

# **THE WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY**

## **ISSUES PAPER**

**Date of issue  
14<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2005**

### **THE REGIONAL HOUSING PARTNERSHIP**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### **Purpose of the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS)**

The Regional Vision as defined in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, June 2004 is:

“The overall vision for the West Midlands is one of an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable Region, which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life of future generations.”

The purpose of the RHS is to

- Deliver sustainable communities
- Make the best use of scarce resources
- Join Housing up with other Regional strategies including land use planning, economic development, transport and other services (including supporting people)

**Integration with the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF):** The RHS is expected to move towards a longer term planning horizon that ultimately brings the RHS and Regional Spatial Strategy together, alongside the RSDF<sup>1</sup>.

**Informing regional investment decisions:** The ODPM has recommended that a clear distinction needs to be made between the Regional Housing Strategy and the recommendations the Regional Housing Board makes for investment – the allocation strategy. The RHS needs to develop into a longer-term strategy, which sets out a vision covering all tenures and aligned with the Regional Spatial Strategy. Both the allocation strategy and the RHS will however be developed through the same public consultation process.

**Meeting Public Service Targets:** The Government expects Regional Housing Strategies to deliver the Sustainable Communities Plan in a way that is appropriate to the region and support and inform the emerging ‘Smart Growth - Midlands Way’. In particular the RHS should support the delivery of ODPM’s Public Service Targets (PSAs) PSAs are aimed at providing thriving, inclusive and sustainable communities in all regions. In particular the RHS is expected to help to deliver on PSAs 5 and 7.

- **PSA 5:** Achieve a better balance between housing and the demand for housing in all English Regions while protecting valuable countryside around our towns, cities and in the greenbelt-and the sustainability of existing towns and cities-through specific measures to be set out in the Service Delivery Agreement.
- **PSA 7:** By 2010 bring all social housing into decent condition with most of the improvement taking place in deprived areas, and increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable groups.

The Government expects the RHS to cover the following issues:

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<sup>1</sup> To be launched on 27<sup>th</sup> January

- Housing demand and supply for all tenures, including traveller sites
- Options for addressing identified needs (including LCHO and equity release)
- Use of a housing market assessment model to establish operational housing markets within the region
- Robust assessment of housing need on a basis comparable with that used in the RSS
- Homelessness and options for tackling it
- Migration into the Region
- Growth - adequate market and affordable housing provision should be made to support RSS and RES growth targets
- Key Workers
- Rural housing – in all rural communities. Current rural targets encourage investment in smaller communities – Regional Housing Boards are invited to propose alternative rural targets for agreement by ODPM & DEFRA
- Cross linkages with Supporting People strategies
- Needs of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities
- Needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities

Full consultation with regional stakeholders is a key requirement for preparation of a robust RHS.

### **Role of the Issues Paper**

This Issues Paper has been prepared on the basis of a range of evidence and strategic analysis commissioned and co-ordinated by the Regional Housing Partnership. This has included a detailed analysis of Housing Market Areas (HMAs), specialist studies of the needs of particular needs groups and the housing options available to them (e.g. Supporting People) and analysis of published statistics on stock condition and housing supply. Although a substantial evidence base has already been amassed this research is on-going and will be fed into later stages of strategy preparation.

The Issues Paper sets out a range of key issues identified from the above analysis and from stakeholder feedback across the Region. It aims to provide a brief but comprehensive summary of each key issue and the options are currently presented as a series of questions on which we are seeking views about what the Region (and individual Housing Market Areas) can do to maximise resources and meet need within the context of the RSS and the family of emerging regional strategies.

Issues of effective partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors are key to many of the topics identified and the Issues Paper is intended to help form the basis for effective dialogue between partners within each HMA, as well as to help develop a distinctive regional vision which provides practical tools for the delivery of urban and rural renaissance.

To this end the Issues Paper will be subject to public consultation for a period of 6 weeks from 14<sup>th</sup> January 2005. This will include 4 consultation events within individual HMAs as well as a Regional Consultation Event on 17<sup>th</sup> February. The 4 HMA events will take place as follows:

- North HMA 3rd February
- Central HMA 4th February
- South HMA 8<sup>th</sup> February
- West HMA 9th February

Following on from consultation on the Issues Paper a draft RHS (and allocation strategy) will then be prepared and submitted for formal consultation during April/May 2005 with the aim of submitting a revised RHS to ODPM by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2005.

## 2. WEST MIDLANDS STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Regional Housing Strategy is one of the family of mutually supportive strategies which will work together to deliver urban and rural renaissance to the West Midlands.

The region's approach to spatial planning is set out in **Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands** - RPG11 (approved in June 2004). Regional planning guidance has now been replaced by regional spatial strategies, referred to as RSS, and this term will be used in the Regional Housing Strategy.

The RSS signalled a fundamental change of direction with a set of policies intended to address the historic decentralisation of population and investments from the **Major Urban Areas** (MUAs)<sup>2</sup>. In the MUAs, more development opportunities are to be created to retain and attract people and investment. This approach will take away pressure for development from the region's rural areas and help secure their own regeneration. The table below shows how the build up of housing provision in the MUAs is to be achieved but it also illustrates that housing provision in other parts of the region will continue to be important to the achievement of the overall objectives of the RHS.

**Table 2.1: RSS11, Average Annual Rate of Housing Provision**

	To 2007	2007- 2011	2011- 2021
<b>MUAs (approx)</b>	<b>6,450</b>	<b>7,250</b>	<b>8,500</b>
<b>Other areas</b>	<b>10,230</b>	<b>8,030</b>	<b>6,150</b>
<b>West Midlands</b>	<b>16,680</b>	<b>15,280</b>	<b>14,650</b>

Fundamental to urban renaissance is raising the overall quality of the MUAs – it is not just about housing quality and availability and the RSS provides an integrated set of measures to improve access to jobs, transport efficiency, the quality of the local environment and rejuvenated city, towns and local centres. Spatial planning cannot do this on its own and land use decisions will need to be integrated with investment and delivery for health, education, community safety, leisure and a range of other activities which are integral to developing sustainable communities.

The RSS recognises that, in addition to the MUAs, there are **other urban areas**, some of which are also experiencing decline or negative change. 12 urban centres<sup>3</sup> are identified where prospects should be improved through local regeneration policies and programmes. Five of these are sub-regional foci for development (Worcester, Telford, Shrewsbury, Hereford and Rugby), where longer-term strategic growth (outside the MUAs) should be located if required.

20% of the West Midland's population lives in the region's **rural areas**; in market towns, villages and in the open countryside. The rural part of the region varies greatly in character and in the amount and nature of action required to deliver rural renaissance. Improved housing choice is one of a range of factors to be tackled; others include diversification of the rural economy and improved 'community infrastructure'. The main geographical focus for rural renaissance will be in the

<sup>2</sup> RPG 11 defines the following as MUAs – Birmingham/Solihull, the Black Country, Coventry and North Staffordshire.

<sup>3</sup> Biddulph, Burton upon Trent, Cannock, Kidderminster, Leek, Redditch, Rugby, Rugby, Stafford, Tamworth Telford, Worcester.

Marches<sup>4</sup> where a Rural Regeneration Zone has been designated in the Regional Economic Strategy.

The RHS adopts the same definition of urban and rural areas as does the RSS. The RHS recognises that the urban part of the West Midlands is not limited to the MUAs and includes other towns and cities, as identified in the RSS.

**The West Midlands Economic Strategy<sup>5</sup>** (RES) sets out the vision for transforming the West Midlands into a world-class region by 2010. It identifies four main headings (or Pillars) which are

- Developing a Diverse and Dynamic Business Base,
- Promoting a Learning and Skilful Region,
- Creating the Conditions for Growth
- Regenerating Communities.

Effort is to be focused on three Key Delivery Mechanisms, Regeneration Zones, Business Clusters and High Technology Corridors.

There are six Regeneration Zones, 5 urban and the Rural Regeneration Zone replicated in the RSS. The Region's two National Housing Pathfinders lie within Regeneration Zones.

Whilst the Economic Strategy focuses on the economy, it recognises that there is a two-way relationship between housing markets and economic success and that the vitality of each will impact on the other. The housing market can be a driver for change. Achieving greater housing choice across all income ranges will play a major part in creating attractive urban areas, helping to stem out-migration and creating the opportunities for people to remain in their own communities, be they in the MUAs or elsewhere. Another driver for change is achieving housing developments in rural areas to meet the needs of local people.

## Housing and Economy

*Needs to refer to the research underway by Ecotec.*

The link between Housing and Economic Development is relatively underdeveloped. The relationship between the market dynamics addressed in the RES need to be related and understood in relation to the RSS and therefore the RHS. e.g. the implications for housing strategy in shaping the way the high technology corridors develop and impact upon the sustainability of the communities influenced by their growth.

The RHS could be helpfully provide a simple and communicable means of explaining how housing and the economy related to one another with some suggestions for future research.

The RHS could draw upon a summary of the most recent material on the dynamic between people, housing and work opportunities to be found in academic and government sources. The RHS should seek to put forward a clear case underlining

<sup>4</sup> Parts of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.

<sup>5</sup> Delivering Advantage, The West Midlands Economic Strategy and Action Plan 2004-2010, Advantage West Midlands and West Midlands Regional Assembly

the existence of linkages between what are sometimes seen as divergent or exclusive agendas. It should specifically examine the evidence base around how housing influences employment and vice versa;

The RHS can contribute to the acceleration of the achievement of urban renaissance, rural renaissance, decent homes, etc (as detailed in the RHS consultation) in the light of academic work and good practice elsewhere on these spatial and economic matters.

The RHS could look at the relationship between Housing and the RSS, RES around a series of scenarios e.g. the RSS policy led vision for urban renaissance works; regression to "business as usual"; (Example: The RSS aims to concentrate much of the future employment growth in a network of existing centres; people seeking employment opportunities will be attracted to these centres raising the price of market based housing; lower income households will be sifted out to the outer suburbs unless affordable housing nearer to work opportunities is made available)

The RHS could look at ways co-ordination could be maximised between regionally influenced housing funding instruments, RES funding instruments and RSS, to accelerate implementation; (it would be desirable to coordinate and prioritise funding from all relevant sectors where the Regional Strategic objectives require and avoid circumstances for instance, where one funding instrument continued to fund affordable housing in locations where economic, regeneration or growth priorities had shifted).

The RHS should identify any linkages to Smart Growth - the Midlands Way in relation to urban renaissance.

**The Regional Sustainable Development Framework** is being launched in January 2005 and will become the key document which will provide a point of reference for all regional policies and strategies. The RSDF will include a section on the process for assessing sustainability issues in the Regional Housing Strategy.

In delivering urban and rural renaissance for the housing market, the RHS will need to integrate its approach and spending priorities with that of the Regional Economic Strategy within the overall context of the RSS and the RSDF. Over-arching questions for the RHS are:

- Is the RHS working in the right direction to maximise the mutual benefits of pathways to housing choice and economic regeneration?
- What more should be done to co-ordinate the efforts of those planning for and investing in housing and in employment?

### 3. THE FOUR HOUSING MARKET AREAS

The starting point for understanding the region's housing markets is the requirement that the Region sets out its priorities and policy options within the context of sub-regional Housing Market Areas. The RHS should not adopt a 'top down' approach. It should build up from the issues and potential faced in each housing market area. Housing Market Areas should reflect the way housing market operates and their distinctive features. Evidence needs to reflect this by cutting across local authority boundaries to identify functional housing markets that demonstrate the interconnectedness of local authorities. Recent research by CURS and Sheffield University<sup>6</sup> provides an analysis of the region's housing markets on this basis.

