



South West Regional Housing Strategy 2005 - 2016



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South West Regional Housing Strategy 2005 – 2016

SECTION 1- OVERVIEW

A. Introduction

- 1.1 The South West Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) 2005-16 has been prepared by the South West Housing Body (SWHB) within the context of “just CONNECT!” the Integrated Regional Strategy for the South West 2004-2026 (South West Regional Assembly, 2004). It has a particularly close, two-way relationship with the existing Regional Spatial Strategy 1996 -2016 (RPG10¹) (Government Office for the South West, 2001) and its successor, covering 2006–2026, currently being prepared by the Regional Assembly in its role as the Regional Planning Body (RPB).
- 1.2 It identifies ways to tackle the **under-provision of housing** (against evidence of increasing housing demand and need for affordable housing), and supports the delivery of “The Way Ahead” - the region’s proposals for delivering planned growth and new housing in the most strategically important places on an accelerated time-scale. (South West Regional Development Agency, 2005). Securing high quality new housing in places where jobs and services are closely linked is essential to the region’s desire to create sustainable communities in the South West.
- 1.3 The role of **intermediate housing** tenures as a potential solution to some types of housing need is recognised within the strategy, and innovative solutions are sought from private developers, co-operatives, RSLs, Local Authorities, and financial institutions for new models of provision. Similarly, the role of the **private rental sector** in tackling the region’s housing problems is recognised and further work to engage with private landlords recommended.
- 1.4 The RHS supports action to tackle **homelessness** and to reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation through investment in new social rented housing and through promoting positive models of prevention such as advisory services, and multi-agency support.
- 1.5 The RHS strongly supports the principles of the **Regional Sustainable Development Framework** (South West Regional Assembly and Sustainability South West, 2000), and seeks to improve the contribution housing can make to **enhancing economic prosperity** and reducing **social and health inequalities** in the region. Equality and diversity, community cohesion and social inclusion issues are embedded in the RHS priorities.

¹ Regional Planning Guidance (RPG10) became the South West’s Regional Spatial Strategy in September 2004 when the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 came into force.

- 1.6 It also provides a strategic framework for regional investment decisions on affordable housing, and is intended to be a strong influence on the development of key regional strategies such as the RSS and RES and on stakeholders' housing-related plans and delivery programmes at sub-regional and local level.
- 1.7 The Government proposes to merge Regional Housing Bodies (RHBs) with Regional Planning Bodies later this year to improve the inter-relationship between housing and planning policies and delivery. The SWHB see this as an opportunity to maximise housing's role within the planning system, and will advocate that housing stakeholders remain integral to the new institutional arrangements.
- 1.8 The Strategy is in four sections. The remainder of this section sets out the context, mission, strategic aims and delivery plan framework. Sections 2, 3 and 4 discuss each strategic aim in more detail – with proposed actions, lead SWHB partner, indicative time-frame and outcome targets. Annex A contains full details of documents referenced in this RHS, and Annex B contains a glossary of terms. Illustrative case studies of successful housing projects and services are available at www.southwesthousingbody.org.uk. A complementary paper - "Proposed allocations for the use of the Regional Housing Pot 2006-07 and 2007-08" is published alongside the RHS 2005-16.

B. MISSION AND STRATEGIC AIMS

- 1.9 The mission proposed in this RHS has been derived from extensive consultation in the region.

SWHB's mission is - "To work in **partnership** to ensure that everyone has **access to** a good **quality** home within a **sustainable and inclusive** community."

Partnership - Taking an approach which re-enforces the progress made so far within the RHB and the region in joining up planning and housing activities at regional and sub-regional level, and which includes the private and voluntary and community sector as well as public delivery agencies.

Access - Ensuring all members of society are treated fairly and inclusively in the opportunities and choice they have regarding access to the housing market or social housing services.

Quality - Of housing construction and management which at least meets basic standards² and does not disadvantage the occupants' health or well-being through its standards of construction, repair, thermal comfort, suitability or facilities.

Sustainable and inclusive - communities where people feel safe, there is a successful economy, decent homes at a price they can afford, a good quality of living and working environment and a strong sense of community cohesion and inclusivity³.

- 1.10 The RHS mission will be achieved by the delivery of three **Strategic Aims**.

Aim 1 – Improving the balance of housing markets.

To develop housing markets with a range of tenures, which improve the balance between supply and demand, and offer everyone the opportunity to access a home at a price they can afford.

Aim 2 – Achieving good quality homes.

To ensure that existing and new homes improve over minimum standards of quality, management and design.

Aim 3 – Supporting sustainable communities.

To ensure that housing makes a full contribution to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive communities

C. HOUSING IN THE SOUTH WEST – PRESENTING THE ISSUES

- 1.11 The RHS takes a whole market approach to the South West's fundamental, long-term housing issues. Table 1 below describes these issues, and refers to actions within the strategy to tackle them either directly or indirectly.
- 1.12 The term **affordable housing** throughout the Regional Housing Strategy refers to housing, of a good standard, of any tenure, that is available at significantly below the normal cost of housing available on the open market, and is thus available to those on low to moderate incomes. Local variations in housing costs against household incomes define relevant affordability constraints. Reference should also be made to ODPM Circular 6/98.

² This is defined by the fitness standard, which is the minimum enforceable standard that applies to both social and private sector stock.

³ The publication "Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity" (ODPM 2005b), defines a sustainable community in more detail.

Table 1 – Housing in the South West: presenting the issues

Issue	Strategic Aim	Action(s)
<p>High and on-going housing demand - particularly from continued immigration to the region and a rise in single-person households. Population growth has been more than double the rate of England as a whole at 13%. Household growth has been 29% compared to 21% nationally. This trend is projected to continue with a further 20% increase in population by 2021 (Office of National Statistics, 2004).</p>	1	1-6
<p>An ageing demographic profile – The share of over 60 year olds in the South West's population is set to increase from the highest of the English regions at 24% of the population (national average is 21%) to 27% by 2021. There is a projected corresponding fall in the working population share of the total (South West Observatory, 2004).</p>	2	16,17
<p>Under-delivery of new homes – Although, since 1996 the region as a whole is broadly meeting its overall net housing commitments in RGP10 to add an average of 20,200 units to the stock per year, delivery across the region is patchy. Net completions between 1996 and 2004 have only exceeded RGP10 targets in Cornwall, Dorset and Somerset. In the rest of the region, completions have failed to meet the targets, and the shortfalls have been particularly acute in Gloucestershire, Former Avon and Wiltshire. Given the high and on-going demand and need for housing of all tenures in the region, this delivery record must be improved, and it is likely that overall housing provision in the revised RSS will need to be increased over current levels.</p>	1	2, 3
<p>Severe market access difficulties to owner occupation -particularly for first time buyers, and in the region's more rural areas. 18 districts in the South West are among the 40 most unaffordable in the country with average house prices to gross earnings ratios of over 5:1 (Wilcox, 2004). Supply constraints are also severe in much of the region from treble the national average level of second and holiday homes – In some rural and coastal districts such as North Cornwall, South Hams, Penwith and the Isles of Scilly over 10% of the housing stock is classed as second or holiday homes.</p>	1	2, 3
<p>High levels of homelessness and use of temporary accommodation – the numbers of homeless households accepted by local authorities to be in priority need rose 40% between 1997 and 2002 but has since declined to around 10,000 households in 2004. This is still 15% higher than in 1997. Households in temporary accommodation have increased by 36% since 1999 to over 6,600 (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004d).</p>	1 & 3	Aim 1 - 7,8 Aim 3 – 26, 27
<p>Shortage of affordable housing - current stocks of affordable housing, particularly in rural areas, are unable to compensate for severe market access difficulties to owner occupation, increased levels of homelessness and use of temporary accommodation. Given an average net addition of only 3,975 grant funded affordable homes year since 1996, the Regional Assembly consider the overall provision of affordable housing including that provided through S106 agreements has fallen short of the indicative target of 6,000-10,000 per year contained in RPG10. (SWRA 2005)</p>	1	3, 4, 6

