



Andy Street
Board Chair
Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP
c/o LEP Executive
Baskerville House, Ground Floor
Centenary Square
Birmingham, B1 2ND

Email: gbslep@birmingham.gov.uk
Telephone: 0121 303 4369
Fax: 0121 303 6379

Cllr Brian Edwards
Leader of South Staffordshire Council
Council Offices
Codsall
Staffordshire
WV8 1PX

27th October 2014

Dear Cllr Edwards,

BDP Public Examination – GBSLEP Strategic Housing Needs Study

I am writing in response to your letter of 5th September to Sir Albert Bore, the Leader of Birmingham City Council, signed by yourself and the leaders of North Warwickshire, Stratford-on-Avon and Wychavon Councils.

The population of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) area is projected to continue to grow, driven mainly, but not solely, by the continued growth of Birmingham. The LEP has recognised the challenge which this presents to us in terms of ensuring that we are able to provide a sufficient supply of housing to meet our needs over the next twenty years and so the Board took the decision to commission the Strategic Housing Needs Study to help us to develop a planned response to this challenge. The study was not designed by, or for, one local authority to support their Local Plan proposals, but by and for the LEP area as a whole.

In undertaking this exercise we have been aware that the GBSLEP area is not entirely self-contained and that there will inevitably be implications for adjoining areas (which, we recognise, will have their own challenges). In this respect there are clearly strong links between Birmingham and the Black Country, and I am therefore pleased that the Black Country Local Authorities have joined with us in commissioning this work.

The "Related Authorities Briefing" to which you refer was intended to provide a factual update on the progress of the Study and to ensure that authorities adjoining and with connections to the GBSLEP and the Black Country were kept up to date with progress. It was intended to be a helpful update to engage you and your colleagues in the process. I understand that unfortunately it was not received this way and that it was not possible for those leading the briefing to complete their update.

So far as the GBSLEP is concerned, stages 1 and 2 of the Study have demonstrated that there is a clear need for additional land for new housing to be identified to meet the housing needs that will arise in the GBSLEP area in the period to 2031. Stage 3 of the Study is a technical piece of work which will identify scenarios for accommodating this growth. It will not propose a Preferred Option – this will result from a consideration of the report by the LEP authorities and it will then be taken forward through the GBSLEP Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth.

As you would expect, the stage 3 work will focus on the GBSLEP and Black Country areas – but I am sure that you would agree that it is not possible for a piece of work of this nature to ignore the fact that there are potential cross-boundary issues.

This is not a new or a controversial point. It is for example already recognised in the recently published inspector's report on the North Warwickshire Core Strategy, which states *"..... it does seem likely that Birmingham and Tamworth at least will be looking to the Borough to meet some of their needs."* (paragraph 15). In line with this a modification to the Strategy has been agreed which acknowledges this and commits the Borough Council to review their plan if this is confirmed.

Elsewhere, in South Worcestershire it appears that the emerging strategy will be planning for a level of new housing which will be above what would be required to meet local demographic growth. This implies that there will be additional migration into that area – and it is reasonable to expect that some of this may be from the study area. It would be strange if a study looking at housing requirements in the GBSLEP area did not take account of this.

As we move forward with this process, we will continue to work in an open and transparent way. I am sure that this will mean that there will be a need for further discussion on these issues with you and your colleague authorities, and I look forward to these discussions taking place in a positive way, just as discussions under Duty to Cooperate do in preparation of your local plans.

I am copying this response to the leaders of the other Councils who were joint signatures to your letter, the Black Country Local Authority Leaders and the Birmingham Development Plan Programme Officer.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Street
Chair, Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP

Copy to:

Cllr Chris Saint, Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Cllr P Middleborough, Leader of Wychavon District Council
Cllr M.E. Stanley, Leader of North Warwickshire Borough Council
Sir Albert Bore, Leader of Birmingham City Council
Cllr Roger Lawrence, Leader of Wolverhampton City Council
Cllr Sean Coughlan, Leader of Walsall Council
Cllr Darren Cooper, Leader of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr David Sparks, Leader of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Mr I Kemp, Birmingham Development Plan Programme Officer.