are there any other matters which an updated Policy M4 should address?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

If yes, please explain (and where possible, provide evidence) to support your view.

**NO RESPONSE**

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If no, please explain (and where possible, provide evidence) to support your view.

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Are there any other matters which an updated Policy M4 should address?

Educational/Health/Sport/Cultural biodiversity/conservation opportunities from redundant minerals workings.

Through partnership working there are opportunities for the restoration of mineral sites to contribute to a greater offering around education and health and wellbeing.

Old quarries such as the stone quarry on Fish Hill Broadway can and are moving towards a site for the education of young people and adults in the areas of flora, fauna, conservation and management, biodiversity, sustainability and geology. Such partnership arrangements though embryonic show the vision that could be applied elsewhere in the County.

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## **Future Supplies of Construction Aggregates**

**Question M9:** Do you think that the indicative apportionment outlined in Table 4 on page 106 is realistic?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question M10:** Which of the three Options on page 109 do you think would provide both an adequate and sustainable supply of aggregates up to 2026 in the West Midlands?

- Please tick one box
- Option 1: Apportion future supplies by existing methods
  - Option 2: Apportion future supplies using different sub regions
  - Option 3: Apportion future supplies using different sub regions and methods

Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question M11:** In relation to the contribution of alternate materials to future supply (see page 108), what additional policy guidance set out in Policy M3 (The Use of Alternative Sources of Materials) of the WMRSS is required to reduce the reliance on aggregates and increase the use of alternate materials in construction?

Do you have any suggestions for additional regional policies/guidance that could reduce the reliance on aggregates and increase the use of alternate materials in construction?

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question M12:** Do you think that the provision of future supplies of aggregates in the Region can be determined by applying one or more of the following policies, provisions or concepts? Please tick the relevant boxes and give reasons for your choices.

- Future Patterns of Housing and Employment growth
- Existing Mineral Infrastructure
- Local Resource Availability
- Environmental Acceptability and Designations
- None of the above
- Other (please specify)

Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question M13:** Do you agree with the Section 4(4) Authorities that the sub regions set out on page 106 are the most appropriate for carrying out any future sub regional apportionment of aggregates in the West Midlands?

- Please tick one box
- Existing Sub-Regions Authorities
  - Sub-Regions Proposed by Section 4(4)

Please provide reasons for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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## **Future Brick Clay Provision**

**Question M14:** What policies do you think would best ensure that separate long term off site stockpiling of Etruria Marl and fireclays can be provided in the Region?

Do you have any suggestions for policies to ensure that separate long term off site stockpiling of Etruria Marl and fireclays can be provided in the Region?

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question M15:** Which of the Options for meeting the shortfall in Brick Clay supplies (see page 117) would provide the most sustainable way of meeting the industry's future needs?

Please tick one box       Option 1: Regional Supply Requirement  
                                          Option 2: Supplies for Individual Brickworks  
                                          Option 3: Future Supplies from Resource Areas

Please provide reasons for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question M16:** Do you think that the 13 million tonnes shortfall in clay supplies could be met from quarries within the Region?

Please tick one box       Yes       No

Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) for your answer.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Question M17:** What planning and environmental criteria should be used to identify broad locations for the development of long term off-site stockpiles of clays (including fireclays)? Please provide reasons to support your views.

**Suggested Planning and Environmental Criteria To Identify Broad Locations For Stockpiles Of Clays (Including Fireclays)**

Proximity to brick clay supplies  
 Proximity to existing brickworks

- O Good access to road/rail
- O Proximity to existing/future markets
- O Long term accessibility
- O Locations where it is possible to minimise/avoid significant environmental impacts
- O Other (please specify)

Please provide reasons (and where possible, evidence) to support your views.

**NO RESPONSE**

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**Please send your completed questionnaire by post to:**

**WMRSS Phase Three Revision**  
West Midlands Regional Assembly  
Regional Partnership Centre  
Albert House  
Quay Place  
92-93 Edward Street  
Birmingham  
B1 2RA

**Or by fax: 0121 245 0201**

**Or by email: [wmrss@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:wmrss@wmra.gov.uk)**

(Electronic copies of the questionnaire can be downloaded from [www.wmra.gov.uk](http://www.wmra.gov.uk))

**Or complete online: [www.wmra.gov.uk](http://www.wmra.gov.uk)**

(visit the Assembly's homepage for more details).

**All submissions must be received by 14th August 2009**

Any questions relating to the WMRSS Phase Three Consultation should be directed to the WMRSS Team at West Midlands Regional Assembly on **0121 678 1010** or **[wmrss@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:wmrss@wmra.gov.uk)**