High levels of Right To Buy (RTB) sales - The right to buy continues to be widely exercised in the region, over 130,000 social rented homes have been sold, but there has been little re-investment. As a result, the proportion of social housing in the region is among the lowest in the country at around 15%. There has been a 2% fall in this stock between 1991 and 2003 (SWO, 2004). The supply of social housing has declined to around 10% of all new dwellings in 2002-03.	1	10
Poor quality homes - approximately 30% of the region's housing stock does not meet the Government's Decent Homes standard ⁴ . Estimated non-decency rates by sector are: 23% in RSL stock; 35% in Local Authority stock and 32.6% of private sector stock.	2	17 - 19
Social exclusion and disadvantage – exacerbated by the peripherality and/or rural nature of much of the region which coexist with the exclusion and disadvantage of deprived urban communities. The RHS also needs to reach out to those in the voluntary and community sector to improve our understanding of equality and diversity issues (e.g. for BME groups, the disabled, and the gypsy and traveller community) and their specific housing needs.	3	24, 25
Inadequate links between housing affordability, quality and health - Improving affordability and housing quality will deliver a range of positive health outcomes – particularly for children and young families and older people and help reduce fuel poverty.	2	16
The challenge of creating sustainable communities - Across the region the developing picture of growth being concentrated in Principal Urban Areas (PUAs) and other significant towns and cities means these areas will incorporate major housing development. It will be essential to ensure that these are balanced sustainable communities.	3	21-23

D. USE OF THE REGIONAL HOUSING POT

- 1.13 The RHS 2005-16 also provides an investment framework for the use of the Regional Housing Pot 2006-08, which will be updated on a two yearly cycle.
- 1.14 The Regional Housing Pot allocation to the South West is £158m for 2006-07, and £203m for 2007-08. The RHS retains the priorities for investment set out in the Strategic Housing Priorities document (SWHB 2003), in the following ranked order:

- Priority 1 – the provision of additional affordable housing (approx £280m over 2 years)
- Priority 2 – improving the quality of private sector homes occupied by vulnerable households (approx £64m over 2 years)
- Priority 3 – meeting the Government's Decent Homes target in the social sector by 2010 (approx £16m over 2 years)

⁴ This is defined in "Quality and Choice – a Decent Home for All" (ODPM, 2000)

1.15 More detail on the use of the RHP is given in Section 2.

E. DELIVERY PLAN FRAMEWORK

1.16 In response to the very strong desire from partners during the consultation period to accelerate the production of a Delivery Plan for the revised RHS, the SWHB is proposing the following elements of a Delivery Plan Framework:

- i. A commitment to establish a work group for each theme in the RHS. This would be led, in the first instance by a SWHB member organisation, and invite membership from the SW Housing Forum, and other relevant, specialist groups and organisations as required.
- ii. Each work group will co-ordinate the delivery of a revised set of specific actions contained in the RHS text, distinguishing between ongoing and new work, identifying a lead SWHB member, and setting short, medium or long-term timescales. Boxes on pages 15, 35, and 48 summarise these actions and lead relationships.
- iii. A commitment to seed-fund each workgroup with a small budget to enable them to produce a detailed action plan by December 2005 and start work on any "quick wins". The detailed action plan should identify additional activities, suggestions for pilots or pieces of further research, and suggest milestones for measuring against the objectives and outcomes of the RHS.
- iv. A commitment to consider any future bids from work or advisory groups for research, staff or event costs, provided they clearly demonstrate how the activity relates to RHS objectives and outcome targets. Match funding from partnership organisations will be expected.
- v. A commitment to monitoring the activities and outputs of each work or advisory group, using existing data collection methods wherever possible, e.g. Regional Assembly Annual Monitoring Report, LDF monitoring returns, ODPM data from local housing authorities, Regional Observatory publications, and national or regional statistics.
- vi. A commitment to review the RHS and its delivery plan to take into account the Government's response to the Barker review, particularly regarding advice on regional affordability targets and the developing RSS.

1.17 The proposed Work Groups of the Delivery Plan are in Table 2 below. The lead SWHB organisation named in this table, undertakes to establish the associated work group, inviting membership from the region as appropriate to work on the actions under its remit.

Table 2 Establishing the Delivery Plan work groups

Strategic Aim	Theme	Lead SWHB organisation
1. Balancing housing markets	Increasing housing delivery, including exploring new models of affordable housing delivery	SWRA
	Reducing homelessness and use of Temporary Accommodation	HC
	Access and more efficient use of existing housing stock	GOSW
2. Good quality homes	Promoting Sustainable Development and Good Design	EP
	Meeting the Decent Homes target in the social sector and for vulnerable groups in the private sector	GOSW
3. Sustainable Communities	Working to achieve sustainable and mixed communities	SWRDA
	Addressing the support needs of vulnerable groups and promoting social inclusion	HC

1.18 The lead organisation for each theme would need to consider how it ensured a representative and **partnership approach** – at regional, sub-regional or local level to its future development and how it engaged with the **private sector** whether developers, land owners, land-lords or employers. Each lead organisation will also need to consider how its work can support the principles of **sustainable development, equality and diversity**, and will need to “**rural proof**” all its proposed activities.

1.19 The NHF, HBF, and SWLGA members of the SWHB will be playing a crucial supporting role for the lead organisation of each theme. The SWHB will review performance against the actions and outcomes detailed in this Strategy on an annual basis, taking appropriate action as necessary to ensure progress is made.

1.20 The actions in this RHS are defined either as new or as on-going. New actions have been established to tackle key issues that the region has identified as being priorities where new or different work is required. On-going actions are those where the current day-to-day work of partners in the SWHB will ensure progress. Each action also has a time-scale, reflecting the importance placed on moving the action forward quickly, although associated impacts may take much longer to

occur. For example, we have outcome targets with a range of time-horizons of 2010 and 2016.

