

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**Assembly Board of Directors - 8<sup>th</sup> June 2007**

**Development of the West Midlands Housing Allocations Strategy  
2008 – 2011**

**Report of the Director - Policy**

---

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1. To provide the Assembly Board with an overview of the development of the West Midlands [Regional] Housing Allocations Strategy 2008-2011 (WMHAS0811).

**2. Recommendation**

2.1 That the Board notes the update.

**3. Background to the development of the West Midlands Housing Allocations Strategy**

3.1 Following the merger of the Regional Housing Boards (RHBs) with the Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) under Regional Assemblies from September 2006, the West Midlands Regional Housing Executive (RHE) is now tasked with developing the next Regional Housing Allocations Strategy for the period 2008 – 2011.

3.2 The purpose of the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy is to allocate housing funding across the Region between local authorities (Capital housing funding) and the National Affordable Housing Programme (to Registered Social Landlords, Housing Associations and private developers, via the Housing Corporation). The Regional Housing Allocations Strategy is the process by which the short term allocations of the Regional Housing Pot are determined, whilst the Regional Housing Strategy sets out the longer term vision for housing in the Region.

3.3 The next Regional Housing Allocations Strategy (RAS) will closely follow the directions set out in the Regional Housing Strategy and the current Regional Housing Allocations Strategy 2006-2008. It is important for the Regional Housing Executive to take into consideration major issues which have arisen since the current Allocations Strategy was produced and in particular identifying their implications for investment.

## **4. Consultation Process to Date**

### a) Questions & Issues Paper:

- 4.1 The consultation process for WMHAS0811 commenced on 15 January 2007, when a large Regional event was held at Austin Court, Birmingham. The event was arranged for an Officer audience, to enable them to influence the shaping of the Strategy at an early stage
- 4.2 Discussion at this event focused upon a 'Questions & Issues' paper, which the WMRAs Housing Secretariat, in conjunction with the Investment team at the Housing Corporation (HC) and Government Office West Midlands (GOWM) had worked-up to stimulate debate in relation to the potential capital investment streams and themes for the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP), to be included within the new Strategy.
- 4.3 The 'Questions & Issues' paper was also designed to highlight some of the key issues to the sub-regional Housing Market Area Partnerships, to assist them in the development of their sub-regional Housing Investment Strategies (SRHISs), which is in accordance with Government's drive for sub regional working.

### b) Sub-Regional Housing Investment Strategies (SRHISs):

- 4.4 The input by the sub-regional Housing Market Area Partnerships has been integral to the consultation process, with the Sub-Regional Housing Investment Strategies (SRHISs) serving as the major components of the Allocations Strategy, around which other influences (e.g. CLG guidance, advice from Thematic groups) have been added. By working through the sub-regional Housing Market Area Partnerships, effective communication has been achieved, which should ensure the investment priorities for the WM Region accurately reflect the needs and priorities emanating from sub-regions. It is to be hoped this will allow local authorities to be supportive of the funding advice submitted to Ministers by the Regional Housing Executive.
- 4.5 Following the delivery of the Sub-Regional Housing Investment Strategies, a draft version of the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy (WMHAS0811) was launched for formal consultation on 16 March 2007, with a deadline for comment of 18 May 2007. A copy of the draft version was made publicly available on the Assembly website and circulated electronically to both Housing and Planning Officer Groups, along with Other Stakeholder groups.

c) Thematic comment:

4.6 In an attempt to secure expertise comment from each of the thematic areas, the Housing Secretariat approached each of the Regional Thematic Groups (e.g. Regional Homelessness Implementation Steering Group (RHSIG), Regional Supporting People Implementation Group (RSPIG), BME Housing Network and the West Midlands Strategic Partnership for Asylum and Refugee Support (WMSPARS), with the view to holding a Roundtable event, to allow focussed debate on the issues posed for each of the Themes.

Due largely to capacity issues for each of the thematic groups, the RHSIG, RSPIG and WMSPARS felt they were unable to resource an event, with only the BME Housing Network holding a Roundtable discussion on Friday 4 May 2007. However, RHSIG did undertake a discussion on WMHAS0811 at its Steering group meeting held on 16 April 2007 and both RSPIG and WMSPARS have agreed to contribute comment on key questions, following the closure of the formal consultation period.

d) Elected Member involvement:

4.7 The importance of consultation with Elected Members was also highlighted by the Regional Housing Executive (RHE) at its meeting on 15 March 2007, when it set out a clear expectation that Officers would consult with all their Members who hold a Housing, Planning or Regeneration Portfolio. Consequently, each of the sub-regional Housing Market Area Partnerships was informed of the need to submit a response to the formal consultation, with Members input.

e) Refinement of Sub-Regional Housing Investment Strategies:

4.8 As part of the on-going consultation process, the Housing Secretariat reviewed each of the SRHISs, to identify gaps in advice and in light of the guidance issued by CLG on 29 March 2007. Once an overview of each of the sub-regions circumstances had been obtained, the Housing Secretariat in conjunction with the Housing Corporation and GOWM drafted HMA Briefing Note 5, to provide each of the Sub Regional Housing Market Area Partnerships with a steer as to how their SRHISs could be refined, especially in terms of ensuring the prioritisation of investment needs and contributing supporting evidence on key issues (e.g. determine the percentage split on affordable housing tenures, identification of Strategic sites, consideration of impact posed by advice on BME groups).

f) Regional Housing Allocations Strategy Editorial Group:

4.9 Following the closure of the formal consultation period, an Editorial Group will be convened to review all of the responses received and make recommendations to the Regional Housing Executive as to the

Allocations Strategy for 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007. To avoid any conflicts of interest, RHAF has previously agreed that the sub regional Housing Market Area Partnerships would not be represented on the Editorial Group and that the Group would comprise of WMRA, HC, GOWM, Chartered Institute of Housing and Advantage West Midlands (AWM).

## **5. Submission of the Housing Allocations Strategy and Activity Post-Submission**

- 5.1 The advice on housing priorities, which the Region submits to Ministers on 28 June 2007 will assist in the process of arriving at the allocation of the Regional Housing Pot (RHP) between the Regions. The Regional Housing Executive will sign off the Regional Allocations Strategy at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2007.
- 5.2 This allocation will only be made once the outcomes from the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR 07) are known, which is expected during October 2007. Once the funding made available via the Regional Housing Pot is confirmed, the Regional Housing Executive will need to finalise the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy 2008-2011. Whether any further consultation with the sub regional Housing Market Area Partnerships is undertaken, will be determined by the information coming from Government at that time.
- 5.3 Following further advice from CLG, a decision will be made as to the possible appointment of a consultant, to assist the Housing Secretariat in making any subsequent revisions to the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy 2008-2011, post 28 June 2007. Further work will be undertaken into issues identified as requiring further investigation during the consultation period, for example the scale of the Decent Homes Standard issues for vulnerable people in the Private Sector.

### **Contact Details:**

**Rose Poulter – Policy Director**

**0121 678 1024**

[r.poulter@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:r.poulter@wmra.gov.uk)

Steve Forrest

Strategic Advisor – Housing

Tel: 0121 678 1064

Email: [s.forrest@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:s.forrest@wmra.gov.uk)

Emma Kiteley

Senior Regional Advisor – Housing

Tel: 0121 678 1037

Email: [e.kiteley@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:e.kiteley@wmra.gov.uk)