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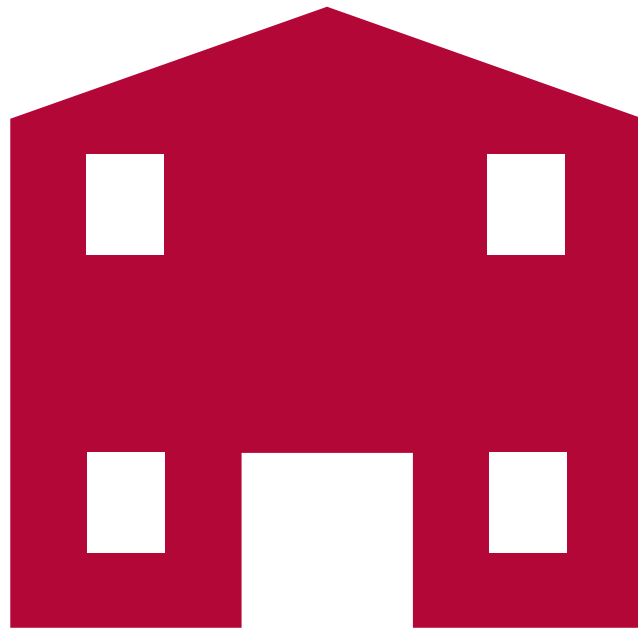
mediation of space · making of place



Local Government Association

intelligent approaches to housing

achieving better integration in planning for housing



useful references

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introduction

A lack of co-ordination between economic and infrastructure decisions, housing investment and planning policy has perpetuated the problem of unbalanced housing markets

Over the last couple of years there has been a revolution in the way that the strategic aspects of both housing and planning are handled. The formulaic approach to housing investment has been abandoned in favour of a much more flexible approach based on regional strategies for housing and the new legal framework for planning has enshrined the concept of a 'spatial strategy' in legislation - a huge step away from a system that focused simply on land use.

The Barker Review of Housing Supply has highlighted the problems faced by local authorities in promoting the benefits of new housing developments to often sceptical local communities as well as the localised impacts new development can bring versus the more diffuse benefits. A debate is taking place about how to solve these issues through more timely and certain local funding to deal with impacts, and through further planning reforms. Some of these represent a potential threat to local authority freedoms and flexibilities and some an opportunity to develop them further.

The government's commitment to the delivery of its sustainable communities plan, the abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant, the creation of Regional Housing Boards and the introduction of new Regional Spatial Strategies/Local Development Frameworks has fundamentally changed the landscape for strategic housing and planning functions at all levels. These

changes create an urgent need for the two functions to work together on a common agenda and for new approaches to evolve.

A lack of co-ordination between economic and infrastructure decisions, housing investment and planning policy has perpetuated the problem of unbalanced housing markets. Rebalancing and maintaining balanced housing markets requires an integrated approach – investment in new affordable housing and in existing public and private stock must be integrated with decisions relating to how much new housing is to be developed – or, in some cases, demolished – and where it is to be located. A new commitment must be made to understanding housing markets as a whole and to co-ordinating the full range of investment going into housing. This must be set within a spatial vision for new and redeveloped housing in sustainable communities. To achieve these outcomes successfully, local authorities must be prepared to adapt and, where necessary, radically change the way they work.

This report is a joint one between the three key local government, housing and planning bodies and is partly intended to assist local authorities to bring about the necessary changes to both their housing and planning functions, and to re-affirm their role in delivering sustainable communities. The report examines the changing policy context and need for better integrated

working practices within and between authorities on housing and planning issues. It also provides a snapshot of current joint-working practices at local and sub-regional levels. A number of recommendations to achieve better integration at local, sub/regional and national levels are made to assist government and regional bodies to drive forward this agenda.

section 1: the changing agendas of housing and planning

Too often current experience is that the professions pull against one another, leaving the way open for challenge by developers

The government's renewed commitments to delivering higher levels of housing, tackling areas of decline and building sustainable communities presents a significant challenge to both the planning and housing professions.

Achieving sustainable communities will require an enlightened and interventionist approach to planning – one that creates vision for, and ensures delivery of, high quality environments that serve the aspirations as well as the needs of present and future communities in a way that is socially inclusive. The current planning reforms are intended to promote a more positive and less regulatory approach, but their success will depend largely on the desire and abilities of professionals to re-invent the way planning is done. It also requires a bigger vision and willingness for housing professionals in all types of roles and organisations to think, act and invest more strategically. Changes in society and in people's aspirations require different ways of thinking about meeting housing needs that embraces all tenures within the broader context of creating sustainable communities.

Local government and elected members have a key role to play in helping to drive forward this change. A large part of successful community leadership rests on members and chief officers being able to develop and drive forward a shared vision for local areas based on the creation of thriving, mixed and sustainable communities. The recent Egan Review of Skills has put forward a number of

proposals to help members and officers successfully undertake this role.

Closer alignment of housing, planning and indeed wider economic and social development strategies will be crucial in meeting this objective. This means adopting new approaches so that housing and planning functions do not operate according to separate programmes and agendas that deal with different tenures and new and existing housing in isolation from each other. Between them, planning and housing professionals have a wealth of knowledge and experience covering different but overlapping spheres. Housing professionals work at the sharp end of policies that have not always delivered socially-sustainable communities in the past and they have both knowledge of what makes a community sustainable and a passion for change. Planning professionals are able to think strategically and long-term, can co-ordinate different agencies involved in development and are well-versed in issues of environmental sustainability. The best outcomes will be achieved through a process of sharing and debating this knowledge with the aim of arriving at a shared vision for delivering sustainable outcomes. Too often current experience is that the professions pull against one another, leaving the way open for challenge by developers.