- 1.21 Actions with a Short timescale will be progressed within year 1 of the strategy; those with medium term timescales will be progressed in years 2 and 3. Longer term actions will be progressed from year 4 onwards.

How will the RHS be used? How will it make a difference?

- 1.22 The key **regional level** implementation process is the Delivery Plan, the framework of which is described above.
- 1.23 For individual regional agencies, a number of whom are members of the SWHB, the RHS provides the framework within which they will be expected to take forward their housing-related work. In particular the RHS provides the framework for the Housing Corporation's Affordable Housing Programme in the South West.
- 1.23 The proposed merger of the SWHB and SW Planning Body will also provide an opportunity for even closer and more formal joint working on the objectives of the RHS. It will re-enforce the links between the RSS and RHS, and help align their cycles and evidence base.
- 1.24 At a **sub-regional level**, the SWHB is committed to promote greater understanding of the region's sub-regional housing markets, using Housing Market Areas (DTZ 2004) so that local authorities, developers, RSLs and others can have a common evidence base from which to work. This will particularly assist those Local Authorities working in two or more HMAs and the links with the new RSS.
- 1.25 It is particularly important to understand, for example, how markets in rural and urban areas interact, how in-migration affects housing demand and supply, what the support needs of different types of households are, the scope for increased provision of intermediate forms of tenure, the drivers of homelessness in an area etc
- 1.26 Joint working across administrative areas and LSPs should play an important part in making a reality of the RHS. The SWHB will work to promote this, for example, sharing expertise between county, unitary and district levels, and supporting the development of common policies across districts where appropriate. The **Local Area Agreement** process, and the establishment of **Local Public Service Agreement targets** (LPSA2's) is likely to be helpful in driving forward some of this closer co-operation between counties and districts in two tier authorities.
- 1.27 Other areas in which a sub-regional approach can be helpful is in working together on housing services for vulnerable people (Supporting People services) whose client groups are often transient, across local authorities' boundaries. A sub-regional approach, based on market areas may also be helpful to achieve efficiencies in

procurement of new housing needs surveys and HMAs, or new Choice Based Lettings systems.

- 1.28 **At a local level**, the RHS should act as a framework within which the plans and delivery programmes of local housing authorities, housing providers and others are prepared and implemented. The SWHB will work to ensure that this happens and that the RHS does indeed add value at this level.

Risks to delivery

- 1.29 Each work group will be commissioned to produce a detailed risk assessment of its part of the overall RHS Delivery Plan. However, it is clear that there are a number of headline risks to delivery that SWHB will take steps to manage over the lifetime of the RHS.
- Changes in housing market conditions may potentially affect the number of sites coming forward from developers, which would have a knock-on effect to the number of affordable homes able to be provided with the assistance of S106 planning obligations. These risks could be either to the downside or upside, depending on relative demand and competitive pressures within the marketplace.
 - The number of homes able to be provided through the proposed £310m capital investment programme for affordable housing will be affected by the availability of sites coming forward from local authorities, RSLs, and developers with relevant planning permissions. The need to balance delivery with efficiency savings targets also affects the number of homes that can be provided. The transition to the new planning system of LDFs and Government's development of planning policy following the Barker Report may also pose a risk to regional and local delivery performance.
 - The level of revenue funding available to the region for Supporting People services may be reduced over the medium to long term, due to the introduction of a new distribution formula that tends to shift resources to larger urban areas of the country. This will have an impact on the type and location of services provided in the region.

E. THE WIDER REGIONAL CONTEXT

Links to the Regional Spatial Strategy

- 1.30 Within the context of "Just CONNECT!", a crucial link in the delivery of the RHS will be the future direction of the **Regional Spatial Strategy** and the policies it contains on the spatial distribution of overall housing growth and on affordable housing.
- 1.31 The SWHB is developing detailed advice to the Regional Assembly on these key housing issues, through a Task and Finish Group of stakeholders, which includes representatives of GOSW, NHF, HC, EP and others.

- 1.32 There is evidence for example, that while the region as a whole experienced a jump in housing supply last year, there are marked differences between parts of the region.
- 1.33 Table 3 below, reproduces table H2 of the 2004 Monitoring Report for RPG10 (SWRA 2005). The figures reported by the Regional Assembly are significantly (around 4,000 pa for the region as a whole) above ODPM new build figures. This is because the Regional Assembly are monitoring Local Authority figures on both additional homes from new build, **and** those provided by conversions and change of use, giving a higher overall total.

Table 3: Net Housing completions 1996-2004 (Source, SWRA, 2005)

TABLE H2 NET HOUSING COMPLETIONS BY COUNTY 1996-2004

Year	Former Avon	Cornwall	Devon	Dorset	Glos~	Somerset++	Wiltshire	South West
RPG requirement	3,700	2,050	4,300	2,650	2,400	2,100	3,000	20,200
1996/97	3,146	1,741	3,687	2,791	2,050	1,994	2,853	18,262
1997/98	3,620	1,899	4,397	3,122	2,269	2,058	3,572	20,937
1998/99	3,870	2,373	4,630	2,813	2,451	2,296	2,273	20,706
1999/00	3,358	2,066	4,188	2,678	2,137	2,729	2,260	19,416
2000/01	2,885	2,293	4,229	2,639	1,870	2,434	2,416	18,766
2001/02	3,299	2484	3,883	3,292	1,912	2,249	3,047	20,166
2002/03	3,669	2,626	3,884	2,945	1,756	1,970	2,340	19,190
2003/04	4,672	2,154	3,712	3,746	2,622	2,436	3,418	22,760
1996-2004	28,519	17,636	32,610	24,026	17,067	18,166	22,179	160,203
Percentage of RPG requirement over the plan period 1996-2004	96.3%	107.5%	94.8%	113.3%	88.9%	108.1%	92.4%	99.1%

Source Housing Flow Reconciliation data and SWRA 2004 verified with the SW Structure Plan Authorities' monitoring data

*The Somerset 2001/02 figure is calculated using the HFR and P2m returns

** The Devon 2003/2004 figures are awaiting verification from Devon County Council

++Somerset net housing figures have been calculated using the average gross to net ratio for Former Avon, Dorset and Wiltshire (0.928995) and applying this to the gross housing data received for Somerset for the period 1996/97-2000/01. The remaining areas were provided as net housing figures.

- Former Avon total has increased by 427 in the plan period between 1996-2004 due to the inclusion of cluster flats as per the requirements of the HFR.

~ - The Gloucestershire figures were collected on a calendar year basis. Note the figure for 2003/04 is for a 15 month period from 01.01.03 to 01.04.04 and therefore is higher than the district completion data for the financial year submitted to ODPM for the HFR. The next housing survey will reflect the 2004/05 financial year.

The historical county data has been provided from the Housing Monitoring Reports for Dorset, Wiltshire, JSPTU and Gloucestershire. Devon's figures had already been provided as net housing figures. The Somerset net housing figures have been calculated using the average gross to net ratio for Former Avon, Dorset and Wiltshire (0.928995). The 2002/03 figures have been provided through the HFR, P2m returns, Housing Monitoring Reports and RES11 answers.

