

NEWS RELEASE

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Your last chance to have your say

People in Shropshire should have their say in a major planning consultation which aims to tackle the challenges faced by the rural parts of the West Midlands such as affordable housing, transport and accessibility.

Consultation on the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision, originally scheduled to be completed back in June, has now been extended to 8 December following discussions with Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM).

GOWM was asked by the government to undertake a study on options that could deliver higher housing numbers than proposed by the Phase Two Revision. GOWM appointed planning consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners to undertake the study which was published on 7 October, and is now available for public viewing.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision has been submitted to government by the West Midlands Regional Assembly for public examination and comments on it must be made by 8 December. At the heart of this overarching planning strategy is a need for a major renaissance of the Region's rural areas.

Cllr Rex Roberts, Chairman of the Assembly's Regional Planning Partnership said: "West Midlands is often thought of as an industrial or urban Region – reality is 80 per cent of its area is rural and home to 20 per cent of the population."

The aim of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy is to achieve the rural renaissance and regenerate rural areas by better transport links both within rural areas and between urban and rural areas; improving health, education, skills training, social, shopping, community facilities and other services.

Among key issues for Shropshire are:

Housing: What level and type of new housing development is right for Shropshire? Can it accommodate up to 25,700 new homes by 2026 and if so where should they be built?

Employment: Is 216 hectares enough land to be set aside in Shropshire for industry. How much office and retail development is needed and where should it go? Shrewsbury has been identified as a strategic centre within the Region, which means it could be a focus for office and retail development, do you agree with this?

Waste: Can Shropshire manage all of its own waste and how much of that waste total can be diverted away from landfill?

Transport: What criteria should Shropshire develop to decide how many parking spaces are needed for different types and sizes of development. Is there a need to come up with different criteria for different types of settlements and also take into account public transport and accessibility?

Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Cllr David S Smith said: "We have developed the Phase Two Revision in consultation with local authorities across the Region as well as technical experts in key areas such as housing, waste and logistics. But it is very important now that we hear from as many individuals, businesses and organisations in Shropshire as possible. The work that we are now doing and the decisions made following on from this consultation will have a major impact on their area over the next 20 years and beyond."

To get involved and have your say, you can comment on the Assembly's Phase Two Revision Draft either by post or email by 12 noon on 8 December 2008. Responses need to be sent to:

WMRSS Panel Secretary
c/o Government Office for the West Midlands
5 St. Philips Place
Colmore Row
Birmingham
B3 2PW
wm.panelsecretary@gowm.gsi.gov.uk

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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 is the Regional Planning Body for the West Midlands Region.
2. The West Midlands Regional Assembly ('the Assembly') represents a wide range of democratic, social and economic interests throughout the West Midlands region.
3. The Regional Assembly submitted the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision Draft, known as the 'Preferred Option' to the Secretary of State in December 2007. The Draft Revision is out for public consultation until 8 December 2008.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. The Assembly is the Regional Planning Body, and is also responsible for scrutinising the operation of the region's RDA, Advantage West Midlands.
8. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk.

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A sample of the 'Preferred Option' for Shropshire

Overarching Issues

The Preferred Option proposes policies for a number of overarching issues that also affect Shropshire. These include four new crosscutting policies relating to Climate Change, Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Construction and Improving Air Quality for Sensitive Ecosystems.

Housing:

The Preferred Option proposes a number of policies in relation to the provision and distribution of housing development across the West Midlands Region. This also includes policies relating to the re-use of brownfield land and the provision of affordable housing. In terms of new housing development the following number of new houses is proposed for the West Midlands including Shropshire.

Area	Proposed total provision 2006-2026
West Midlands Total	365,600
Shropshire	25,700
Bridgnorth	2,500
North Shropshire	6,100
Oswestry	4,000
Shrewsbury and Atcham	8,200
of which Shrewsbury	6,200
South Shropshire	4,900

Employment Land:

It is important that there always a pool of land available for employment purposes in each district, to make sure that people have access to work. This can include land which could be used for offices or retail developments as well as more large scale employment developments. For Shropshire a total of up to 216 hectares of employment land is proposed. In addition, the Preferred Option proposes that the following amounts of land for office and retail development should be held in reserve.

Strategic Centre	Additional Office space required from 2006-2026	Net Additional Retail Space required from 2006-2026
Shrewsbury	20,000m ²	80,000m ²

Waste:

The Preferred Option also includes proposals for managing waste from all sources including; commercial and industrial waste, waste from construction, demolition and agricultural activities as well as municipal waste. This Preferred Option also identifies broad locations for waste management facilities and the amount of provision to be made by each Waste Planning Authority including Shropshire.

Transport:

The Transport proposals focus on four key issues of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) which is an integral part of the WMRSS. These issues relate to Strategic Park and Ride, Car Parking Standards, Demand Management and Airports. In addition the list of priorities for transport investment has been updated, in particular to reflect the spatial and infrastructure implications emerging from the new housing and employment policies.