Four separate housing market areas (HMAs) are identified, each of which presents its own opportunities and challenges. The four Housing Market Areas are:

- North
- South
- Central
- West

A map of the areas is detailed in Appendix 2

Brief descriptions of each HMA and the key challenges it faces are set out below:

#### **South**

- The HMA is generally characterised as having a predominance of moderate to high priced neighbourhood zones and a lack of social housing provision within settlements. There is evidence of both homelessness and affordability problems.
- Warwick and Stratford appear as uniformly high priced neighbourhoods with no significant concentrations of social housing;

#### **Key questions**

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1. How can a wider range of housing with better pathways of housing choice be provided?
  - How can the lack of affordable housing be addressed? (need to include definition of affordable housing, i.e. social and low cost home ownership)
  - What is the possible role of choice based lettings
  - Is there a need to provide intermediate housing aimed at 'locally defined' Key Workers
  - Is there a need to develop inclusion strategies and re-think BME issues
  - Are there unidentified problems with concealed and suppressed households
2. How can the supply of affordable housing be increased?

<sup>6</sup> West Midlands RHS/RSS Partial Review – Shared Evidence Base CURS December 2004

- What is the role of planning policy and S106 Agreements?
- Is there a need to develop capacity and examples of Best Practice in implementing planning led affordable housing solutions?

### **West**

- Shrewsbury and Hereford have established structures with discernible neighbourhood typologies;
- Hereford is the only major urban settlement in the West with any evidence of housing market stress;
- The West is characterised as having a preponderance of sparse, low density settlements.
- The West contains areas of relative rural deprivation and includes the Region's only Rural Regeneration Zone.

### **Key questions**

1. How can a wider range of housing with better pathways of housing choice be provided?
  - What is the possible role of choice based lettings
  - Is there a need to provide intermediate housing aimed at 'locally defined' Key Workers
  - Is there a need to develop inclusion strategies and re-think BME issues
  - Are there unidentified problems with concealed and suppressed households
2. How can the supply of affordable housing be increased?
  - What is the role of planning policy and S106 Agreements?
  - Is there a need to develop capacity and examples of Best Practice in implementing planning led affordable housing solutions?
  - should affordable housing be provided through the purchase of street properties (with or without public funding)
3. What additional action should be taken to address concentrations of housing stress?
4. What additional action can be taken to address the issues faced in the Rural Regeneration Zone?
5. How can the HMA develop strategies for areas with contrasting needs adjacent to each other?
6. Should the Regional Housing Strategy advise on the location of affordable housing in rural areas, taking into account factors such as access to public transport?

## **North**

- The North has 5 main urban settlements outside the Major Urban Area of Stoke and Newcastle: Burton-on-Trent, Stafford, Leek, Uttoxeter and Stone;
- Newcastle and Stoke have uniformly monolithic neighbourhood structure with little variety in neighbourhood type;
- Stafford has a discernible neighbourhood structure with some low priced social housing neighbourhoods;
- Burton also has a discernible neighbourhood structure, although there is limited social housing and some evidence of housing stress;
- All of the urban settlements outside those cited above have limited neighbourhood typologies and are characterised as low priced zones in the context of the Region.
- There are rural homelessness and affordability issues which need to be addressed
- A National Pathfinder (RENEW) is located in the HMA

## **Key Questions**

1. What additional action should be taken to address long-term decline in North Staffordshire?
2. How will major neighbourhood challenges be tackled
3. What will be the impact of urban renaissance on the adjacent rural areas?
4. How can the HMA address and identify issues of variety and choice and improve housing mix across the HMA?
5. How can the HMA develop strategies for areas with contrasting needs adjacent to each other?
6. How can the supply of affordable housing be increased?
  - What is the role of planning policy and S106 Agreements?
  - Is there a need to develop capacity and examples of Best Practice in implementing planning led affordable housing solutions?
  - should affordable housing be provided through the purchase of street properties (with or without public funding)
7. Are the right types of housing being built to address local need/demand? If not what steps can be taken to ensure that they are?

**Central:**

- The Central HMA is the most populous and most complex HMA.<sup>7</sup>; it incorporates the city of Birmingham at its heart and thus provides an important starting point for understanding how the regional housing market and its sub markets interact.
- This HMA is delivering about 57% of the Region's new housing<sup>8</sup>;
- Housebuilding activity varies significantly across the HMA with, for example, Birmingham and Coventry/Solihull/Warwickshire having completion rates ahead of RSS provision but the Black Country lagging behind RSS figures;
- Birmingham has the most complex neighbourhood structure, with a variety of neighbourhood types facilitating pathways of housing choice, although this must be seen in the context of relative lack of movement of some parts of the BME community in Birmingham
- Birmingham is the only settlement with a convergence of high priced neighbourhoods adjacent to areas of major housing stress; these areas are symptomatic of processes of gentrification coalescing with a growing BME community that experiences significant housing stress and overcrowding;
- In the Black Country two housing zones predominate: low priced zones with limited social housing and very low priced with a significant concentration of social housing;
- The Black Country appears to offer limited diversity in delivering pathways of housing choice;
- Further eastwards, Solihull is polarised north-south with a contiguous high priced zone that extends into the southern belt of Birmingham and also into the South HMA. The northern quarter contains largely low priced housing and high concentrations of social housing which extend into Birmingham.. Housing market issues in the south part of the District are high demand ones, whilst the north west, faces questions of market renewal;
- Coventry has a relatively complex structure and has significant housing market stress associated with a highly segregated BME community running in a north eastwards direction from the city centre;
- Lichfield and Tamworth have some pathways of housing choice, However the former has a lack of social housing and relatively high property values, while the latter has lower house prices and has a relatively large social housing presence;
- Cannock and Nuneaton are characterised as peripheral settlements within the context of the Central HMA; their neighbourhoods are uniform with little discernible structure or variety. They are affected by significant changes in the sub-regional economy and the demise of coal-mining;
- South Staffordshire has relatively high values and provides a different 'offer' for residents on the western edge of the conurbation;

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<sup>7</sup> Average annual completions 2001-2004

<sup>8</sup> Average annual completions 2001-2004

- Finally Telford, has a relatively complex neighbourhood structure and has a mixture of neighbourhood types including social housing to afford a housing market pathway.
- A National Pathfinder (Urban Living) is located in the HMA.
- Although parts of the HMA are characterised by housing stress, affordability is also a major issue within the HMA.

### **Key Questions**

1. How can the HMA address and identify issues of variety and choice and improve housing mix across the HMA?
2. What additional action should be taken to address concentrations of housing stress?
3. How can the HMA develop strategies for areas with contrasting needs adjacent to each other?
4. What action should be taken to address the East/West polarisation of the conurbation?
5. How can opportunities for growth and renewal in Birmingham/Solihull/Coventry be effectively taken forward?
6. How can a wider range of housing with better pathways of housing choice be provided, particularly in Telford and the Black Country?
7. What is needed to speed up housing delivery in those parts of the HMA where housebuilding is slower than expected?
  - What steps can be taken to increase demand for/attractiveness of housing markets in areas of low demand/failing housing markets.
8. How can the supply of affordable housing be increased in areas of high house prices in order to provide pathways of choice?
  - What is the role of planning policy and S106 Agreements?
  - Is there a need to develop capacity and examples of Best Practice in implementing planning led affordable housing solutions?
  - should affordable housing be provided through the purchase of street properties (with or without public funding)

**4. HOUSING STRATEGY THEMES****4a NEW SUPPLY OF HOUSING**

The Regional Housing Strategy is concerned with both how the existing housing stock is used and the amount and make-up of new supply. This section looks at issues around new supply.

The RSS sets out the level of new housing to be provided across the Region to 2021. These are expressed as annual rates for three different periods and show a shift in the balance of provision towards the MUAs. This is set out in the table below (Appendix 1 gives the detailed breakdown shown in RSS11).

**Table 4.1: Housing Provision**

	<b>Annual Average rate of Housing Provision</b>		
	To 2007	2007-2011	2011-2021
<b>MUAs (approx)</b>	6450	7250	8500
<b>Other areas</b>	10230	8030	6150
<b>West Midlands</b>	16680	15280	14650

(Table 1: RSS11)

In the first three years covered by the RSS housebuilding across the Region has been slightly ahead of RSS figures with an average rate of completions of around 16,900. RSS11 also shows the requirements for new housing for different parts of the Region. In some parts of the Region housebuilding has been ahead of the RSS figures and in other parts, it is lagging behind.

**Table 4.2: Completions against RSS11 Requirements**

	<b>Completions per annum - average for 2001-2004</b>	<b>RSS - average annual provision, to 2007</b>	<b>% completions against RSS provision</b>
<b>Birmingham</b>	2,961	2,300	28.7%
<b>Black Country</b>	2,181	2,500	-12.7%
<b>Coventry/ Solihull/ Warwickshire</b>	3,806	3,050	24.8%
<b>Staffordshire/ Stoke-on-Trent</b>	3,425	3,500	-2.1%
<b>Shropshire/ Telford and Wrekin</b>	1,876	2,630	-28.7%
<b>Herefordshire</b>	588	800	-26.5%
<b>Worcestershire</b>	2,051	1,900	7.9%
<b>MUAs</b>	7,047	6,450	9.3%
<b>Other areas</b>	9,841	10,230	-3.8%
<b>West Midlands</b>	16,889	16,680	1.3%

(Note: Rates for MUAs are minima.)

House building in the MUA's as a whole reflects the ambition within the RSS. Birmingham and Coventry/Solihull/Warwickshire are well ahead of RSS figures and provision in Worcestershire is also above RSS levels. On the other hand, Shropshire/Telford and Wrekin, Herefordshire and the Black Country are well behind, whilst provision in Staffordshire/Stoke on Trent is slightly below RSS levels.

Reflecting their size and character, the four housing markets of the West Midlands are very different in terms of the amount of housebuilding activity in each. Average annual rates of completions between 2001 and 2004 were:

**Table 4.3: Completions in Housing Markets 2001-2004**

	Completions per annum
<b>Central</b>	9,719
<b>North</b>	1,948
<b>South</b>	3,493
<b>West</b>	1,729

It is not possible to compare housebuilding rates in each sub-region with RSS requirements - the boundaries of the sub-regions do not coincide with the areas used in the RSS. *If delivery of the RHS is to be monitored effectively, it will need to move to a position where new supply in each of the housing markets can be assessed against RSS figures.*

**Demolitions:** Against a regional picture of new supply in line with expectations, the rate of demolitions in the Region has been faster than had been anticipated. For the first three years of the RSS demolitions were, on average, about 3,750 which is 28% more than the 2,925 assumed for the period 2001 to 2010. This faster pace of demolitions is not necessarily a cause for concern for the RHS - it most likely indicates that renewal programmes are moving ahead more quickly than was anticipated. However, the RHS needs to recognise that the housing stock in the Region (i.e. net additions) is not growing as quickly as the RSS set out.

**Housing mix:** The make-up of the new supply coming through has a higher proportion of market housing and less affordable housing than the RSS sought. The RSS recognised the need for 6,000 – 6,500 affordable dwellings per year from 2002 to 2011 but estimates show that the Region has been delivering about 2,200 social housing completions per annum (2001-2003)<sup>9</sup>. Whilst this is almost certainly an underestimate of all affordable housing completions (because the figure excludes other forms of intermediate housing) it nonetheless indicates a very serious shortfall in overall affordable housing provision against RSS targets.

The ability of the Region to redress the balance of new supply will rest on a number of factors. One issue will be land supply and the ability of the planning system to increase the delivery of affordable housing on new sites. The flexibility of the system to do this depends, in part, on the amount of the future supply which is already 'determined'. The table below shows the position at April 2004. It looks first at sites where development has already happened, dwellings which are under construction or where planning permission has been granted. These are grouped together as 'provision already secured'. The right hand column then sets out other known land supply - either through plan allocations or 'other commitments'. The amount and type of affordable will already have been 'fixed' on some of this land but information is not available to say how much this is.

