

NEWS RELEASE

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Examination in Public Debates the Future of Housing in the Region

Key questions that challenge controversial housing projections for the Region will be contested over the next few days, as part of a seven-week Examination in Public into the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. Prepared by the West Midlands Regional Assembly, and submitted to government, this Strategy sets out targets for homes*, the economy, infrastructure and waste reduction across the Region through to 2026.

Of major concern is not only the level and distribution of additional housing, but the Regions ability to provide the required employment land and infrastructure to match the proposed housing development, with environmental impact forming a key area of debate.

Director of Policy, Mark Middleton, said: "Housing is more than just crude numbers – it is about location, deliverability, affordability and need.

"The holistic and well-researched approach to delivering the Assembly's 365,000 net housing target will ensure its long-term success. New housing development must be prioritised within the Major Urban Areas, minimising the amount of greenfield and greenbelt land we release for development. Where housing is to be allocated outside of Major Urban Areas, it should be focused in specific locations where supporting infrastructure can best be provided, and not spread around the Region at random."

Housing matters will be discussed both on 6th - 8th, and 19th - 20th May at the Examination in Public which is being held at the Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton, conducted by an independent Panel of experts. During the seven 'sitting' weeks, the Examination in Public will also address a number of other matters relating to strategic centres, employment land, transport and waste.

* The Assembly proposes a figure of 365,000 net additional housing across the Region over the next 17 years. However, a study commissioned by government has proposed a considerably higher figure of 445,000 net additional homes.

ENDS

For further information on the Examination in Public please contact Mark Middleton, Director of Policy on 0121 678 1024

For further information or to arrange a briefing please contact Jo Kite, Head of Communications on 0121 678 1044

Notes to Editors

1. The examination in Public programme is available at http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/pins/rss/west_midlands_phase_two/documents/WMRSSEiPTimetableFinal12Mar09.pdf
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 Assembly's membership consists of 100 nominated representatives, with 68 elected members representing the local authority, 16 representing the business sector and 16 representing other economic and social partners.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. The Assembly is the Regional Planning Body,
7. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk