

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Proposed transfer of powers to Regional Development Agencies could halt regeneration, says Assembly Chairman.**

In his acceptance speech following re-election as Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Councillor David S. Smith (Leader of Lichfield District Council), called for plans to transfer responsibility for regional housing, planning and transport to Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to be scrapped.

Cllr David S. Smith commented: "These proposals are ill-timed and simply can't be delivered. The transfer of power to the Development Agencies is unlikely to be completed within the life of the current parliament, and faces a challenging process through both the Commons and the Lords.

These powers are the only part of the Sub National Review that requires primary legislation and the transfer proposals are expected to be included in the Queen's Speech on 11 December. They will then fight for legislative time in the 2009 parliamentary session.

Cllr Smith continued: "Regional Assemblies are currently responsible for these services, and will be until March 2010, at which point power could remain with local government. By pushing these changes through a lengthy Parliamentary process, it leaves Regional Assemblies, Regional Development Agencies and other partners hamstrung. Instead, work could begin now to fight off some of the potential ravages of the growing recession, and ensure onward regeneration momentum."

**ends**

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### **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.'