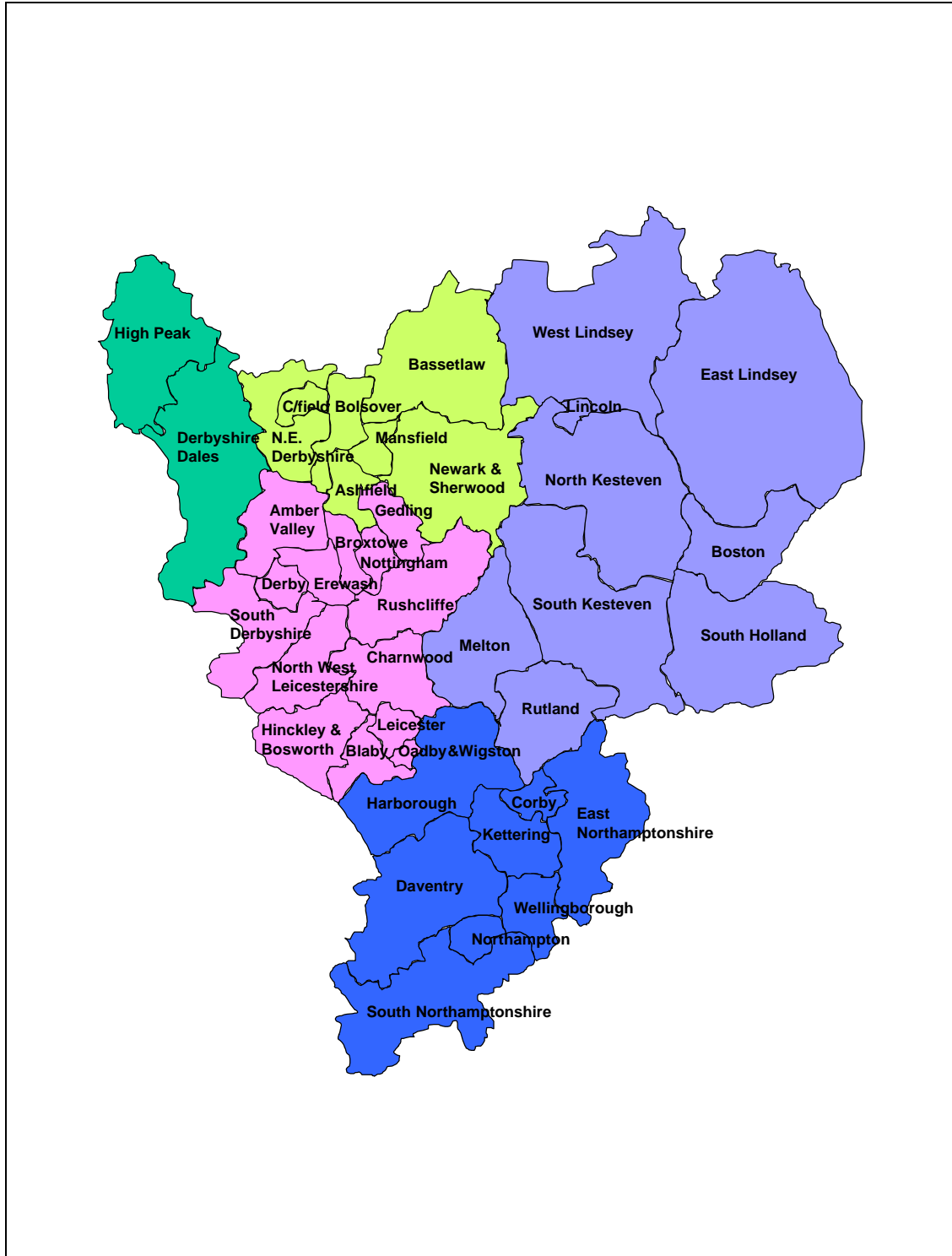


# The East Midlands



## Regional Housing Strategy 2004-2010

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## **2. Introduction**

Since the late nineties the English Regions have increased in importance as the government has pursued its policy of devolution. A Regional Housing Statement was first produced in 1999 to provide a broadly drawn picture of housing in the East Midlands.

The Sustainable Communities Plan, launched by the Deputy Prime Minister in February 2003, provided the impetus for further development at a regional level with the introduction of Regional Housing Boards. These Boards were to be responsible for housing investment at the regional level. A more robust document with clear priorities was needed to guide investment decisions - a Regional Housing Strategy.

This Strategy document is part of a family of three. There is also a Digest of Evidence containing the information and research that this Strategy is based upon, as well as a short summary version that describes the Strategy and is accessible to a much wider audience.

The Regional Housing Board has developed the Strategy with the help of a range of partners, but the strategy belongs to the region. These partners provide the mechanism for influencing the strategy as it develops further.

The contact for the Regional Housing Board is Ian White – telephone 0115 971 2678, e-mail [housing.goem@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:housing.goem@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk). The Regional Housing Board comprises representatives from the following organisations:

- East Midlands Development Agency ([www.emda.org.uk](http://www.emda.org.uk))
- East Midlands Regional Assembly ([www.emra.gov.uk](http://www.emra.gov.uk))
- East Midlands Regional Assembly Housing Group
- English Partnerships ([www.englishpartnerships.co.uk](http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk))
- Government Office for the East Midlands ([www.go-em.gov.uk](http://www.go-em.gov.uk))
- Housing Corporation ([www.housingcorp.gov.uk](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk))
- The Countryside Agency ([www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk))

If you have difficulty reading the Regional Housing Strategy in its current format and would like information on how to access it in a different format (Braille, large print, computer disk or in another language) please contact Ian White, Regional Housing Board Secretariat on 0115 971 2678.

### 3. Executive Summary

#### 3.1 The Purpose of the Strategy

The Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) is part of the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS), sitting alongside the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) that is developed from Regional Planning Guidance (RPG). It delivers national housing priorities, set out in the Sustainable Communities Plan (SCP), in a way that is appropriate to the East Midlands and has been informed by stakeholders in the region. It provides guidance on regional priorities for regional stakeholders.

#### 3.2 The Vision Guiding the Strategy

The Strategy supports the Integrated Regional Strategy's vision for the East Midlands:

*“The East Midlands will be recognised as a region with a high quality of life and sustainable communities that thrives because of its vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity and the way it addresses social inequalities and manages its resources”.*

The objective for Housing is *“to ensure that the existing and future housing stock is appropriate to meet the housing needs of all parts of the community.”*

The challenge for the Regional Housing Strategy is to set out how the vision will be delivered through its housing policies.

The general policy statement will be to promote sustainable housing development which addresses all the matters which would need to be taken into account when considering any development proposals (including accessibility and transport) as set out in RPG8 policies 1, 2 and 3. This should:

- Help create neighbourhoods where people want to live.
- Reflect the need for balanced mixed tenure communities.
- Prioritise the use of previously developed land and buildings.
- Provide high quality housing which incorporates sustainable construction and design (see Appendix One).
- Enhance the quality of the local environment and support community safety.
- Improve accessibility to jobs, recreation and services and reduces the need to travel.
- Contribute to environmental infrastructure<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of environmental infrastructure is being developed regionally. It includes a network of multifunctional green spaces, sustainable construction and drainage systems and environmental work in rural areas

### **3.3 Key Issues and Challenges**

The East Midlands housing situation has been described as reflecting the national polarised north-south housing picture: lower demand and the need for regeneration in the north and high house prices and growth pressures in the south. All captured within one region, but this simple picture hides a much more complex reality.

The region does not experience the intense polarisation of some other regions, nor does it attract the policy led funding associated with these problems. Nevertheless, the issues remain to be addressed.

Northamptonshire is part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area. The East Midlands is expected to deliver around 97,000 dwellings (42,000 more than originally planned in RPG8) as part of the growth area provision. The region will find it extremely difficult to deliver without additional resources to do so.

The strong housing market and price rises of recent years have presented the region with a conundrum. On the one hand rising prices have protected fragile housing markets from degenerating into significant areas of low demand. On the other hand, price rises have meant that housing affordability is now a problem right across the region, with first time buyers experiencing difficulties buying property at the bottom end of the market. Research estimates a need for affordable housing of over 6,000 homes per year in the East Midlands. This figure is neither being planned for, nor delivered at present. Dealing with the gap most pressing in the Eastern and Southern sub-regions is a critical issue for the Regional Housing Strategy.

The state of the housing market is closely linked to economic performance. When demand for housing is very high, businesses have problems recruiting their workforce locally and more people are forced to commute longer distances. This in turn leads to transport congestion with its additional financial and environmental costs.

In other areas it is difficult to attract business where demand is lower and environments are unattractive. Part of the problem stems from the quality of private sector housing. In buoyant markets private housing, whether for sale or rent, may be gentrified and command a higher return. In potentially low demand areas any turnaround must come from intervention, through grants, renewal policies or enforcement. Research has provided a means to identify low demand areas that are likely to fall into structural low demand and have wider effects on the market. The factors that tip the balance are now known so that action can be taken.

Delivering decent homes, particularly to the most vulnerable groups, will improve the region's health and well-being. This is dependent upon combining better knowledge of the most vulnerable people, with better knowledge of the most vulnerable housing and targeting interventions accordingly.

### **3.4 Delivering Change**

The Regional Housing Board has developed a comprehensive set of policies that will contribute to delivering the vision and changing the situation in the East Midlands. These are grouped into three overall Strategic Aims:

- Balance
- Inclusion
- Co-ordination

Policies have been developed under the three aims to deliver change.

#### **Policies to deliver Balance**

<u>Policy 1</u>	Increasing the quantity and improving delivery of appropriate high quality affordable housing for all communities
<u>Policy 2</u>	Securing quality and choice for housing development
<u>Policy 3</u>	Recognising and responding to areas affected by low demand
<u>Policy 4</u>	Providing options for unpopular or unsuitable sheltered housing stock
<u>Policy 5</u>	Delivering decent homes and decent neighbourhoods: renewing and re-vitalising the private sector
<u>Policy 6</u>	Delivering decent homes and decent neighbourhoods: decent homes in the social sector
<u>Policy 7</u>	Ensuring sustainable growth for the Milton Keynes South Midlands area is delivered
<u>Policy 8</u>	Ensuring that the skills in the construction sector can be harnessed to increase output in the region

#### **Policies to deliver Inclusion**

<u>Policy 9</u>	Tackling the causes of homelessness
<u>Policy 10</u>	Assisting people to maintain their independence for as long as they wish
<u>Policy 11</u>	Promoting healthy, safe and eco-efficient homes
<u>Policy 12</u>	Ensuring that in rural areas and market towns there is both an appropriate provision of quality housing to meet a range of housing needs and access to related services for vulnerable people of all ages
<u>Policy 13</u>	Ensuring that all sub-regions understand and address the needs and aspirations of diverse sectors of their communities

#### **Policies to deliver Co-ordination**

<u>Policy 14</u>	Developing the role of the sub-regions
<u>Policy 15</u>	Developing and integrating a common information base
<u>Policy 16</u>	Supporting economic growth in partnership

## 4. Purpose of the Regional Housing Strategy

The Regional Housing Strategy sets out to achieve four things:

- Deliver the Sustainable Communities Plan
- Encourage Regional Integration
- Provide Guidance to Stakeholders
- Inform the Regional Strategy for Housing Investment

### 4.1 Deliver the Sustainable Communities Plan

The Government's Sustainable Communities Plan<sup>2</sup> (SCP) sets out a national strategic framework for housing. It sets out a programme of action to tackle high house prices in parts of the country and housing abandonment in others, focusing on the need for decent homes, good quality local environments and protecting the countryside. The Plan identifies four growth areas, one of which, Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM), effects Northamptonshire. The Regional Housing Strategy aims to deliver the SCP by prioritising the right actions for the East Midlands.

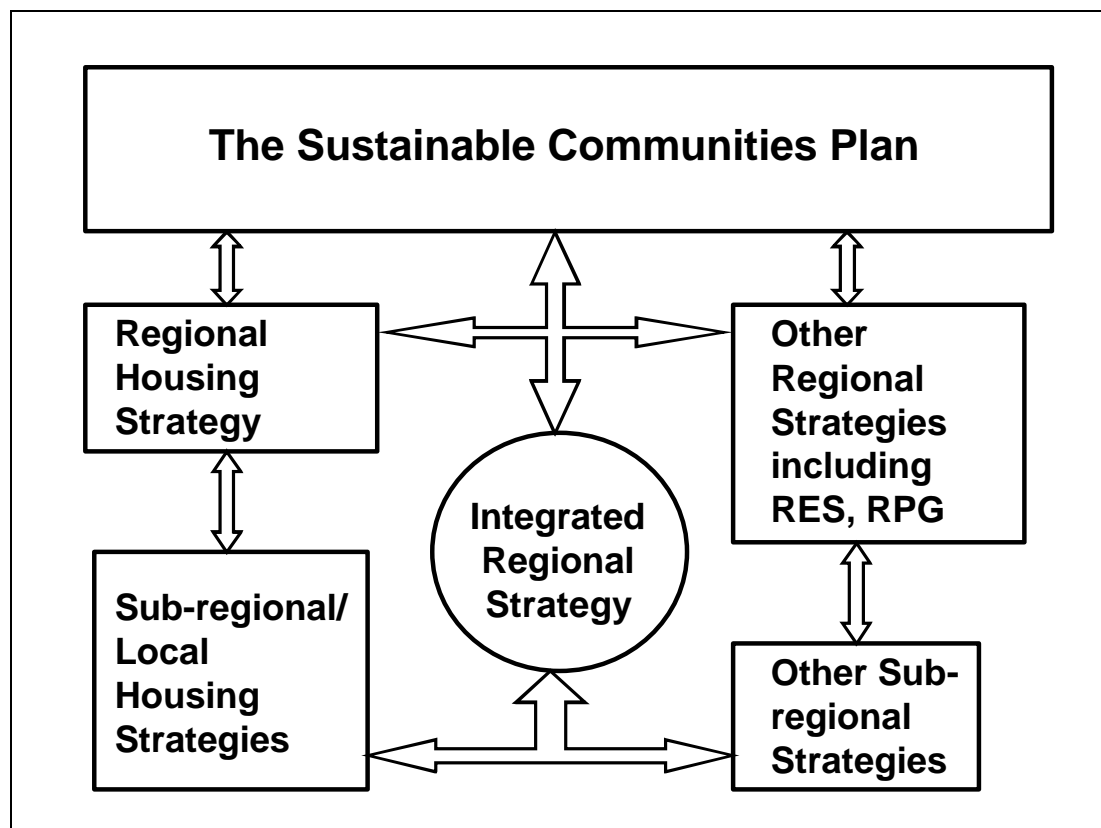


Figure 1 Relationships for delivering the Sustainable Communities Plan

<sup>2</sup> The Sustainable Communities Plan introduced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in February 2003

The Regional Housing Boards were established following the publication of the Sustainable Communities Plan in recognition that:

- Many aspects of housing need to be planned on a regional or sub-regional basis as housing markets cross local authority boundaries;
- To deliver sustainable communities and make the best use of scarce resources, housing needs to be joined up with land use planning, economic development, transport and the planning of other services;
- Formulaic allocations are unlikely to make the best use of available resources: a better use of resources is likely to be produced by using regional knowledge informed by a proper analysis of housing needs in the region.