<sup>9</sup> Losses through Right to Buy will exacerbate the situation

**Table 4.4: Provision Already Secured (1.4.04)**

	RSS provision to 2007	Completions 2001-2004	Under construction at 1.4.04	With planning permission at 1.4.04	Total provision already secured	% of RSS provision to 2007 already secured	Plan allocations and other commitments
<b>Birmingham</b>	13,800	8,882	2,969	8,384	20,235	146.6%	2,608
<b>Black Country</b>	15,000	6,544	2,809	6,396	15,749	105.0%	11,468
<b>Coventry/ Solihull/ Warwickshire</b>	18,300	11,418	3,206	9,144	23,768	129.9%	6,210
<b>Staffordshire/ Stoke-on-Trent</b>	21,000	10,275	3,394	9,980	23,649	112.6%	7,413
<b>Shropshire/ Telford and Wrekin</b>	15,780	5,629	1,735	4,688	12,052	76.4%	5,831
<b>Herefordshire</b>	4,800	1,765	624	1,037	3,426	71.4%	2,137
<b>Worcestershire</b>	11,400	6,153	1,744	4,052	11,949	104.8%	2,606
<b>MUAs</b>	38,700	21,142	7,277	20,557	48,976	126.6%	21,313
<b>Other areas</b>	61,380	29,524	9,204	23,124	61,852	100.8%	16,960
<b>West Midlands</b>	100,080	50,666	16,481	43,681	110,828	110.7%	38,273

In most parts of the Region, there is some flexibility in the 'planning pipeline' and the aspirations of the RSS (shared by the RHS) to increase the supply of affordable housing has the potential to be achieved, but only if the right steps are in place to achieve a significant improvement in delivery. Birmingham and Coventry/Solihull/Warwickshire and, to a lesser extent, Staffordshire/Stoke-on-Trent, are areas where there is less flexibility in the immediate future (i.e. provision already secured represents a high % of the RSS figure). In the case of Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent, this is likely to be a lesser issue because RSS figures are a minimum and more land could be made available for both affordable and market housing. Looking to the longer term, relatively high levels of 'plan allocations and other commitments' in the Black Country, Coventry/Solihull/Warwickshire and Staffordshire/Stoke-on-Trent suggests a possible problem here in the future. *More detailed research is needed to understand properly the scale and extent of land supply 'inflexibility' and implications for the future supply of affordable housing.* This is an issue which the Board will want to pursue.

### Questions

1. How can the RHS assist those areas which are under-performing against the RSS, to increase overall housing supply?
2. What action can be taken through the RHS to increase affordable housing provision in line with the RSS? And are specific actions required in areas that are close to 'over-performing' against RSS targets?
3. What are the key performance indicators which the RHS should monitor (either directly or through RSS monitoring) to keep up to date with the pattern of new supply?

**4b AFFORDABILITY AND DELIVERY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING****Issues**

Affordability is a significant problem across the West Midlands but the nature and severity of the problem varies from area to area. The RPG/RSS recognised the need for 6,000 – 6,500 affordable dwellings per year from 2002 to 2011 and stated that

*'Both social rent and low cost market housing should contribute to meeting the need for affordable housing'.*

Ongoing research estimates affordable housing requirements for the region from 2006 to 2008 at 7,700 to 8,300 dwellings per annum. (CURS 2004/5; revised estimated will be available in February 2005)

Estimates show that the Region has been delivering about 2,200 social housing completions. This will be an underestimate of all affordable housing completions (because it excludes other forms of intermediate housing). However, it indicates that the Region needs to significantly increase delivery if it is to meet RPG/RSS targets.

**Location of need** The need for affordable housing is not uniform across the region. The RPG/RSS noted the marked differences in affordable needs across the Region. Poor quality and lack of choice in the MUAs with insufficient affordable housing in the south and east of the Region is acknowledged. Subsequent research<sup>10</sup> highlights significant affordability problems in the South and West HMAs and the pockets of affordability problems in the North and Central HMAs with some emphasis on the the housing problems and needs experienced by BME communities.

The lack of effective pathways to choice associated with concentrations of high priced market housing in some localities and a high proportion of low priced sale and private rented and social housing in others works against appropriate choice and the objective of balanced and mixed communities.

**Role of the RHS:** The RHS must promote:

- An increase in the supply of affordable housing
- More effective pathways to housing choice
- Mixed and balanced communities
- Affordable housing which contributes to both urban and rural renaissance
- Affordable housing which contributes to the economic growth of the Region.

In order to achieve these objectives, coordinated action by local authorities, developers, housing associations and other stakeholders is essential. Recent research<sup>11</sup> on emerging sub-regions has demonstrated the strong links between adjoining local authorities in the same housing markets. Partnership approaches that cross local authority boundaries and recognise the realities of local housing markets are required.

<sup>10</sup> CURS and the University of Sheffield - forthcoming

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

**Increasing the supply of affordable housing:** Opportunities to increase affordable housing supply through new building and acquisition of the existing stock should be considered. Both social rented and low cost market housing should be used to meet housing needs. Opportunities to obtain affordable housing through Section 106 agreements should be maximised. Authorities under most pressure will need to consider whether their plan policies can be strengthened (e.g. through the inclusions of a wider range of development sites) and how policies can be implemented more robustly. The approaches adopted towards new development should be strategically linked to Housing Corporation funding and other sources of finance (e.g. through the use of authorities own funds, PFI funding), to promote an efficient approach to the provision of additional supply. Other approaches (e.g. switching the balance of affordable housing delivery away from social rented towards more intermediate housing) could also be used where subsidy is tight.

**Pathways to housing choice:** provision of a range of affordable housing including low cost home ownership and intermediate rent will be required in order to improve the range of housing options for low to middle income households. These options have a role to play in facilitating wider clearance and renewal strategies. Where supply of low-cost market housing is limited local authorities may wish to consider using the planning process to specify types of newbuild and developing models for purchase of street properties (e.g. Homebuy or DIYSO) to assist local households in need of affordable housing.

**Mixed and balanced communities:** provision of a range of affordable housing options within a neighbourhood will contribute to sustainable development and mixed and balanced communities. Individual local authorities, in conjunction where appropriate with Housing Market Renewal Areas (HMRA) strategic partners and National Pathfinders, need to develop effective strategies at neighbourhood and district level as well as looking at the role of their area within the wider sub-region.

**Urban and rural renaissance:** Both urban and rural renaissance require a mix of good quality affordable and market housing. However patterns of existing supply vary between urban and rural areas and between individual authorities. Local authorities need to consider whether their main priority is improving the existing stock of affordable housing, diversifying and increasing supply or bringing in a wider mix of market housing to offset a high proportion of existing social housing.

**Affordable housing and economic growth:** A mixed and balanced housing stock is essential to retain a balanced workforce.<sup>12</sup> Housing for key workers is an issue which is beginning to emerge in some parts of the Region. The issue is less acute than elsewhere in the country and government funding to provide housing for key workers has not been allocated to the West Midlands.<sup>13</sup> However, local authorities may, at the local level, want to 'allocate' part of their future supply of affordable housing for workers in occupations regarded as 'key' to the local community and economy. But this would be at the expense of households who have a more pressing housing need.

#### **Policy tools:**

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<sup>12</sup> See study by ECOTEC due by February 2005

<sup>13</sup> Central government assistance for key worker housing, in other regions, is focussed on public sector workers in health, education and community safety sectors where there are serious recruitment and retention problems. The assistance under the relevant Key Worker Living scheme is not currently available in the West Midlands.

- There is a need for improved clarity and consistency within and between authorities at sub-regional level in the securing of affordable housing through the planning system and S106 Agreements.
- Local authorities at HMA level may find it helpful to undertake joint research into the financial viability of different tenure options when provided as newbuild or purchase of existing properties.
- They may also wish to consider making use of commuted sum payments or mechanisms such as PFI in order to enhance their ability to support the provision of a range of affordable housing options.
- Common housing registers between local authorities should also be considered. Local authorities and RSLs should positively market the range of affordable housing options and should keep a common register of affordable housing demand for different tenure and housing options.
- An increased supply of affordable housing should be promoted as a positive outcome for localities, contributing to the growth and sustainability of local communities. Land supply, funding and political intransigence barriers to an improved supply need to be addressed by positive Regional and sub-regional approaches to improved delivery.

### Questions

1. Should targets for each HMA be set for the volume and type of additional affordable housing supply?<sup>14</sup> How should land supply barriers to increased delivery be addressed?
2. Should increased use of compulsory purchase orders be encouraged to increase affordable housing land supply?
3. How can public authorities be encouraged to supply more land for affordable housing?
4. Should more SHG be available for mixed tenure schemes to increase the supply (at the expense of other funding streams)?
5. Should SHG on S106 sites be limited to closing any “viability gap” in development? Should, for example, grant be limited to compensating for exceptionally high development costs on urban contaminated sites and small rural sites?
6. Should the Region encourage the development of more intermediate housing as a means of increasing supply, but at the expense of a reduced supply of social rented housing?
7. Should there be clearer S106 policies that are co-ordinated at the HMA level?
8. Should there be a Regional definition and consequent Regional approach to promoting an increased supply of Key Worker housing?
9. Should SHG be available for the acquisition of existing properties to increase the supply of affordable housing?
10. Should the proportion of affordable housing to be negotiated through Section 106 be varied in particular parts of the Region, either between or within Housing Market Areas?

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1. <sup>14</sup> Ongoing research by CURS is assessing affordable housing needs by HMA)

#### 4c URBAN RENAISSANCE AND IMPROVED PATHWAYS OF HOUSING CHOICE

The West Midlands is a predominantly urban region. 80% of the region's population lives in urban areas. All four HMAs contain urban areas, but Central and North HMAs have the highest concentration of Major Urban Areas (MUAs) - Birmingham Coventry, North Staffordshire and the Black Country. Housing conditions are poorer in the major urban areas, with high concentrations of social housing and polarized housing markets offering limited housing choice. Historically the major urban areas have lost population to their rural hinterland with out-migration from the conurbation to the shire counties.

**Plan policy:** The RPG/RSS seeks to reverse this trend and encourage growth in the urban areas by developing the MUAs in such a way that they can increasingly meet their own economic and social needs in order to counter the unsustainable outward movement of people and jobs facilitated by previous strategies; Outside the MUAs new development will be focused on the Region's other large settlements and in particular the five sub-regional foci of Hereford, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Telford and Worcester, with other major shire towns and cities beyond the MUAs continuing to act as a focus for new investment to support wider regeneration and help meet the economic, social and cultural needs of surrounding rural areas<sup>15</sup>

The West Midlands vision is to create urban areas where people will choose to live and rural areas where people are not forced to leave. Urban renaissance is a critical part of this process, which will require the development of strong city centres with attractive suburbs and well connected rural hinterlands. The establishment of pathways of housing choice is central to this concept. There are major regeneration initiatives (HMRA and National Pathfinders) in Birmingham, Stoke on Trent and Telford/the Black Country which aim to carry this forward. The potential housing market restructuring in East Birmingham and elsewhere in the conurbation would also contribute to urban renaissance.

**The role of the RHS:** An obvious question is how can the RHS contribute to developing pathways of housing choice? Possible options might include more investment to achieve a faster pace in meeting and surpassing government targets for decent homes), funding the provision of a wider range of affordable and low cost market housing in urban areas, facilitating the provision of more appropriate supported housing in urban areas and encouraging local authorities to use planning powers to encourage the provision of a more balanced range of market housing.

However there is ample evidence within the region and elsewhere to demonstrate that the creation of vibrant city centres and thriving suburbs is about more than just housing. Housing renaissance needs to go hand-in-hand with economic success and it will be critical that a range of jobs are available (both locally and within reasonable commuting distance) for existing residents and newcomers to the reinvigorated urban areas. The balance to be struck between residential and employment development on brownfield sites<sup>16 17</sup> will be a key issue for the region

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<sup>15</sup> West Midlands RSS

<sup>16</sup> Any amendments to land classification must take place within the context of Govt Guidance in the ['Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Note' ODPM December 2004](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Phasing policies in local development documents also control the flow of housing land and completions.. The Regional Assembly has just let a contract to study the effectiveness of](#)

over the coming years and the co-ordination of the RHS, Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy will be essential in this respect.

But there will also need to be better schools, community and leisure facilities, improved transport connections, better shops and a strong economic base all have a role in “lifting” an area. Environmental improvements are also essential to change image and improve morale. Successful regenerated cities from Baltimore to Docklands have established a new identity within which better quality housing is fundamental though never sufficient on its own to make a difference. Can the RHS influence these wider socio-economic and environmental factors? Is there a role for visionary masterplanning which marries up housing and other key factors? Can the West Midlands learn from the experience of developers and RSLs elsewhere in the country with experience of successful regeneration?

### Questions

1. How will pathways to choice be created?
2. What can the RHS do to help ensure a co-ordinated approach to urban renaissance - both through the major regional strategies, local programmes and policies, the activities of other key agencies, (such as providers of education, health, transport and culture) and private investment?
3. How much affordable and supported housing is needed and what types of housing?
4. What social, economic and environmental change is required and how will it come about?
5. What can be learnt from urban renaissance elsewhere?
6. How can more effective partnerships with housing providers be established

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current phasing policies and what is going to be needed in future local development documents to support the implementation of the RSS.

#### 4d STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT AREAS WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

The West Midlands contains a number of regeneration and potential growth areas. These include the two National Pathfinders (Urban Living in Birmingham/Sandwell and RENEW in North Staffordshire) and areas in the Black Country/Telford and East Birmingham and North Solihull which are in need of restructuring. The Rural Regeneration Zone in parts of Worcestershire, Shropshire and Herefordshire, the Coalfield Regeneration Area in Staffordshire/N Warwickshire and Camp Hill Urban Village in Nuneaton. Regeneration is therefore an issue for all the HMAs.

**Partnership working:** Both the regeneration areas and the growth area rely on partnership working between the delivery vehicle, the local authorities and a range of private and voluntary sector partners including housebuilders and RSLs. All of the regeneration and growth areas require a mix of public and private funding with significant potential inputs from the Housing Corporation, Advantage West Midlands and English Partnerships and from individual local authorities through the RHS. Issues of effective co-ordination between funding streams and clear and effective partnership working are therefore very important. The RHS will need to consider how effective partnership working can be maximised and a range of key issues are picked up in the questions below. Finally any public sector regeneration led project needs to partner with private sector developers/house builders at a very early stage of development, certainly before the plans have been fully formulated.

**Adjacency and bunching:** a number of regeneration initiatives, including the National Pathfinders, have been launched within a very short timespan. Whilst most are still finding their feet and have yet to reach their full delivery potential it is already clear that issues of timing and balance of housing supply and demand will be critical in terms of both demands on the public purse and the ability of the local housing market to absorb a significant increase in housing supply which if not carefully programmed could all come on stream at once. Programming will be an issue both within individual regeneration initiatives and between them, so as to ensure that adjacent initiatives do not come on stream at the same time unless the market is strong enough to sustain them. How will this be managed and by whom?

**Demolition vs renewal:** Several of the regeneration zones and National Pathfinder areas have a significant proportion of older terraced properties which may no longer be fit for purpose. These are being addressed through a combination of demolitions and renewal with an overall aim of achieving neighbourhood stabilisation and broadening housing choice. It will be crucial to monitor how achieving these objectives intermeshes with that of achieving an increase in the proportion of properties which reach the Decent Homes standard.

**Funding priorities:** The regeneration zones and National Pathfinder areas will make a significant call on the regional housing budget over the life of the strategy. Their needs are considerable but they are not the only call on the regional budget. Concern has already been expressed that disproportionate spend on regeneration zones and National Pathfinder areas could disadvantage adjoining areas which are also in poor condition. Conversely in more prosperous areas where issues of affordability are prominent there are fears that increased spend on regeneration will reduce the region's ability to address issues related to affordability and hence weaken the wider socio-economic base. More research is needed to explore the

extent to which alternative funding sources can be tapped to assist neighbourhood renewal and the extent to which such funding sources may be more readily accessible in high value areas than in areas of housing market stress.

**Questions:**

1. Are effective regeneration strategies in place?
  - Are delivery partnerships working effectively with a genuine input from housing providers and consumers which is both timely and appropriate and which is heard with respect by the partnership board?
  - How can the RHS encourage co-operative partnership working and the dissemination of best practice?.
  - Are the roles of the various funders clearly identified and has a potential source of funding been identified for all planned activities?
  - Are appropriate powers available to the partnership boards, their partner local authorities and the relevant statutory agencies? Are CPO powers for instance appropriately located and administered?
  - Will the proposed delivery plans achieve prosperous, mixed and balanced communities and improve pathways to housing choice?
  - 'What can the RHS do to support existing delivery plans and to ensure that all sectors of the community are catered for?
2. How will the needs of the regeneration areas, as opposed to those of the rest of the region be balanced at HMA and regional level?
3. How can performance and achievement be monitored and by whom?

**4e RURAL RENAISSANCE AND REGENERATION**

80% of the land area of the region is rural and 20% of the total population of the West Midlands lives in rural areas. For this population, a very broad range of rural circumstances apply. Remote rural areas are found to the West of the region and in North Staffordshire where local economic circumstances are often weak and there is limited housing choice. Other rural areas (especially in the South) which are nearer to the main economic centres in the region, are attractive locations for out-commuters and the housing needs of local people can be 'squeezed out' as pressure from in-migrants from the MUAs push up prices. The RSS has stated the need for local authorities to fully understand the functional relationships between their urban and rural areas when drawing up housing and regeneration strategies.

**Rural Regeneration:** The Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ) (as identified in RSS) accounts for parts of the rural areas of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire and has a population of around 280,000. The main problems facing these rural locations are declining employment opportunities and, at the same time, a depopulation of younger people to urban areas where housing is often more affordable and more job opportunities exist. In some areas of the Marches, unemployment has affected two (and sometimes three) generations of households with consequent disaffection amongst local communities. In some locations, social and economic deprivation levels are high. It will be important to identify what contribution the RHS can make to regenerating these deprived rural communities in concert with efforts to revitalise their economies.

*The term declining employment opportunities mentioned above needs to be checked, as RHS Editorial Support Group were advised that there was strong employment growth in some rural areas – statistics need to be checked.*

**Settlements and migration:** Whilst rural renaissance is a key regional policy objective, it is important to emphasise that new housing provision should not lever development outside the major urban areas in such a way so as to cause out-migration to increase. Housing developed in the rural areas should meet local housing needs. This is a key tenet of RSS. It should be recognized that within the rural areas there are a variety of settlement types performing different functions. There are (small) market towns (providing services for the local community), a range of types and sizes of village and dwellings in the open countryside. RSS sees market towns as an interface between the relatively better served urban areas and the more remote rural locations, where there is a need for local provided services and facilities. However, to deliver this policy, it will be critical for local authorities to identify and define settlements in emerging policy frameworks and to identify their approach to housing provision in smaller settlements - both through planned allocation and exception sites. Closer definition will enable a better understanding of local housing markets and hence help anticipate pressures on migration.

**Settlement definition and related policies:** The Land Use Consultants and Cambridge University report identifies a rural definitions structure around 'sparse' and 'less sparse settlements' where 'sparseness' is related to population density. This definition is applicable across towns, villages and dispersed settlements for rural areas. For the West Midlands, around 6% of all Census Output areas are defined as 'town and fringe', around 6% as 'less sparse villages' and around a further 1% as sparse hamlets and villages<sup>18</sup>. These classifications should be used wherever

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<sup>18</sup> These definitions are based on those used by DEFRA in framing rural policy

practicable in helping local authorities to understand the nature of their local housing markets and hence in the development of affordable and sustainable policies.

**Land supply:** To deliver a strategy of rural renaissance, a number of practical policy issues will need to be considered and resolved. There is for example, potential for significant tension where rural communities try to meet local housing need in situations where local land supply is limited. It will be important for local authorities to consider very carefully how they apply and implement the Sequential Test within their own urban-rural contexts. Authorities should consider both the nature of sites (brownfield-greenfield) as well the scale of sites in the context of policies aimed to bring about rural regeneration. They should avoid situations in which an unreasonable proportion of new housing is developed in urban areas. This can occur as a result of an overstated urban capacity assessment, as a consequence of adopted affordable housing policy thresholds or from a failure to understand how particular settlements function in the wider housing market. The issue of the application of sustainability criteria is important here. There is evidence<sup>19</sup> to suggest that exceptions sites are less extensively used than in the early 1990s as a result of planners applying sustainability criteria more strictly. Further research<sup>20</sup> will highlight the contribution that small affordable housing developments can make to strengthening rural communities but local planning authorities need to ensure that they have clear local plan policies which facilitate the provision of rural affordable housing and identify possible locations for provision.

**Small sites in rural areas:** It will be important in the Region to recognise the significance of small windfall (single and dual) plots within villages to the overall well being of the settlement and community. Although such plots may not always yield affordable housing, new dwellings sold to middle and higher earning owner-occupiers create the potential for additional investment within the local community. Local authorities will need to balance the opportunity cost of turning away planning applications for small private developments in villages with the need to preserve the rural nature of their environment. They may also wish to consider having a lower threshold in rural areas and seeking a higher proportion of affordable housing.

**Defining affordable housing:** Affordable housing in the rural context must encompass not just social rent but also low cost home ownership and intermediate rent. Consideration should also be given to seeking an element of low cost market housing where overall supply is limited and newly forming households find access to conventional market housing constrained by shortage of supply. Clearer guidelines on Keyworker Housing may be needed in the rural context where a range of occupations are essential to the local economy and social infrastructure.

**S106 Agreements and planning policy:** There are strong arguments for tightening and making more transparent, the local planning policy framework. Wherever possible, protocols on planning policies for affordable housing and Section 106 requirements should be agreed between authorities within an HMA facing similar challenges.

**Funding affordable housing in rural areas:** The development and provision of affordable housing meeting local needs, is a prerequisite to maintaining and regenerating rural settlements/communities (although that housing may be provided in market towns or key settlements rather than in every village). Social Housing Grant has a role to play in this process and the RHS must provide clear guidance on

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<sup>19</sup> in the Land Use Consultants and Cambridge University research – October 2004

<sup>20</sup> *ibid* - forthcoming

how much SHG funding is available for rural sites (both exceptions and allocated sites). However supply of SHG will never be sufficient to meet identified need and there are emerging mechanisms within the West Midlands and other regions where affordable housing is provided without public funding through SHG. These include provision of low cost home ownership, funded through land value, acceptance of a lower proportion of social rented housing, use of funding from stock transfer, and pooling capital contributions from major development sites to support provision of rural affordable housing on smaller sites. Consideration should be given to the use of these and any other potential mechanisms (eg PFI) to facilitate affordable housing provision in rural areas.

**Guaranteeing rural housing supply:** Working with the private sector through S106 Agreements is not the only route to meeting rural affordable housing need. Other mechanisms also need to be explored.

- Local authorities could be encouraged to adopt very low site size thresholds in small settlements (e.g. as low as two dwellings) on which they seek affordable housing?
- Does purchase of existing properties have a possible role in the provision of rural affordable housing? Or where land supply is very constrained (e.g. on environmental grounds) but need for affordable housing is acute, the RHS could give its support to authorities who pursue an active policy of purchase of 'street properties' to increase the affordable supply.
- Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs), have proved successful in bringing forward exceptions sites and securing SHG. Is there a wider role for them in facilitating affordable housing provision in market towns? Should more counties in the West Midlands have an RHE?
- In some instances developers have proved sluggish about bringing sites forward for development or have provided mainly upmarket housing. Can local authorities use planning powers to speed up development and/or to specify a wider mix of new housing including affordable housing and lower priced market housing? Is there a possible role for CPO by either the local authority or English Partnerships where it seems unlikely that Local Plan targets will be met?

### Questions

1. What strategies should local authorities put in place to deliver an increased supply of rural affordable housing? Should they make use of the full range of powers open to them including CPO, purchase of existing properties, and introduction of planning policies which specify type and mix of market housing? What other powers could they use?
2. What if any change does there need to be in the Housing Corporation funding regime to facilitate provision of rural affordable housing?
3. How can local authorities establish more effective working relationships with housing providers and rural communities?
4. Should local authorities within an HMA seek to develop a common approach to the provision of rural affordable housing?