The joint CIH/RTPI publication *Planning for housing: the potential for sustainable communities* provides a critique

of the government's Sustainable Communities Plan and considers ways in which planning for housing could be improved.

planning goes spatial

The government's reforms of the planning system have set out a new relationship between land use planning and wider strategies. Under the new system, planning strategies will become more 'spatial' in nature. This means that beyond identifying what activities need to be accommodated, where they are needed, and when, new planning strategies will consider who will implement the policies or take the lead in doing so and where the resources needed to deliver will come from. Many of these considerations are becoming more evident in community strategies. The new planning system therefore creates a formal and explicit link between community strategies and development plans. Local development frameworks become the spatial framework for the delivery of the community strategy.

In order to keep pace with the community strategy, which is more easily evolved and reviewed, the local development framework will become a collection of individual local development documents. At the centre of these will be a core strategy setting out the overarching spatial policies and objectives. Surrounding these will be topic or geographically-specific local development documents, which can be reviewed as and when required.

The local development framework therefore becomes a more flexible and more easily reviewed plan.

This is good news for the integration of housing and planning at the local level. There will be a need to develop more integrated approaches and keep intelligence underpinning policies and priorities up to date and the land use framework should be more capable of handling this than under the old system. There should be greater potential to identify the other factors – services like education, public spaces, health etc – beyond the housing itself, that help to create attractive housing environments, and to ensure that those responsible play their part.

At the sub-regional and regional levels, regional spatial strategies will formally identify housing needs and set out their broad distribution to local planning authorities. There will be a great deal of joint work done to promote more effective housing and planning integration at sub-regional level to inform regional strategy allocations and local development frameworks. This is a major opportunity to promote closer housing, planning and wider spatial approaches at this level. The challenge will be to ensure that this work contributes effectively to the Regional Spatial Strategy and produces housing allocations that can be delivered locally through local development frameworks.

There has been a significant new emphasis on housing strategy as the basis for investment in recent years

A key factor determining whether or not local authorities will succeed in providing the housing development needed locally is the availability of funding to provide infrastructure to support strategic and local housing development. The Barker Review of Housing Supply recognised the difficulties facing local authorities in delivering new housing development when such development creates burdens on local community services and infrastructure, which cannot be mitigated. The LGA are working with the government on seeking solutions to the funding gap that frustrates local infrastructure provision.

the rise in regional housing strategy

There has been a significant new emphasis on housing strategy as the basis for investment in recent years. Low demand problems, in some instances extreme ones, have exposed the existence of complex and dynamic housing markets that need to be understood and managed. Investment by needs-based formulae calculated on political rather than housing market boundaries does not work well; a more intelligent and forward-looking approach is required.

The most significant development has been at the regional level. Regional housing boards (RHBs), set up in February 2003 are required to produce housing strategies and to advise ministers on investment priorities. The content and nature of these strategies is developing and the CIH has prepared advice notes for regional

stakeholders to assist them in preparing the next round of regional housing strategies. The strategic approach has led to a significant redistribution of funds, with stark differences in investment patterns in 2004/5 compared with previous years. Some local authority areas have received only a fraction of the amount they would have received under the formula, and some have received far more. More of the money available for affordable housing has been channelled through the regional housing boards, including the funds that were allocated to local authorities through Local Authority Social Housing Grant.

Currently ODPM is developing proposals for the merger of regional housing boards and regional planning bodies, as recommended by Kate Barker in her report reviewing housing supply. There is a good deal of sense in bringing the investment strategy alongside the spatial strategy and more discussion about how this might be best achieved is included in the next section. In short, CIH, LGA and RTPI believe there is merit in maintaining separate boards for planning and housing within the Regional Assembly at least until there is the possibility of comprehensive integration across other activities, such as transport and economic development.

Housing Corporation's new investment regime

The Housing Corporation is changing the way that it delivers investment for new housing through housing associations in two ways. With the advent of the regional housing strategies it is shifting its investment priorities to

those set out in these strategies. In this sense it is increasingly becoming a delivery vehicle for certain key aspects of regional strategy. It is also seeking to achieve better value for money by exploiting economies of scale, and to this end has changed the nature of its relationship with housing associations. The main features of the new Investment Partnering programme are:

- the Corporation is focusing its investment on a limited number of key housing associations or consortia partners (currently about 70). Only these partners will receive ADP.
- chosen partners will be funded to deliver a two year programme, moving away from grant being negotiated scheme by scheme.
- this will foster new development partnerships at regional level between otherwise independent associations. So far three such partnerships have been established and all have received allocations for 2004/05 and 2005/06.
- the pattern of investment increasingly reflects the priorities set out in the regional housing investment strategies.
- emphasis is being placed on more efficient procurement methods to achieve greater value for money, and increasingly on using modern methods of construction.

changing role of local housing strategy

Local authority statutory land use planning responsibilities have always been clear. The strategic housing role however, has been interpreted more flexibly. All housing authorities have a duty to evaluate local housing requirements and set out policies and programmes to help address local housing problems in a formal housing strategy and activities have taken on different forms and emphasis in different authorities. Whilst many authorities have traditionally focused on addressing affordable housing issues, there is now an increasing expectation for local housing strategies to look at the wider housing market and supply and demand issues across all tenures.

The current planning reforms have emphasised the need for a much more integrated approach between housing and planning strategies. Local development frameworks are expected to give spatial expression to housing and wider community strategies. In this context, housing strategy could be interpreted as being an arm of the planning process.

