

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Seven Week Public Examination to Debate the Future of the Region**

The number of new homes needed in the West Midlands over the next 17 years and the infrastructure requirements to support them, are about to come under major scrutiny at an important Examination in Public opening on the 28<sup>th</sup> April at the Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton.

Seven weeks of public hearings will examine the revised West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS), prepared by the West Midlands Regional Assembly. This plan sets out targets for homes, the economy, infrastructure and waste reduction across the Region through to 2026.

Amongst the many issues being debated, major concerns undoubtedly surround the level and distribution of additional housing development. Up for discussion will be the study on behalf of government which proposes up to 445,000 net additional homes in the Region and a controversial Middle Quinton Eco-town proposal. This figure is much higher than the 365,000 net total of homes that the Assembly has proposed.

Of equal concern is 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. 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.

Back in December 2007 The West Midlands Regional Assembly submitted a Phase Two Draft Revision of the WMRSS to government. Through a public consultation that ended a year later, some 700 organisations, groups and individuals submitted their views on the draft proposals that could radically change the long-term landscape of the West Midlands.

These responses have been considered by an independent Panel appointed by the Secretary of State who will thrash out these issues at the Examination in Public (EiP) before submitting recommendations to government about changes they think will be necessary.

Cllr David Smith, Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly said:

“The Examination will no doubt be challenging, but we welcome an open and public debate on the tough choices to be made which affect the future sustainability of the West Midlands. Critical to the future prosperity of the West Midlands is the government’s ability to listen to the evidence of Regional experts before making any final decisions.

“A considerable amount of research and public involvement underpins the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. Whilst the economic crisis is clearly hitting the Region hard, it is vital we continue our efforts to bring about the long-term sustainable growth of our Region.”

The Examination will open on the 28<sup>th</sup> April at the Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton, and is expected to last until Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June.

**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](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](http://www.wmra.gov.uk)