#### 4f COMMUNITY COHESION AND DIVERSITY

##### Issues

The RHS should value and support the rich diversity of cultures in the Region. It should seek to ensure appropriate housing choices and opportunities for all groups within the Region. The large and diverse BME community represents a significant economic and cultural resource to the Region. The RHS must ensure that there are effective pathways of housing choice to meet the range of housing needs of the BME community and that the community is fully involved in delivering the regeneration objectives of the strategy. It is important to ensure that households from different communities and traditions share in the improvement of housing quality and increasing choice.

The West Midlands has the largest BME community in England outside of London. For the Region as a whole BME communities comprise 11% of the population. Nearly 30% of the population of Birmingham is from the BME community and over 20% in Wolverhampton. There is a BME population of 539,000 in the Central HMA, representing 91% of the BME population of the Region. In 1991 – 2001 the BME population in the Central HMA grew by nearly 150,000 (38%) whilst in the remainder of the region BME growth was 20,000 (consisting of 59% in the South HMA, 64% in the North HMA and 84% in the West HMA). So whilst decentralisation is, slowly, taking place, the absolute numbers concentrated in the Central HMA mean that the future of BME communities will continue to be linked to the future of the core of the Region.

A table of BME data between 1991 – 2001 is detailed in Appendix 3

Compared to other households BME households are more likely to be overcrowded, live in poor housing, be more dissatisfied with their home and want to move. There is however much diversity within the BME community and BME households should not be regarded as wholly poor, marginal and badly housed<sup>21</sup> (ECOTEC, 2004). BME communities are growing and the value of these communities to the wealth, vibrancy and diversity of the Region must be reflected in policies which ensure that they have effective and affordable housing choices.

Housing to meet the needs of the BME population should be reflected in the mainstream of the Regional Housing Strategy. The size of the BME population and its role as a source of growth makes it integral to both analysis of the housing market and any strategy to meet housing need. Urban renaissance can be enhanced by both raising the standard and quality of housing and raising income levels for BME households. An understanding of the links between the BME housing market and the BME economy could help deliver added value from housing investment within BME communities.

Local authorities and housing delivery vehicles across the region need to ensure that their strategies fully reflect the needs of the BME Communities. In order to do this they should ensure that:

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<sup>21</sup> ECOTEC (2004) "BME Housing Research in the West Midlands", Commissioned by the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the BME Housing Network on behalf of the Regional Housing Board.

- All housing proposals are subject to effective community consultation which involves full BME engagement.
- Community cohesion strategies underpin renewal and renaissance agendas and masterplans seek to ensure development of multi-ethnic communities and discourage concentration of single ethnic groups.
- There is appropriate linkage to Supporting People strategies with the distinctive but diverse needs of minority groups recognised. Within the lifetime of the RHS the housing needs of BME elders are likely to come to greater prominence and need to be taken into account.

The BME communities are essential to renewal and renaissance especially in the Central and North. However, there must also be effective housing choices which make rural areas including parts of the South and West HMAs more accessible to BME households. Where stock is replaced, and for new development more generally, dwellings of suitable sizes, types, tenures and locations to meet the needs of a diverse range of households should be provided. New housing supply in the private and social sectors must meet the diversity of needs from all households.

BME engagement will be critical to the delivery of sustainable communities in both areas of growth and renewal. This means creating a dialogue around future planning so that communities feel that they are included and heard in the formulation of major change. The BME housing sector can contribute both to the process of wider BME engagement and the delivery of a housing strategy which meets BME needs. Investment through partnership arrangements can help to sustain the capacity of the BME housing sector and wider BME communities to be engaged in delivering the Strategy.

## Questions

1. How can the role of BME communities as an integral part of the solution to urban renaissance and market renewal be better acknowledged?
2. Can links be made between the BME housing market and the BME economy so that housing investment adds value to BME communities?
3. How can BME housing issues be mainstreamed within the RHS?
4. How can BME capacity to engage in delivery of the Strategy be enhanced?
5. How can existing areas of social housing, re-modelled and new supply be made accessible to BME communities?
6. How can we create a comprehensive range of housing options that recognises the diversity of the BME population and its changing aspirations?
7. How do we mainstream BME housing issues whilst ensuring that culturally sensitive provision is developed where needed?
8. How to ensure that there are effective pathways of housing choice for all communities?
9. How to engage the BME community more fully in housing market renewal and urban renaissance?
10. How can the RHS encourage effective housing options for minority communities in rural as well as urban areas?
11. How can we ensure that new supply in both the social and private sectors is better suited to meet the aspirations of a diversity of communities?
12. How can pathways to housing choice be better linked to leisure and employment provision to meet the needs of all communities?

13. What needs to be done to ensure that the opportunities for improved choice offered by housing market renewal are fully realised?
14. How can consultation with minority groups in aspects of the housing strategy be inclusive and effective?

## 4g HOMELESSNESS

### Issues

ODPM guidance states that the RHS should seek to reduce the level of homelessness in the Region and, in particular, reduce the numbers of households in temporary accommodation. It should tackle the causes of homelessness and promote actions which prevent homelessness. The RHB has commissioned a regional Homeless Strategy as part of its response. This strategy builds on local homelessness strategies to provide a wider vision for tackling homelessness in the West Midlands. It will be important to maximise the benefits of a coordinated approach, between local authorities, given the propensity for homelessness to be “shifted” from one locality to another. Co-ordination with other agencies such as health, education and criminal justice, employment and economic development can also be enhanced at the regional level to develop joined up approaches to homelessness prevention and support on the ground.

**Scale of need:** In the third quarter of 2004, ODPM data shows that there were 3,960 cases accepted as homeless and in priority need in the Region. At a rate of 1.8 per 1000 households this is above the average for England (1.5). 1,458 of these acceptances were in Birmingham where the rate is 3.7 per 1000. There were a total of 2,740 households accommodated in temporary accommodation in the Region of which 977 were in Birmingham. Recent research<sup>22</sup> has identified a number of “homelessness hotspots” in addition to Birmingham where the level of homelessness acceptances is out of balance with the level of social housing supply. These hotspots include rural as well as urban authorities.

Using ODPM data for the third quarter of 2004, each of the HMA has authorities with high (>2 per 1000 households) levels of acceptances of homeless households in priority need. In addition to Birmingham these authorities are Cannock and Solihull in the Central sub-region; Stoke in The North; Malvern Hills and Redditch in the South and Shrewsbury in the West. Relatively high levels of households accommodated in temporary accommodation (>100) were, in addition to Birmingham, located in Dudley, Tamworth and Telford and Wrekin in the Central HMA; Malvern Hills, Worcester and Wyre Forest in the South and Herefordshire and North Shropshire in the West.

**Nature of need:** The overwhelming demand on local authority homelessness services is from households with dependent children or where one member of the household is pregnant (but this partly reflects the statutory priority need categories which exclude most single people). In most cases these households need access to decent secure homes rather than care or support services. However, a significant minority of demand comes from those who require care and support services as well as decent homes.

**Proposed solutions:** The strategy should support the provision of additional investment in general needs housing to tackle homelessness by targeting identified homelessness hotspots. The need for additional investment is indicated by the

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<sup>22</sup> CURS, University of Birmingham, December 2004 “West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy”.

relationship between demand and the availability of social housing lettings. It should also support appropriate capital and revenue funding to address the backlog of need for supported housing<sup>23</sup>.<sup>24</sup>.

The strategy should set specific targets for the reduction in numbers of households in temporary accommodation in line with ODPM guidance that such reductions should be a priority.

The strategy should support an approach to homelessness that recognises the multidimensional nature of the problem and seeks to prevent homelessness. A multi-agency approach to funding solutions and securing funding should be promoted.

### Questions

1. Should the balance between the level of priority homelessness acceptances and the supply of social housing lettings be used as an indicator of the requirement for investment in general needs housing to relieve homelessness?
2. How should better coordination be achieved between the RHB, Housing Corporation, Supporting People commissioners and homelessness strategy groups to promote appropriate capital and revenue funding for supported housing?
3. How should homelessness be designed out of market renewal areas, and provision be made for housing and support needs of vulnerable and excluded groups be retained as the HMRA programmes are implemented ?
4. Should a small cross-authority and cross-sector homelessness strategy implementation group be established to champion homelessness at regional level, to influence resource allocation and to collate and disseminate good practice?.
5. Should HMA homelessness partnerships build on existing cross-authority and cross-sector partnerships to deliver the strategy on the ground and to implement and monitor joined-up homelessness strategies
6. How can the quality and coverage of data on homelessness in the region be improved and how should the impact of the regional homelessness strategy be monitored?

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

<sup>24</sup> See also section 4h: Supporting People.

#### 4h SUPPORTING PEOPLE

The introduction of Supporting People in April 2002 presented a challenge for the Region to implement and plan housing support related services across the West Midlands. Limited revenue funding over the last couple of years has resulted in a reduction in the development of new supported housing. Capital and revenue funding need to go hand-in-hand and there have been gaps in provision, particularly where revenue funding could not be assured to support potential capital allocations. New provision has therefore not necessarily followed the greatest need.

The Government announced cuts in the Supporting People Programme in December of 2004 whose impact will be felt on future programmes.

The Government expects regional housing boards to take a lead by ensuring that RSLs and supporting people administering authorities co-ordinate their approach to capital and revenue investment. The RHB has commissioned a Regional Supporting People Strategy in response<sup>25</sup> (on which this paper is based).

**Improving existing provision:** Some of the existing provision for supporting people is in outdated and poor quality buildings which, if re-modelled, could continue to serve a useful purpose. However, Housing Corporation funding for this is very limited with the focus on new provision.

**Improved access to move-on accommodation:** Access to affordable rented housing for people moving on from supported housing is important both for the individual and those providing supported housing - without move-on accommodation, some of the available supported housing is blocked and people are unable to progress and to live increasingly independent lives. This is not a new issue and the region needs to exploit as many options as possible to address it. Possible options could include identification of a specific proportion of all allocations and/or nominations for this purpose but other actions urgently need to be identified.

**Role of supported housing in wider urban and rural renaissance:** Supported housing is needed to help deliver the region's rural and urban renaissance and offer pathways of housing choice across the region. In areas of market renewal, in addition to the re-provision of existing supported housing, there may be a need, as yet unquantified, for additional provision. People living in the poorest housing in the region (particularly older rented terraced housing) are likely to be the most vulnerable and the loss of their current home will highlight their need for support.

In rural areas, support services are spread more thinly and whilst it is desirable for vulnerable households to remain in their local community, concentrating supported housing and services in larger settlements could offer a more effective service to vulnerable households.

#### Questions

1. What can the RHS do to help in the co-ordination of capital and revenue funding?

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<sup>25</sup> West Midlands Regional Supporting People Strategy, Secta Starfish, 2004

2. What can the RHS do to help identify the need for and effectiveness of joint authority working?
3. Should the RHS ear-mark funds to redress under-provision over the last two years?
4. What is the right balance between the provision of temporary and move-on accommodation?
5. Should more public funding (ADP) go to remodelling existing schemes at the expense of new provision?
6. Should the RHS focus on delivering supported housing wherever the need or for a more concentrated approach to provision particularly in rural areas?
7. How can the RHS help deliver supported housing in renewal areas where market diversification is also the aim?

**4i MIGRATION INTO THE REGION**

***Need to ensure all types of migrants are covered in RHS, for example, economic migrants such as HSMP, the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme.***

**ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES**

The RHS will need to take account not only of fixed housing need, but also of the requirement to provide housing for those who are transient or temporarily housed. This includes asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers some of whom may still be eligible for accommodation and support. Refugees will also need to be considered as they will have been granted limited or indefinite leave to remain in the UK. The latter will have a permanent requirement for accommodation

**Asylum Seekers:** The West Midlands is a key dispersal area for asylum seekers being dispersed from London and the South East area as well as new applicants claiming asylum in this region directly. It is estimated that there are between 15-20 000 asylum seekers and around 50,000 refugees residing in the core urban areas of the West Midlands Region. Research currently being undertaken by CURS will verify these estimates. The dispersal areas are currently Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell, Solihull and Stoke-on-Trent. The largest refugee communities are Somali, Kurdish, Iraqi and Iranian, with significant numbers of Sudanese and Ethnic Albanian. The process of asylum seeker dispersal and refugee integration is overseen by the West Midlands Consortium for Asylum & Refugee Support in partnership with key stakeholders.