However, housing strategy and the strategic housing role go beyond the spatial aspects and it is important that local authorities maintain and develop the housing role in achieving wider goals.

The strategic housing role is being shaped by a number of key policy developments and drivers of change

For instance, in addition to affordable housing concerns, the strategic housing role can embrace a diverse range of activities such as:

- preventing homelessness;
- setting up and running a common housing register;
- strategies for investment in existing private housing;
- strategies for tackling anti-social behaviour and promoting community cohesion; and
- supporting neighbourhood renewal and local economic development.

Equally, it is becoming increasingly important for local housing strategy to interconnect effectively with other strategies including health and social services in ways that go beyond the Supporting People strategy, and also beyond traditional regeneration activities. This requires the ability to build strong working relationships both within and externally with partner organisations.

Housing strategy at a local level is in a period of transition. The strategic housing role is being shaped by a number of key policy developments and drivers of change. These include:

- A shift towards broader housing market analysis with housing needs assessments being complemented by a more comprehensive and sophisticated approach to understanding key factors driving housing market change at local and sub-regional levels. Good housing market assessments are the basis for successful strategy. Local authorities must develop strategies for affordable housing together with market housing to present a continuum of affordability and tenure types (including 'intermediate' housing solutions) to reflect the housing choices people make, set within the market as a whole. The integration of different types of affordable and market housing is crucially important in developing mixed and sustainable communities. Housing market based approaches to deliver mixed inclusive communities require both a common evidence base and an integrated spatial strategy for housing investment and land use.
- Developing a more strategic approach to investing in existing private housing – following the regulatory reform order 2002 local authorities now prepare strategies setting out how they intend to invest in private housing to meet the decent homes target. These strategies should be an integral part of the overall housing strategy, considered alongside other spatial and investment matters.
- Effective understanding, management and balancing of local housing markets forms a key part of the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment

of the local authority housing role. All local authorities will have to demonstrate what measures they have put in place to help balance housing markets and their progress and success in achieving this goal.

- Strategic collaborative working between authorities is growing in recognition that housing issues and problems (ie problems of high and low demand) often transcend local authority boundaries and require broader housing market analysis and more joined-up responses from local authorities at a sub-regional level. The need to inform and influence regional housing strategies and investment decisions has also required authorities to invest greater time, effort and resources in strategic collaborative working. In many regions, sub-regional housing strategies are being developed as a building block for the regional housing strategy. In at least one region (Yorkshire and Humberside), the regional housing board has delegated to the sub-regions responsibility for allocating funds to local authorities.
- The new Housing Corporation investment regime is making local authorities think carefully about their collaborative approaches with other authorities and housing association partners. A recent report published by the Chartered Institute of Housing, *Towards investment partnering*, recommended that the Housing Corporation, in consultation with ODPM, should clarify the role of local authorities in investment partnering, how it intends to

support authorities in their strategic housing role and how it sees the future of joint commissioning.

It is not surprising, given this changing climate, that there are differing interpretations locally about what the strategic housing role involves, how it should be carried out and its relationship to broader policy areas such as health, social services and planning. At the start of a new system of development plans through LDFs, local authorities have an exceptional opportunity to enhance their 'planning for housing' capabilities by drawing together their strategic planning and housing activities and creating a much richer and more proficient pool of expertise to inform land use and investment decisions.

Alongside this more integrated approach to planning for housing, a much wider national-level debate is needed about the future nature and scope of the local strategic housing role – both for those that continue to manage their housing stock and those that have partially or fully transferred their stock. Local authorities need clearer direction from Government and more assistance in developing their strategic capacity relating to housing in order to contribute effectively to wider local, regional and national goals.

section 2: an emerging joint agenda

At present, there is not always a good fit between the sub-regional boundaries for housing and planning

Deliberate moves are already being made to better co-ordinate planning and housing activities at regional and local level. This report highlights several examples of joint working initiatives at the local and sub-regional levels. There are a number of important aspects to achieving a more integrated approach to planning for housing:

- at all levels politicians and officers must develop a common vision for housing that combines spatial vision with housing investment strategy;
- to achieve the vision, clear roles for planning and housing functions and for external partners, such as housing associations must be set out; and
- spatial and investment activities must be properly co-ordinated between local, sub-regional and regional levels.

joint ownership of housing market research

Planning policy guidance is already beginning to reflect these drivers for change, and in particular the need for common vision, clear roles and integrated working. The Planning Policy Guidance 3 on housing consultation paper, *Influencing the size, type and affordability of housing* sets out positive and welcome proposals for joining up housing and planning:

- the requirement for a common evidence base to inform

both the Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy;

- the requirement for local assessments of housing need and demand to be drawn up jointly by planning and housing departments working closely with housing providers;
- the requirement for these assessments to be cross-tenure in nature;
- for the Regional Housing Boards to co-ordinate local assessments and provide support for local authorities undertaking housing market assessments; and
- to allow these assessments to be undertaken at the sub-regional level, so that they embrace housing market areas.

ODPM is currently working on a new Housing Market Assessment model and is intending to make available more centrally-provided data and advice on undertaking cross-tenure housing market assessments. There needs to be commitment by local authorities to use the results of such assessments in the development of joint policies and investment decisions. More generally, it is important that all those involved in planning for, funding, or delivering housing come to a consensus on the needs across tenures in a locality. The development of a new assessment model provides the opportunity to work towards this.

regional level

The regional housing boards were set up with the express purpose of bringing housing investment, planning and economic development into line with each other. The government's positive response to Kate Barker's recommendation to merge the housing boards with the planning bodies is a further indication that the two are to be more closely aligned.

