

NEWS RELEASE

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Government Housing Study Prompts Regional Assembly Concerns

The West Midlands Regional Assembly today registered concern about the recommendations of a government-commissioned study into higher housing numbers for the Region.

The study looks into how and where an additional 12,500 to 80,000 houses could be delivered by 2026, over and above the 365,000 new homes proposed by the Assembly in its December 2007 Revisions to the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Cllr David S. Smith, Chairman of the Regional Assembly said: "The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy is a brave strategy which, at the heart of it, is very clearly focused on the need for a renaissance of our urban areas as well as supporting rural communities to achieve their potential. We, along with local authorities and our other regional partners, will be analysing the Nathaniel Lichfield Study in great depth to see if it is right for the West Midlands, can be delivered in a sustainable manner and with the right infrastructure."

The Nathaniel Lichfield study will be submitted by Government Office for the West Midlands as part of the evidence for next year's Examination in Public of the Regional Spatial Strategy Revisions. This will provide a forum for an expert and independent panel to examine the consultants' higher housing ranges against the strategy promoted by the Regional Assembly and its partners.

Cllr Smith added: "Our response, when it is submitted in December will take into account the views of the Region as a whole. Nobody disagrees that there is a need for new housing in our Region and the draft strategy submitted by the Assembly already sets ambitious house building targets. But it is pointless and dangerous to set even higher housing targets if there is no realistic prospect that these targets can be delivered and that the full range of facilities – roads, schools, open space and so on – will be provided to support them.

"It remains to be seen whether the government will accept the view of London-based consultants or trust the collective wisdom and expertise of a wide range of regional partners including the expertise of the 38 local authorities that underpins the strategy submitted by the Assembly."

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For further information please contact Jay Rana, press officer on 0121 245 0181.

Notes to the Editors

About the West Midlands Regional Assembly

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 is the Regional Planning Body, 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.

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