The Regional Housing Boards have two main roles:

- Preparation of Regional Housing Strategies; and,
- Advising Ministers on how the region's allocation of funding for housing capital works (the Regional Housing Pot) should be spent.

Both roles support the overall objective of ensuring that housing makes the biggest possible contribution to the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities. They also have a part to play in fostering partnering and encouraging effective use of resources.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets<sup>3</sup> are aimed at providing thriving, inclusive and sustainable communities in all regions. The Regional Housing Strategy supports this aim. In particular it will help to deliver on targets PSA 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.

### **4.2 Encourage Regional Integration**

The East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) has drawn up a framework, the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS), to ensure that regional strategies and action plans (such as the Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Planning Guidance) are integrated to deliver agreed priorities for the region. This means that, for example, developing new employment opportunities can be

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<sup>3</sup> Public Service Agreements established to ensure Government departments are more accountable for performance under Comprehensive Spending Review.

co-ordinated with providing new homes and transport links. The Regional Housing Strategy is a component of, will influence future revisions of, the IRS.

### **4.3 Provide Guidance to Stakeholders**

The organisations that deliver housing and support on the ground - for example local authorities, housing associations, private developers and so on - need both guidance on potential action within the region, and an opportunity to use their local knowledge to influence regional priorities in the future. The ongoing development and monitoring of the strategy provides this mechanism.

The Regional Housing Strategy **is not a substitute** for local housing strategies – only a local strategy can reflect and act on the situation on the ground. Local housing authorities will produce their strategies within the context of Local Strategic Partnerships to ensure that housing priorities deliver across local economic, social and environmental needs.

The Regional Housing Strategy proposes that sub-regional housing action plans are developed in response to the Strategy by the sub-regional housing partnerships. Not all policies will carry equal weight in all the sub-regions, and we would look for the sub-regions to prioritise policies at a sub-regional level. Sub-regional housing plans can reflect the way that housing markets operate across administrative boundaries, and can integrate activities to make best use of resources and information. Sub-regional plans will also inform the region's investment priorities.

### **4.4. Inform the Regional Strategy for Housing Investment**

In each region there is a Regional Housing Pot (RHP) – a single pot of funding for housing investment administered by the Regional Housing Board (RHB). This took the place of the resources allocated to each region through the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme (ADP), and the local authority Housing Investment Programme (HIP). The RHB published a *Regional Strategy for Housing Investment* in October 2003, which set out the proposed focus and outcomes to flow from the investment of the RHP in 2004-06. This Strategy is available on the Government Office for the East Midlands (GO-EM) website ([www.go-em.gov.uk](http://www.go-em.gov.uk)).

The Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) provides evidence-based advice to Ministers on housing issues in the region, and draws to their attention issues that might require action at a national level. It also provides the overall policy context to enable the Regional Housing Board to advise Ministers on spending recommendations for the Regional Housing Pot (RHP) beyond 2006.

Following the preparation of sub-regional action plans by December 2004 the RHB will be producing a further *Regional Strategy for Housing Investment* for 2006-08 by May 2005, drawing upon evidence gathered from the RHS and the sub-regional action plans.

## 5. Overview of Facts and Evidence

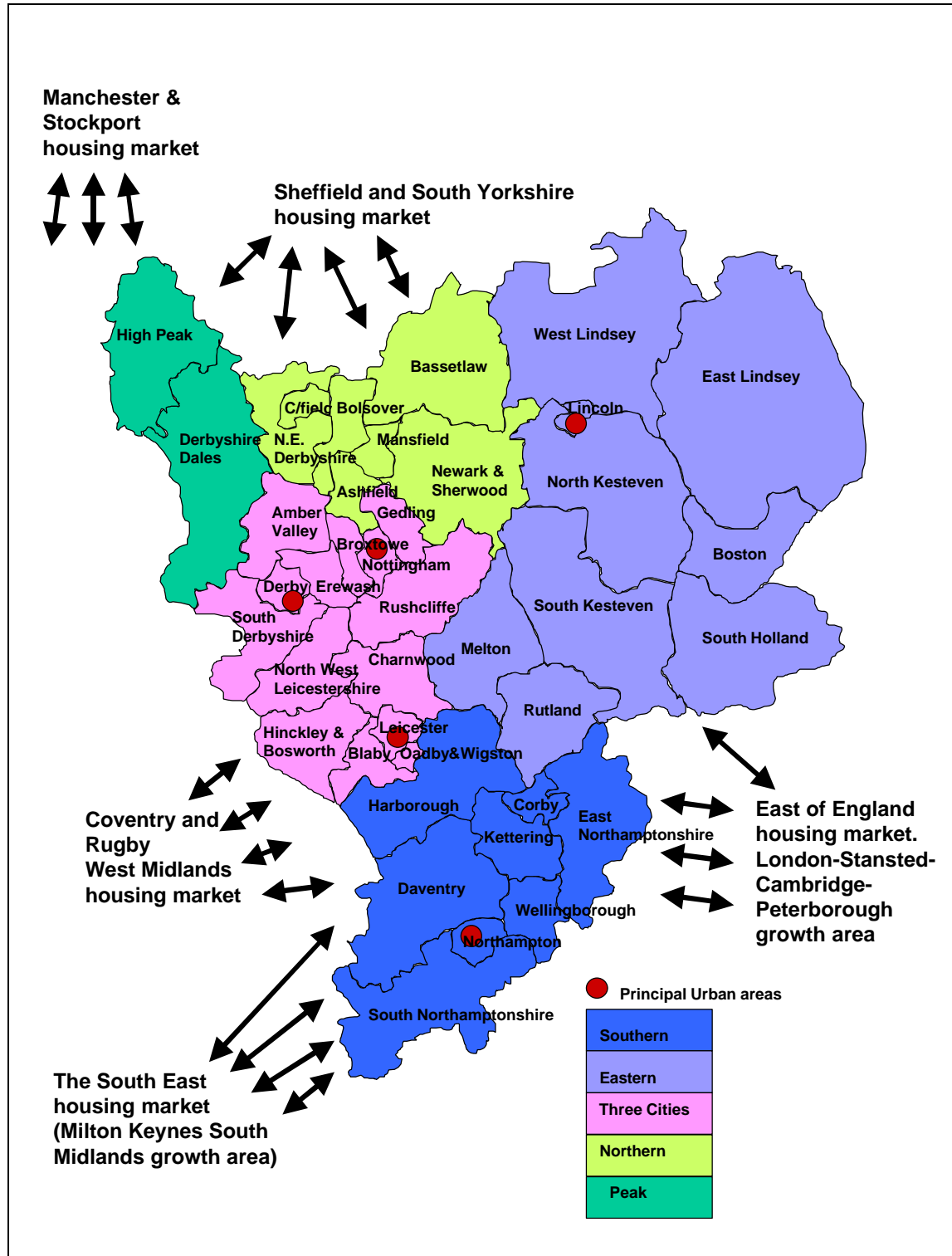
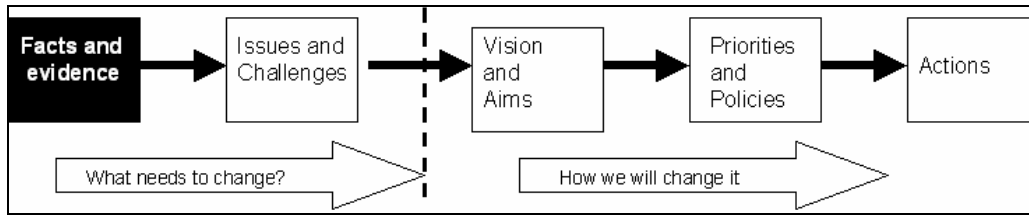


Figure 2 Influences on the East Midlands

This section presents a brief overview of the facts and general situation across the region. The “Digest of Evidence” presents data and facts on the complexities of housing markets of the region in more detail. References to the Digest are included within the text.

The East Midlands is a large and diverse region. With a population of just under 4.2 million, it has a distinctive “polycentric” settlement structure based on the 3 major national cities of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham and the regional centres of Lincoln and Northampton. Around 40% of the population live in towns and villages of less than 10,000 people which also makes the East Midlands one of the more rural regions in England. The East Midlands is strongly influenced by the proximity of major urban centres in adjacent regions, most notably, the conurbations of the West Midlands, the North West and South Yorkshire, and to the South, the small but expanding cities of Milton Keynes and Peterborough.

Regional Planning Guidance identifies sub-regions in the East Midlands which share common characteristics. The map (Figure 2) shows these sub-regions and the external housing markets which influence, and in turn are influenced by, the East Midlands.

### **5.1 People**

The East Midlands is a growing region with increases of both population and household formation above the national average, sharing some of the characteristics of the wider South East. The highest growth has tended to be focused in the south and east of the region, with a more static population in the north of the region. The Sustainable Communities Plan, through the impact MKSM growth area, will lead to even higher rates of growth than projected in the south of the region. In general terms rural areas have gained whilst urban areas have lost population.

➤ **See Digest of Evidence sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 on population projections, household growth and migration patterns.**

The population is also becoming older, with increases in the older population higher than that for the population as a whole. The ratio of older people to younger economically active people (the dependency ratio) varies widely across the region, with lower ratios in the more urban areas such as Northampton and higher ratios in some of the more rural areas such as East Lindsey.

➤ **See Digest of Evidence section 4.4 on age profiles and dependency ratios.**

Whilst the East Midlands as a whole has a higher proportion of white people than England as a whole, there are significant variations across the region. Leicester, Oadby and Wigston, Derby, Charnwood and Nottingham all have larger Asian populations than the national average. The Asian population is strongly concentrated in a relatively small number of areas. The Black population tends to be less concentrated, with Leicester and Nottingham having the highest proportions of Black people in the region.

- **See Digest of Evidence section 4.5 for details of Black and Minority Ethnic breakdown.**

As at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004 the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) was supporting 3422 asylum seekers in the cluster areas of Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Lincoln, with a further 1055 supported on a subsistence only basis in the cluster areas plus Northampton.

- **See Digest of Evidence section 4.6 for more information.**

The region has also proved to be attractive for people in search of employment. Some of this movement is recorded within the migration figures referred to above. What is more difficult is to assess the number of people who have come to work from outside the United Kingdom. There has been a history of this in the seasonal agricultural work in some areas of the region. Recent changes to the European Union borders may have an impact upon this. At present information is anecdotal.

Homeless acceptances across the region have increased by 15.8% from 1999, with some districts experiencing increases above 100%. At the end of March 2003 there were 2830 homeless households in priority need living in temporary accommodation. A third of supported housing lettings are to single homeless people in need of support, with women at risk of domestic violence also featuring strongly in terms of need.

- **See Digest of Evidence sections 4.8 and 4.9 for more information**

### **5.2 Housing Stock**

72% of people in the East Midlands own their own homes, slightly more than the national average. The social rented sector is more concentrated in council housing than is the case nationally, reflecting a lower level of local authority stock transfers. The tenure balance differs across the region, with some areas having higher levels of owner occupation and lower levels of social housing than the regional average, and vice versa. To some extent this reflects the take up of 'Right to Buy'.

- **See Digest of Evidence sections 5.3 and 5.4 for details**

The region has a higher proportion of newer and larger dwellings than the national average. Despite being newer overall, the region's housing stock does not score particularly well on energy efficiency ratings. There are more dwellings located in rural areas than is the case nationally. In April 2002 there were 25,000 private sector homes that had been empty for more than 6 months.

- **See Digest of Evidence sections 5.2 and 5.7 for details**

Completions of new housing are relatively high in the East Midlands, but the vast majority have been in the private sector.

➤ See Digest of Evidence section 5.8 for details

### **5.3 The Region's Housing Markets and Economies**

The term “housing market” describes the economic conditions associated with buying and selling of homes, defined by demand and supply. Demand for housing may be influenced by factors such as mortgage availability, interest rates, economic confidence and growth, level of taxation, prices, aspirations and competition for homes. Profitability, willingness to sell, availability of building land and cost of building may influence supply. Some factors may apply universally across the region, for example mortgage interest rates, whilst others may be related to local conditions such as job availability.

The Barker Review (Kate Barker's Treasury-commissioned report on UK Housing Supply, March 2004) shows how house price inflation has made home ownership in the private sector increasingly unaffordable for many groups in the population, particularly first-time buyers, with knock-on impacts on rent levels in the private sector and on demand for social housing. The review warns that the poor functioning of the UK housing market is destabilising the economy and recommends a substantial increase in housing supply in order to curb house price inflation.

Housing markets are closely affected by economic performance. Economic growth increases demand for housing, while declining economies undermine demand. The region has high rates of economic activity compared with the UK average, but earnings are low and the region has been described as suffering from a low productivity - low pay - low skills equilibrium<sup>4</sup>. The East Midlands does not have the scale or intensity of deprivation of some other English regions, but it has pockets of disadvantage particularly in some urban areas and the more remote rural areas, often associated with industrial restructuring and other economic changes.

Set out below are “thumb-nail” sub-regional sketches which illustrate the diversity of the region's housing markets.

➤ The Digest of Evidence contains more detailed information in section 6 relating to sub-regional markets and the findings of regional research

The **Northern Sub-region** has had a period of painful restructuring as the economy moves away from traditional heavy industry and coal mining. The sub-region has a poor economic outlook because employment is still too heavily weighted towards traditional sectors in decline. The process of industrial decline has left the sub-region with an oversupply of housing, particularly of social housing and traditional terraced housing which is often in poor condition and contributes to unattractive environments. There is a lack of higher quality housing in the area. Detailed information<sup>5</sup> shows a more complex pattern of prices, with some higher priced areas and types. Whilst housing is generally lower priced (around 45% lower than the East Midlands

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<sup>4</sup> State of the Region's Economy 2002

<sup>5</sup> “Further analysis of identified issues of low and changing demand in the East Midlands”.

average) than other areas further south, the sub-region has seen recent house price increases, which currently masks potential problems of low demand in some parts of the sub-region.

Whilst the economy of The **Peak Sub-region** has performed well, with low unemployment, the QUELS<sup>6</sup> study forecasts that the economic performance of this sub-region may deteriorate markedly over the next few decades because of an over-dependency on manufacturing and the minerals sector, under-representation of private services, a lack of sites for employment and transport problems. The 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that access to housing is an acute problem in much of the Peak sub-region. This arises from high levels of demand from people working outside the area and people moving to the Peak on retirement, combined with low local income levels. A limited supply and low turnover of social housing, and a high incidence of second homes exacerbate this.

The **Three Cities Sub-region** of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham and the surrounding districts, is the most urbanised and complex in the East Midlands. The economies of the three cities have seen a shift from manufacturing to services, which is likely to continue as the textiles industry in particular contracts. The East Midlands Development Agency (*emda*)'s Economic Planning and Infrastructure Context (EPIC) study in 2002 identified a need for each of the three cities to become a focus for financial services, scientific research, cultural industries and leisure. The role of the three cities in driving forward the region's economic growth is threatened by 'city flight', with economically active households, particularly professional families with children, living outside the city boundaries. The EPIC report recommends that urban environments be improved in order to attract and retain talented people and businesses. Improvements to housing quality and choice could help achieve this, particularly in drawing new residents into the inner urban core and reducing social divisions.

The **Eastern Sub-region** is a relatively strong economic performer. Much employment is agriculture related, but service employment linked to tourism is increasing in Spalding, Skegness and Lincoln. There are disparities within this sub-region, with the greatest growth in employment in the southern part. The proximity to Peterborough and the London-Stansted-Cambridge growth corridor is pushing up prices. Wages are low in many parts of the region. The prevalence of low-paid seasonal employment has led to poor housing along the coastal belt, and scattered deprivation in some of the more inaccessible rural areas.

The **Southern Sub-region** is one of the most thriving and competitive sub-regions in the East Midlands. The relative proximity to London and good transport links contribute to its popularity as a location for employment and housing. The south west of the sub-region around and beyond the M1 has characteristics that are closer to the greater South East than the East Midlands. Corby constitutes a distinct housing market of its own. It was

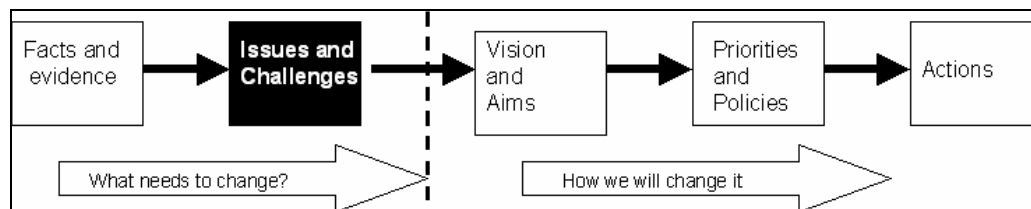
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<sup>6</sup> Quality of Employment Land Supply – EMRA 2002

developed around steel production and designated a New Town in 1950. The closure of the steel works and the town's subsequent decline has led to a focus on regeneration. The sub-region is part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area, identified in the Sustainable Communities Plan to help counter pressures on the housing market in the wider South East. Trend-based population increases will therefore be overlaid with additional policy-led growth.

Each sub-region has a part that is rural to a greater or lesser extent, with some rural areas part of an urban-suburban-rural continuum and other rural areas that are more inaccessible. Whilst sharing the characteristics of their sub-regions, **rural areas** are likely to have features in terms of their housing markets that are related to the availability and choice of housing in these areas. The Countryside Agency has reported that affordability problems are increasing with prices in remote rural areas rising by 24% between 2001 and 2002, and average gross weekly earnings £18.43 less in rural than urban parts of the region.<sup>7</sup> Coupled with the relatively small size of the social rented stock in rural areas this has led to a rise in homelessness in rural districts. Although homelessness acceptances in priority need are still less than in urban districts, in 2001/02 30.7% of homeless households in temporary accommodation were in rural districts - the second highest proportion of all English regions.<sup>8</sup>

## 6. Challenges and Issues for the Regional Housing Strategy



### 6.1 Housing Affordability

Recent house prices increases mean that affordability is now a problem right across the region. The University of Birmingham's Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) new report<sup>9</sup> shows that across the region the proportion of households now unable to enter the property market to purchase ranges across districts in a range between 44% to 75%.<sup>10</sup>

The CURS report estimates a need for affordable housing at around 6400 homes per year. The current RPG has set a monitoring indicator of around 3,400 *affordable* (both low cost market and subsidised housing) houses per year. At the present time the region is neither planning for nor delivering this amount of affordable housing.

<sup>7</sup> From the Countryside Agency's State of the Region report

<sup>8</sup> From the Countryside Agency's State of the Region report

<sup>9</sup> "Additional Work on background information on the East Midlands Housing Market", CURS February 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Table 5.2 from the above report - % unable to buy with loan 3.5 times income

➤ See Policies 1, 7, 8, 9, 12 & 16

## **6.2 Structural Economic Change**

Economic change and housing markets are inextricably linked. In some areas there is a need for housing to play a role in regeneration, whilst in others the shortage of good quality, affordable housing can be a significant brake on potential growth. Both mixed tenure and a revitalised private sector have a role to play alongside quality affordable housing in responding to economic changes. In addition the future of empty homes will vary with the policy options chosen for an area.

➤ See Policies 1, 2, 7, 9 & 16

## **6.3 Changing Levels of Demand**

The risk of low demand in the East Midlands has been largely reduced and held at bay by a rising and buoyant housing market, as people look to cheaper areas for entry-level housing. However if the market dipped, the risk of low demand could increase.

The worst pockets of unpopular housing in the region, are usually quite localised, and tend to be mixed or adjacent to poor quality private rented and social housing. This combination is more likely to cause a greater threat to the surrounding housing market. There are also some very unpopular council and housing association areas, often in urban areas, but these usually tend to be more clearly demarcated, better managed and do not adversely affect the surrounding sub-market in the same way.

➤ See Policies 3 & 4

## **6.4 Stock Condition and Neighbourhood Renewal**

At present 28.1% of private sector housing and 34.3% of social housing is failing to meet the decent homes standard. Clearly more direct control can be exercised over the social housing stock to bring it up to standard. Property in the private sector has to be improved through less direct methods of advice and encouragement, with enforcement as a last resort. The ratio of private and public stock varies between districts, therefore approaches and interventions need to be tailored to the local situation.

Improving private sector housing is often the key to market improvement. Where the market is buoyant, this is happening through “gentrification” and the operation of market forces. In other areas such as housing renewal or regeneration areas, some more robust intervention is necessary – as in the Meden Valley for example. Success depends upon the effectiveness of private sector renewal policies, and the interventions they bring about.

➤ See Policies 5 & 6

### **6.5 Suitability of Housing for Vulnerable People**

There are vulnerable groups on low incomes living in poor housing conditions across the region, who lack the choice (although not the aspiration) that a higher income can bring. They may also have specific support needs to enable them to access alternative, or remain in, their existing accommodation. The largest group requiring supported housing are single homeless people, who often require ongoing support to ensure they can maintain a tenancy.

The rural population is older than the urban, and changing demography means that the population will become even older. In some areas the “dependency” ratio is far higher than the national average. This, coupled with the relatively poor access to services in some of the more remote rural areas is an important issue for the region.

➤ See Policies 4, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13

### **6.6 Providing More Homes Now: Avoiding Future Shock**

There is no doubt that providing more housing now is necessary to alleviate housing stress, particularly in regional “hotspots”. The challenge will be to ensure that in the “rush” to provide more homes we do not forfeit quality.

A recent study, “The Environmental Impacts of Increasing the Supply of Housing in the UK”, for the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has identified that significant environmental impacts will arise from the implementation of the Sustainable Communities Plan and the Barker Review recommendations.

As expected environmental impacts will increase with the increase in house building. The costs of dealing with additional demand for water, waste production and aggregate extraction will also increase. Reductions in environmental impacts may be achieved by moving to “excellent” EcoHomes design, but further research is required to assess the overall cost and benefit.

➤ See Policies 2 & 11

### **6.7 Joining It All Up Regionally**

The Regional Housing Strategy needs to ensure that it fulfils the purpose outlined in section 4 by delivering:

- The regional dimension of the Sustainable Communities Plan
- The housing dimension of the Integrated Regional Strategy
- The guidance for sub-regional action plans
- Information to inform the Regional Strategy for Housing Investment.

➤ See Policies 14, 15 & 16

## 7. Rising to the Challenge: the Regional Response to Deliver Change

The Regional Housing Strategy needs to look ahead and provide a vision to deliver a future that is different from the past, with the collaboration of key stakeholders. The Regional Housing Board produced an issues paper as part of the strategy consultation during November/December 2003, which was used to inform the draft Regional Housing Strategy. The 53 responses to the consultation on the draft Regional Housing Strategy in March-May 2004 have been used to shape the Strategy.

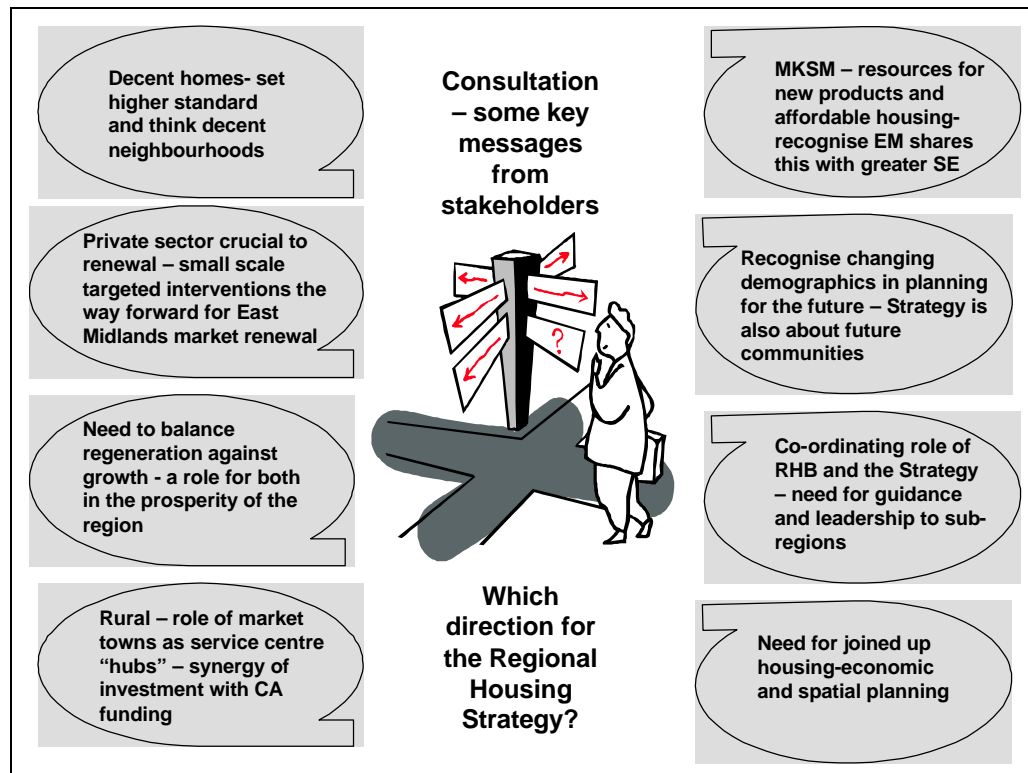
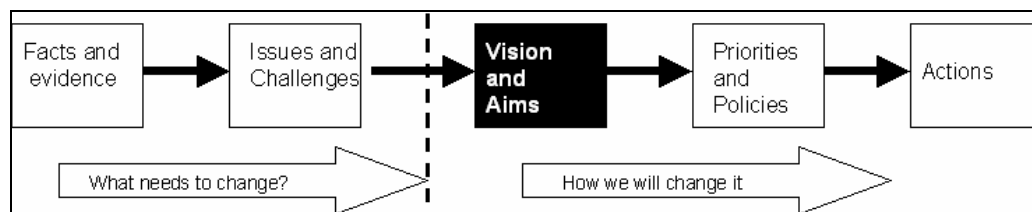


Figure 3 Which direction?