The most likely outcome is for the Regional Assemblies to take on the responsibilities for the regional housing strategies, making them leaders on both regional housing and planning matters. The question then will be how they go about making sure that the two strategies co-ordinate as well as dealing fully with the matters that relate only to housing or to planning. The CIH, LGA and RTPI recommend that separate boards for planning and housing are maintained in the Regional Assembly. This will ensure that housing and spatial planning issues retain an explicit voice and that needs arising from both sectors are debated openly rather than mediated within an organisation. We also recommend that the two bodies are required to produce joint spatial and long-term investment strategies based on resource projections covering new housing development (both market and affordable), demolition of private and public dwellings and refurbishment of existing private and public housing. This would compel housing and planning professionals to pool their expertise, debate their differences and agree on

spatial development and housing investment that supports and re-inforces each other.

sub-regional level

At present, there is not always a good fit between the sub-regional boundaries for housing and planning. Historically, planning sub-regions have predated housing ones. Different sub-regional housing and planning boundaries can present challenges for joint strategic working at this level. However, housing market areas particularly those requiring policy intervention are unlikely to retain firm and fixed boundaries. Housing market areas and boundaries may fluctuate in response to economic, social, and physical changes and the new planning for housing framework will require a more flexible approach. In this respect it is critical that all agencies work in concert to develop a shared common evidence base that can track these changes. Collaborative working between housing and planning authorities is critical in identifying and delivering appropriate policy responses to local housing market problems.

The new Planning Act places a strong emphasis on sub-regional spatial planning. The Act provides for both voluntary sub-regional planning partnerships and formal ones to inform RSS. It also provides for local authorities to produce joint local development frameworks. The Act places an obligation on Regional Planning Bodies to consult with local authorities on the need for sub-regional

There is a big challenge to ensure that regional, sub-regional and local strategies and priorities work well together to deliver an integrated programme

planning and take into account their views. The RPB must take into account the work and recommendations of formal sub-regional strategies in drawing up and adopting RSS.

The new sub-regional planning landscape will therefore meet a variety of needs and different sub-regions may overlap for different purposes. Clearly, in planning for housing terms it will be important for planning for housing sub-regions and housing market areas to match closely. This is based on bringing together areas that share strategic spatial development concerns ie the identified growth areas, or Market Renewal Pathfinder areas, or face similar issues, ie the need to deal with and have in place effective responses to flooding etc... and relate to housing market areas. These areas may cut across different council boundaries and therefore result in very different local authority sub-regional planning areas, strategies and partnerships.

Some practical ways of achieving a greater integration of housing and planning functions at the sub-regional level are set out below:

- encourage current sub-regional separate housing and planning member, officer and groups to merge into a single network. This could provide a useful forum for producing sub-regional housing strategies from the pooled knowledge of planners and housing professionals

who are operating at the local level providing a single route for them to feed into both the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy;

- maintain an information flow and swap – if the sub-regional groups are not merged, then individuals from each of the housing and planning sub-regional groups should be represented on the equivalent group;
- collaborate over research into housing markets at various levels in order to provide a joint evidence base;
- undertake a joint identification and delineation of sub-regions;
- work to agreed joint timetables;
- run joint seminars and consultation events on planning for housing in the sub-region;
- hold workshops for all those involved in delivering housing – local authority housing and planning officers, housing associations, rural housing enablers etc – designed to encourage effective partnership approaches to delivering affordable housing in mixed communities; and
- develop strong sub-regional groups of housing and planning professionals to aid vertical communication, from regional to local level.

local level

The joining-up of housing strategy and spatial planning are positive steps towards better understanding and ‘management’ of complex housing markets. There is a big challenge to ensure that regional, sub-regional and local strategies and priorities work well together to deliver an integrated programme. There are significant implications for local authorities, but if managed well, then regional and sub-regional strategy should ‘add value’ to local strategy rather than detract from it.

Clearly, regional and sub-regional collaborative working and Housing Market Assessment (HMA) approaches will help to break down barriers between planning and housing at the strategic level. But large elements of the roles of housing and planning functions will necessarily remain separate. Even so, it would be desirable to see a gradual blurring of boundaries between housing and planning strategy, and to encourage the development of new skills to achieve the best outcomes in terms of developing sustainable communities.

In *Planning for housing*, the CIH and RTPI suggest that a single document be produced covering the development of housing across all tenures and investment in new and existing housing. Some local authorities have committed to producing a housing development document as one document in their local development framework. This should be a joint effort by housing and planning

professionals drawing on the full range of experience of what makes communities sustainable and including demolition and investment in existing housing as well as new build. Long-term investment decisions should be considered alongside the development document, even if they are only based on projections of future allocations.

