

16 February 2007

Nazma Begum  
Communities and Local Government  
Zone 2/H1, Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1 5DU

Dear Nazma

**Response of the West Midlands Regional Assembly to the  
'Housing Investment in the Region' Consultation.**

The West Midlands Regional Housing Executive (the Regional Housing Board) has met to consider the DCLG consultation document 'Housing Investment in the Regions', and appreciated the opportunity to comment afforded by this consultation.

Please find attached the formal response to which the RHE gave considerable attention. The RHE has asked that DCLG recognise the keen endorsement the Executive has given to these representations.

In particular the RHE stressed the importance of the Region's considerable difficulties in respect of,

- affordability,
- the need for more affordable housing, especially for social rent, and
- the growing concern that insufficient means are available to deal properly with the scale of the repair problems facing private sector vulnerable households.

The RHE wished a number of associated points to be conveyed to DCLG with this response.

Alongside the urgency to deliver more affordable housing, through better use of the planning system and the National Affordable Housing Programme, the RHE also wanted the indicators to properly account for the need to regenerate old former council estates. The current Decent Homes policies do not deal sufficiently with recreating sustainable communities, for instance by not making

resources available sufficiently for environmental improvement and consolidating the impact at a neighbourhood level the improvements that are being delivered internally to peoples' homes.

More attention was needed to arrest the worsening affordability problems of rural areas. The indicators should give sufficient weight to the need to rural sustainability issues. There needed to be a balanced formula to take appropriate account of the needs arising from regeneration, growth and a greater sensitivity to the maintenance and achievement of sustainable rural areas.

The point was made that there is a wasted opportunity to deliver more affordable housing when surplus publicly owned land was sold off to achieve maximum value placing outside the reach of RSL purchasing power. The policy on the use of surplus Government and other public utility held land should be prioritised in favour of meeting affordable housing needs. Changes in this direction should be match by resources to help take up these opportunities.

The issue of Climate Change is taken most seriously. Its increasing importance poses challenges for housing, both for new homes and the existing stock where adaptations are essential, in terms of design, use of renewable energy and recycling. Capital funding allocations should reflect this newly emerging target.

The RHE wished the issue of sustainable communities to be reflected in a more sensitive use of demographic indicators that will do justice to the profile of need, for instance both the ageing, and the young population. The indicators should reflect the BME dimension to these indicators, and the Supporting People aspects.

Finally there was concern that the true levels of International migration and their impact on the West Midlands needed to be reflected in the housing costs which will arise as newly forming households start to enter the mainstream housing market in the next three years, given that the majority of these can be reasonably expected to need social for rent housing at first.

I hope you find this response helpful. Please contact me if you require any further clarification.

Yours sincerely



**Steve Forrest**  
Strategic Housing Advisor  
Housing Secretariat  
West Midlands Regional Assembly