### 7.1 Which Direction? The Vision



The Integrated Regional Strategy sets out a vision for the region:

“The East Midlands will be recognised as a region with a high quality of life and sustainable communities that thrives because of its vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity and the way it creatively addresses social inequalities, manages its resources and contributes to a safer, more inclusive society”.

This will be achieved for the benefit of present and future generations through the integration of:

- A vibrant and competitive economy driven by high levels of learning and skills, enterprising individuals, increased productivity and improvements in the physical infrastructure
- Cohesive and diverse communities that empower and engage people, are safe and healthy, combat discrimination and disadvantage and provide hope and opportunities for all
- A rich, diverse and attractive natural and built environment and cultural heritage
- Sustainable patterns of development that make efficient use of land, resources and infrastructure, reduce the need to travel, incorporate sustainable design and construction, and enhance local distinctiveness.

The Integrated Regional Strategy objective for housing is:

**To ensure that the existing and future housing stock is appropriate to meet the housing needs of all parts of the community**

Consultation with the region in November and December 2003 confirmed the validity of this overall objective. The challenge for the Regional Housing Strategy is to set out how this objective will be delivered, and how housing can contribute to achieving the overall regional vision. Consultation responses also emphasised the need for the Regional Housing Strategy to:

- Consider how to resolve difficulties caused by polarised markets by providing a range of quality homes to suit a variety of pockets in places where they are most needed, alongside appropriate infrastructure and services
- To ensure that the aspirations of individuals and communities are not thwarted by lack of choice, either now or in the future.

**The general policy statement for the Regional Housing Strategy will be to promote sustainable housing development which addresses all the matters which would need to be taken into account when considering any development proposals (including accessibility and transport) as set out in RPG8 policies 1, 2 and 3. This should:**

- Help create neighbourhoods where people want to live
- Reflect the need for balanced mixed tenure communities
- Prioritise the use of previously developed land and buildings
- Provide high quality housing which incorporates sustainable construction and design (see appendix one)
- Enhance the quality of the local environment and support community safety
- Improve accessibility to jobs, recreation and services and reduces the need to travel
- Contribute to environmental infrastructure<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The concept of environmental infrastructure is being developed regionally. It includes a network of multifunctional green spaces, sustainable construction and drainage systems and environmental work in rural areas

Achieving the vision means providing answers to THE BIG QUESTION

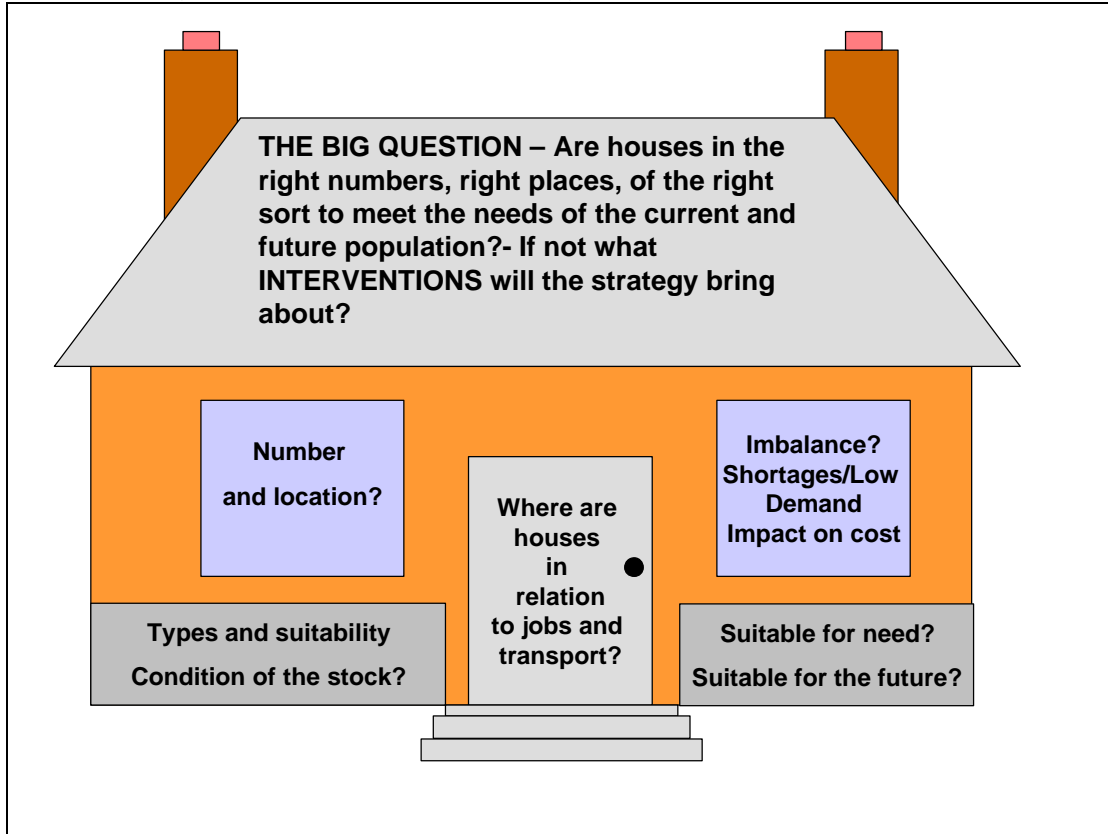


Figure 4 The Big Question

**Strategic Aims: Balance, Inclusion, Co-ordination**

The Regional Housing Board has developed a comprehensive set of priorities, policies and actions for the Regional Housing Strategy grouped under three overall strategic aims.

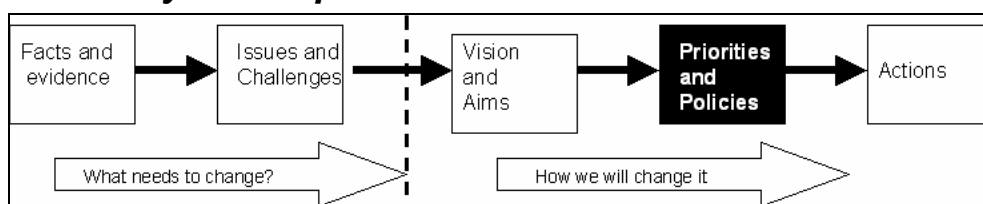
**Strategic Aims**

**Balance:** the region is better equipped to provide housing to meet the needs and aspirations of its population where they arise, avoiding an imbalance of supply and demand.

**Inclusion:** the region’s housing and related support services provides for a range of needs to ensure people are not excluded from the housing market.

**Co-ordination:** the region’s housing is provided in a sustainable way to complement economic growth and regeneration.

**7.2 Policy Development**



The Regional Housing Strategy has developed a range of policies under these three aims to address the challenges the region faces in delivering the vision. **Unless specifically noted, policies will apply to both urban and rural areas across the region.**

## 8. Policies to Deliver Balance

Section 5 described the region’s housing markets. The current situation overall is one of a buoyant market with rising house prices.

At the same time research has identified existing areas of unpopular housing, and potential low demand problems that are currently masked by the buoyant market. This presents another, but different set of issues to deal with - including the need to identify what tips the balance.



Figure 5 Housing balance

### ***8.1 Policy 1- Increasing the Quantity and Improving Delivery of Appropriate High Quality Affordable Housing for All Communities***

#### **Discussion**

The Barker Review concludes that the supply of new homes consistently lags behind demand and that the number of houses built in Britain must rise substantially if we are to reduce house price inflation and increase the number of affordable homes for people wishing to buy and rent.

The CURS research has indicated a potential need for up to 6341 affordable homes each year for the next five years in the East Midlands. (Total 2003-08 is 31,709)<sup>12</sup>. The report is available at [www.go-em.gov.uk](http://www.go-em.gov.uk).

The methodology utilised in the CURS report is acknowledged as not incorporating all relevant factors which impinge on affordable housing need. However it is seen as providing indicators as to the relative levels of need within the region at a sub-regional level. Much more detailed analysis will take place through the housing market assessments to enable a clearer picture at market level.

### **Affordable housing output**

The completions table and diagram in the Digest of Evidence shows the number of grant-funded social housing completions<sup>13</sup> over the last five-year period 1998-2003 at 11,799. Additional houses are completed without grant-aid (e.g. through Section 106) but further work is required to ensure robust data is available for these houses.

There is a gap between both the number of affordable houses required in RPG and the larger number identified in the CURS research, and total completions. This represents a challenge for both the RHB which needs to consider how much additional funding it can secure, and for other sectors which can contribute to new affordable housing provision e.g. planning.

### **Planning**

The current planning system allows for affordable housing provision to be made by developers as part of planning obligations, presently captured in section 106 agreements. The Government is currently consulting on the locally agreed "tariffs" as an alternative option. However, it may be some time until this approach is finalised.

If the amount of public subsidy for affordable housing is not increased, the amount coming through the planning system will need to be greater if the affordable housing gap is to be bridged.

### **The routes into home ownership**

The CURS research shows that between 44% and 75% of households cannot afford to buy a home with a loan of 3.5 times income. This suggests that a range of housing to suit people's pockets and aspirations is required.

The RHB recognises the significant role existing and emerging intermediate housing products can play in helping to address issues of reduced access to home ownership. They also serve to contribute to the creation of communities with mixed incomes.

Whilst it is recognised that income and price levels do not have the same impact on overall access to home ownership as in London and the South East, there are hotspots within the region which impact very heavily on local

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<sup>12</sup> The University of Birmingham's Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) report February 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Combined funding by both the Housing Corporation and Local Authorities

provision for key worker and other occupational groups. Further research of these geographic and occupational hotspots would enable appropriate resource targeting and enhance the ability of the region to seek additional support from central government.

### ***Regional Policy 1 – Increasing the quantity and improving delivery of appropriate high quality affordable housing for all communities***

*Meeting the affordable housing needs of the region is a key priority:-*

*The RHB, the Regional Assembly as the Regional Planning Body (RPB) and key local partners will work together to develop sub-regional housing need and market assessments. These assessments will enable the determination of specific regional and sub-regional/local affordable housing targets.*

*Partners should address the needs of those who cannot access the housing market, in response to emerging evidence amongst specific groups and in specific locations.*

*The RHB will work with the RPB to ensure that the Regional Spatial Strategy enables the delivery of an appropriate level of housing to meet the housing needs of the whole community.*

*Local Authorities should take account of this RHS and local housing strategies in the preparation of Local Development Documents.*

*Where developments are the subject of a Section 106 planning obligation land should be provided at nil cost, fully serviced and free of contamination. The Housing Corporation will assist in ensuring early clarity of grant availability.*

*All developments should reflect principles of both high design quality and sustainability and where appropriate utilise innovative techniques such as off-site manufacture to enhance output*

## **8.2 Policy 2- Securing Quality and Choice for Housing Development**

### **Discussion**

There is a need for attractive and well designed social and market housing to improve the quality of built environments within many parts of the region, and provide a wider range of choice to people who live there. In particular:-

- Parts of the northern sub-region where the industrial legacy has left a poor quality environment that is unattractive to incomers
- The three cities where second-time buyers are moving to the suburbs in search of better quality housing and environment
- The MKSM growth area
- Hotspots of key worker and other occupational housing pressure

The proportion of housing stock, which is flats and maisonettes, is increasing. National House Building Council (NHBC) figures show that nationally the number of new flats built in the first three months of 2003 exceeded, for the first time, the number of detached houses. 37% of new homes built were flats or maisonettes, showing a 10% increase on the number of detached homes built over the quarter. Figures from ODPM show that in the East Midlands the percentage of flats being developed has increased but not exceeded the number of houses. This could raise problems in the future management of the stock and sustainability of the community. In responding to this issue it is important that developers and planning authorities consider firstly, liveability issues to ensure a quality local environment, and secondly, the need for balanced communities with a mixed tenure profile.

### ***Regional Policy 2 – Securing quality and choice for housing development***

*The development of high quality housing design, which enhances the quality of the local environment, reflects the need to create balanced mixed tenure communities where people want to live, and takes account of RPG8 will be encouraged. Regional interpretation of high quality design is defined in Appendix One: “Principles of sustainable design and construction”.*

### **8.3 Policy 3 - Recognising and Responding to Areas Affected by Low Demand**

#### **Discussion**

The East Midlands is a very complex region with extremes of demand often falling within quite small areas; pockets of unpopular or low demand housing often at an individual street level exist even within otherwise strong housing markets. This was reflected by the strong support for the adoption of a policy in the RHS to intervene in areas where this is a particular problem.

Supporting the development of the policy, recent research by B.Line Housing Information looking at low demand in the region, has developed a typology (Table 1) which describes the difference between “unpopular housing” and housing that is in “low demand”. The distinction is largely down to scale and the “knock-on” effect on the surrounding housing market.

“Unpopular housing” is difficult to sell or let because it is of a type, or in a particular neighbourhood, that has specific problems. An example of this was the St. Matthews tower blocks in Leicester that proved very difficult to let despite significant investment. They were subsequently demolished and replaced by family housing.

Whereas “low demand” is where housing is difficult to sell or let because there are more homes in a particular area than people who actually want to live in them.