For this to succeed the following factors will need to be addressed:

- housing strategists and planners will together need to think of themselves as managers of the entire housing stock. Both need to be concerned with new market and affordable housing as well as investment in existing housing to meet the public and private sector decent homes standard and demolition to rebalance housing markets. Their thinking needs to be truly cross-tenure, embracing both land use and investment;
- together housing and planning functions will need to address how best to meet the housing needs of low income households and vulnerable people in both rented housing and owner occupation;
- all aspects of ‘sustainability’ – whether social, resource use, environmental, economic or relating to the housing market – will need to be embraced by and tackled in strategies;

section 3: recommendations

- there will need to be developed a more sophisticated understanding of affordability that links housing costs to incomes and ability to pay, rather than being tied to assumptions about tenure or ownership. Mechanisms to keep housing affordable in the long-term should increasingly be through covenant and other 'in perpetuity' planning conditions rather than relying on ownership by a housing association;
 - the professions should embrace the increasing range of 'intermediate' housing solutions and flexible tenure options;
 - an acceptance of the implications of decisions in one area on another, particularly investment decisions in moving to a more strategic approach; and
 - the co-ordination between funding allocations and site allocations for particular schemes.
- for ODPM:**
- second round of local PSAs to provide incentives and rewards for local authorities who perform their strategic housing roles well;
 - working with the Regional Housing Boards / Regional Assemblies, revise and update guidance to local authorities on their strategic housing role; and
 - encourage joint working between housing and planning departments through policy and practice guidance, focusing on the linkages that need to be made.
- for the Regional Assemblies:**
- in implementing Kate Barker's recommendation to merge RPB and RHB to keep housing and planning as two distinct boards within the Regional Assembly structure. Further debate is also needed to consider how more comprehensive integration across other activities, such as transport and economic development can be achieved;
 - require both the housing and planning boards to sign up to joint spatial and long-term investment strategies based on resource projections covering the following elements:
 - new housing development – including both market and affordable housing
 - demolition of private and public dwellings and the creation of attractive places to replace them
 - refurbishment of existing private and public housing
- for sub-regions:**
- ensure that sub-regions identified for planning for housing purposes are more closely aligned in both housing market and planning terms; and
 - to monitor the implementation of the regional housing and spatial strategies to ensure that strategic priorities for housing are delivered.
- to consider the following adjustments in order to improve integration of the housing and planning agendas:
- combining sub-regional housing and planning officer and member networks into joint strategic partnerships;
 - having representatives from each of the housing and planning sub-regional groups on the equivalent group;
 - collaborating over research into housing markets at various levels;
 - running joint seminars and consultation events on planning for housing in the sub-region; and
 - running workshops for all those involved in delivering housing – designed to encourage effective partnership approaches to delivering affordable housing in mixed communities.

local government to establish a training programme for housing and planning professionals

for local authorities:

- that housing and planning departments both sign up to a spatial strategy and a long-term investment strategy for housing based on projections of resources from public and private sources. This is to ensure that the spatial and housing investment strategies are re-inforcing and supporting each other. One or both of these should form part of the suite of development documents that make up the local development framework. They should cover the following elements:
 - new housing development – including both market and affordable housing;
 - demolition of private and public dwellings;
 - refurbishment of existing private and public housing;
- that these strategies are based on evidence that considers housing market assessments and which determines needs/requirements across all tenures – whether undertaken at local, sub-regional or housing market area level;
- local government to establish a training programme for housing and planning professionals to gain a better understanding of each others' functions and to re-invent the way they undertake their dual role; and

- that local authorities build relationships with all RSL partners (not just Housing Corporation development partners), possibly through a forum of RSLs in their areas and with private sector housing providers, in order to influence them towards meeting the strategic aims of the local authority.

for the Housing Corporation:

- that the Housing Corporation, in consultation with ODPM, clarifies with local authorities their roles under investment partnering, how it intends to support authorities in their strategic role and how it sees the future of joint commissioning;
- that the Housing Corporation, in partnership with Regional Assemblies, monitors delivery on the ground to ensure that the outcome of the individual planning and investment activities, when added together, supports the regional strategic priorities;
- that the Housing Corporation and Audit Commission roles in regulation and inspection should be revised to re-inforce the local authority strategic role in planning for housing;
- to pro-actively seek to engage local authorities with the partner development RSLs;

- to evaluate partner RSLs to assess how well they have met both regional and local authority strategic housing priorities; and
- to take on board local authorities evaluation of performance of RSLs in relation to, for example, their handling of BME issues, community cohesion, and Supporting People.

section 4: integrated working practices and policies within authorities

Identifying the current level and nature of joint working on housing and planning issues within and between local authorities across the country formed a key strand of analysis covered in the survey.

a snapshot of current practices

In January 2004 the LGA undertook research to examine the implications and response from local government to key issues and policy changes arising from the government's sustainable communities agenda. A survey was sent to all local authorities in England covering a wide range of areas.¹

Identifying the current level and nature of joint working on housing and planning issues within and between local authorities across the country formed a key strand of analysis covered in the survey. The findings reveal a wide spectrum of activity and a range of good practice in terms of both internal practices and the increasing development of strategic sub-regional local authority and multi-agency partnerships aimed at addressing housing market issues, wider infrastructure provision and the creation of sustainable communities.

The findings demonstrate a snapshot of current activity based on submissions from authorities responding to the LGA survey, further supplemented by follow up research to fill in some of the gaps in the data. The findings outlined below provide a general indication of broad activity on housing and planning issues rather than a fully comprehensive map of all joint working practices and approaches across the country. However, what they do reveal is some very good examples of integrated working on housing, planning and wider economic development

issues providing a benchmark for what can be achieved and indication of where we should be going.

housing and planning working together at a local level

Joint working on housing and planning issues within individual local authorities can be broadly categorised under the following headings:

- 1. employment practices and internal organisation**
- 2. joint policies and policy development**
- 3. procedures and practices to promote a more integrated approach**
- 4. training and wider activities**

The findings demonstrate that most, if not all, local authorities have in place some internal mechanisms to try and ensure a more integrated approach to housing and planning issues.

However, variations exist in terms of the level or nature of internal joint working practices between authorities. Whilst most authorities have in place some planning and housing officer liaison arrangements, those authorities that exemplify best practice tend to adopt an integrated approach across the broad range of areas, including policy development, employment and internal organisation, joint procedures and practices as well as wider activities such as training and member involvement.

