

NEWS RELEASE

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West Midlands Regional Assembly to Launch Major Public Consultation into Plans for the Region

The public are being urged to have their say on accommodation for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople, rural services, environmental issues as well as culture, sport and tourism. These are just a few of the issues up for discussion in a seven-week consultation as part of the Phase Three Revision of the West Midlands Regional 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. The Phase Three Options consultation will be launched on Monday 29th June, following the end of the Phase Two Examination in Public this week.

Whilst the big issue in the Phase Two Revision was the development of housing and employment land, Phase Three forms a tighter focus on five key areas: critical rural services, quality of the environment, culture, sport and tourism, minerals, and the provision for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople. Amongst the issues covered in Phase Three, the consultation seeks views on:

- How many new sites are needed for gypsies and travellers and where should they go?
- Should services in rural areas, like transport, be driven by the needs of local people or climate change considerations?
- What policies do we need on the proactive use of Green Belt land? How can we minimise the risk of flooding?
- Which culture, sport and tourism sites are most important? What are the gaps in provision?
- How do we make sure there are enough minerals and aggregates for construction now and in the future without damaging the environment?

“The Strategy is not only about the way we look at homes and commercial development but environment and climate change too – issues that need to be incorporated into our planning structure.” said Cllr David Smith, Chairman of the Assembly.

“This is the most important Strategy about the way we will live for the next 20 years, and the Assembly is committed to carrying out this Revision in an open, transparent and inclusive way. There are some tough choices at hand, and I would encourage as many individuals, businesses and organisations to get involved and have their say in shaping the future of the West Midlands.”

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 consultation feedback later this year, and be submitted to the Secretary of State for approval.

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Please see the accompanying background information sheet on the Phase Three Options. For further information, please contact Mark Middleton, Director of Policy on 0121 678 1024

**Cllr David Smith, and a number of other Assembly representatives, will be available on the 29th June for interviews. For further information or to arrange a briefing please contact:
Jo Kite, Head of Communications on 0121 678 1044 or
Hafsah FitzGibbon, Press & PR Officer on 0121 245 0181**

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