- 1.34 As highlighted in the key issues, the Regional Assembly consider that the level of affordable housing within these overall totals – provided with public subsidy and through developer contributions, falls significantly short of the indicative figures in RPG10 of 6,000 – 10,000 for new affordable homes per year.
- 1.35 The SWHB will work with the SWRA to improve the quality of the monitoring information available on the provision of affordable housing, and will expect authorities which have consistently under delivered against agreed overall planning totals from RPG10 to improve their performance in line with the region’s spatial priorities, and tackle any backlogs of supply.
- 1.36 Within the new RSS 2006-2026, the SWHB wishes to see that:
- i. Sufficient housing growth is allocated to support the RHS’s main priorities of improving the balance of housing markets and reducing homelessness and the use of Temporary Accommodation. This is likely to mean an overall increase in housing provision from RPG10 levels to meet projected rising household numbers and tackle affordability concerns and a spatial distribution that seeks to deliver sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. This is likely to mean greater concentration of housing development in identified strategic towns and cities and in sustainable rural settlements such as market and coastal towns that have good prospects for economic growth. Research on the function of places below PUA level for the Regional Assembly will help build this evidence base. (Roger Tymms and Partners, 2005)
 - ii. Local planning authorities are required to develop robust affordable housing policies that meet the needs of their local communities. A sub-regional approach to this should be encouraged, so that authorities within the same market area can share expertise and consider, for example, developing common policies for affordable housing thresholds and developer contributions through their LDFs. One potential mechanism for achieving this could be through Local Area Agreements and LPSA targets on affordable housing.

Links to the Regional Economic Strategy (RES)

- 1.37 The links from the RHS to the Regional Economic Strategy are equally important and should be mutually re-enforcing, and this RHS will influence the review of the RES happening this year.
- 1.38 The regional economic strategy seeks to improve productivity and wage rates in the South West, through investment in skills, key sectors of the economy and regeneration projects in major cities, and market and coastal towns. The link between lower than average wage rates in the South West, and much higher than average house prices, clearly

greatly exacerbates the lack of market access opportunities for low to moderate income households in the region, as reported by Joseph Roundtree Foundation research in 2004. . Accessing the private rental sector in some parts of the region can also be prohibitively expensive for those on housing benefit.

- 1.39 To further the economic potential of the South West, and to help tackle the loss of young graduates and skilled workers, deprivation and inequalities across the region, the SWRDA, in partnership with SWRA and GOSW have produced proposals to accelerate sustainable growth in “**The Way Ahead**” (SWRDA 2005). These proposals offer:
- Acceleration of growth in employment and housing in areas which can accommodate it, that will help deliver faster the wider regional aim of a decent home for everyone at a price they can afford in a thriving and stable community.
 - A channelling of the benefits of growth to reduce social exclusion and help create socially well-balanced communities based on sustainable design principles.
 - Targeted accelerated interventions on a small number of Principal Urban Areas and areas for regeneration. (In the West of England, Swindon, Plymouth, Exeter and central Cornish towns.)
 - Innovative and better co-ordinated means of delivery.
- 1.40 These proposals also include ideas to establish a revolving Regional Infrastructure Fund and regional and local delivery mechanisms with dedicated support. Further work on these ideas is planned for 2005, with a view to providing an input to the next Government Spending Review in 2006. SWHB will ensure the full engagement of stakeholders in this process.

Links to the Regional Sustainable Development Framework

- 1.41 The RHS promotes high quality and the principles of sustainable development. High design and environmental standards will be supported through the use of public subsidy and engagement with the private sector in order to mitigate the effects of housing growth on Climate Change and the landscape of the region.
- 1.42 In addition, the wider social and economic principles of the Sustainable Development Framework and Future Foundations will be supported. For example, the SWHB will encourage the greater involvement of the public in housing design and planning, and investment in local sourcing, and the development of local skills in the design and construction sector.

Links to other regional strategies

- 1.43 Within the Integrated Regional Strategy, the RHS will seek to influence and be influenced by the direction of travel in other key regional strategies. These include transport, health, environment, waste, renewable energy, and skills strategies.
- 1.44 For example, the RHS will support the achievement of key targets on:
- reducing health inequalities by 10% by 2010 as measured by infant mortality and life expectancy at birth (Department of Health PSA 2 target –see www.doh.gov.uk)
 - fuel poverty (eliminating, as far as reasonably practicable for vulnerable households by 2010, and for everyone by 2016) (Fuel Poverty in England, Defra 2004).
 - energy efficiency and renewable energy (minimum of 11-15% of the electricity generation capacity (597MW) in the region should be from renewable sources by 2010). (www.regensw.co.uk)
 - developing the efficient and inclusive working of the South West labour market (Framework for Skills and Employment Action, 2002).

E. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 1.45 The main national policy influence on the RHS comes from the **Sustainable Communities Plan** (ODPM, 2003a) published in February 2003. This stressed that it is vital to link housing to socially inclusive places where there are jobs, services and transport links.
- 1.46 ODPM have also recently published **“Sustainable Communities: Homes for All”** (ODPM, 2005a) which sets out the Government’s 5 year plan to deliver greater choice in housing across the country alongside its partner document **“Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity”** (ODPM 2005b)
- 1.47 Homes for All sets out an increased emphasis on home ownership, with a Government target to help up to 110,000 people into home ownership by 2010. New policies include a first time buyer initiative, led by English Partnerships and using public sector land; and a competition to build homes for £60k, again initially on public sector land.
- 1.48 A further 300,000 social housing tenants will be offered the opportunity to buy a stake in their home. (HMT/ODPM 2005). Consultation on various Homebuy options (“HomeBuy – expanding the opportunity to own” ODPM 2005c) describes a number of mechanisms to achieve this.
- 1.49 People, Places and Prosperity aims to give people more of a say in the way places are run; help local authorities to deliver excellent services

and provide leadership for and empower their communities; tackle disadvantage, and; increase prosperity in the regions. Local Area Agreements will play a key role in delivering these aims and housing will undoubtedly be a key cross-cutting issue of LAAs in the South West.

- 1.50 A new **Homelessness Strategy** – Sustainable Communities: Settled homes, settled lives” (ODPM 2005d) has also been published, which contains a new national target to reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation by 50% by 2010, and a strategy to promote positive models of homelessness prevention.
- 1.51 In addition, Ministers have issued guidance to Regional Housing Boards (ODPM, 2004a) on specific policy topics. The Government expects each region to support the delivery of three key ODPM Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets:
 - ODPM PSA 1 (Tackling disadvantage and narrowing gaps between the most deprived areas and the rest of England in health, education, crime, worklessness, housing and liveability outcomes.)
 - ODPM PSA 5 (Achieving a better balance between housing availability and demand, including improving affordability); and
 - ODPM PSA 7 (Bringing all social sector housing into a decent condition and for vulnerable households in the private sector).
- 1.52 In their investment recommendations for the Regional Housing Pot, Ministers also require regions to consider the broad tenure balance between rented and intermediate housing, the needs of rural areas, key workers, and the needs of gypsies and travellers.
- 1.53 Given the key housing issues in the South West, these national policies are helpful and links are made throughout the RHS to how regional actions will support these national policies.