## East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy

**Table 1 : Typology of low demand<sup>14</sup>**

<b>Demand classification</b>	<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>Wider impact</b>	<b>Example</b>
Structural low demand	Abandonment, voids, falling prices, market collapse	May spread further, reduces supply in the wider housing market	Potential structural low demand resisted by shortage of supply and rising prices
Very unpopular housing sub-market areas	Low quality renting, sales between landlords	Likely to spread if left, unless in a self-contained area.	Parts of Shirebrook, West Gainsborough, Mansfield
Less popular property types in popular sub-market areas	Healthy but lower priced market. High demand/'need' entry level housing	Gentrification, increases in price/demand to remove it from entry level range	Flats and maisonettes in West Bridgford, Arnold, Oadby, Blaby
Unpopular neighbourhoods in healthy sub-market	Lower priced or difficult to let properties with higher turnover	May improve, decline, or remain fairly static. Targeted policies and actions can improve it	Some eastern district estates in Northampton, Fulmar Lane/Hemingwell Road, Wellingborough
Less popular specific types	Lower priced or more difficult to let properties often with higher turnover	Will generally let or sell provided there is demand in the wider housing market	Many maisonettes and high rise flats in the three cities
Very unpopular specific types in any sub-market	Very low prices or difficult to let	May have high voids for long periods, do not generally affect the wider neighbourhood/sub-market	Sheltered bedsits throughout the region

To move into more “structural low demand”, an area seems to need to reach a ‘critical mass’ of some 200-300 or more dwellings. Smaller areas may be very unpopular, but do not necessarily affect the wider housing sub-market in the same way. There may be a ‘crossover point’ where an unpopular area can move quite rapidly into more structural low demand. The research by Bob Line highlighted 149 locations within the region deemed to be at risk of lowering demand. These will have to be monitored by the RHB together with local and sub-regional partners to ensure that effective early intervention can be made.

The RHB has brought together a group of local practitioners as a Housing Market Renewal Group to examine the problem in our regional context. Its remit is to develop a mechanism that would allow the RHB to direct funding at those areas affected by a lowering of demand, identifying the underlying causes for a property type or area becoming less attractive than its surrounding housing market.

<sup>14</sup> From “The Further analysis of identified factors of low and changing demand” B.Line Housing Information

***Regional Policy 3 – Recognising and responding to areas affected by low demand***

*Local and sub-regional partners should monitor the extent of low demand within the region. The 149 areas identified in the Regional Housing Board's research should be regarded as those at greatest risk of low demand.*

*The Housing Market Renewal Group should develop proposals for a housing market renewal programme which will remove the blight of unpopular housing, to be closely co-ordinated with local community and economic regeneration initiatives such as Neighbourhood Renewal.*

**8.4 Policy 4 - Providing Options for Unpopular or Unsuitable Sheltered Housing Stock**

**Discussion**

Some sheltered accommodation for older people, especially bedsits, has become increasingly unpopular as the aspirations of a new generation have changed since they were built largely in the 1960s & 1970s. Housing providers must appreciate that the market changes and that what was acceptable once is not necessarily appropriate now or in the future.

The research undertaken by Bob Line into low demand concluded that “unpopular particular types of housing such as sheltered bedsits and flats are endemic throughout the region, and although they do not threaten to cause wider housing market problems in the same way as more structural low demand, are a considerable waste of resource”. The report recommends that an “assessment for unpopular types of accommodation could assist local authorities in addressing the problem, and save much duplication and re-learning.”

***Regional Policy 4 – Providing options for unpopular or unsuitable sheltered housing stock***

*As part of good asset management planning, landlords throughout the region should utilise unpopular or unsuitable sheltered stock to meet the needs identified in Policies 10, 12 and 13. It is essential that such appraisal should have due regard to changing demographics and aspirations, matching supply and design to meet future requirements.*

**Policies 5 & 6 - Delivering Decent Homes and Decent Neighbourhoods**

**8.5 Policy 5: Renewing and Re-vitalising the Private Sector**

**Discussion**

Since the introduction of the Decent Homes Standard and the priority accorded to its achievement in the social sector, resources for renewal in the private sector have come under pressure. Of the region's 1.5m privately owned homes 5.5% are rated as “unfit” – with a backlog repair bill estimated at £715 million. However the Government expects everyone to be able to have access to a ‘decent’ home’ and within the private sector 65% of

vulnerable households – as a minimum – should be living in such accommodation by October 2007.

Despite the consequent requirement to target resources more closely, nearly half of the authorities in the region are working to out-of-date or even non-existent information on conditions within the private sector. Regional consultation has confirmed this and it appears that there is no shared understanding of what constitutes a vulnerable household and no common methodology for undertaking stock condition surveys. The 2001 English House Condition Survey identified 28.1% of private sector homes as being 'non-decent' but this tells us little about the people who actually live in them.

There is a wide range of organisations, statutory and voluntary, that can help to ensure that at least 65% of vulnerable households are living in decent housing. Home Improvement Agencies have a key role to play, particularly as they provide a valuable local service to help elderly, disabled and vulnerable people to remain living independently at home. The Warm Front grant programme (administered by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, DEFRA) is also important in meeting the thermal comfort criterion of the standard.

It is important that local authorities recognise the benefits of effective joint working where appropriate and their strategic housing role responding to the needs of the housing market. This has become especially relevant since the introduction of new powers for local authorities to develop private sector renewal policies that are appropriate to their own areas.<sup>15</sup> This includes new means of providing assistance through low cost loans, equity release or for private landlords to be offered support to bring their properties up to standard as part of a regional accreditation scheme. Combining the more traditional grants with these other products will enable resources to go further and tap into existing assets in the private sector. However, the potential for the *most vulnerable* households to benefit from this kind of assistance will require further consideration.

There are models of best practice in the region. Newark and Sherwood District Council has been awarded Beacon Status<sup>16</sup> for its work on tackling fuel poverty. This authority has developed extensive partnership networks to successfully identify dwellings not capable of delivering "affordable energy" and raise public awareness about fuel poverty. This kind of activity will have to be replicated elsewhere if the target is to be met.

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<sup>15</sup> Under the Regulatory Reform Order of 2002

<sup>16</sup> Beacon Status has been developed from the Best Value approach to encourage continuous improvements in service delivery. Information relating to beacon councils can be found on the Improvement and Development Agency website ([www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk))

### **Regional Policy 5 – Renewing and re-vitalising the private sector**

*Renewal within the private sector which is integrated with neighbourhood renewal areas, or is identified in the 149 areas at risk of low demand in Policy 3, or encourages innovation through pilot schemes elsewhere in the region, will continue to be supported. Emphasis will be placed on supporting schemes which reduce the proportion of vulnerable people living in non-decent housing within the private sector, and areas where there is a clear appreciation of local conditions, both in terms of the built environment and social factors.*

*Interest-free loans and equity-release schemes will be encouraged.*

*Local Authorities should work together and share good practice. They should investigate the development of a common framework for stock condition surveys and common definition of a vulnerable household.*

*Local partners should agree a common approach to the monitoring of the target amongst vulnerable groups within the private sector. A consultation on the viability of establishing a regional accreditation scheme will be undertaken.*

### **8.6 Policy 6: Decent Homes in the Social Sector**

#### **Discussion**

One of the most important tasks for the RHB is meeting the targets established for the achievement of the 'Decent Homes Standard'<sup>17</sup> in the social sector. All social landlords are expected to have plans to make their housing 'decent' by 2010.

As at April 2003, in the East Midlands over a quarter (28%) of council-owned homes failed the standard, with an estimated repair backlog of £400 million. The Housing Corporation has estimated that a similar proportion (24-26%) of housing association stock is also 'non-decent'.

ODPM views the DHS as a minimum but believes decisions should be taken locally as to whether this is appropriate or if a higher standard ought to be established. No factors outside of the home are covered by the DHS but clearly there is a link between strategies to bring homes up to the standard and the area in which they are located.

Feedback from regional partners has shown that some providers do indeed consider the standard as a minimum, and would like to go beyond the front door to develop a 'decent neighbourhood standard'. Striking the right balance between improving the condition of the property and its local environment is key to revitalising many of our communities.

Housing providers are expected to set out how the standard will be achieved through investment strategies within their business plans. These must be set in the context of an appreciation of the local housing markets and the objectives laid out in the Local Strategic Partnership's 'Community Strategy'.

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<sup>17</sup> See description within the glossary

In addition all stock holding local authorities are required to complete the formal consideration of the options available to bring their stock up to the DHS by July 2005. This provides an excellent opportunity to build upon the relationships between tenants and their landlords, as tenants have the final say in any decision about the future of their homes.

### ***Regional Policy 6 – Decent homes in the social sector***

*Local Authorities should work with their tenants and other key partners to choose the right approach for additional investment in housing stock from three options: Stock Transfer, the Private Finance Initiative and Arms Length Management Organisations by July 2005. Authorities that do not use these options cannot expect increased investment in their stock from the Regional Housing Pot.*

*Under the Housing Corporation's regulatory regime, housing associations are required to draw up robust Asset Management Plans to ensure that they meet the Decent Homes Standard, and to implement them according to the timetable.*

*Regional stakeholders should consider whether a 'decent neighbourhood' standard is appropriate for the East Midlands.*

### **8.7 Policy 7- Ensuring Sustainable Growth for the Milton Keynes South Midlands Area is Delivered**

#### **Discussion**

The SCP calls for a step change to tackle serious housing shortages in London and the wider South East. The plan identifies four growth areas, one of which, Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM), affects Northamptonshire (the MKSM growth area also includes parts of the East and South East regions). Growth will be concentrated in the Northampton and Wellingborough/Kettering/Corby urban areas.

The East Midlands is expected to deliver around 97,000 dwellings (42,000 more than originally planned in RPG8) between 2001 and 2021 as part of the growth area. These housing figures are set out in the draft MKSM sub-regional strategy which sets out alterations to RPG and were subject to public examination in March and April 2004. The final sub-regional strategy will become part of RPG in 2005. Although the East Midlands was successful in securing £58 million for infrastructure improvements to support the growth area, the region did not receive funding support for additional housing. The RHB recognises that without additional central Government funding it is unable to fully respond to the MKSM growth agenda. Additional support would recognise:

(a) The particular significance for the region of the affordability pressures and sustainable economic growth potential in the Southern sub-region; and (b) the need to deliver a step change in affordable housing provision in Northamptonshire to match the overall step change in housing provision in the growth area.

Without additional resources, there are deep concerns in the region that the MKSM growth area could potentially soak up the lion's share of funding for affordable housing provision for years to come. There will be a need to maximise planning gain in order to minimise the need for grant, but planning gain will also be needed for infrastructure improvements. What happens in MKSM will be crucial to achieving balance with priorities for affordable housing in other areas experiencing growth and areas in need of regeneration in the region.

It is important that growth in the MKSM area creates balanced communities rather than commuter estates. The draft MKSM sub-regional strategy sets out key requirements for building sustainable communities including the provision of employment, quality public services and transport infrastructure as well as an integrated mix of well designed homes. There is also a need to minimise the environmental impact of MKSM for example through employing the principles set out in Policy 2 and the principles of sustainable design and construction set out in the Appendix. This should also take into account the recent DEFRA<sup>18</sup> report considering the environmental impact of increased housing numbers.

The Regional Housing Board through the policies in the Regional Housing Strategy will be looking to work closely with regional partners such as the RPB and *emda* as well as partners in neighbouring regions, and with the emerging Local Delivery Vehicles and other local partners in Northamptonshire to shape the regional response to MKSM.

### ***Regional Policy 7 – Ensuring sustainable growth for the Milton Keynes South Midlands area is delivered***

*The RHB will lobby Government for resources for affordable housing to ensure that the East Midlands can deliver the MKSM growth agenda in Northamptonshire.*

*Regional, sub-regional and local partners (including the emerging Local Delivery Vehicles) should ensure that housing growth contributes to creating sustainable communities and is supported by appropriate infrastructure, services and new employment.*

### ***8.8 Policy 8 – Ensuring that the Skills in the Construction Sector Can Be Harnessed to Increase Output in the Region***

#### **Discussion**

The construction industry has grown steadily and now employs over 100,000 people in the region. The substantial growth in construction output of the last few years has put considerable pressure on the skills capacity of the industry. This is likely to be increased by the MKSM Growth Area and delivery of the decent homes targets. The construction industry will also need to respond to the Government's Modern Methods of Construction agenda.

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<sup>18</sup> [www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2004/housingreport-020504.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2004/housingreport-020504.htm)

As a consequence the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) established the “Bridging the Gap East Midlands” project to highlight appropriate actions. This is particularly to resolve short-term recruitment and long-term training issues. An East Midlands Construction Forum has subsequently been established to take matters forward, and the CITB has become the Sector Skills Council for Construction.

The construction industry will also have to consider the skills requirements to deliver new environmental technologies such as energy efficiency, combined heat and power, renewable technology and water efficiency.

***Regional Policy 8 – Ensuring that the skills in the construction sector can be harnessed to increase output in the region***

*Emda, the CITB, the Learning and Skills Councils, the East Midlands Construction Forum, and other relevant bodies should develop the skills within the construction sector so that output can be increased.*

*The CITB in its role as Sector Skills Council for Construction should undertake research in the region to identify skills gaps including relevant environmental technologies such as energy efficient construction techniques, sustainable development and modern methods of construction.*

*Partners should support innovative solutions to the skills gaps identified, promote the use of local labour in construction, increase the number of women, minority groups and other under-represented groups in the industry and share good practice across the region.*

## 9. Policies to Deliver Inclusion

There are individuals and groups of people who have difficulty finding accommodation that is suitable for their needs. Others in accommodation find it difficult to maintain it without some help. They are at risk of being excluded from a facility most people take for granted.

For many people access to housing comes simply through the operation of the market – buying a property. All people have aspirations about their housing regardless of their income level.

For some buying is not the solution to their housing problems because:

- They do not want the commitment of a mortgage or property to maintain.
- They are looking for temporary rather than permanent accommodation.
- The sort of accommodation they need is “specialised” and not available on the open market
- They cannot afford to buy a property.

There are a number of vulnerable groups for whom market housing is unavailable, unaffordable or unsuitable. Very often individuals need to seek

housing in either the private or social sector to meet their needs. They may require some level of additional support to enable them to remain at home. Very often this support will be funded through the Supporting People regime.