At present accommodation for asylum seekers is contracted by the Home Office in the areas mentioned above. In the West Midlands the Home Office contracts directly with the eight local authorities and five private sector housing providers. These five-year 'Accommodation & Support' contracts will come to an end for all eight local authorities in December 2005, and for private sector providers at various dates throughout 2005. A key policy question currently being given much consideration is how best to effectively accommodate asylum seekers in the UK including the West Midlands once the existing contracts come to an end, using the experience and knowledge that the Home Office, private sector and local authorities have gained over this five year period. When local authorities entered into Contract in 2000 they allocated a specific number of units of accommodation in cities and boroughs that were designated as 'cluster areas' where asylum seekers would be dispersed and 'clusters' of communities would be created as a result. The private sector however were able to disperse asylum seekers outside the cluster areas without a mandate to consult with the relevant local authorities which in some cases resulted in cluster limits being exceeded and a number of asylum seekers being accommodated outside the designated cluster areas, where they were less likely to integrate with the local community.

However, proposals for the new Accommodation & Support Contract Post 2005 include rectifying these issues through tightening up of providers contracts, establishing a regional mechanism for procuring and managing dispersal accommodation, regional management of asylum seekers dispersed in the West Midlands through a 'Regional Management Board' made of local authority and private sector providers, the voluntary sector, Regional Consortium and National Asylum Support Service representatives and other relevant stakeholders, a reduced number of private sector contracts with a reduction in sub-contractual arrangements, and greater standardisation in the Contracts offered to providers. The West

Midlands Consortium has already stated this as its preferred way forward for this region to the Minister for Immigration. This will also address the issue of sub-standard accommodation being used within the Contract. The procurement and management of Emergency Accommodation which is offered to new applicants who claim asylum directly in the region prior to dispersal accommodation will also be reviewed.

There is much concern also about the welfare of those asylum seekers who have received a negative decision on their asylum application and have exhausted all appeal rights, and for failed applicants who cannot for various reasons be returned to their country of origin. There are incidences of failed asylum seekers living with friends or being accommodated by members of their own community which has led to overcrowding.

CURS Asylum Seeker & Refugee research findings will enable the RHB to be better informed in terms of the scale and nature of housing demand for both asylum seekers and refugees. The West Midlands Consortium will ensure that any future projections for the numbers of asylum seekers to be dispersed to the region are made available, thus the impact upon the Regional Housing Strategy can be considered. This will include considering the numbers of asylum seekers dispersed to the region, estimating the number that will be granted refugee status, and the number of refugees that will remain in the West Midlands and those that will enter the region from other parts of the UK. Failed asylum seekers who are still accommodated as well as those in emergency accommodation will all be included and the impact that numbers of people in this category could have upon the demand for dwellings in the region.

With regard to accommodating refugees, there are already some good practice models within the region which demonstrate ways in which refugees can successfully access move-on accommodation through partnership arrangements between the public and private sector working with refugee community organisations. These models will be considered as part of a successful move-on accommodation strategy for refugees.

RHS policies on asylum seekers and refugees should be linked to wider RES strategies to upskill and improve the economic base. Their needs should also be taken into consideration alongside the policy aims of housing market renewal, balancing tenure, sustainable urban development and rural regeneration.

A key issue for the Strategy to address is how prescriptive it should be in relation to integrating policies for asylum seekers and refugees into local authority planning; both in terms of the scope of data required to underpin assessments of need as well as in terms of the rubric appearing in Local Development Frameworks. There could be merit, in the absence of stronger guidance from ODPM, in avoiding a highly defined policy statement at this stage.

**Questions:**

- 1 How can local authorities develop more effective responses to dealing with housing and land provision for asylum seekers and refugees?
- 2 What role should the RHS play in dealing with the challenge of accommodating asylum seekers and refugees?

- 3 How can better information be provided and accessed on the housing and other needs of asylum seekers and refugees?
- 4 Is more information required about the resettlement experiences (including access to work and skills training) of those who have found permanent accommodation in the Region?
- 5 How can policies on asylum seekers and refugees be integrated with the RES, forward planning and local planning process?

#### **4j GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS**

##### ***Needs to refer to the research underway***

Local authorities are now charged under the Housing Act 2004 who, with assessing the need for local pitches for gypsies and travellers in their housing needs assessments. Whilst ODPM have identified a shortfall of some 4,500 pitches for gypsies and travellers nationally, local authorities across the Region now have to estimate how this (national) requirement is dispersed across the West Midlands region.

**Key issues:** A key issue for the Strategy to address is how prescriptive it should be in relation to integrating policies for gypsies and travellers into local authority planning; both in terms of the scope of data required to underpin assessments of need as well as in terms of the policy framework appearing in Local Development Frameworks and local Housing Strategies.

##### **Questions:**

1. How can local authorities develop more effective responses to dealing with housing and land provision for travellers?
2. How can better information be provided on the housing and other needs of gypsies and travellers?
3. Is more information required about the resettlement experiences (including access to work and skills training) of those who have found permanent accommodation in the Region?
4. How can policies on travellers be integrated with the RES, forward planning and local planning process?

**4k DECENT HOMES****Issues**

Meeting the government's Decent Homes targets across all sectors must be a key priority for the RHS. With 38.5% of all dwellings failing the decent homes standard<sup>26</sup>, the West Midlands has a higher proportion of the housing stock estimated to be non-decent than any other region. 620,000 of the estimated 828,000 homes in the Region failing the standard were in the private sector. On the basis of recent ODPM estimates<sup>27</sup> the Region appears to have nearly 140,000 vulnerable households in non-decent homes in the private sector, with much of the need for improvement concentrated in the Central and North HMAs .

Non-decent local authority dwellings are a particular problem in the Central HMA with several authorities here recording over 50% of their local authority stock as non-decent. Private sector unfitness<sup>28</sup> is also an issue in the Central HMA and to a lesser extent in the North HMA. Whilst nearly 7% of the private sector stock is estimated to be unfit in the North, less than 3% is unfit in the South HMA. Nearly 59,000 of the regional total of nearly 92,000 unfit private dwellings are in the Central HMA<sup>29</sup>.

The variations within each HMA. are wide.

- Sandwell in the Central HMA records over 14% of its private stock as unfit whilst six Central authorities record less than 3% as unfit.
- In the North the variation is from nearly 12% unfit stock in Stoke-on Trent to less than 1% in the Staffordshire Moorlands.
- In the South HMA, Worcester with nearly 6% unfit contrasts with Bromsgrove at less than 1%.
- The variation in the West HMA is less marked but the range is nevertheless, from around 5.5 % to around 2.25 % of the private sector stock unfit.

The Region must establish a vision of decent housing in decent neighbourhoods. The RHS must promote an approach to the delivery of Decent Homes that coordinates approaches in the Local Authority, Housing Association and Private Sectors, despite the differing funding routes and delivery mechanisms for each sector. Approaches to the delivery of decent affordable homes must link clearly with wider neighbourhood renewal and urban and rural renaissance agendas. This may include demolition and wholesale neighbourhood restructuring as is already underway in the HMRAs.

The West Midlands was allocated £3.5m from central government in each of the two years 2004/05 to help local authorities support new ways to fund repairs and improvements to low income and vulnerable households in private sector homes. The largest share of this funding has gone to a consortium of local authorities who have combined in the "Kick Start" programme. The innovation and collaboration that is a feature of this initiative should become typical of the Region.

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<sup>26</sup> English House Condition Survey 2001

<sup>27</sup> The so-called Ready Reckoner

<sup>28</sup> Unfitness is one potential aspect on non-decent homes. ODPM guidance states that a decent home meets four criteria; 1.It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing. Dwellings below this standard are unfit. 2. It is in a reasonable state of repair. 3. It has reasonably modern facilities and services. 4. It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

<sup>29</sup>HIP Returns 2004.

Investment in sustainable decent housing and sustainable decent neighbourhoods must be a regional priority. Guidance from ODPM indicates that the RHS must seek to ensure that the Region meets the national targets that all social housing (owned by local authorities and housing associations) reaches the decent homes standard by 2010 and that the proportion of vulnerable households in the private sector living in decent homes should increase year by year. This proportion should be 65% by 2006 and 70% by 2010. This will have implications for the allocation of the SHP and could influence the balance between spending on new build and refurbishment. The RHS needs to articulate a vision of significant improvements in the quality of the housing stock in all tenures. However, the means by which improvements will be achieved and the associated funding vary from sector to sector.

ALMO authorities will receive additional borrowing allocations to tackle decent homes objectives from their ALMO investment allocations if they achieve the required performance ratings. Where an ALMO or retention is the best way forward as demonstrated by option appraisal, resources will match those agreed in business plans.

No SHP funds are required for RSL dwellings. RSLs are expected to be able to fund achievement of decent home standards from their own resources.

It is likely that significant SHP funding will go towards tackling non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households in the private sector. It is clear that this will be a major issue for the West Midlands. However, both the extent of the problem and the possible funding mechanisms require clarification. The number of vulnerable households, the proportion of the housing stock involved and the associated costs of improvement are large but further data verification at a local authority level should underpin allocations. The allocation strategy needs to consider all possible sorts of funding sources including non-SHP resources in order to establish the most effective means of obtaining sustainable improvements.

ODPM guidance stresses the importance of linking an overall private sector renewal strategy with achieving decent homes at the local level. In the private sector *“Achieving the decent homes standard will only be achieved by adapting a combination of policies which will involve a range of assistance, advice and encouragement for homeowners and using enforcement powers only as a last resort”* The role of home improvement agencies, the DEFRA ‘Warm Front’ grant programme and the place of loans and equity release are all expected to be considered<sup>30</sup>

Delivering decent homes is expected to link to objectives such as improving health and education outcomes, renewing failing housing markets and tackling poverty. The delivering of decent homes is expected to be linked to community strategies and local neighbourhood renewal strategies and with other regeneration activities such as low demand measures<sup>31</sup>.

It will be important to develop a coordinated funding strategy which ensures that money spent on decent homes ties in with wider with wider renewal and supporting people strategies as well as taking into account other regeneration and renewal activity (including demolitions). It will also be important to ensure that initiatives to tackle decent homes in the social and private sector are planned and executed in harmony. Local authorities will need to demonstrate both that they have a robust assessment of the extent to which vulnerable households are housed in non-decent

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<sup>30</sup> ODPM Feb 2004 “A decent home – definition and guidance for implementation”

<sup>31</sup> *ibid* paras 6.1-6.5

stock within their area and that they have a clear and effective strategy, within the context of their overall neighbourhood renewal strategy, to deal with this.

## Questions

1. How can local authorities most effectively establish a robust database on private sector non-decent homes and develop effective renewal strategies to the benefit of vulnerable households.
2. What are the criteria by which funds to support the decent homes objective in the private sector are allocated. A number of options are possible:

Concentrate funds on:

- a) Those local authorities with the highest level of need for action on vulnerable households in non-decent homes in the private sector based on the absolute number of households or the percentage of households affected. (If this approach is taken it will need to be on the basis of agreed data. ODPM have produced estimates of such levels of need for each authority but the accuracy of this information (based on the “Ready Reckoner”) is debatable).
- b) Those local authorities with the greatest levels of private sector unfitness measured by the numbers of dwellings and proportion of the stock affected. Here the data is clearer and less debateable but there is no readily identifiable correlation between unfitness and vulnerability and unfitness is but one potential feature of non-decent homes.
- c) Localities identified as Housing Renewal Areas in the Communities for the Future chapter of the RSS.
- d) Proposals that show clear linkage with wider regeneration, renewal and supporting people objectives.
- e) Proposals that demonstrate a high level of need but for which alternative funding routes are not available.
- f) Proposals that demonstrate a high level of need and a high level of linkage with complementary funding from other sources.
- g) Those LAs that can demonstrate both a high level of past performance in delivering improvements and can show a high level of on-going need.
- h) Is there a need in certain circumstances to exceed the Decent Homes Standard, for example on issues of energy efficiency, etc?

#### 4I QUALITY, DESIGN AND SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

(Awaiting information)

To refer to SWM's **Sustainable Construction Project**

Housing is a major consumer of energy in both construction and running of the housing stock (see the newly adopted Regional Energy Strategy). Many of the people in housing need but unable to meet need through market choice are also most vulnerable to climate change. Given that new investment in the housing stock now will last well into some of the climate change scenarios predicted by UKCIP, this region's approach to creating "decent homes" in both the public and private sectors should factor in climate change e.g. insulation standards in excess of current regulation standards. Investment priorities set in the RHS could help stimulate a market for the types of technologies that the RES is trying to promote through its cluster strategies. (Source AWM)

##### Questions

1. How can the RHS contribute to the development of sustainable construction initiatives?
2. How will the delivery of sustainable construction inter-act with the creation of pathways of housing choice and urban and rural renaissance?

## 4m SKILLS AND TRAINING

Achieving RHS/ RSS objectives will require a significant change in the productivity of the construction sector during a relatively buoyant labour market. Large reserves of surplus labour do not exist to be drawn upon to expand output as with the past. Housing output can only be expanded by accessing the non traditional workforce (e.g. females, ethnic minorities) and increasing output per worker by using new fabrication techniques.

Pillar 2 of the West Midlands Economic Strategy is focused on the skills agenda. AWM has supported a number of initiatives<sup>32</sup> concerned with the development of a skilled workforce for construction activity. Typically, this has been connected with advancing Regeneration Zone policies by providing accessible work opportunities especially for people marginalized from the workforce. Some of this support has related to specific housing developments and changes in public policy on housing (e.g. stock transfers).

The Regional Housing Strategy could support at a strategic level the co-ordination of housing investment and appropriate training interventions especially in Regeneration Zones. Co-ordination could be extended to looking at ways of supporting new construction skills related to manufacturing techniques in the building industry which will be necessary if the scale of build required by some targets is to be met.

***NB. Further work will be required to illustrate the breadth of issues relating to the skills agenda, for example, housing management skills, design etc.***

### Questions

1. How can the RHS encourage improved productivity in the construction sector?
2. What are the linkages between increasing work opportunities within the housebuilding industry and longer term economic growth?
3. Are there trade-offs between productivity and quality and if so, how can they be handled?

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<sup>32</sup> in collaboration with partners such as the LSC/ Further Education Colleges

## 5. FUNDING – ISSUES AND OPTIONS

**Decent homes** – Local Authority stock - Guidance to the RHB from ODPM is that when ALMO/retention is the agreed option, the board should provide HIP resources at the level agreed in the Option Appraisal business plan. *To what extent should capital resources be allocated over and above this decent homes standard and on what basis should decisions be made?*

Private Sector Vulnerable Decent Homes - the board will wish to target resources to contribute to achievement of this decent homes standard. Few authorities however have undertaken the necessary surveys to determine the extent and location of the problem and therefore lack strategies to address it. *The board considers it reasonable that some reward should be built into the allocation of resources where need has been assessed. How might this be done?*

RSL stock - RSLs are expected to maintain all the properties to Decent Homes Standards without recourse to the public purse but part of the ADP in the past has been directed at works to housing association stock. This has dwindled in recent years to less than 5% of the programme. However "emergency" funding is still available for small RSLs that have little reserves to meet problems when quite literally the roof might be falling in. Typically these are properties with vulnerable residents. *Should the Corporation continue to hold reserves for these instances?*

**Rewarding effectiveness:** The board feels that the way capital resources are allocated should have a built in incentive to encourage local authorities to meet RHS housing policy objectives in an efficient and effective way. An example is decent homes (vulnerable people) above. Another possibility is the recommendation in the draft Regional Homelessness Strategy (on the RHB website) to provide resources for the reduction of priority families in temporary accommodation in a way that does not create a perverse incentive. *Are there any other areas where good performance might be rewarded through the capital allocation process?*

**Partnership working:** effective partnership working is key to the delivery of balanced and sustainable communities. It will require local authorities and delivery agencies to form genuine partnerships with housing providers and local communities and to be prepared to change strategies and methods of working in order to meet their partners concerns. *Are there ways in which capital allocations might be made that would reinforce the partnership working now being established at housing market level and address the needs of housing markets more effectively?*

**Maximising resources available** – The RHS will look to split the SHP between HIP and ADP, but maximum use should be made of other resources available to the region to stretch what we have, Eg: there may be capital resources which local authorities have to contribute (e.g. to fund DIYSO), the public sector may also be able to contribute land for housing at below open market price and private landowners can also be expected to contribute through S106 Agreements. PFI and stock transfer may also generate additional resources. There is also some uncertainty about what resources can be made available from within the National Pathfinders' budgets for housing purposes. *How can we quantify at sub-regional and local level the contribution which can realistically be expected from these other sources and identify the size of any funding gaps? Should availability of other funding influence the allocation of the SHP?*

*There is also a need to identify spending and resources available for specific actions, for example, Urban Renaissance, clearance, etc.*

*There is also a need to capture all resources relating to housing, for example, regeneration funding.*

Local authorities and delivery vehicles need to demonstrate that they are doing their utmost to facilitate new homes by maximising other resources available and putting in place robust planning policies. *Why should the public purse invest in areas that make delivery difficult or are seen to be working against the regional agenda?*

**Priority Investment Areas:** The RHS needs to identify priority investment areas and decide whether these take the lion's share of resources, accepting that other areas which also have problems which may be less severe will therefore not get public funding or whether public funds will be spread more equally between authorities and locations. If the former approach was adopted one possible option would be geographic targeting on priority investment areas overlaid by thematic considerations which would then determine the allocation of funds within those areas (e.g. BME, Supported housing, affordability etc). *How should the RHS divide scarce resources between priority investment areas and the rest?*

**Urban Renaissance:** What are the housing investment requirements for achieving urban renaissance. Is it resources for clearance of existing properties and provision of infrastructure with private developers providing the new housing? This will require a lower level of investment than the provision of a high proportion of social housing on the assembled sites. *What guidance can the RHS give on this matter?*

*Is there is a role for varying the way "value for money" is assessed in and outside priority areas.* There may be a justification for considering that a higher intensity of public funding per output is permissible within a priority area than outside it reflecting the likely costs of intervention in the priority areas compared to other areas or the policy urgency.

**Under-occupancy:** Could money be made available by the Regional Housing Board to incentivise the movement of people who are under-occupying family houses (in the affordable and market sectors) into smaller accommodation, thereby making better use of existing stock? *What priority should be given to such a policy?*

**Development pipeline:** the new RHS will set clear priorities, based on RSS, for the use of SHP funding for new affordable and social housing. These priorities might not equate to where RSLs have the capacity to deliver in the short/medium term, for example location of land holdings, schemes already under discussion. *How can RSLs be encouraged to develop more appropriate pipeline schemes in the future? In the transition period how much funding should go to pipeline schemes which are not in priority areas?*

**Getting the product right:** The ADP mainly funds social rent and lowcost home ownership – *Are these the right products for the region? Is there a role for other products tailored to the intermediate market? What should the balance be between newbuild and purchase of existing properties?*

**Supported housing:** It is acknowledged that supported housing has not received significant capital funding in the region over the past two largely due to revenue

squeeze. Should we therefore allow more of the ADP to pay for remodelling of existing schemes, but at the expense of getting no new completions from these? What are the implications for meeting ODPM new completions targets?

## PROPOSED ALLOCATIONS STRATEGY 06/08

### Essential building blocks

The distribution of resources can be built up from the following essential building blocks:

1. Resources needed to provide adequate progress on LA decent homes. This will be based on OA figures plus estimates where OA business plans have not yet been agreed.
2. Resources needed to be targeted at achieving adequate progress on the 2010 decent homes target for housing in the private sector occupied by vulnerable people. The level of resources could be based on estimates of private sector stock condition/ODPM ready reckoner and historic spend plus incentive for those who have undertaken a proper survey. The RHB might consider how it could assist in obtaining needs data. We might specifically retain some funding for 07/08 to be allocated later where LAs could show they have undertaken a survey and have a strategy for dealing with it.
3. ODPM guidance specifies that the RHB must maintain the level of output to social rented housing, and that any increase in regional budgets needs to be used on additional social housing to meet the needs of families in temporary accommodation. The recent consultation paper by ODPM on the allocation of resources to the regions suggests that we might have an extra 7%. Decisions on locations for targeting will require the more detailed information from the current Shared Evidence Base research being undertaken by CURS on location and extent of need for social housing within the need for affordable housing, within HMAs.

Allocation of resources for affordable housing, including social rented, will only be allocated when it supports the principles of sustainable communities. It will also need to take account of regional geographic priorities, e.g. HMRAs and already defined low demand areas, and needs arising from CPO activities in these or ALMO/PFI/transfer areas. It will take account of the needs of BME communities as described elsewhere in this Issues paper.

4. If not met within 3. above, additional funding in high demand areas to remove families in temp accommodation, taking into account the perverse incentive effect on housing management (see section on homelessness above).
5. Supporting people. We suggest developing an indicative amount for new SP within the social housing block, saying whatever we can on location and priorities for funding based on emerging LA 5 year strategic plans and RIG view. In the early years this level is likely to be determined by the amount of revenue funding likely to be available. It will need to have within it a clear statement on the extent of remodelling which will be funded. Any of this funding not spent on SP would go back into the social housing category.
6. The HC is monitoring RSL progress towards decent homes and requires RSLs to make the necessary provision within its business plans. It is not proposed to fund work to achieve decent homes standards in RSL properties (but see 12. below)

7. Gypsies and travellers. The HC is now able to support development of gypsy sites. We may not have a separate indicate budget but guidance to housing providers will make it clear that gypsy sites can be supported and will contribute to affordable housing targets.

8. Research for future RHS. We have obtained substantial advantage in 04/06 from the funding reserved from the Single Housing Pot for research. In future we should treat the SHP as funding of last resort and seek if possible research funding within RPB running costs.

### **Other important areas**

When sufficiently detailed info is available, particularly on 2.,3. and 5 above, we should be able to establish the total amount of funding required and establish the amount of funding left for other activities in 9 to 12 below once any existing commitments have been taken into account.

There are at least 4 key areas which may not be not adequately covered by the above:

9. Need for social housing identified by the Shared Evidence Base research over and above the “last year + 7%” figure at 3. above.

10. Need for affordable housing identified by the Shared Evidence Base research other than social rented, i.e. the intermediate housing market. In arriving at the target for new affordable housing, the HC would take account what affordable housing can be produced by other means/funding.

11. Need for investment in public and private housing stock above the decent homes level, for example:

- \* contribution to wider neighbourhood renewal
- \* CPOs
- \* unfitness in the private sector
- \* any funding for LA properties to complement the decent homes standard, and environment, security works
- \* contribution towards LA 40% costs on DFG.

12. Traditionally, the HC has put aside around £1.5m for bids during the year from charitable housing providers which are not backed by RSLs e.g. almshouses. It is suggested that this be reduced to £1m in 06/08 with a view to targeting specifically on decent homes standards and if necessary reducing further in future years

It would be possible to come up with options for what the funding not committed with categories 1 to 9 above might buy in terms of affordable/social housing mix... It might be possible to extend this to stock public and private sector stock condition above the decent homes standards. It could do this within housing market areas.

## Questions

1. In principle do you agree that the process above the one is the one should use?
2. Are there any key areas which need to be supported with the RHB's capital resources?
3. What are the options for dividing available funding between items 9 - 12 above? What evidence needs to be in the Regional Housing Strategy to support any allocations under 11. above?
4. To what extent and how should we involve housing market partnerships in influencing the extent and balance between 9 - 12 for their housing market? This might for example relate to timing of RSL investment, how to use funds within a housing market if there was slippage on a new affordable housing project., identifying and prioritising location based priorities (e.g. HMRA's) within the housing market.
5. It is likely that the capacity of housing providers to respond to newly defined priority investment areas for affordable housing (based on the Shared Evidence Base work) will take some time to develop fully. To what extent should funding be allowed to be directed at secondary priority areas in 06/08 if schemes are not available? It is suggested that the HC aims to achieve at least 75% of resources to areas of need defined as priority.
6. What share of overall resources should be spent in the Priority Areas and how should this be allocated?
7. How can robust information on alternative funding sources be collected and what impact should this have on public funding decisions?
8. Is the ADP funding the right products? If not what new products are needed?
9. How can effectiveness at local authority level be measured and rewarded?
10. How can the development pipeline be aligned with priorities in RPG?
11. How much funding should be given to Supported Housing?