SECTION 2

STRATEGIC AIM 1 - Improving the balance of housing markets

"To develop housing markets with a range of tenures, which improve the balance between supply and demand, and offer everyone the opportunity to access a home at a price they can afford."

Theme	Work group lead	Actions	Action lead	Timescale
Increasing housing delivery	SWRA	Action 1 - New - Promote sub-regional housing market partnerships and establish a pilot programme of 3 jointly funded market assessments.	GOSW	Short
		Action 2 . New - Engage in dialogue with key local authorities to explore barriers to housing supply and ways forward, linking to development of proposals in "The Way Ahead".	SWRA/GOSW/ SWRDA	Short
		Action 3 - New - Hold a series of events to promote S106 good practice and support a pro-active approach to planning and funding for affordable housing development using the full set of tools available within the new planning system and LAAs, e.g. events to disseminate PPG3 reforms, training events, contributions to local and sub-regional affordable housing events/conferences.	HC/GOSW	Short - medium
		Action 4 - New – Investigate new models of affordable housing provision with RSLs, co-operatives, local authorities, and specialist private developers as appropriate.	SWRDA/EP/HC	Short
		Action 5 . Ongoing - Support skills and capacity development projects for the construction and design sector, linking with creating:excellence centre and other partners.	SWRDA	Medium
		Action 6 . Ongoing - Use allocations from RHP to support: increased social rented homes, strategic cities and towns and regeneration areas, small rural settlements, homelessness and BME lettings, key public sector workers, supported housing and additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches.	HC	Short
Reducing Homeless and use of TA	HC	Action 7 . New - Investigate reasons behind differences in RSL and Local authority lettings policy and practice for homeless households, with a view to sharing good practice and encouraging a more consistent performance.	HC	Short
		Action 8 . New. Consider the value of sub-regional CBL systems, and whether regional co-ordination is required.	GOSW	Short
Access and more efficient use of the housing stock	GOSW	Action 9 . New – Research the role of the private rental sector in SW in relation to provision of affordable housing, the role it plays in sub-regional housing markets, and the impact of 2 nd homes/holiday homes.	GOSW	Medium
		Action 10 . Ongoing – Promote through events and good practice examples, awareness of Government policy on empty homes, the private rental sector, RTB reforms, and Housing Benefit reforms.	GOSW	Short - Medium

Introduction

- 2.1 This strategic aim suggests policies and actions to begin to address the long-term imbalance across the South West of housing demand and supply, **across all tenures**. Improving this balance, is clearly a long-term process and is greatly affected by market conditions which affect the rate of new build and supply, and social change e.g. in the rise of single person households, and demographic change.
- 2.2 The RHS looks at this housing challenge positively – seeking to harness the benefits of population growth in the region for sustainable economic and social gain. This is the first aim of “just CONNECT!” the Integrated Regional Strategy for the South West, and links to the proposals for targeted growth in the “The Way Ahead”.
- 2.3 The following **outcome targets** for Aim 1 are proposed:

- Achieve housing delivery levels in RPG10/RSS in all areas of the region by 2007 and eradicate existing backlogs by 2011.
- Reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation in the region by 50% by 2010.
- Achieve a clear downward trend in affordability ratios (measured by lower quartile house prices to average earnings) from current levels by 2016.⁵

- 2.4 The RHS supports the delivery of housing across all tenures, for ownership, shared ownership or rent. For example, the recent growth of the **intermediate market** has been fulfilling an important role for those on low to moderate incomes unable to access open market housing. If some barriers to the use of the **private rental sector** can be overcome, e.g. through accreditation or licensing schemes, this sector can provide accommodation for those on waiting lists and be part of a positive model of advice and support for the prevention of homelessness.
- 2.5 The actions proposed under this Strategic Aim are based around the following three themes:
- I. Increasing housing delivery, including exploring new models of affordable housing delivery.
 - II. Reducing homelessness and use of Temporary Accommodation
 - III. Improving access and making more efficient use of existing housing stock.

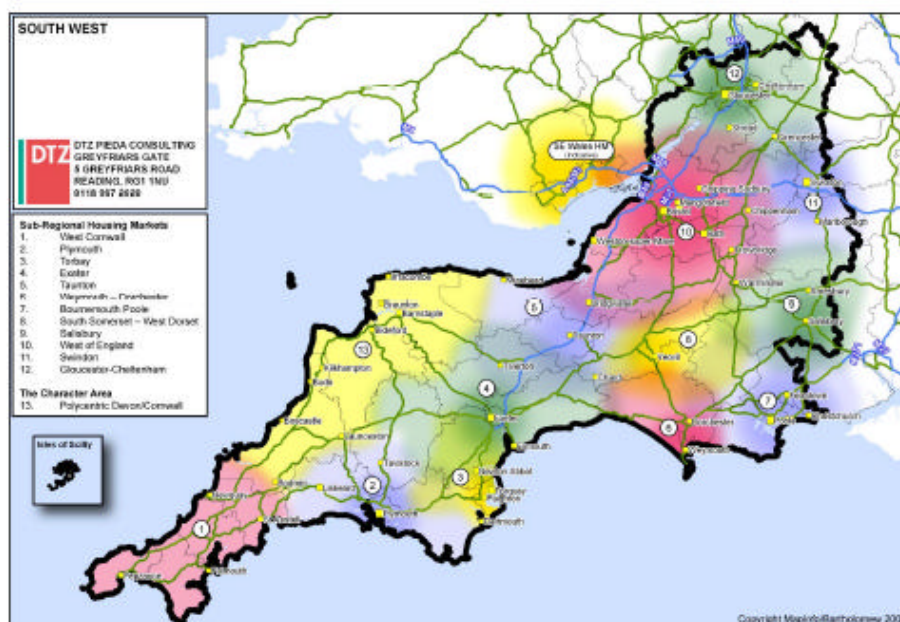
⁵ This outcome target will be subject to revision in the light of the Government’s advice on national and regional affordability targets, expected in November 2005.

I INCREASING HOUSING DELIVERY

A. Understanding housing markets and needs: taking a sub-regional approach.

- 2.6 Because the region is very large and diverse, and averaging across the region masks stark contrasts in housing performance and experience, the SWHB has taken a **sub-regional approach** to understanding its housing markets.
- 2.7 The SWHB has already sponsored research into mapping the sub-regional housing markets of the South West, which found 14 housing market areas in the region – ranging from the largest area based around the urban areas of the West of England, to very local, fragmented markets in rural areas of north Devon and north Cornwall. This is available at www.southwesthousingbody.org.uk.

