

NEWS RELEASE



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Have your say on the future shape of the West Midlands

A major consultation launched today (8th January) by the West Midlands Regional Assembly, will give individuals, businesses and organisations in the West Midlands the chance to influence the big planning decisions in the Region over the next 15-20 years.

The eight week 'Options' consultation, which runs until the 5th March, is focusing on the major issues of housing, employment land, transport and waste disposal. The Options Consultation is part of the Phase 2 Revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy - which sets out the framework for development across the West Midlands over the next 15-20 years. The consultation will give people in the Region the opportunity to tell the Assembly, in its statutory role as the Regional Planning Body, how they want to see the balance between homes, jobs, congestion and the environment by answering key questions such as those below.

- **Housing:** What level and type of new housing development is right for the West Midlands? Can it accommodate up to 575,000 new homes by 2026 and if so where should they be built and how many should be built in your area?
- **Employment:** How much land should be set aside in the West Midlands for industry, offices and retail developments, and where should they go? Within the West Midlands a number of strategic centres have been identified, which could be a focus for new retail and office investment and development, do you agree with this?
- **Waste:** Should the West Midlands provide alternatives to landfill for all the waste it generates? If so where should new waste facilities go?

- **Transport:** What criteria should be used to decide how many parking spaces are needed for different types and sizes of development? Do you think Strategic park and ride facilities are needed at certain locations? Should road charging be introduced to reduce traffic congestion in parts of the Region?

Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Cllr David S Smith said: “We have developed the Options in consultation with local authorities across the Region as well as technical experts in key areas such as housing, waste and logistics. But it is very important now that we hear from as many individuals, businesses and organisations in the West Midlands as possible. The work that we are doing now and the decisions made following on from the consultation will have a major impact on their area over the next 20 years and beyond.”

Assembly Chief Executive, Olwen Dutton, added: “The overall objective of the West Midlands Spatial Strategy is to reverse the current flow of people and jobs moving out of the major urban areas in the West Midlands and at the same time tackle the challenges faced by the Region’s rural areas, such as affordable housing and transport and accessibility. I hope that by getting involved with this consultation people will take the opportunity to have their say and not only help shape the future of their local area, but of the Region as a whole.”

To get involved and have their say people can complete the Options questionnaire on-line via the Assembly website at www.wmra.gov.uk/wmrss or contact the Assembly on 0121 245 0200 or by email to wmrss@wmra.gov.uk to request a hard copy of the Options Document and questionnaire. The closing date for returning questionnaires is 5th March 2007.

A Sample of the ‘Options’ for the West Midlands

Housing:

There are three different Options concerning the number of new homes which need to be built between 2001 and 2026. Option One is based on the original figures set out in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, Option Two is based on information given by the Strategic Authorities in

terms of how many new homes they can provide. Option Three is based on the high levels of demand set out in the Government’s revised Housing Projections. Which of these figures do you think is the most appropriate and where could the new houses needed in your area be built?

| Area | Option One | Option Two | Option Three |
|---------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| West Midlands Total | 381,000 | 491,200 | 575,000 |

Employment Land:

It is important that there is always a pool of land available for employment purposes in each district, to make sure that people have access to work. This can include land which could be used for offices or retail developments as well as more large scale developments such as major manufacturing sites, business parks and even large warehousing and logistic sites (over 50 hectares). The Options will also look at land for office and retail development. An example option is asking where new Regional Investment Sites (25-50 hectares) should go.

Waste:

The main principle underpinning the Waste Options is that each Waste Planning Authority within the Region should in future identify sites to manage all the waste (Municipal/household, Commercial and Industrial and Construction and Demolition Waste) in its areas and that only the residues from any waste treatment processes should be landfilled. In terms of landfill, the existing permitted landfill capacity should meet the needs of the Region until 2017 in the worst case and possibly until 2020 in the best case. This means that variety of new facilities will need to be built ranging from small composting sites to large recycling and recovery plants - a key question is where these new, alternative waste management facilities should go and whether they should be allowed on open land or possibly Green Belt.

Transport

The Transport Options cover a range of issues including Strategic Park and Ride, Car Parking Standards, Road User Charging and the Role of Airports in the Region. Of these it is perhaps the Options on Car Parking Standards which are the most significant across the Region as these focus on what needs to be done to ensure appropriate levels of parking supply and availability across the city. Another key area is the introduction of demand management/road user charging to reduce congestion in some of the busiest parts of the Region. Also of significance is the role of the Region’s airports. Questions include whether Birmingham International Airport should continue as the Region’s principal international airport, complemented by Coventry Airport. Strategic Park and Ride considers whether London is the only target destination or if there should be more.

- ENDS -

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Notes to editors:

1. The Regional Planning Partnership carries out the Regional Planning Body function on behalf of the West Midlands Regional Assembly. It has a statutory duty to review matters relating to the Regional Spatial Strategy and matters relating to the ongoing planning and development of the Region.
2. The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy is part of the statutory development plan and includes the Regional Transport Strategy. It provides a framework for all Local Development Frameworks and Local Transport Plans and aims to influence wider strategies and plans. It is the Government who publishes the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and therefore it is Government policy.
3. The West Midlands Regional Assembly ('the Assembly') was established in 1999 to give a representative voice to the West Midlands region, an area which covers the metropolitan areas of Birmingham, the Black Country, Coventry and Solihull and the Shire Counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire including Telford & Wrekin, Staffordshire including Stoke-on-Trent, and Warwickshire and Worcestershire.
4. The Assembly consists of 100 members including 68 elected councillors nominated by the 38 local authorities in the Region, 16 members elected by the business sector and 16 representing other economic and social partners.
5. The Assembly has three areas of core business: It is the Regional Planning Body, it is responsible for scrutinising the operation of Advantage West Midlands and it acts as the representative voice of the West Midlands.
6. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk