Annex A
Guiding Principles for the West Midlands RPG Review

Through the various stages of consultation a set of Guiding Principles for the Review was defined. Their main role was to provide a framework of values to guide decisions and choices on the content of the RPG and subsequent development plans. This approach was adopted in order to help ensure an integrated and sustainable approach to the future planning of the Region.

The agreed framework of the Guiding Principles is outlined below. Although expressed as eight statements, they are linked together combining to guide towards an integrated and sustainable approach to the development of the Region. They are listed in no order of priority.

Principle A
To secure more sustainable patterns of development throughout the Region

- stemming the unsustainable decentralisation of people, jobs and other activities away from the Region's major urban areas by improving the quality of the urban environment as a whole;

- making the best use of existing urban capacity, built environment and infrastructure, while also respecting environmental quality and historical heritage;

- improving or where necessary replacing existing infrastructure, if it is agreed that it has passed the end of its viable life, and reusing existing buildings;

- ensuring that development is directed sequentially with priority given to promoting brownfield development in sustainable locations, but not where it is detrimental to the quality of the environment.

Principle B
To encourage a better balance between jobs, houses and services within each part of the Region in order to create more sustainable and stable communities

- providing opportunities for an appropriate mix of new development, including mixed uses in some locations, in order to limit the need for travel;

- adopting an integrated approach to policy across all regeneration and other development areas and administrative boundaries;

- using the principles of 'plan, monitor and manage' to control the release of land and achieve more sustainable patterns of development;

- being sensitive to local requirements and needs in order to achieve a better qualitative, as well as quantitative, balance of development both in location and social terms.

Principle C

To encourage economic growth and increased prosperity throughout the RPG period which serves the broad sustainable development needs of the Region

- assisting development plans to enable the Region to meet its longer term economic potential and employment needs in line with the aims of the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Sustainability Strategy;

- encouraging higher quality jobs, particularly where they meet sustainability criteria;

- providing types of employment suited to the changing needs of the local work force, urban and rural, including wider access to better quality jobs;

- promoting and enabling new economic activity where it can deliver environmental benefits and social benefits, particularly in areas of need.

Principle D

To ensure that regional inequalities in education, employment, health, environment, and social and cultural potential are narrowed

- ensuring that education, employment and health opportunities are accessible to all urban and rural communities, including support for appropriate community development to encourage the take up of such opportunities;

- promoting the development of appropriately located social, cultural and recreational facilities to meet the needs of communities;

- ensuring that there is sufficient housing of the right quantity, quality, type, tenure and affordability to meet people's needs locally;

- addressing environmental inequalities in air pollution, water quality, open space provision and access to wildlife.

Principle E

To facilitate appropriate development in rural communities where job and service needs exist

- supporting rural communities by providing appropriate development opportunities in areas with potential for meeting local employment and service needs without encouraging further decentralisation;

- providing policy support for local initiatives, particularly where they address local needs identified by the community;

- improving the availability and range of services in rural areas;

- encouraging the diversification of the rural economy

Principle F

To protect and enhance the quality of the environment, strengthening the interrelationship with economic and social progress and health and well-being

- protecting and enhancing the Region's natural, historic, and cultural assets and recognising the importance of conserving regional character and local distinctiveness;

- planning environmental enhancements as an integral part of development and ensuring that all significant adverse environmental impacts are mitigated or compensated;

- ensuring that the integral role the environment plays in achieving economic and social goals is realised;

- reducing waste, pollution, the unsustainable use of natural resources, and the negative effects of climate change;

- requiring high quality design in all development and supporting measures that minimise environmental impact;

- ensuring that the Region meets or exceeds its responsibilities in addressing national and international obligations.

Principle G

To ensure that the Region's economic and social potential is not undermined by congestion and inaccessibility, but is supported through the provision of a better balanced and improved transport system

- aspiring to a fully integrated, multi modal transport system serving all parts of the Region;

- ensuring that the transport infrastructure is developed in ways that support and help drive forward the aims of the Region's regeneration programmes;

- encouraging more sustainable patterns of living to reduce the need and demand for travel;

- reducing the impact of transport on the environment

Principle H

To ensure that every part of the West Midlands has a positive role to play in achieving a wider regional vision, and to have full regard to the linkages and relationships that exist between the West Midlands and adjacent areas

- preserving and enhancing the diversity of different sub-regions, incorporating both urban and rural areas, and their potential for contributing to a better West Midlands;

- promoting consistent policy approaches with adjacent areas in neighbouring Regions, and seeking to manage spatial relationships that cross regional boundaries in a sustainable manner;

- helping to develop the specific roles of different sub-regions to enhance their regional, national and international standing.