A key objective of the Supporting People programme was to break the link between tenure and support. Prior to April 2003, often the only way to develop supported housing was to secure capital commitment first because the revenue funding could be attached later. This no longer applies and support can be funded from Supporting People regardless of tenure. The Regional Supporting People Implementation Group has a protocol with the Housing Corporation in place to ensure a continuing dialogue over capital and revenue funding.

### **9.1 Policy 9 - Tackling the Causes of Homelessness**

#### **Discussion**

The Homelessness Act 2002 required all housing authorities to adopt a specific homelessness strategy based on an appreciation of the scale and causes of the problem in their area. The new strategies have two distinct objectives:

- The prevention of homelessness; and
- Ensure that accommodation and support are available for those who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The first strategies were produced in July 2003.

The timing coincided with a rise, although not universal across the whole region of homeless acceptances over the last two years. Many of those authorities reporting big increases in the number of acceptances are rural authorities.

Amongst those in need of extra support are recovering drug addicts. One study<sup>19</sup> found that 83% of homeless people had taken some form of drug (other than alcohol) in the previous month; that two-thirds said that drug or alcohol use had contributed to their becoming homeless; and 80% said that they had started using at least one new drug since becoming homeless. There is also a close relationship between drug and alcohol misuse and mental health problems.

To promote the development of resettlement services for drugs users, in 2002 the Home Office launched the Criminal Justice Interventions Programme, which is now funding the provision of resettlement services for current and recovering drugs users across the country. The RHB encourages all local housing authorities and other providers to work closely with their local Drug Action Team (DAT) to ensure that they have in place the evidence base, policies and working practices to ensure that the needs of problematic drug users are given weight alongside those of other vulnerable groups. A 2004 report by NACRO (*Housing Services for Drug Users in the East Midlands*)

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<sup>19</sup> For CRISIS undertaken by Fountain and Howes, 2002.

suggests that the key issues identified by DATs, local authorities and other service providers include:

- Floating support to help people sustain (or in the case of offenders sentenced prison, smoothly terminate) tenancies and prevent homelessness
- Floating support for life skills e.g. dealing with providers of benefits
- Provision of drugs training to staff partner agencies
- Dedication of supported housing units to provide a stable base from which to tackle problematic drug and/or alcohol use
- Improving partnership working and information sharing
- Ensuring the needs of service users are given due weight in developing services

Similarly, the resettlement needs of ex-offenders must be fully understood and tackled. In the 12 months to October 2002 5,263 prisoners were discharged from prisons in the East Midlands (*East Midlands Resettlement Strategy*). A key recommendation from a recent report (*Custody to Community*), is that prior to release, the accommodation needs of all prisoners should be assessed. Local housing authorities and prisons should, therefore, work closely to ensure timely exchange of data to enable offenders' needs to be established and dealt with, with a view to preventing homelessness or inappropriate accommodation solutions being offered. Local housing authorities should consider, with other partners, options such as tenancy sustainment policies for offenders serving short sentences and the provision of floating support services post-release.

Domestic violence is a major cause of homelessness throughout the region. Valuable work is being carried out by a number of agencies locally to tackle the problems arising from such situations but it is important that this good work is highlighted and that the extent of the issue regionally is quantified by bringing all local support organisations together, sharing best practice and fostering a partnership approach to resolve the housing needs of victims of domestic violence.

A significant proportion of homeless people have mental health problem. NACRO estimate that 25% of their intake is people with mental health problems. In particular, it is important to explore the use of co-ordinated placement in ordinary general needs housing stock as a way of creating conscious networks and communities of mutual support. Key delivery agents, particularly local housing authorities will be encouraged to work together to develop a cohesive and co-ordinated approach of placement with peer support to meet the needs of people with mental health problems as an alternative to merely re-housing.

Finally, many new arrivals to the region from abroad are likely to want to stay where placed, or join people from their own communities if they are given leave to remain. This in turn may impact upon homeless acceptances, particularly when applicants are families who have been given permission to remain within the recent amnesty arrangements. Leicester City Council, like

many other authorities, set up a staffed unit and multi-agency forum in response to the start of dispersal under the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act. The unit has been one of the prime movers in establishing the asylum seekers agency forum in the city. The council was awarded Beacon status for this work and other areas of homelessness prevention.

ODPM has identified a research fund to undertake research into homelessness issues in the region and bring key support organisations together to encourage regional cohesion and co-operation which, in turn, will inform future work in developing this strategy. Key themes identified for this research are:-

- Homelessness among young people
- Homelessness and re-settlement of ex-offenders
- Homelessness and co-ordinated settlement of people with mental health problems
- Homelessness as a result of domestic violence
- Homelessness through drug and substance abuse
- Homelessness among asylum seekers

### ***Regional Policy 9 – Tackling the causes of homelessness***

*Statutory and voluntary agencies should work together to develop homelessness strategies and services which will tackle the causes of homelessness.*

*Local housing authorities should work with DATs and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) to identify the level of housing need and current service provision for current and recovering drug users and ex-offenders as part of the crime/drugs audit process.*

*Local housing authorities should agree targets (with DATs, Supporting People partnerships and other partners) for needs-based provision for current and recovering drug users and ex-offenders as part of their housing strategies.*

*The East Midlands Consortium for Asylum and Refugee Support (EMCARS) and its member organisations should assess the housing needs of refugees to plan provision of adequate suitable affordable housing for new refugees and other new arrivals from abroad.*

*All local housing authorities should set targets to meet the housing needs of refugees through their BME housing strategies, including where appropriate improvements to existing housing.*

*The GOEM will undertake research into the issues identified through the above, present that evidence to the region and co-ordinate regional events to encourage co-operation and good practice.*

## **9.2 Policy 10 - Assisting People to Maintain Their Independence For As Long As They Wish**

### **Discussion**

When people's lives change through illness, disability or the onset of old age most people prefer the security of being able to stay where they are comfortable and confident - at home.

Very often support systems are structured around processes and procedures and what is convenient for the provider rather than the user. So it is often more usual to cope with such changes by a stay in hospital, a move to nursing home or sheltered housing.

Private sector renewal policies (see Policy 5) combined with the use of intermediate care, community alarms, assistive technology and better access to housing options advice may mean that people wish to remain independent for longer, particularly as their own perceptions of what to expect from providers change. A range of other services outside the home e.g. transport, local shops, post office services can also be important to maintaining independence.

Disabled facilities grants are crucial to maintaining independence, yet the region has benefited from limited amounts of funding to date. There is a need for greater clarity and equity in relation to the national allocation formula, and a distribution mechanism which is responsive to need within the region.

Demographic changes mean that the ageing population will be a priority for the strategy for the following reasons:-

- Changes result in more older people becoming dependent upon fewer, younger and economically active people
- Older people's aspirations are changing, supported by initiatives such as "Better Government for Older People", and the "Older People's National Service Framework". Increasingly older people will expect services to be delivered in ways that enable them to stay in their own homes for as long as possible
- There are increasing problems with vacant or difficult to let sheltered stock right across the region.

Accidents and falls are also relevant and are dealt with in Policy 11.

The housing connection is threefold:

Firstly, innovative design and demanding standards – such as lifetime homes or wheelchair accessibility - may mean that housing can meet a wide variety of needs.

Secondly, aids and adaptations and disabled facilities grants – particularly when combined with help and advice from Home Improvement Agencies - mean that existing accommodation can be suited to needs.

Thirdly, where expectations have changed, and housing stock has become redundant in its current format, e.g. sheltered housing bedsits, new uses should be found to avoid wasting the resource.

Partnership work and joint funding can enable vulnerable people to live at home in comfort, security and independence, which has the potential to produce benefits for health and social care providers. The RHB recognises the spread of needs met through health and Supporting People budgets but encourages these agencies to use their resources working in partnership to assist people to maintain their independence.

### ***Regional Policy 10 – Assisting people to maintain their independence for as long as they wish***

*Housing agencies should work closely with a range of local partners including Primary Care Trusts, social care providers, and Local Strategic Partnerships to ensure 100% coverage of Home Improvement Agencies within the region which can ensure the availability of services and support required to enable people to stay safely in their own homes.*

*The RHB will press for the Government to implement the proposed mandatory Lifetime Homes revision to national Building Regulations as soon as possible. In the meantime Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to obtain a year on year increase in the proportion of all new housing of all tenures which meets the Wheelchair Standard and or Lifetime Homes Standard. Funding from the Regional Housing Pot will support the implementation of this policy.*

*The RHB will also lobby Government in pursuance of greater clarity and equity in the Disabled Facilities Grant national allocation forum, and a distribution mechanism which is responsive to need within the region.*

### **9.3 Policy 11- Promoting Healthy, Safe and Eco-efficient Homes**

#### **Discussion**

The “Investment for Health the East Midlands Public Health Strategy”<sup>20</sup> set out the close relationship between poor housing, poverty and poor health. Research supports the fact that improvements to housing and its surrounding environment can help to reduce health inequalities, particularly for vulnerable groups<sup>21</sup>.

According to the 2001 English House Condition Survey 11.6% of households in the East Midlands (across all tenures) lived in homes that are inefficient and expensive to heat, having a SAP rating of 30 or below, compared to the regional average of 48.8. Improving the thermal effectiveness of these homes would lead directly to a reduction in the level of illnesses particularly among

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<sup>20</sup> [www.empho.org.uk](http://www.empho.org.uk)

<sup>21</sup> See the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s report, “*The impact of housing conditions on excess winter deaths*”, 2001

the very young or old. It would also contribute to a reduction in the level of 'excess winter deaths'.

In 1998/99, 4,090 people in the East Midlands died as a result of the cold weather during the winter months (defined as December-March). Of those, 3,780 were aged 65 and above<sup>22</sup>. Since then the recorded level of 'excess winter deaths' has fallen to 2,000 during the winter of 2002/03. This reduction has taken place at the same time as the implementation of strategies to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as part of the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995. Whilst there are other factors to consider, raising the thermal efficiency of homes is an essential component of reducing this level still further.

The EcoHomes standard, developed by the Building Research Establishment (BRE), gives credits for various environmental and social areas such as energy efficiency, water use, proximity to transport nodes and timber sourcing.

The RHB supports BRE's EcoHomes "Good", "Very Good" and "Excellent" standards as a good measure of new and refurbished homes which have significantly less impact on the environment, whilst optimising economic and social benefits for occupants and the wider community. An example of what can be achieved by those aspiring to achieve the "Excellent" standard can be found at the Sherwood Energy Village in Ollerton, Nottinghamshire, where annual heating bills for the properties to be built on the site are estimated to be no more than £50.

The Regional Assembly's "Sustainable Construction and Design" project is expected to make further recommendations about improving standards of sustainable design and the dissemination of best practice.

The East Midlands has a high rate of accidents with the second highest death rate for accidental falls when compared to other English regions. Most of these deaths were to older people (87% aged 65 or over)<sup>23</sup>. Applying the new Housing Health and Safety Rating Standard in property inspections, and linking such inspections to socio-economic information would enable local authorities to target both vulnerable properties and people.

Preventative services which identify and rectify potential risks in the home through inspections and property surveys can reduce accidents, improve energy efficiency and so on. The complex nature and the division of responsibilities amongst different statutory agencies will inevitably mean that partnerships (such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships at local level and the Regional Assembly and GOEM regionally) will be important in bringing together different agendas and responsibilities to streamline service provision for clients.

Incorporating access to green space is an aspect of "liveability" which is dealt with further in Appendix One.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/ssdataset.asp?vlnk=7089&More=Y>

<sup>23</sup> East Midlands Health Profile 2003

### **Regional Policy 11 – Promoting healthy, safe and eco-efficient homes**

*Through GOEM, the RHB will work with the East Midlands HECA Forum and other relevant regional agencies to develop effective cross agency working, and will consider how to incorporate the findings of the Sustainable Construction and Design project into the implementation of the Regional Housing Strategy and sub-regional Action Plans.*

*Housing providers should implement Housing Health and Safety Ratings across all tenures, and target investment at vulnerable households in poorly insulated homes, to raise the SAP rating of properties up to and above the regional average.*

*LAs should develop and implement effective Affordable Warmth strategies.*

*All new developments should meet EcoHomes “Good”, “Very Good” or “Excellent” standards, in order to meet the aspirations of the Sustainable Communities Plan. Future new build housing funded from the Regional Housing Pot will be required to at least meet the EcoHomes “Good” standard and action is required to identify how to influence private developers.*

### **9.4 Policy 12 - Ensuring that in Rural Areas and Market Towns There is Both an Appropriate Provision of Quality Housing to Meet a Range of Housing Needs and Access to Related Services for Vulnerable People of All Ages**

#### **Discussion**

The East Midlands is a rural region, with 40% of the population living in rural communities. Compared to the rest of rural England people who live in villages in the East Midlands are much less likely to have access to public services or community facilities<sup>24</sup>. Access standards are particularly poor for the smallest settlements. Remote rural areas have relatively high mortality rates, perhaps as a result of poor information and advice as well as problems with emergency response.

The region’s rural districts have a significantly older age profile than urban districts with 43.63% of the population over 45. In one of the region’s most rural districts, East Lindsey, nearly 30% of the population is aged 60 or over.

The high quality of the environment, particularly in the National Park and Lincolnshire Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB), has a significant impact on the housing market. Its attractiveness to those on higher incomes combined with limited supply fuels the house prices. At the same time a policy focus on conserving the physical environment constrains the availability of sites for affordable housing.

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<sup>24</sup> Countryside Agency East Midlands Evidence and Analysis

Housing and related needs in rural areas are often 'hidden' by statistics that do not take account of the polarised nature of incomes in rural areas, the limited supplies of private housing at the lower end of the purchase and rented market; and the limited supply and turnover of social rented housing.

