

NEWS RELEASE

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Future of Rural Services in the West Midlands up for Consultation

There is a natural focus on big cities when it comes to regional planning but it is vitally important that the interests of rural shires are not forgotten, according to the West Midlands Regional Assembly. The services rural communities need and how they can be provided is a key issue up for discussion in a seven-week consultation as part of the Phase Three Revision of the West Midlands Spatial Strategy (WMRSS).

Prepared by the Assembly, and led by local government, the Strategy sets out targets for homes, the economy, infrastructure and the environment through to 2026. Amongst several other topics, the Phase Three consultation aims to identify and prioritise 'critical rural services' in the Region, which could range from public transport, markets, schools or even ICT facilities.

"The consultation is not about producing unrealistic wish-lists of services in rural areas, but understanding what rural communities need and how these services can be delivered sustainably." said Mark Middleton, Director of Policy at the Assembly.

"This includes not only the remote rural areas but those considered 'accessible' too – for example, do rural areas lose out on their own local services if they are situated close to big cities? Would development in these areas help to reverse a cycle of decline or would it encourage more people to move out of urban areas? Should rural services be driven by the needs of local people or climate change? These are just a few of the questions central to the debate."

The consultation will run from 29th June – 14th August, where the public will have the opportunity to submit their views via an online questionnaire or in writing. A Preferred Option will be drafted based on the consultation feedback later this year, and be submitted to the Secretary of State for approval.

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You can read the Phase Three Options consultation document and fill in the Questionnaire at:
[http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Planning and Regional Spatial Strategy/RSS Revision/RSS Revision Phase 3.aspx](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Planning%20and%20Regional%20Spatial%20Strategy/RSS%20Revision/RSS%20Revision%20Phase%203.aspx)

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Notes to Editors

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 elected 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,
6. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk