

NEWS RELEASE

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Eco-town Battle Brought to Expert Panel

An expert panel will tomorrow question how sustainable and deliverable the Middle Quinton Eco-town proposal really is, at the Examination in Public into the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.

The Assembly has long argued this government lead proposal undermines the key objectives of the Regional Spatial Strategy, and tomorrow an independent Panel of experts will conduct a debate on whether the controversial Middle Quinton Eco-town in Long Marston is something the Region can sustainably deliver. They will question how financially viable the proposal is and whether current transport and infrastructure is enough to support the new development, in particular whether the rail links to Honeybourne and new road connections, including the Stratford western relief road, can actually be provided.

“The Panel will expect the promoters of the Middle Quinton Eco-town to demonstrate how environmentally friendly it really is. From all the evidence the Assembly has seen, we do not believe there is a credible case to support this proposal. All it will do is detract from regenerating major urban areas.” said Mark Middleton, Director of Policy at the Assembly.

“The Regional Spatial Strategy sets its own very high environmental policy standards, with eco-standards being applied across all new developments, not just in one small eco-town. Our Strategy also prioritises development in Major Urban Areas to minimise impact on greenbelt land and support urban renaissance.”

Whilst the stated intention for Eco-towns is to tackle the combined challenges of climate change and the shortage of housing, the Middle-Quinton Eco-town in Long Marston in the West Midlands has been vehemently opposed by campaigners since its initial proposal in March 2007. The Secretary of State decided earlier this year to put off a decision for Middle Quinton until recommendations on the Regional Spatial Strategy have been published at the end of 2009, in light of the Panels report to him.

The Middle Quinton Eco-town proposal will be discussed tomorrow, on Tuesday 16th June at the Examination in Public, held at the Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton. Prepared by the West Midlands Regional Assembly, and submitted to government, the Regional Spatial Strategy sets out targets for homes, the economy, infrastructure and waste reduction across the Region to 2026.

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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:
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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