Chart 1 – Sub-regional housing markets areas in the South West



- 2.8. As a first step to helping partners work together to analyse the market trends and needs of households and communities within each sub-region, the SWHB has also funded a series of sub-regional housing market profiles, which describe broad demand, supply and affordability conditions in each housing market area. These are also available at www.southwesthousingbody.org.uk
- 2.9. To continue to take this work forward, SWHB will incorporate lessons learned from existing work on housing needs and markets within the region, e.g. in Somerset, Gloucestershire, the West of England, and establish a pilot programme of 3 jointly funded housing market assessments during 2005.

Action 1 - New - Promote sub-regional housing market partnerships and establish a pilot programme of 3 jointly funded market assessments.	GOSW	Short
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- 2.10 These jointly funded assessments will deliver benefits for local partners, for example to strengthen the evidence base for their LDF policies, to better understand economic and demographic drivers of demand and will also add extra value to the region's level of understanding of key housing issues which will be of benefit to other parts of the region.
- 2.11 Areas that are not in the first wave of pilot studies should not however wait for the results of these pilots if that would disadvantage them in the cycle of LDF preparation or other policy development. Partners should follow ODPM guidance expected later this year to accompany "PPG3 – planning for mixed communities" (ODPM 2005e), on how to undertake housing assessments.
- 2.12 Partnerships undertaking a housing assessment should include representatives of the private sector, and use a wide range of data sources to build a picture of their housing demand and need across all tenures. It is likely that reliance on bespoke housing needs surveys will be reduced in this new guidance, although survey information is clearly of use to many relevant questions of housing need and demand, such as household aspirations, willingness to make compromises to achieve their tenure of choice etc.
- 2.13 The SWHB will disseminate learning from the first phase of pilot housing assessments but will not expect identical studies to be undertaken in all parts of the region. However, where it is useful, SWHB will expect common definitions and indicators to be used (e.g. affordability ratios, definitions and measures of need) so as to be easily comparable at a regional level. In addition, methods used to complete housing assessments should be in-line with national guidance. It will hold regular seminars on progress being made on housing market assessments and share lessons being learned.

Rural housing markets

- 2.14 Housing assessments will cover all areas of the south west, and will inevitably explore the issues within and between market areas regarding rural housing needs, demand and supply constraints.
- 2.15 At a very local level, SWHB recognises that **rural enablers** are conducting valuable parish level surveys of need to support individual planning applications for affordable housing, often on exception sites. This community based work, and additional work with landowners, developers, RSLs and local authorities is helping to achieve the delivery of affordable homes in these areas.
- 2.16 GOSW has indicated that funding for rural enablers will be maintained for 2005-06 when responsibility for the Rural Community Councils

passes to it. GOSW will then work closely with the Countryside Agency and other stakeholders to consider how the role of rural enablers can be developed in the future. This may potentially include a greater strategic input to planning and housing delivery, at district or sub-regional level.

Demand for home ownership

- 2.17 The Government is supporting increases in home ownership, as a new plank of its Sustainable Communities policy, published in **Homes for All** (2005) – the First Time Buyer initiative and new ways for social tenants, public sector key workers, those on the waiting list and other regional priority groups to purchase equity stakes in their existing, or other homes.
- 2.18 English Partnerships are the lead agency for delivering the First Time Buyer initiative, which will build on, in the first instance, surplus public sector land, reducing the cost to the purchaser of the resulting home. Some 1,000 of these homes will be expected to be constructed for £60k as part of a competition among developers.
- 2.19 There is currently a consultation on the different types of shared ownership scheme (Homebuy options) that will be run, with all proceeds from equity sales being retained by the Local Authority or RSL for re-investment in new affordable housing provision.
- 2.20 Home ownership levels are already above national average at 74% (compared to 71% nationally) in the South West, with a larger than average private rental sector, and lower than average social rental sector.
- 2.21 While some forms of home ownership, such as second homes, and the continued use of Right to Buy can add to, in some cases, severe supply constraints within housing market areas, this implies that more innovative solutions to local housing needs are required. For example, exploring the role of the intermediate market or private rental sector can play, as well as enabling greater delivery through the planning system of new housing provision.
- 2.22 The SWHB therefore supports the role that home ownership and intermediate affordable housing can play in the creation of mixed and balanced communities in the South West. This offers people opportunity and choice – to own their home, to meet their aspirations and to build up assets. Coupled with provision of social rented housing for other forms of housing need, this approach will help create desirable and balanced communities to live and work in.

B. Tackling housing supply issues

- 2.23 In terms of housing delivery, the South West Regional Assembly has identified an approximate 1,400 total shortfall in the region's provision of additional housing against planned totals of 20,200 p.a. from 1996.

This is a shortfall of around 1% in the first 7 years of the RSS, down from around 3%. (SWRA 2005). As discussed in paragraph 1.32 these figures refer to total net additions to stock, not additions from new build alone.

- 2.24 Within the overall regional picture there remain counties of the South West that have not been meeting the requirements of RPG10/RSS since 1996, while some have exceeded target levels. Much of the shortfall is in the provision of affordable housing.
- 2.25 The reasons for this are complex, and require further exploration. For example delivery can be adversely affected by extant Structure Plans and Local Plans containing levels of housing development which pre-date RPG10/RSS coupled with a lack of capacity within the planning system to update these plans quickly. The nature of negotiations with infrastructure providers and developers can be complex and expensive, adding delays to delivery. Legal and environmental issues also require detailed assessment, and thorough public consultation also adds to the time taken to progress planning applications.
- 2.26 In line with Policy HO1 in RPG10/RSS, the SWHB will therefore expect county areas, and the authorities within them that have consistently under delivered against these spatial priorities to improve their performance. Backlogs in supply in these areas, and elsewhere across the region, need to be addressed at the same time as raising future annual supply to required levels. Housing assessments will be an important tool in determining how this level of supply can best be delivered, in terms of type and tenure, in order to meet localised need and demand.
- 2.27 It should be stressed that the design and environmental quality of additional housing is crucial to promoting genuine sustainable development and long-term benefits. These aspects are discussed in the next section under Strategic Aim 2 of the RHS, and the SWHB's approach to creating sustainable communities under Strategic Aim 3.

Delivery proposals in the region's key urban and regeneration areas

- 2.28 In addition to tackling overall housing delivery issues, the proposals to Government contained in "**The Way Ahead**" (SWRDA, 2005) focus on addressing the particular problems of unlocking the potential of key, strategic places in the region (the West of England, Swindon, Plymouth, Exeter and the central Cornish towns). If these places and associated major sites can be successfully and sustainably developed, they have the greatest potential to increase the economic performance of the region and address inequalities of income and deprivation.
- 2.29 The proposals are focussed on the need to improve infrastructure and housing delivery capacity by:

- ❖ Establishing a revolving **Regional Infrastructure Fund**. This would pay for infrastructure up-front and collect developer contributions through legal agreements when profits begin to flow.
 - ❖ Developing **Regional and Local Delivery Mechanisms** with dedicated support. These new arrangements will provide a key forum for co-ordinating and prioritising public investment in strategic physical and social infrastructure in the region. The progress of local Delivery Teams will be monitored to ensure good practice is being shared and built on.
- 2.30 SW RDA, GOSW, SW Regional Assembly and other key partners will work to develop the ideas contained in the document over the coming months, and in the run up to Spending Review 2006. To help in this, an advisory group has been established, and there will be a major regional event in early 2006 to ensure the full engagement of stakeholders.
- 2.31 The SWHB will therefore support the SWRA, and other regional partners to explore with these key authorities how to overcome delays and barriers to housing delivery linking closely to emerging policy in the RSS and The Way Ahead proposals.

