

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Government Office housing study raises concerns**

West Midlands Regional Assembly, which includes representatives from the Region's local planning authorities, expressed grave concern today over the shape of an emerging study commissioned by the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM).

Consultant Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners were asked by GOWM to look at options for higher housing growth across the Region to meet the government's aspirations set out in last year's Housing Green Paper. Their work will take account of the recently-published 'Advice to the Minister' on higher regional housing levels prepared by the government's National Housing and Planning Advice Unit (NHPAU). This national advice suggested that a range of between 19,000 and 22,600 should be built annually up to 2026.

The Nathaniel Lichfield study was commissioned by GOWM in response to West Midlands Regional Assembly's submission to the Minister of its Revisions to the Regional Spatial Strategy. This proposed an annual average of 18,280 additional homes for the Region for the next 20 years and had achieved a broad consensus across the Region. Government Minister, Baroness Andrews felt this figure was too low to meet the Region's housing demand and asked GOWM to commission the housing study.

Cllr David S Smith, Chairman of the Assembly said: "We have always had concerns about GOWM's study as it has the potential to undermine the sustainable growth strategy prepared by the Assembly and its partners after many months of detailed work and consultation. We are now even more concerned having seen the level of detail to which the consultants are working. In proposing ranges of housing figures and broad locations for those houses at the level of individual local authorities, the study is directly

cutting across the work of those local councils who are preparing their own local development frameworks.

“Proper planning requires local knowledge and detailed consultation with local communities, all within the framework of our West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. The GOWM study will be seen by many citizens and local councils as pre-empting the statutory planning process and contrary to local democratic accountability. It also runs counter to the government’s own proposals in its Sub National Review for devolving more decision making to local level”.

**For more information contact Jay Rana, press officer, [j.rana@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:j.rana@wmra.gov.uk) or 0121 245 0181.**

#### **Note to Editors**

1. The West Midlands Regional Assembly is the regional planning body charged by Government with the preparation, monitoring and review of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS). WMRSS is currently being updated through a phased series of three Revisions.
2. WMRSS Phase Two Revision covers housing, employment, transport, town centres and waste policy areas. Revisions are submitted to the government and after scrutiny through Examinations in Public. The final version is issued by government and becomes official government policy.
3. WMRSS Phase Two Revision was submitted to government last December and is due to be debated at an Examination in Public in spring 2009.
4. West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, together with the relevant local development framework, forms the statutory development plan for that local authority area.
5. The National Housing and Planning Advice Unit published its ‘Advice to the Minister about the housing supply range to be tested by Regional Planning Authorities’ on 26 June 2008.
6. Planning and economic development consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners were commissioned by the Government Office for the West Midlands to prepare a study for ‘The Development of Housing Options for the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.’

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