The shortage of affordable housing provision is a problem for developing the regional economy, as is recognised in the Peak sub-region for example.

The region's Supporting People Implementation Group has reported that there is a concentration of housing related support services in the urban compared to rural areas. This particularly applies to short-term and direct-access hostel services for various groups. This results in a movement of some of the most vulnerable groups into the urban areas, which in turn places further pressure on urban areas. Together with the increasing number of older people and the limited provision of supported and related services in rural areas, meeting the needs of vulnerable people in rural areas presents particular challenges.

It is important for cross authority groups of urban and rural authorities to work together to address these issues and develop local services. This will give vulnerable people the choice of continuing to live in their own local communities with the support they need to prevent social exclusion.

Market towns can also act as "hubs" for personal and social service provision as they do for the provision of more commercial services in order to contribute to sustainable rural communities.

The Regional Housing Board, with its representation from the Countryside Agency, is in a good position to obtain synergy of programmes and maximise benefits to the community. For example the Vital Villages "Parish Plans" programme can identify potential service needs.

An example of how regeneration can be achieved in partnership to provide solutions to deep rural problems is the Rural Action Zone initiative developed by Lincolnshire County Council and South Holland District Council. This has included an active elderly forum building community capacity through active older people volunteering to help less able people, supported by the Countryside Agency. This is a Beacon Council scheme.

***Regional Policy 12 – Ensuring that in rural areas and market towns there is both an appropriate provision of quality housing to meet a range of housing needs and access to related services for vulnerable people of all ages***

*Resources will be targeted to meet the identified needs of people living in villages and market towns.*

*Local Development Documents should promote the adoption of positive planning policies that improve the supply and quality of affordable housing in villages and market towns, in response to identified housing need.*

*Local authorities, RSLs and LSPs should respond to the housing needs identified in Parish Plans, Market Town Health Checks and by Rural Housing Enablers; and encourage the development of suitable projects including those that provide supported housing and access to related services.*

*Those developing housing in rural areas should maximise the contribution that such development can make to meet social, economic and environmental needs.*

***9.5 Policy 13 - Ensuring That All Sub-regions Understand and Address the Needs and Aspirations of Diverse Sectors of Their Communities***

**Discussion**

The provision of good housing and accessible services for all are essential for sustainable communities. In achieving this aim the region should consider the following three sub-policies:-

- a) To promote sustainable and balanced communities by providing a framework for the delivery of housing to address the needs of the diverse communities in their areas.

Partners should plan new developments (both new growth and infill/redevelopment) in such a way to include the needs of diverse sectors of the community with the aim of ensuring balanced communities across the region. Diversity is not restricted to ethnicity or those in need of support to maintain their tenancies in social housing, an appropriate response may simply be accommodation, or may be accommodation plus support. For example the needs of the following groups should be considered:-

- Teenage parents: ensuring that that all teenage parents (who cannot live with family or lone partner) have access to semi-independent or supported housing.
- Students: increasing numbers of students require accommodation across the region.

- Gypsies and Travellers: providing both permanent and temporary site provision for those Gypsies and Travellers who pass through local authority districts on a regular basis.

In areas where there is decline and lack of confidence, it is often the poorest and most vulnerable who have no choice but to remain. The approach to housing market renewal and low demand set out in Policy 3 aims to ensure that housing is attractive for all section of the community.

- b) To identify and address the need for housing with support for vulnerable groups

There are sections of the community who are disadvantaged and vulnerable who have little or no choice in terms of housing provision and location. Demographic changes will mean, for example, that vulnerable older people will increasingly require appropriate services to enable them to continue to live independently in their communities.

The Disability Discrimination Act and other legislation and guidance, has rightly made it a priority for new housing in all its varieties and forms to be accessible for people with physical disabilities. Service users with physical disabilities or sensory impairments are as likely as anyone to need supported accommodation due to a crisis (e.g. fleeing domestic violence, immediate threat of homelessness) or due to leaving institutional care (e.g. psychiatric hospital, prison).

Housing and care providers need to work together to match their plans with such current and future needs.

In order to address the needs of vulnerable groups it will be essential to maintain the close links between capital expenditure on homes and revenue expenditure for services and support through the Supporting People programme.

It will therefore be necessary to draw together the conclusions from the final Supporting People strategies in March 2005 to assess the likely future capital commitments over the 5-year life of the strategies. Future capital bids for supported or sheltered housing should reflect the revenue commitment in the Supporting People strategy.

In both the short and long term there is likely to be some revenue redistribution of Supporting People Grant between regions and between Supporting People Commissioning Body areas. This will be driven by a variety of factors, some of which will emerge from the recommendation of the Independent Review. The allocation of capital investment for new supported or sheltered housing developments should therefore take account of and broadly reflect the pattern of any projected changes in Supporting People Revenue Grant in the East Midlands region.

- c) To identify and address the future housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities within the sub-regions.

The diverse population of the region includes BME communities that are well established as well as newly settled communities. The location and demographic trends of the communities is in some cases identified at a local level. This needs to be developed further at a sub-regional level to inform future provision and investment across a range of tenures to address demand.

**Regional Policy 13 – Ensuring that all sub-regions understand and address the needs and aspirations of diverse sectors of their communities**

**a) To promote sustainable and balanced communities by providing a framework for the delivery of housing to address the needs of the diverse communities in their areas.**

*Sub-regional housing groups should identify gaps in the provision of suitable housing and services relevant to diverse housing needs in their sub-region.*

*The Renewal Programme developed by the Housing Market Renewal Group in response to Policy 3 should have reference to all sections of the community.*

**b) To identify and address the need for housing with support for vulnerable groups**

*The Supporting People Regional Implementation Group will inform integration of capital and revenue funding commitments. The Group should review Supporting People strategies as they are published in March 2005 to provide advice about future commitments, priorities and programming arrangements.*

*The Supporting People Regional Implementation Group and the Housing Corporation should develop guidelines (for the assessment of priority bids and programmed delivery of new supported housing, or refurbished existing schemes) for agreement by the RHB.*

*Partners should ensure that planning for major new developments includes an appropriate proportion of new housing allocated for accommodation in response to locally identified and prioritised needs of vulnerable groups, with the aim of ensuring balanced communities across the whole region.*

**c) To identify and address the future housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities within the sub-regions.**

*Sub-regions should establish joint working arrangements to identify the housing needs and priorities of BME communities in their areas. This could be through either schemes specific for BME group(s) or facilities within a general scheme.*

## 10. Policies to Deliver Co-ordination

Some policies are needed to achieve the vertical and horizontal integration. Priorities are

- To promote sub-regional development
- To provide robust information
- To provide housing to support economic development and regeneration

### 10.1 Policy 14 - Developing the Role of the Sub-regions

#### Discussion

Whilst the Regional Housing Strategy provides the framework for action, practitioners working at a local level can only deliver effective intervention. In turn, this can only be achieved by coordinated action within the sub-regions.

Sub-regions provide an appropriate unit size because:

- Housing markets often operate across local authority boundaries
- Sub-regions provide a mechanism for authorities to work collectively. This is particularly important outside unitary authorities for work with planning and education for example
- This wider grouping of authorities can work with other agencies - health, training and enterprise and so on
- The grouping can make more cost-effective use of resources for research and information
- They already exist and are well recognised within the integrated framework

To deliver at sub-regional and local level this strategy needs sub-regional action plans. It will be important that all sub-regions re-visit their existing action plans in the light of the Regional Housing Strategy to ensure that they effectively respond to both the policies in the Strategy and the needs of the sub-region. It is for the sub-regions to consider how sub-regional/local Community Strategies may influence their action plans, and how they achieve complementarity with other sub-regional and local plans.

The Regional Assembly Housing Group will provide sub-regional groups with outline guidance and recommendations for sub-regional group membership, terms of reference etc., along with secretariat support for at least one year from GOEM and the Housing Corporation. Sub-regional groups will be encouraged to demonstrate effective joint working between represented agencies/bodies, and to be fora for good practice sharing.

Each sub-regional group will also have an opportunity to be represented on the Regional Assembly's Housing Group to ensure effective communication between the sub-regions and the RHB.

Local housing authorities have an important strategic housing role in their districts and it is important therefore that these housing strategies respond to sub-regional and regional priorities and policies.

### ***Regional Policy 14 – Developing the role of the sub-regions***

*The sub-regions should develop effective action plans, prioritise policies and identify their spending priorities, in response to the policies in the Regional Housing Strategy and needs in the sub-region.*

*The sub-regional groups should be representative groups which promote and demonstrate effective joint working and good practice in order to inform regional discussions.*

*Local housing authorities should work with GOEM to develop “fit for purpose” Housing Strategies, which respond to the priorities in the Regional Housing Strategy and needs in the sub-region.*

## **10.2 Policy 15 - Developing and Integrating a Common Information Base**

### **Discussion**

The region has a good record of producing regional research to underpin strategy development. The current suite of research reports has focussed on housing markets in the three cities, potential areas of low demand and affordability across the region. These have been used to inform the development of this Strategy.

The Regional Housing Strategy will need to develop in a complementary manner with the revised Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands, taking into account the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Alterations. It is expected that RPG housing figures will be fully reviewed using the 2001 census based district household projections issued by the ODPM, due to be published in mid 2005. RPG is to be replaced by a Regional Spatial Strategy that will be required to set housing figures down to district level. If the ODPM projections are issued on time, the Regional Assembly would expect to issue revised district housing provision figures for public consultation by September 2006.

There will be a need to ensure that appropriate levels of market and affordable housing are identified on a consistent basis in the RSS and the Regional Housing Strategy. As a result it will be necessary to develop an agreed research programme and common evidence base on housing issues that will feed into future versions of both strategies.

### ***Regional Policy 15 – Developing and integrating a common information base***

*The RHB will work with the Regional Assembly as the Regional Planning Body and local planning authorities to develop and agree a joint research programme covering future market and affordable housing needs. This should be reviewed annually and will inform the RSS and RHS.*

### **10.3 Policy 16 - Supporting Economic Growth in Partnership**

#### **Discussion**

Housing market fluctuations are closely linked to economic changes, and housing provision can play an important part in supporting economic growth. If housing markets cannot keep pace with demand generated by a growing economy then shortages and high house prices will result in affordability problems, and in turn this will mean that businesses and services will find it difficult to recruit.

Unattractive housing and lack of choice for a potential workforce can work against efforts to retain and attract businesses and skilled workers in areas of decline. Housing is an essential element in delivering rural and urban renaissance.

The Regional Economic Strategy sets out a blueprint for economic development until 2010. Housing can play an important role in creating the right climate for investment (providing the physical conditions for a modern economic structure), identified in the RES as one of three 'drivers for success' in the region. Of 12 key areas of activity identified in the RES:

- Site provision and development
- Rural development
- Urban regeneration
- Transport

All have significant linkages with housing. The RES is due to be revised in 2006 and this provides an important opportunity for the RHB to ensure complementarity between the RHS and the RES.

The draft revised RPG 8 sets out priority areas for regeneration including Principal Urban Areas, the northern sub-area, isolated rural and coastal areas and other settlements displaying high levels of deprivation. It also provides sub-regional priorities in relation to employment land.

*Emda* and Advantage West Midlands are currently working with partners including Regional Assemblies and Government Offices on a further Sustainable Communities Plan initiative to enhance the economic performance and quality of life in the Midlands, focusing mainly on urban areas and their hinterlands.

A wide range of organisations and partnerships are involved in delivering regeneration and economic growth in the region. The RHB needs to develop appropriate regional level links and partnerships with, for example, *emda*, English Partnerships and Regeneration East Midlands to ensure integration between housing plans and plans for regeneration and economic growth. The RHB also needs to encourage the development of sub-regional and local level partnerships between local housing authorities, RSLs and, for example, LSPs, *emda's* Sub-regional Strategic Partnership (SSPs), Urban Regeneration Company's (URCs) and local level initiatives.

Housing which supports economic growth is clearly not just about numbers, but also about increasing choice to suit different needs, aspirations and lifestyles. As set out in Policy 1, there appears to be a particular need for a range of affordable housing products in areas of high housing growth. There is also a need to improve the built environment of towns and cities in the region through high quality design. 'City flight' has been identified as a key concern for the three cities and it is likely that this phenomenon is not solely down to the quality of housing offered by the cities, but due to a range of quality of life factors such as services, crime levels and the overall environment. There is also a need to ensure housing meets changing working patterns for example by providing appropriate broadband infrastructure on new housing development.

In particular interventions are needed to:

- Tackle the shortage of good quality housing in the northern sub-region to attract growth and investment
- Improve the range of housing offered in the three cities and attempting to reduce "city flight"
- Address affordability problems in overheated areas of strong economic growth
- Address affordability problems in rural areas.

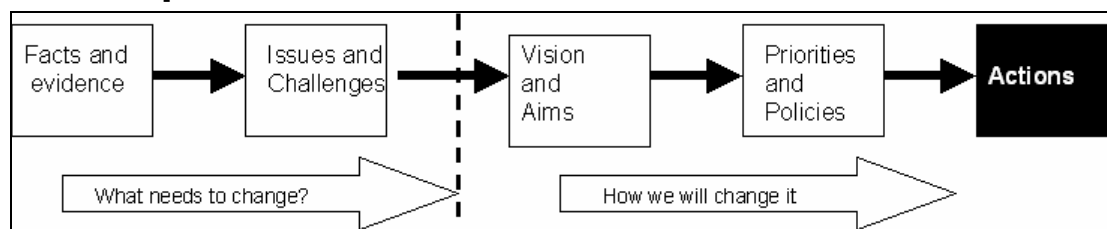
### ***Regional Policy 16 – Supporting economic growth in partnership***

*Partners should ensure that housing policies support economic growth in the region and vice versa. Affordability problems in overheated housing markets will be fully assessed to influence the revised RES and to ensure complementarity with the RHS.*

*Further research should be undertaken into the need for key worker and intermediate housing solutions in areas of high house prices. The RHB will then work with partners to develop appropriate solutions, learning from good practice in other regions.*

*Local and regional partners should ensure synergy between regeneration plans and housing plans. Regeneration will be promoted through addressing issues of housing balance and increasing choice and quality of housing. Further research should be undertaken into reasons for 'city flight' and to identify other factors which would help attract and retain professionals and families in the cities.*

## 11. Implementing and Monitoring the Regional Housing Strategy - the Action Plan and Responsibilities



The Regional Housing Strategy Action Plan highlights the key regional actions to deliver the regional policies identified within each of the 16 key priorities. On an annual basis, the RHB will work with partners to monitor and measure progress against the success criteria for each action.