Action 2. New - Engage in dialogue with key local authorities to explore barriers to housing supply and ways forward, linking to development of proposals in "The Way Ahead".	SWRA/GOSW/SW RDA	Short
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Enhancing the effectiveness of the planning system to deliver affordable housing:

- 2.32 National guidance promotes the sustainable use of land in Planning Policy Guidance note 1 (General policies and principles), and elsewhere. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has brought in a new system of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs).
- 2.33 Guidance on what is expected from RSSs and LDFs has been published in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 11 (Regional Spatial Strategies) and PPS12 (Local Development Frameworks). Two updates to Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3 (Housing) were published in late January 2005: Supporting the Delivery of New Housing (ODPM 2005f) and Planning for Sustainable Communities in Rural Areas (ODPM 2005g).
- 2.34 Consultation on further changes to PPG3 continues with "Planning for Mixed Communities" (ODPM 2005e) which provides updated guidance for local authorities on how they should plan for delivering housing, including sufficient affordable housing in their areas. Further aspects of PP3 will be consulted on later in 2005, as part of the Government's response to the Barker Report, and overall planning reforms.

- 2.35 The SWHB welcomes these reforms to the planning system, and will encourage Local Authorities to take a pro-active approach to planning for housing development using the full set of tools available within the new planning system, such as Area Action Plans⁶.
- 2.36 For example, site threshold levels, below which affordable housing contributions are not sought from developers through S106 agreements are a common issue for planning authorities, as is the percentage of affordable housing required.
- 2.37 These decisions are for the Local Planning Authority to determine, balancing evidence of local need for affordable housing and what is realistic in their local marketplace. But to help with the **process** of S106 negotiations, the SWHB commissioned during 2004 the collation of good practice principles in the use of Section 106 Agreements (this can be viewed at www.southwesthousingbody.org.uk).
- 2.38 Focus groups were held with practitioners from the private and public sectors, which resulted in a good practice report and recommendations to the SWHB. The SWHB have accepted the majority of these recommendations and will be promoting good practice in the use of the S106 through a series of regional events, and will also respond to changes in national policies and guidance.
- 2.39 Local Area Agreements may also prove a useful tool to develop common affordable housing policies across districts and share expertise in delivery. Authorities should also use their increased resources from charging 90% Council Tax on second homes to fund additional affordable housing rather than other services, as intended by Government when this power was introduced.
- 2.40 There is an important monitoring role for the SWHB to help ensure that both total and affordable housing targets are being met against an agreed spatial plan, and that good practice in the use of S106 Agreements is being applied.

<p>Action 3 - New - Hold a series of events to promote S106 good practice and support a pro-active approach to planning and funding for affordable housing development using the full set of tools available within the new planning system and LAAs, e.g. events to disseminate PPG3 reforms, training events, contributions to local and sub-regional affordable housing events/conferences.</p>	<p>HC/GOSW</p>	<p>Short</p>
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⁶ All Local authority LDFs must be in place by 2007, and the planning system will ensure that the full environmental impact of developments is considered, e.g. flood plain risks, and whether the overall impact on infrastructure, the landscape and habitats is in line with the economic and social benefits from the development.

C. Exploring new models of affordable housing delivery

- 2.41 The SWHB is keen to see, as part of its strategy to improve the balance of housing markets in the region, innovative methods to deliver affordable housing being introduced.
- 2.42 There is a strong case for differing models of intermediate housing provision to be explored, which potentially reduce or eliminate the need for grant support. This is particularly the case if land is made available by public sector organisations at zero or heavily discounted costs, or held through a co-operative or community land trust model.
- 2.43 The SWHB will support work to investigate the potential for different types of affordable housing model to be delivered in the south west, involving financial institutions, co-operatives, RSLs, and specialist private developers as appropriate. This may also include how the models of affordable housing interact with the planning system.

Action 4 - New – Investigate new models of affordable housing provision with RSLs, co-operatives, local authorities, and specialist private developers as appropriate.	SWRDA/EP/HC	Short
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D. Housing policies for the new RSS

- 2.44 The SWHB will expect the new RSS to allocate sufficient housing growth to support the RHS’s main objectives of improving the balance of housing markets and reducing homelessness and use of Temporary Accommodation.
- 2.45 Household projections for the region, coupled with current indicators of unmet housing demand and need such as very severe affordability ratios, increasing housing waiting lists, and use of Temporary Accommodation, are such that overall housing provision is likely to increase rather than decrease in the revised RSS to 2026, with a proportion of this requirement being for affordable housing.
- 2.46 This overall level and spatial distribution of housing development across the region is being taken forward by the Regional Assembly, and is being informed by a wide range of research, technical work by Joint Study areas, and stakeholder engagement.
- 2.47 Current thinking is that the Regional Assembly will continue to promote sustainable development and efficient land use, by focusing a higher proportion of expected growth in the region’s strategically significant cities and towns, where there is generally a wider range of employment opportunities, easier access to services and better transport links.
- 2.48 At the same time, within a context of high demand and in-migration to the South West, the RSS will recognise the continued need for growth

in the more sustainable and strategically important settlements (or groups of settlements) within rural areas of the region.

- 2.49 The Regional Assembly is currently assessing the role and function that different types and size of settlement in the region play, particularly among the range of rural settlements that exist in the region. These range from larger market and coastal towns, to much smaller villages (measured by population size) which may also nevertheless play an important strategic role in providing employment and services if they are within a more remote and isolated part of the region.
- 2.50 The SWHB is providing an input to the RSS process which argues strongly for planning for sustainable housing growth in all parts of the region, which is accompanied by employment and infrastructure and a greater emphasis on how to plan for an appropriate balance between market and affordable housing needs. This directly addresses the third aim of the IRS – to ensure housing development and the needs of the economy are planned together.

E. Improving skills and productivity levels in the construction and design sector.

- 2.51 In parallel, the SWHB has a role in helping to improve local capacity and skill levels in the construction and design industry. This need is also highlighted in "The Way Ahead" proposals.
- 2.52 The SWHB will therefore support actions to develop local labour schemes which link people from deprived areas with skills and job opportunities and further develop the creating:excellence centre (working with the new national centre for regeneration skills). It will also work with Learning and Skills Councils, CITB, RTPI, CABE, Sector Skills councils and others to establish more training centres of excellence and Modern Methods of Construction.

