

Matter 6

**Statement on behalf of
West Midlands Planning & Transportation Sub-Committee**

1. Will the waste strategy set out in Policy W1 and other policies provide an effective framework for planning the sustainable management of waste in the region?

1.1 The Metropolitan Authorities support the overall strategy for waste as expressed in Policy W1 and paragraphs 8.77 – 8.83. The strategy is also supported in principle in separate representations by Coventry City Council (658/1426), Birmingham (676/1489), Dudley (414/903), Solihull (493/1202), Walsall (393/991) and Wolverhampton (530/933).

1.2 Overall, the Metropolitan Authorities consider that the suite of waste policies in the RSS will provide an effective framework for managing waste in the region.

1.3 However, we feel that Policy W1 partly duplicates national policy rather than relating it to the regional situation. For example, the statement that waste should be considered as a resource and the reference to the waste hierarchy are not regionally specific and are already set out in the national waste strategy and in national policy guidance.¹

2. Does the strategy achieve the right balance between certainty and flexibility, e.g. in relation to cross – boundary waste issues?

2.1 We consider that it does, as the “equivalent self sufficiency” principle appears to recognise the need for sharing of facilities across WPA boundaries. It is not always possible to have facilities in every authority to manage all types of waste, particularly within the Metropolitan area. Sharing of facilities may be the most cost-effective and sustainable option for Municipal waste.

2.2 Authorities can rarely afford to bring forward new Municipal waste infrastructure on their own but rely on public/ private partnerships, often involving more than one authority. Commercial facilities may also have to accept wastes from a wide area to be viable.

2.3 Walsall Council has provided examples of such arrangements in its statement (6/Walsall Council/393). In a separate representation, Solihull MBC (429/1202) has also sought recognition of cross-boundary movement of waste to “shared” facilities in Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire.

¹ Core Document CD 92, paragraph 3 and Waste Strategy for England 2007, paragraphs 19 - 22 - to be added to Library

2.4 It would be helpful if cross-boundary issues could be more explicitly recognised in Policy W1 or perhaps in paragraph 8.80.

3. Are the targets for waste management in policy W2 realistic and deliverable? How will account be taken of future changes, e.g. arising from further technical work?

3.1 The Metropolitan Authorities' main concern (see 443/3397) is that the targets in Table 5 will need to be revised if the Panel recommends any major changes to the level and distribution of housing across the region.

3.2 We would also draw attention to the separate representations made by Walsall Council (393/992) concerning the status of the targets in Tables 5 and 6, the need for flexibility over how they are applied at a local level and the need for clear mechanisms for monitoring and review.

4. Are the policies for the provision and protection of waste facilities, W3 to W7 soundly based? Are the criteria justified and appropriate; should there be greater reference to environmental impacts?

4.1 The Metropolitan Authorities support the policies in principle and agree they are soundly based, although we have expressed concerns on matters of detail in our original representations (443/3398 – 443/3401). These concerns are explained in more detail below.

4.2 We feel that **Policy W3** should clarify whether regional/ sub-regional requirements are additional to, or part of, the treatment gaps identified in Table 7. It should also explain how these specific requirements relate to the overall strategy towards “equivalent self-sufficiency” expressed in Policy W1. In a separate representation we note that Walsall Council (393/994) has also sought clarification on the need for facilities of a regional/ sub-regional scale, how they will be delivered and who will be responsible.

4.3 Although the Metropolitan Authorities support **Policy W4** in principle, we should point out that Birmingham City Council has commented separately (676/1492) that the policy should not preclude relocation of existing facilities where this is the most sustainable option. One suggestion as to how this might be addressed is for the policy to protect the capacity of existing facilities rather than the actual facilities themselves. We understand that this approach has been suggested in technical work undertaken for the Black Country Core Strategy.

4.4 Such an approach would allow for relocation and replacement of existing waste management capacity elsewhere, if redevelopment is unavoidable or if there are clear advantages in relocating the facility. For example, it may be advantageous to relocate a facility if the operator wishes to expand, and the existing site is severely constrained by its size or the nature of its surroundings.

4.5 The point we wish to make in relation to **Policy W6** is that the Metropolitan Authorities contain both MUA and non-MUA areas, and it is therefore not clear whether or not this policy applies to us.

4.6 We feel that the 2nd, 3rd and 6th bullets of **Policy W7** duplicate or partly duplicate national policy guidance in the following ways:

- PPG2: Green Belts already allows for essential facilities which are genuinely required for uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it²
- PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation already seeks to prevent harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests and requires harmful proposals to demonstrate there is no reasonable alternative that would result in less or no harm³
- PPS10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management already allows for waste management in the Green Belt where there are particular locational requirements or wider environmental and economic benefits.⁴

5. Do policies W8 to W11 give appropriate guidance for Waste Development Documents and LDDs?

5.1 We agree that Policies W9, W11 and W12 give appropriate guidance, although we have said in our representations that they could be further clarified/ expanded in the following ways.

5.2 With regard to **Policy W9**, we feel that it needs to clarify how on-site recycling of CD&EW should be addressed, and the relationship between this policy and Policy SR3 should be explained. We also suggest that description of “urban quarries” in paragraph 8.100 could be expanded. We would also like to draw attention to the representations made by Birmingham City Council and Walsall Council on this policy, which are summarised below.

5.3 Birmingham City Council (676/1496) considers that specific sites or locations for managing CD&EW only need to be identified in LDFs/MWLDFs where there is an identified shortfall in recycling capacity or where there is evidence that facilities cannot be located in employment areas. We know that modern “urban quarry” type operations can be successfully integrated into such areas without causing harm to adjoining uses. A good example of this in the Metropolitan area is Coleman and Company in Great Barr, Birmingham.⁵

5.4 Walsall Council (393/1000) considers that the policy should make a clear distinction between “urban quarries” and open air crushing activities

² Core Document CD 85, paragraphs 1.4, 3.5

³ Core Document CD 91, paragraph 1 (vi)

⁴ Core Document CD 92, paragraph 3

⁵ Coleman and Company’s “Urban Quarry” - Production of high value aggregates from construction, demolition and excavation waste (2006), WRAP – to be added to Library.

which should generally be discouraged in urban areas (other than as a temporary activity associated with on-site recycling).

5.5 We support **Policy W11** as we recognise that landfill needs to be adequately catered for.⁶ There are many examples of despoiled or degraded land in the Metropolitan area. They include quarries operating under existing mineral permissions with conditions requiring restoration by landfill.

5.6 Infilling with inert materials is also essential to the reclamation of areas where limestone working or mining has taken place in the past. Without landfilling it would not be possible to restore these sites and bring them back into a beneficial use. This would create dereliction as well as public safety issues.

5.7 **Policy W12** needs further clarification along similar lines to Policy W6 (see paragraph 4.5 above).

5.8 With regard to our objections, we have nothing to add to our original representation on **Policy W8** (443/3402) except to note that a separate representation by Birmingham (676/1495) goes into more detail. Although we have commented on **Policy W10** it is primarily a Black Country issue. Our representation (443/3404) has therefore been addressed in the statement by Walsall Council (6/Walsall Council/393) and we have nothing further to add.

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⁶ Core Document CD 93, paragraph 3