Joint working practices specifically around the delivery of affordable housing issues also reflected a common approach for a significant majority of authorities, particularly in terms of joint working on supplementary planning guidance, negotiations with developers etc... However, survey findings also revealed a number of authorities where housing and planning officers were aware of each other's broader targets and worked together to support those objectives.

Many authorities also recognised the importance of adopting an integrated housing and planning approach to help understand and address wider housing market issues. For instance effective understanding, management and balancing of local housing markets forms a key part of the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment and is a crucial element of the wider strategic housing role expected from local authorities.

Equally, in many areas where housing market renewal rather than the delivery of affordable housing emerged as a primary concern, integrated housing and planning policies and practices were much more common. For instance, in Liverpool housing and planning colleagues work together to monitor and assess housing markets to ensure appropriate planning support to restructure the city's housing market.

The table overleaf highlights a broad spectrum of activities currently being undertaken by local authorities to achieve better integration of their housing and planning functions.

¹ Out of 354 councils, 183 councils responded providing a response rate of over 52 per cent.

measures for improving internal joint working practices on housing and planning issues

employment practices and internal organisation

- establishing joint planning and housing departments or, where stock has been transferred, locating the strategic housing function within the planning department.
- secondments between housing and planning departments to increase understanding across the departments or to other local authorities to learn how they approach joint working.
- use of multidisciplinary or development team approaches to housing development, investment and strategy to help improve development outcomes and strategic decision making.
- regular liaison and interdepartmental meetings at all levels including member, officer and senior management.
- joint housing and planning surgeries.

joint policies and policy development

- drawing up a single strategy or 'housing development document' for that element of the local development framework and that part of the local housing strategy, that both housing and planning cabinet members (or committees) can sign up to.
- joint commissioning of Housing Assessments and drafting of affordable housing policies and supplementary planning guidance to help balance housing markets and ensure effective management.
- joint policy development, and review of the following: Local Housing Strategy; planning policies and local development frameworks, housing market renewal and restructuring issues, and Best Value review.

procedures and practices to promote a more integrated approach

- use of joint protocols that are regularly reviewed, setting out what each department should expect in terms of input from the other – although these need to be positive in tone and not be seen as drawing a boundary around the responsibilities of each function.
- joint scoping and pre/outline and application discussions and negotiations with developers and RSLs.
- development of standard S106 guidance.
- joint guidance produced for developers.

training and wider activities

- adopting a positive action plan to educate housing professionals about planning matters (ie attending inquiries etc) and planning professionals about housing matters (ie understanding the work of RSLs, and the wider support role of housing managers).
- cross training and briefing sessions for members.
- joint community consultation and workshop sessions on housing and planning issues.

section 5: promoting joint working between authorities on housing and planning issues

Overall, there is greater evidence of integrated working on housing and planning issues within local authorities than there is between them

Results from the LGA survey demonstrate that while many authorities are starting to move towards better cross-boundary working on housing and planning issues, the majority of sub-regional local authority partnerships still tend to be confined to either housing or planning networks. This in part reflects different historical policy developments and requirements within respective housing and planning spheres as well as the fact that the shift towards greater sub-regional and regional policy is still relatively new. Overall, there is greater evidence of integrated working on housing and planning issues within local authorities than there is between them. However, there is some evidence to suggest that this is starting to change at a sub-regional level, particularly in the growth areas and market renewal pathfinder areas.

Sub-regional partnership working between authorities on housing and planning issues presents a number of challenges. For instance, even where broad similarities in housing market issues exist there may be differences within areas which may require different solutions and lead to conflicting priorities. Trying to develop shared priorities and agendas and overcome political differences and priorities for authorities presents a key challenge.

At the same time, there are clearly benefits to be derived from better joint working between authorities on housing and planning issues. For instance, such partnerships enable authorities to put forward a much stronger

lobbying voice which is critical in order to try and influence regional housing investment decisions and priorities. A joint sub-regional approach also enables authorities to benefit from economies of scale, pool resources and expertise and develop more strategic housing market responses to problems that transcend local authority boundaries.

Outlined below are some case studies highlighting a range of integrated housing and planning partnerships as well as examples of activities being undertaken to support such an approach.

case studies

Tees Valley Living Partnership

Tees Valley Living was set up in 2003 by Tees Valley local authorities (Darlington BC, Hartlepool BC, Middlesbrough BC, Redcar and Cleveland BC, Stockton-on-Tees BC) and includes representation from local Registered Social Landlords, Tees Valley Regeneration Company, the House Builders Federation and Darlington Building Society.

Tees Valley Living works to co-ordinate the work of planning, housing and regeneration officers and agencies in assessing the nature and extent of housing market failure in Tees Valley and planning for appropriate intervention to create sustainable neighbourhoods and communities. Partners have contributed to a budget of £870,000 (£600,000 from One North East through the Tees Valley Partnership; £100,000 from the Housing Corporation; £150,000 collectively from the local authorities; and £20,000 collectively from the Registered Social Landlords), which is being directed towards gaining a proper understanding of the operation of the housing market; identifying the principal causes of market failure and potential sustainable interventions; and in promoting the case for government support towards remedying low demand outside the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders.

Tees Valley Living is working to achieve the following outcomes:

- a fully evidenced sub-regional strategy targeting areas for intervention; including specific plans of action;
- identifying sources of funding and detailing appropriate means of delivery; and
- implementation focused around building early and positive relationships with the private sector and with communities, to ensure that properly funded and high quality redevelopment and improvement contribute to the creation of sustainable communities.

