

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **Regional Assembly to recommend future house building figures to Government**

After many months of discussion and debate, housing proposals for the West Midlands are shortly to be decided with major implications for future supply and affordability across the Region.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) proposed housing figures are to be discussed at a meeting of the Regional Planning Partnership on Monday 22 October. If agreed, the figures will be recommended to the Secretary of State as part of the RSS Phase 2 Revision.

Having undertaken extensive technical work and wide ranging consultations (including earlier discussions with Members of the Partnership), papers for the October meeting have now been circulated which set out a recommended Preferred Option. As well as provision of new housing over the next 20 years, this also addresses a range of important issues for the development of the Region. These include climate change, employment land provision, town and city centres, transport and waste management.

The Preferred Option proposes that some 365,600 homes should be built across the Region between 2006 and 2026 with a major emphasis on using brownfield sites particularly in the Major Urban Areas of Birmingham, the Black Country, Coventry and the North Staffordshire conurbation. It is suggested that this is a workable match to the Government's requirement to increase house building and will also ensure that the longer term housing needs of the West Midlands should be met over the next 20 years.

Councillor Rex Roberts, Chair of the Assembly's Regional Planning Partnership said: "The Regional Assembly is very aware of the Government's agenda to increase housing in all areas and has worked hard with partners to ensure the housing projections of 380,000 are met as closely as possible. We feel we have responded positively to this challenge, particularly to ensure that the number of affordable homes in the Region can be increased.

"We have listened very carefully to the views of all our partners and are confident our recommendation is the best option for our Region. It ensures housing development is not treated in isolation but is part of set of proposals for sustainable and well balanced communities. This means adopting an integrated approach where the need for more affordable homes marries up with wider concerns such as adequate provision for transport (particularly public transport), employment opportunities and a high quality environment in both urban and rural areas."

Cllr Roberts further emphasised: "It is important that the Region has the right infrastructure to support its aspirations for housing and employment growth. The Assembly is looking to its partners, in both the private and public sectors, including government, to provide the funding and investment required in transport systems and wider infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, water supply and flood protection. This will be crucial if we are to create attractive and sustainable communities across the West Midlands."

Regional Planning Partnership Members have already agreed that Urban and Rural Renaissance - the underlying principles of the existing Spatial Strategy - must be maintained. This means developing the Major Urban Areas in such a way that the unsustainable trend of people and jobs leaving these areas is reversed; allowing the rural areas to focus on meeting their own housing and employment needs including the diversification of the rural economy

Achieving Urban and Rural Renaissance will also be crucial to responding to the challenge of Climate Change - a further theme that has been central to the development of the Preferred Option - where new policies have been introduced to encourage a reduction in emissions whilst also ensuring new developments are adaptable to climate change conditions.

The next meeting of the RPP to approve the Preferred Option will be held on Monday 22 October in Birmingham.

- ENDS -

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**Notes to editors:**

1. The West Midlands Regional Assembly ('the Assembly') represents a wide range of democratic, social and economic interests throughout the West Midlands region.
2. The Assembly's membership consists of 100 nominated representatives, with 68 members representing the local authority, 16 representing the business sector and 16 representing other economic and social partners.
3. The Assembly provides a platform for organisations to consider matters of common concern including: regional planning, transport, economic prosperity, sustainability, culture and Europe. It also supports regional policy forums and task groups on social inclusion, faith, housing, life long learning/skills, health, rural and community safety/crime reduction.

4. The Assembly works in partnership with Advantage West Midlands (AWM) the regional development agency (RDA), the Government Office West Midlands (GOWM), Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM) the West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA) and other regional and local organisations from across the West Midlands region.
5. The Assembly's Regional Planning Partnership is the designated Regional Planning Body for the West Midlands, and is also responsible for scrutinising the operation of the region's RDA, Advantage West Midlands.
6. For further information, visit our website [www.wmra.gov.uk](http://www.wmra.gov.uk)
7. The Independent Performance Assessment was undertaken by the National Audit Office as part of an examination of all 8 English Regional Development Agencies at the request of the Department of Trade and Industry.
8. The final report can be downloaded from Advantage West Midlands' website [www.advantagewm.co.uk](http://www.advantagewm.co.uk)