

NEWS RELEASE

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Regional Partners met to Check Plan Delivery

Birmingham City Council House today held a seminar for over 100 of the Region's planners and developers to take the pulse of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.

Organised by the Region's planning body, West Midlands Regional Assembly, the meeting examined the Region's performance over the last year in terms of house building, renewing the Region's big urban areas and town centres, creating employment opportunities, protecting the environment and improving transport.

Chairman of the seminar Mark Middleton, director of policy at the Assembly, said: "With the economy entering a rocky period, it is more important than ever that we look at what is happening across the Region, to see if our regional policies are actually being delivered. House completions, reclaiming derelict land and tackling transport congestion are three key trends that we will need to keep a particularly close eye on."

Delegates heard that there are some hopeful signs of renewal for the Region's major urban areas. The rate of out migration is slowing and educational performance is improving. Across the Region, an average of 233 hectares of employment land has been developed each year since 2000, but there is still a need for a better supply of larger and readily available sites.

Mark Middleton added: "Last year's housing completions continued to exceed the numbers to meet our long term targets, but when we come to measure the current situation next year, we may well be discussing a different picture".

Findings included a significant difference in mean house prices across the Region with Stratford-upon-Avon topping the tables at £275,218 and Stoke-on-Trent coming in at the bottom at £103,601.

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For more information contact Jay Rana, press officer, j.rana@wmra.gov.uk or 0121 245 0181 or visit www.wmra.gov.uk/Planning_and_Regional_Spatial_Strategy/Monitoring_/Monitoring.aspx

Notes to Editor

1. West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) is the Region's development plan for the period to 2026. It is prepared by West Midlands Regional Assembly and submitted to government. When approved, it becomes a statement of government policy and provides the framework for all local development plans prepared by councils across the Region.
2. The Assembly is the regional planning body charged with preparing, reviewing, implementing and monitoring the WMRSS and ensuring that local development plans and major planning applications prepared and determined by the Region's councils deliver regional policies.
3. Each year the Assembly is required to submit an annual monitoring report to the government for its WRMSS. The monitoring report the subject of Monday's seminar covers the financial year 2006/07.

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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