Guiding the actions of five local authorities and the range of other agencies, working in a sub-regional, strategic context, can be particularly challenging given that partner authorities each experience a different level of low demand and failure, and are each at a different stage in preparing programmes to deal with the issue. Tees Valley authorities have a history of working sub-regionally and have been supportive of the process of strategy development and lobbying with which Tees Valley Living has necessarily been involved. Tees Valley Living has proved to be a useful vehicle by which planning and housing officers across the sub-region can engage together in exploring solutions to the problem of low demand housing.

Merseyside Housing and Planning Officers Group (MHPOG)

Within Merseyside there are two key housing and planning partnerships – the Merseyside Housing and Planning Officers Group (MHPOG), and the Merseyside Housing Forum (MHF).

The MHPOG is an officer level group consisting of housing and planning professionals from Liverpool city council, Knowsley MBC, Halton BC, Wirral MBC, Sefton MBC, St Helens MBC, Merseytravel PTA & PTE, North West Regional Assembly, Government Office for the North West, NewHeartlands Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, and Merseyside Policy Unit.

The MHF consists of elected member level representation from the above six authorities as well as officers from the other agencies detailed.

The aim of the MHPOG is to develop a shared agenda to monitor changes in sub-regional housing markets and as far as possible to develop policy responses which are complementary and promote sustainability within each authority's boundaries. It has managed a considerable action research programme which will form the information baseline for the development of a sub-regional housing strategy.

The aim of the MHF is to:

- provide an arena for the Merseyside local authorities and partners, to discuss substantive housing matters of strategic concern, comment collectively on these issues and, where appropriate, make recommendations for action;
- facilitate the delivery of the Merseyside Strategic Agenda 2003 in relation to housing matters;
- provide a direct link to the North West Housing Forum and North West Regional Assembly ensuring that Merseyside has sufficient influence at the regional level; and
- ensure satisfactory linkages between the Merseyside Housing and Planning Officers Group and the Regeneration Directors Group, and the Merseyside Chief Executives and Leaders Group.

MHF – the joint working between elected members of the six authorities has developed a stronger understanding of common housing issues and appreciation of the needs of neighbouring authorities. Key outcomes include the development of private sector renewal tools in the form of equity release loans piloted in St Helens, Halton and Knowsley, closer working between those authorities involved in the Merseyside Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder and those outside and a commitment to develop a Merseyside sub-regional housing study which is at an early preparatory stage.

Key contacts: MHPOG – Bill Field, Liverpool city council, 0151-225-6344, bill.field@liverpool.gov.uk
MHF – Mel Godfrey, Knowsley Metropolitan borough council, 0151-443-5823, mel.godfrey@knowsley.gov.uk

West Sussex planning and affordable housing group

The partnership comprises representation from senior planning and housing officers from the county council and each of the district and borough councils, as well as a range of other partners such as RSLs, Government Office South East, the Housing Federation and the Housing Corporation.

The partnership was set up to maximise and support the delivery of affordable housing provision in West Sussex. The Partnership seeks to:

- monitor and help ensure the delivery of Public Service Agreement targets for affordable or key worker housing;
- share information and good practice within the group, and seek to learn from good practice outside of the group;
- where appropriate, develop joint approaches to issues such as planning gain, planning policy relevant to affordable housing, s106 agreements, and housing needs surveys;

- act as a consultative and lobbying group to feed into national housing policies and regional housing strategies;

- inform government of how policies are working 'on the ground'; and

- link into and ensure effective communication with other relevant groups, including the planning and policy officers group, West Sussex chief housing officers group, Sussex rural housing partnership, the key worker alliance and similar groups, and development control officers Forum.

For further information about the work of the partnership please contact Lynne Standing, head of housing services at LynneS@midsussex.gov.uk

joint working on housing and planning issues in Worcestershire

In Worcestershire there are a range of joint working arrangements between authorities aimed at helping to foster better understanding of local/subregional housing markets and develop more joined-up responses to housing and planning issues.

For many years, there has been monthly meeting of Chief Housing Officers (CHOG) from each of the six Worcestershire district councils and Hereford council, to share understanding and promote best practice and joint working. Similarly there have been monthly meetings of

the chief planning officers from the districts and the county council (CADPOG) to address a shared agenda.

In recent months there have been joint meetings of both groups to focus on the West Midlands regional housing/planning strategies, and more focused work on the sub regional housing market(s) within Worcestershire and surrounding areas. Participating authorities include Bromsgrove district council, Malvern Hills district council, Redditch borough council, Wyre Forest district council, Wychavon district council, Worcester city council, and Worcestershire county council.

In addition a range of other partnership activities across the authorities are underway such as:

- Herefordford and Worcestershire Housing Enabling Officers, looking at Housing Corporation/RSL activity, development of common Affordable Housing SPGs/Section 106 agreements;
- a private sector housing group set up to look at at the Regulatory Reform Order, grants policies, private sector enforcement, Home Energy Conservation Act and Home Improvement Agencies, etc...
- all districts and Worcestershire county council are also working together to implement Supporting People as a single county wide initiative with the initial government

implementation grants, being pooled to form a central Supporting People team, tasked with the operational responsibilities; and

- the Worcestershire affordable warmth group, with representatives from the district councils and local energy advice centres, have developed a county -wide affordable warmth strategy, tasked with promoting home energy conservation measures across the county.

Shropshire affordable housing partnership

Shrophsire affordable housing partnership includes representation from a range of local authorities (Shrewsbury and Aitcham, North Shropshire, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin) as well as the National Housing Federation, PCT, Social Care and Health Directorate. Whilst planning officers are not an official part of the group they do attend meetings where appropriate.