## 6. MONITORING

Monitoring plays an important role in assessing progress towards the RHS objectives and in shaping future reviews of the Strategy. Effective monitoring needs to deal with both outputs and outcomes of the Strategy. Outputs show whether specific programmes and activities are in line with the Strategy whilst outcomes measure the impact of the Strategy.

**Outputs** can reasonably be measured on an annual basis and could include factors such as the distribution of public spending, numbers of new market and affordable homes built or given planning permission, properties brought up to Decent Homes standards and the number of supported homes which are remodelled.

**Outcomes** can be measured through selected performance indicators which show how a housing market and the lives of people living there are changing e.g. through changing migration patterns, reduced deprivation, reduced crime and general resident satisfaction. Although such indicators can be 'collected' on an annual basis, it is longer term trends which really matter.

What also matters in the West Midlands is the performance of the four housing market areas and their progress in tackling the issues most relevant to each.

The Board is actively considering mechanisms for improved monitoring of the RHS and the relationship of this process to information being collected elsewhere (e.g. for the spatial strategy)<sup>33</sup>.

***Monitoring of the RHS will be undertaken with the RSS and it will therefore be able to identify important delivery and implementation issues within both Strategies. CURS and WMRA have further work to do in developing this.***

### Question

1. Which indicators will provide the best information to measure the outputs and outcomes of the RHS?
2. How can the RHS co-ordinate its use and collection of indicators with other regional and local monitoring exercises?

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<sup>33</sup> CURS for the RHP forthcoming

## **7. IMPLEMENTATION**

Successful implementation of the Strategy will depend on individual agencies and organisations carrying out their tasks effectively. But success in delivering the Strategy will also require partnership working at the regional, housing market and local area level. Partnership working will not just be about the statutory agencies working together, it will require the support of housing providers, voluntary organisations, agencies delivering non-housing services (e.g. health, education and police authorities) and the local community.

The active participation of housebuilders and RSLs will be particularly important in the process and the way their views are sought and heard will need to reflect the geography of their interests and the realities of the time they can devote to partnership working at regional and housing market level.

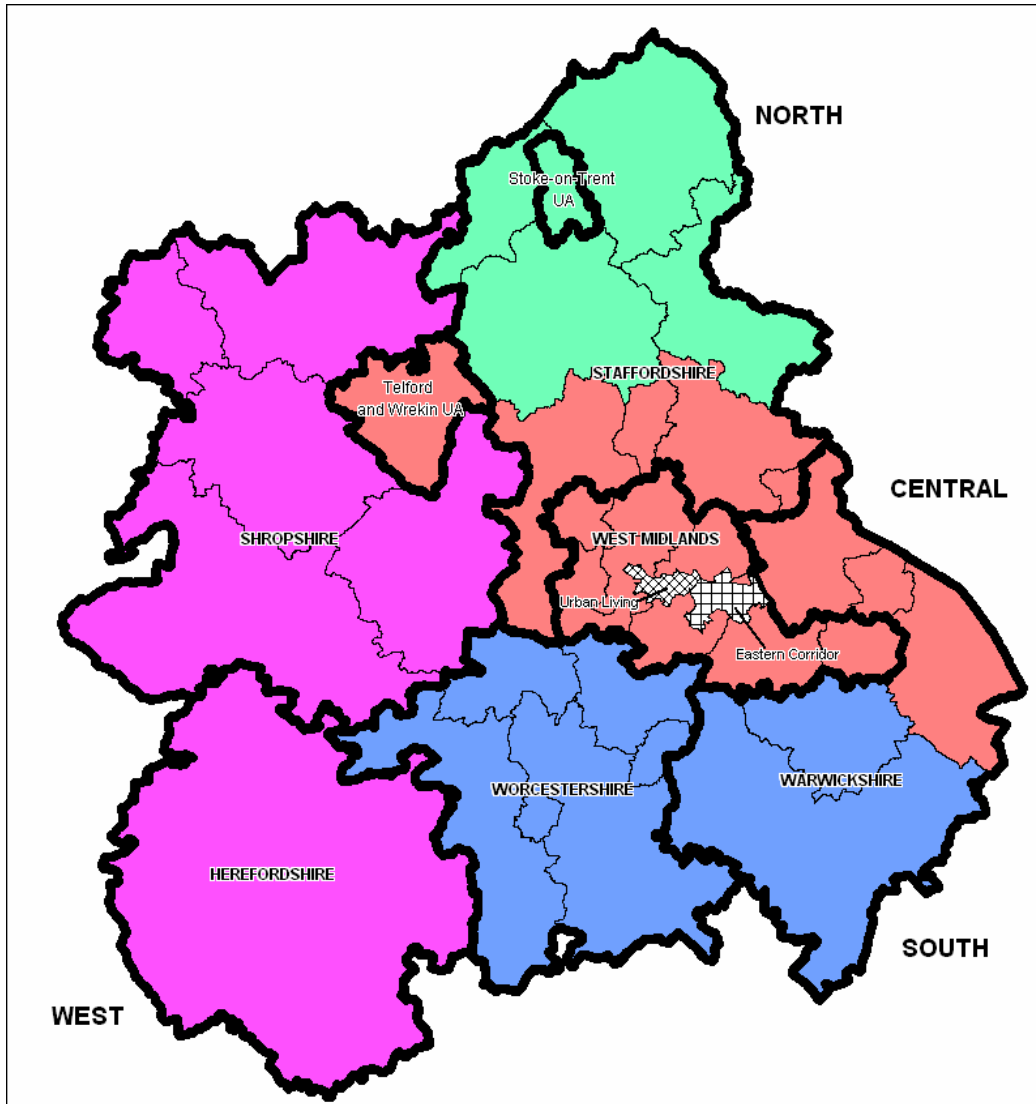
The Region needs to consider how formal and informal partnership working can be strengthened and, for instance, whether it would be helpful to establish working groups or forums at regional, housing market and local level which bring together interest groups, perhaps tackling specific issues of concern (e.g. in speeding up delivery of affordable housing, in tackling rural housing issues). Any new forums which are established would need to have a clear purpose and not duplicate partnerships already in operation.

### **Questions:**

1. What more needs to be done to strengthen partnership working in the Region?
2. Where are the gaps in effective partnership working and where is there a need for streamlining?
3. Should the four HMAs each establish a new partnership forum to guide implementation of the Strategy at HMA level?

**APPENDIX 1****HOUSING PROVISION - TAKEN FROM RSS 11 TABLE 1**

Planning area	Average annual rate of housing provision		
	To 2007	2007-2011	2011-2021
Birmingham	2300	3000	3000
Coventry	650	650	830
Dudley	600	700	975
Herefordshire	800	600	600
Sandwell	900	900	975
Shropshire	1300	900	900
Solihull	400	400	470
Staffordshire	2900	2500	1600
Stoke-on-Trent	600	600	600
Telford and Wrekin	1330	1330	700
Walsall	500	500	825
Warwickshire	2000	1500	1350
Wolverhampton	500	500	825
Worcestershire	1900	1200	1000
Total	16680	15280	14650



Appendix 2

**Appendix 3**

Housing Market Area	1991			2001			Change	
	All People	BME	%	All People	BME	%	Number	%
<b>Central</b>								
Birmingham	961,041	206,767	21.5	977,087	289,681	29.6	82,914	40.1
Cannock Chase	88,833	748	0.8	92,126	1,254	1.4	506	67.6
Coventry	294,387	34,874	11.8	300,848	48,205	16.0	13,331	38.2
Dudley	304,615	13,662	4.5	305,155	19,285	6.3	5,623	41.2
Lichfield	92,679	939	1.0	93,232	1,738	1.9	799	85.1
North Warwickshire	60,747	465	0.8	61,862	842	1.4	377	81.1
Nuneaton and Bedworth	117,052	4,565	3.9	119,132	5,864	4.9	1,299	28.5
Rugby	84,563	4,252	5.0	87,454	5,271	6.0	1,019	24.0
Sandwell	290,091	42,605	14.7	282,904	57,426	20.3	14,821	34.8
Solihull	199,859	5,805	2.9	199,517	10,792	5.4	4,987	85.9
South Staffordshire	105,487	1,169	1.1	105,896	2,071	2.0	902	77.2
Tamworth	70,065	832	1.2	74,531	1,425	1.9	593	71.3
Telford and Wrekin	139,516	4,842	3.5	158,325	8,311	5.2	3,469	71.6
Walsall	259,488	24,794	9.6	253,499	34,434	13.6	9,640	38.9
Wolverhampton	242,190	45,015	18.6	236,582	52,538	22.2	7,523	16.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,310,613</b>	<b>391,334</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>3,348,150</b>	<b>539,137</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>147,803</b>	<b>37.8</b>

Housing Market Area	1991			2001			Change	
	All People	BME	%	All People	BME	%	Number	%
<b>North</b>								
East Staffordshire	97,105	4,040	4.2	103,770	6,323	6.1	2,283	56.5
Newcastle-under-Lyme	119,091	1,286	1.1	122,030	2,475	2.0	1,189	92.5
Stafford Staffordshire	117,788	1,984	1.7	120,670	3,111	2.6	1,127	56.8
Moorlands	95,450	371	0.4	94,488	726	0.8	355	95.7
Stoke on Trent	244,637	7,667	3.1	240,636	12,529	5.2	4,862	63.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>674,071</b>	<b>15,348</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>681,594</b>	<b>25,164</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>9,816</b>	<b>64.0</b>

Housing Market Area	1991			2001			Change	
	All People	BME	%	All People	BME	%	Number	%
<b>South</b>								
Bromsgrove	91,544	1,300	1.4	87,837	1,892	2.2	592	45.5
Malvern Hills	68,638	386	0.6	72,172	1,032	1.4	646	167.4
Redditch	78,106	2,862	3.7	78,807	4,066	5.2	1,204	42.1
Stratford-on-Avon	105,586	708	0.7	111,484	1,462	1.3	754	106.5
Warwick	116,299	6,551	5.6	125,931	8,916	7.1	2,365	36.1
Worcester	81,755	1,746	2.1	93,353	3,223	3.5	1,477	84.6
Wychavon	101,716	522	0.5	112,957	1,337	1.2	815	156.1
Wyre Forest	94,814	872	0.9	96,981	1,778	1.8	906	103.9
Total	738,458	14,947	2.0	779,522	23,706	3.0	8,759	58.6
Housing Market Area	1991			2001			Change	
	All People	BME	%	All People	BME	%	Number	%
<b>West</b>								
Bridgnorth	50,511	311	0.6	52,497	468	0.9	157	50.5
Herefordshire	160,161	889	0.6	174,871	1,576	0.9	687	77.3
North Shropshire	52,873	246	0.5	57,108	640	1.1	394	160.2
Oswestry	33,508	192	0.6	37,308	420	1.1	228	118.8
Shrewsbury and Atcham	91,749	895	1.0	95,850	1,542	1.6	647	72.3
South Shropshire	38,230	187	0.5	40,410	361	0.9	174	93.0
Total	427,032	2,720	0.6	458,044	5,007	1.1	2,287	84.1

Housing Market Area	1991			2001			Change	
	All People	BME	%	All People	BME	%	Number	%
Central	3,310,613	391,334	12	3,348,150	539,137	16	147,803	38
Norrth	674,071	15,348	2	681,594	25,164	4	9,816	64
South	738,458	14,947	2	779,522	23,706	3	8,759	59
West	427,032	2,720	1	458,044	5,007	1	2,287	84
Total West Midlands	5,150,187.0	424,363.0	8.2	5,267,310	593,014	11.3	168,651	39.7

## APPENDIX 4

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