An important element in the delivery of the Regional Housing Strategy will be the sub-regional action plans developed by the housing sub-regions by December 2004. These action plans will offer the RHB guidance as to the sub-regional importance of the identified policies in the RHS. Not all policies will carry equal weight in all the sub-regions, and we would look for the action plans to prioritise policies based on sub-regional evidence (see Policy 14).

**Table 2: Actions, success criteria, timing and responsibilities.**

Policy 1	Increasing the quantity and improving delivery of appropriate high quality affordable housing for all communities			
	Activity	Responsible	Timescale	Success criteria
A	Recommendations to Ministers on allocations for new affordable provision via investment strategy	RHB	May 2005 for implementation 2006-08	More affordable homes provided towards RPG target
B	Recommend to Ministers that there are additional resources for Northamptonshire as part of MKSM	RHB and partners	By May 2005 for implementation 2006-08	Additional resources obtained
C	Work with Regional Planning Board to achieve a jointly agreed review of required housing numbers	RHB, RPB and EMRA sub-regional groups	In conjunction with launch of new Regional Spatial Strategy (replaces RPG)	Commonly agreed research and evidence base and agreed approach to housing market assessments
Policy 2	Securing quality and choice for housing development			
	Activity	Responsible	Timescale	Success criteria
A	Ensure public expenditure from Regional Housing Pot meets criteria	RHB working through HC, GO-EM and sub-regional partners	Immediate and on-going.	High quality affordable housing. Extend Choice through mixed tenure

## East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy

<b>Policy 3</b>	<b>Recognising and responding to areas affected by low demand</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Implement monitoring framework to identify true extent of low demand problem	RHB in lead with Housing Market Renewal Group	Implemented by November 2004	Monitoring undertaken on a defined cycle with consequent remedial action
B	Establish market renewal process for all sections of the community (Policy 13) and funding from Regional Housing Pot linked to action 5c.	RHB in lead with Housing Market Renewal Group	Best Practice conference Sept 04 Draft framework agreed Oct 04 Funding identified from Regional Housing Pot May 05	Regional Framework agreed and funding secured in 2004 leading to commissioning process to restore areas of low demand

<b>Policy 4</b>	<b>Providing options for unpopular or unsuitable sheltered housing stock</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	LAs and HAs to undertake option appraisal for unpopular and/or unsuitable sheltered housing	RHB with RIG and sheltered Housing providers	By December 2006	LAs and HAs have undertaken options appraisal
B	Provide advice and guidance on options appraisal for unpopular and/or unsuitable sheltered housing by disseminating best practice	RHB with RIG and sheltered Housing providers	By December 2006	LAs and HAs have completed the Option Appraisal process

<b>Policy 5</b>	<b>Renewing and re-vitalising the private sector</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Identify the true level of need by the development of a common framework for stock condition surveys and monitoring arrangements	RHB in lead with Private Sector Renewal Group	Common framework agreed by May 2005	Need established across the region
B	Increased take up of new powers such as loans and equity release schemes. Consider the appropriateness of a regional accreditation scheme	Local Authorities RHB in lead with LAs	65% target achieved by October 2007 Best practice available by May 2005	65% of vulnerable households living in decent homes RHB best practice guidance to include Private Sector Renewal schemes
C	RHB to focus support from Regional Housing Pot for vulnerable groups living in non-decent housing	RHB in lead	By May 2005 for implementation 2006-08	Develop appropriate funding support framework

<b>Policy 6</b>	<b>Decent Homes in the social sector</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Stock Option Appraisal with LAs	GO-EM and CHTF with LAs	By July 2005 for implementation by 2010	Stock Option Appraisals completed and identified appropriate options to meet Decent Homes Standard

## East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy

B	RSLs to draw up robust Asset Management Plans to meet Decent Homes targets	Housing Corporation and RSLs	By 2010	Plans successfully implemented
C	To consider whether a 'decent neighbourhood' standard is appropriate for the East Midlands	RHB in lead with regional partners	By May 2005	Decision on appropriateness of a decent neighbourhood standard following regional consultation

<b>Policy 7</b>	<b>Ensuring sustainable growth for the Milton Keynes South Midlands area is delivered</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Lobby Government for resources for affordable housing for MKSM growth area in Spending Review 2004. (See Policy 1b)	Led by: RHB Supported by: Southern sub-region, Local Delivery Vehicles	By May 2005 for implementation 2006-08	Provision of appropriate balance of affordable housing (targets to be informed by Local Delivery Vehicles and LAs)
B	Work closely with regional partners and encourage development of sub-regional working arrangements, to ensure housing growth in MKSM contributes to creating sustainable communities.	Led by: RHB Supported by: RPB, <i>emda</i> , RHB, Southern sub-region, Local Delivery Vehicles	By end 2004 for implementation up to 2010	Sustainable communities in MKSM growth area

<b>Policy 8</b>	<b>Ensuring that the skills in the construction sector can be harnessed to increase output in the region</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	RHB will liaise with CITB to identify skills gaps within construction sector	CITB with RHB and other relevant partners	By 2006.	Construction skills gap identified
B	To respond to the skills gap identified in the work undertaken by the CITB and relevant partners	CITB with RHB and other relevant partners	By 2010	Construction skills gap significantly reduced in the region

<b>Policy 9</b>	<b>Tackling the causes of homelessness</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Encourage joint working by statutory and voluntary agencies in the development of future homelessness strategies through the dissemination of best practice	RHB, RIG in lead with LAs	July 2005	RHB and RIG to disseminate best practice. Service users experience provision that is more relevant to their needs
B	Support development of inclusive housing strategies which respond to local homeless needs including drug related issues	GOEM in lead with LAs, DATs and CDRPs	March 2005	'Fit for Purpose' local housing strategies
C	Assess the housing needs of refugees and for LAs to set targets in BME strategies	EMCARS with LAs	Immediate and ongoing	Region aware of housing needs of refugees and for LAs to set targets in BME strategies

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D	Research into causes of homelessness in East Midlands	GOEM in lead	March 2005	Findings disseminated to regional partners.
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<b>Policy 10</b>	<b>Assisting people to maintain their independence for as long as they wish</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Encourage closer working of housing agencies, LSPs and health and social care providers.	RHB & RIG in lead with LSPs and health and social care providers	From 2004	Increase in joint working and sharing of best practice.
B	Obtain year-on-year increase in proportion of all new housing of all tenures which meets Wheelchair and Lifetime Homes standards.	Local Authorities	From 2005/6	Increased proportion of all new housing of all tenures which meets Wheelchair and Lifetime Homes standards
C	Lobby for inclusion of Lifetime Homes revision to National Building Regulations	RHB	2004	Inclusion of Lifetime Homes revision to National Building Regulations
D	Lobby for review of Disabled Facilities Grant allocation formula	RHB	December 2004	Equitable allocation formula which is responsive to regional need

<b>Policy 11</b>	<b>Promoting healthy, safe and eco-efficient homes</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Promote the implementation of Health & Safety Ratings across all tenures by housing providers	GOEM	Ongoing	Promotion through GOEM to Local Authorities
B	Encourage compliance with HECA requirement for Local Authorities to have an affordable warmth strategy	GOEM with LAs	Ongoing	All appropriate East Midlands LAs to have affordable warmth strategies
C	Encourage housing providers to target investment at vulnerable households in poorly insulated homes linked to actions 5b and 5c	RHB and LAs	Ongoing	Greater investment targeted at vulnerable groups
D	Consider how to respond to conclusions of EMRA's Sustainable Construction and Design project, and how to influence private developers	EMRA	Autumn 2004	Conclusions disseminated as appropriate
E	Require future new build funded from Single Regional Housing Pot to at least meet the EcoHomes "good" standard.	RHB	By May 2005 for implementation 2006-08	Schemes identified from 2006-08 Regional Housing Pot meet EcoHomes "good" standard

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<b>Policy 12</b>	<b>Ensure that in rural areas and market towns there is both an appropriate provision of quality housing to meet a range of housing needs and access to related services for vulnerable people of all ages</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Housing investment strategy to reflect the need to achieve appropriate rural provision.	RHB, EMRAF and sub-regional partners	By May 2005	Rural needs established in housing sub-regions Funding for 2006-08 allocation will follow the rural priorities where appropriate
B	Ensure housing market assessment methodologies capture rural issues	RHB and RPB and sub-regional partners	By May 2005	Rural needs are addressed

<b>Policy 13</b>	<b>Ensuring that all sub-regions understand and address the needs and aspirations of diverse sectors of their communities</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Close dialogue with RIG to jointly review Supporting People strategies in March 2005	RHB, RIG,	2004-6	Service users experience provision that is more relevant to their needs
B	Establish BME needs across the region.	Sub-regions	Ongoing	Sub-regions to identify BME needs
C	Develop bidding guidance for assessment and delivery of new and refurbished supported housing	HC and RIG	2004-6	Guidance produced and disseminated to the region
D	Encourage sub-regions to identify and respond to diverse housing needs.	Sub-regional groups	Ongoing	Needs and aspirations of diverse sectors of local communities identified and reflected in sub-regional action plans.

<b>Policy 14</b>	<b>Developing the role of the sub-regions</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Review membership and constitution of sub-groups.	Regional Assembly Housing Group and sub-regional groups	Through 2004	Confirmation that robust self administering groups exist in each sub-region.
B	Review and update the sub-regional action plans	Sub-regional groups	By December 2004	Sub-regional action plans produced which respond to priorities in RHS

<b>Policy 15</b>	<b>Developing and integrating a common information base</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Develop a joint housing and planning research programme to cover future market and affordable housing needs to inform the RPG/RSS and the RHS (see also Policies 1c and 12b)	Led by: RPB, RHB Supported by: Local Authority partners	Common approach agreed and signed off by December 2004, programme reviewed annually	Joint research programme established

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B	Review Housing numbers in RPG/RSS supported by evidence of needs	Led by: RPB and RHB Supported by: Local Authority partners	Dependent on Regional Spatial Strategy timetable	Complementarity between RHS and RPG/RSS supported by common and robust evidence base
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<b>Policy 16</b>	<b>Supporting economic growth in partnership</b>
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	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Success criteria</u>
A	Commission research into the need for key worker and intermediate housing products in areas of high house prices	Led by: RHB and <i>emda</i> Supported by: RSLs and local authorities	2004-6	Research disseminated and used to inform development of intermediate housing solutions
B	Commission further research to identify reasons for "city flight" and develop appropriate responses	Led by: RHB and <i>emda</i> Supported by: LSPs, local authorities, RSLs and other partners as appropriate	2005 -2007	Research disseminated and regional response to "city flight" developed with partners
C	RHB to contribute to the revision of the Regional Economic Strategy	Led by: RHB Supported by: <i>emda</i>	2005-2006	Complementarity between revised RES and RHS

## 12. Appendix One

### ***Principles of Sustainable Design and Construction***

The settled areas across the East Midlands form a durable pattern of development that changes slowly over time. The decisions made today will influence the quality of the built environment for many years. The inertia of the built environment means that it cannot respond rapidly to large changes. The climate is changing and current projections are suggesting significantly different climatic conditions 50 to 100 years from now.

Much of the development occurring today will still be functional within this time frame. It is vital that development today takes full account of the possible future climatic conditions to ensure buildings that are useable and comfortable in future conditions. The planning, design and construction of the built environment must deliver a sustainable solution to climate change.

**The four guiding sustainable design and construction principles that will enhance the local community and achieve the integration of social, economic and environmental well-being are:**

1. Putting people and a healthy environment as priority;
2. Promoting and supporting a more sustainable lifestyle;
3. Using all resources efficiently and appropriately; and
4. Enhancing a community's ability to generate and retain wealth.

These principles are based on the region's vision for a more sustainable future and relate to:

- The layout and location of development;
- The design and use of buildings; and
- The construction process.

To achieve these guiding principles, the following will need to be addressed in relation to the **layout and location of development**:

- Accessibility to key services by public transport, cycling and walking;
- Harmony with natural landscapes and habitats;
- Designed-out crime;
- Incorporation of good quality green and open spaces for all members of the community while contributing to the enhancement of linked habitats;
- Identification of important water resources and incorporation of sustainable urban drainage;

- Creation of a strong sense of place;
- Enhancement of the community's cultural heritage and diversity;
- Engagement of local communities.

In relation to the **design and use of buildings** the following will need to be addressed:

- Homes that are affordable to live in;
- Homes that are accessible to all members of the community;
- The efficient use of resources and reduced waste;
- The creation of high quality buildings;
- The contribution to an enhanced sense of place;
- Maximised use of energy and water efficiency and the use of ambient energy for light and heat;
- A healthy living environment throughout the life of the building; and
- The full engagement of local people.

And in relation to the **construction process**:

- Minimised use of non-renewable resources;
- Use of sustainable, and where possible, locally sourced materials and the local labour market;
- Use of materials that minimise the risk to health in construction and use;
- High quality construction complemented by high level skills and training;
- Responsible disposal of waste materials; and
- Minimised disruption to local habitats.