The partnership was set up to address common issues for housing authorities and prevent duplication of effort across the county. There is also recognition that housing and health issues are often related so partnership working within these areas is more effective. The partnership has worked to produce a joint homelessness strategy and a joint plan for affordable housing. The partnership has worked hard to identify and develop shared priorities and objectives. In particular the need to raise the profile of

rural housing concerns and issues at a regional level and ensure that these are reflected in regional housing strategies and investment decisions is a key priority.

The partnership has also provided a useful forum for both planning and housing officers to discuss and debate different priorities and perspectives and has helped to generate better understanding and integration of the two agendas.

For further information on the work of the partnership please contact Karen Farrow at:
Karen.farrow@shrewsbury.gov.uk

sub-regional housing needs and market analysis in North Dorset

A number of authorities across the North Dorset area have jointly commissioned housing needs assessments. In addition to underpinning future housing market assessments the sub-regional analysis also includes a rigorous assessment of supported housing needs and contributes to Supporting People Strategies for participating authorities.

The six Dorset housing districts plus Bournemouth and Poole unitary authorities are jointly commissioning housing needs assessments on a rolling programme over the next five years. During that period the timing of the assessments will be brought into line until they are all done in the same year. There will be consistency of

methodology and approach. In addition Dorset county council have been offered the opportunity to build on the data from the housing needs assessments to provide links to economic, regeneration, transport and other developing programmes. The housing needs data will be aggregated across the county as it is collected allowing previous surveys to be updated on a consistent basis. Sub-regional housing market analysis and contribution to housing market assessments are also being explored.

Each authority is contributing up to £10,000 a year providing a sum of up to £400,000 for the project. The authorities hope that the project will lead to greater consistency of data across authorities, reduced resource requirements from individual authorities and better links with economic development, regeneration, transport and other plans. Consistent housing needs data across the county will also support more consistent approaches and adoption of affordable housing policies in the county.

For further infomation contact Simon Hendey, Poole borough council 01202 633440 or Derek Hardy, North Dorset district council at s.hendey@poole.gov.uk

Cambridge sub-regional implementation partnership

The partnership has been established as the primary delivery vehicle to housing development and associated infrastructure provision within the Cambridge sub-region.

The aims of the partnership are:

- co-ordinating development and infrastructure implementation;
- seeking to address barriers to implementation (potential show stoppers);
- securing long-term funding and capacity for growth for the sub-region in accordance with the structure plan;
- establishing guidance on best practice on implementing sustainable development in the sub region; and
- communicating the vision for growth and delivery in the sub-region.

The partnership's work is carried out mainly by its member organisations which includes local authorities in the Cambridge sub-region. It does not have any statutory powers of its own, but delivers through the powers of its members.

The issue of integration of planning and housing agendas has been approached by setting up a partnership task group to focus on the delivery of affordable and key worker housing. This group has developed a sub-regional strategy which they are in the process of updating to take account of national policy and the Cambridge sub-region growth area requirement to significantly increase the level

and pace of delivery of affordable housing. The partnership will be putting in place additional resource to co-ordinate the delivery of the strategy across local authority boundaries and link into other housing and development activities. The partnership is also developing a sub-regional Section 106 strategy to ensure they have a consistent approach and are able to maximise their share of the land value uplift.

The task group has members from all the local authorities in Cambridgeshire (Cambridge, South Cambs, East Cambs, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire county) including housing, planning and economic development specialists, local authorities in the Regional Housing Board Sub-region (Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury Uttlesford and North Herts), RSLs, the Housing Corporation and the Government Office.

For further information, please contact Jemma Little, partnership manager, at jemma.little@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

housing and planning working together in Surrey

Shared concerns around affordable housing provision in Surrey has prompted widespread co-operation between Surrey county council, all eleven district councils and involvement from both planning and housing functions. A joint strategy document titled, *Housing to underpin economic success* was produced in September 2001 and provided a detailed analysis of the problems around the

recruitment and retention of key workers and set out a framework for the development of a more detailed strategy for addressing the problem. This has been taken forward by a local government led multi-agency partnership.

Surrey planning officers and housing officers have also worked together to produce an excellent checklist of areas that require joint working between housing and planning teams as well as wider input from other departments and agencies. The guide is aimed at encouraging the provision of affordable housing by promoting best practice and assisting those involved in the planning process to maximise the provision of affordable housing. The guide does not attempt to provide prescriptive solutions to specific issues. Rather it provides an overview in the context of the planning process. It covers the processes involved in securing affordable housing including policy formulation, assessing housing needs, the role of Registered Social Landlords and the use of legal agreements. It also provides a number of working examples and draws heavily from research and best practice across the county and beyond.

The document itself is on the Woking borough council website, at: www.woking.gov.uk/council/planning/affordablehousing/guide.pdf

East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) research to help improve regional and sub-regional working

The East of England Housing Strategy identifies 10 housing sub-regions where authorities have worked together to help feed into the wider regional housing strategy.

In recognition that joint working between housing and planning is sometimes made difficult as a result of different boundaries between the housing sub-regions, central government defined growth areas and other planning sub-regions and county boundaries. EERA is to commission research this year to look at this issue.

A key part of the research will be looking at the extent to which it is possible to establish a single set of sub-regions in the East of England to cover the principle strands of economic development, housing and regional planning.

For further information about this work please contact Jane Sellers, policy officer, EERA, on 01284 729431.



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Local Government Association

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