Action 5. Ongoing - Support skills and capacity development projects for the construction and design sector, linking with creating:excellence centre and other partners.	SWRDA	Medium
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F. Using the Regional Housing Pot

- 2.53 Over the term of this strategy resources allocated to the Regional Housing Pot (RHP) will vary dependent upon factors, often outside of the control of the Regional Bodies responsible for it. The Strategy is, therefore, flexible and sets out the 'direction of travel' for the use of resources generally and the RHP in particular.
- 2.54 The RHP figures for 2006-07 and 2009-08 have been set at £158.376m and £203.230m respectively. This is a significant increase on 2005/06 levels of 48%.
- 2.55 The element of the Regional Housing Pot allocated to local authorities will continue at the current level of £40m per year with the Affordable Homes Programme⁷ (AHP) resources increasing to £118m in 06/07 and £163m in 07/08. Allowing for existing commitments this will support a new programme of around £310m over the period 2006-2008 (compared to £188m for 2004 to 2006). This is expected to deliver at least 8000 new homes but would increase significantly if the same level of additional resources from local authorities were combined with AHP funds as they were for the 2004-2006 programmes. This might potentially deliver 8,500 - 9000 homes over the two year period. These figures do not include any additional provision delivered under the New Partnerships pilot programme to be allocated to in 2005-06.
- 2.56 It is proposed that this programme will be used to support the following objectives. A particular focus is on new provision to address **homelessness** within the context of a mixed and balanced community.

Tenure split:

- 2.57 Given the significant need for rented accommodation it is proposed that the majority of resources will be directed to providing new social rented housing.
- 2.58 Affordable housing includes intermediate types of housing that are aimed at providing low-cost home ownership solutions to those earning low to moderate incomes, as well as social rented housing tenure. The level of programme directed to low cost home ownership and other intermediate market provision will not increase significantly on current levels (£46m). However it is anticipated that in addition, some £4m will need to be set aside for the purposes of supporting the Social Homebuy requirements of the region over the two years of the programme.

⁷ The Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme (ADP) is now called the National Affordable Homes Programme (AHP)

- 2.59 As mentioned above, innovative financial or planning solutions for delivering intermediate housing without public subsidy can help deliver additional affordable homes. These will be encouraged, as appropriate to help develop mixed communities.

Distribution between settlement types:

- 2.60 Within the Housing Corporation's AHP increased emphasis will be given to ensuring that subsidy is directed to supporting major urban, growth and regeneration developments in the region. A range of factors will influence exactly where and how these resources are distributed:
- The links between development proposals/areas for investment and the priorities for housing growth identified in the current and future Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Economic Strategy and "The Way Ahead".
 - The role of housing proposals in delivering effective regeneration and neighbourhood renewal projects, such as those linked to Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, New Deal for Communities, Urban Regeneration Company or Market and Coastal Town Initiative linked developments;
 - Opportunities to work with other public agencies such as English Partnerships and the SW RDA;
 - The one-off opportunity presented by such major sites to make a significant contribution to meeting the housing needs of the region through sustainable development; and
 - A clear case for additional subsidy under Section 106 negotiations to ensure that balanced, mixed and high quality development delivers a sustainable community.
- 2.61 In the short term (2006-8) a minimum of 60% of the new programme will be directed to support schemes in the region's Principal Urban Areas (PUAs). From 2008/9 onwards the possible scale and timing of these projects is such that their draw on the AHP may need to rise.
- 2.62 At the other end of the scale of settlement size, the RHS retains the allocation of Housing Corporation resources to small rural settlements (population of 3,000 or less) at current levels, delivering a minimum of 764 homes over the period of the 06/08 AHP.
- 2.63 Each scheme will be tested against sustainability indicators, and will need to be an evidence-based response to the affordability constraints present in these villages. It is likely that this programme will account for about 11% of the AHP in the South West.
- 2.64 The balance of the Housing Corporation's AHP, some 30%, will be directed to intermediate settlements – ranging from large county towns, through medium-sized market and coastal towns, to large villages.

- 2.65 The RHS deliberately allows for flexibility to invest in a range of these settlements, a flexibility which will relate to their function and their relationship to the wider sub-region in which they are located, rather than just to their current size; one emphasis will be on investment in the region's more sub-regionally significant settlements (as developed through the RSS) which have the ability to cope with wider housing needs. In respect of any settlement in which investment is proposed, evidence will be sought that they can demonstrate a balance of homes, jobs, services and facilities, or that growth is needed to make existing services viable.
- 2.66 As analysis becomes available from the review of the RSS on plans for the balance of spatial development in the region and further housing assessment work is completed, these regional funding priorities can be reviewed.

Supporting particular groups of people:

❖ Homeless people

- 2.67 The emphasis on providing additional social rented homes is intended by Government particularly to help the homeless. A higher proportion of the AHP programme will be expected to benefit homeless people until the current levels of homelessness and use of temporary accommodation is reduced to as low a level as possible. This will directly help to deliver the outcome target of reducing the use of TA by 50% by 2010.

❖ Key workers

- 2.68 After considering the evidence from the current Key Worker Challenge Fund, which did not produce any schemes that could not be funded under the main AHP programme, and little employer contribution, the SWHB has decided that it will **not** run a separate scheme for Key Workers in 2006-08.
- 2.69 Instead, AHP resources will be allocated to assist key public sector workers (using the South West Key Worker definition which includes any public sector employee delivering an essential public service), **provided** that clear and specific evidence is produced from employers in that market area that they are experiencing real recruitment and retention difficulties.
- 2.70 Employers must provide active support to supplement the cost of such provision. Evidence for this will be required in bids from RSLs to support Key Workers.

❖ First time buyers

- 2.71 Intermediate housing solutions are particularly suitable for first-time buyers seeking to gain access to the private housing market. This can be a key component of sustainable communities. ODPM have launched a model for first time buyers using public sector land (with the public sector retaining the freehold), and challenging developers to construct

homes for £60,000. English Partnerships will be developing this and other initiatives, with input from SWHB.

❖ Supported housing

2.72 The region continues to have a significant demand for supported housing across a range of client groups. The SWHB will continue to provide AHP capital funding for supported housing where identified as priorities by Administering Authorities for Supporting People in their strategies and where provision is capable of easy adaptation to general needs housing.

❖ BME community

2.73 A regional average of 6% of new lettings arising from the AHP programme must be to the BME population to continue to overcome their disproportionate needs. Local Authorities and providers need to ensure that appropriate lettings are made available for locally identified BME need.

❖ Gypsies and travellers

2.74 The Housing Act 2004 requires Local authorities to assess the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers alongside other forms of housing need. The draft revision to Planning Circular 1/94 Planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites (ODPM, 2004c) requires local authorities to make appropriate provision for gypsy and traveller needs in their Development Plan Documents.

2.75 The Regional Housing Pot now incorporates an element of funding for the provision and refurbishment of Gypsy and traveller sites. As evidence of evidence of local need for additional Gypsy and traveller accommodation becomes available, the SWHB will flex the Regional Housing Pot to provide capital for the provision of additional transit, or settled pitches. This resource will need to vary in future years, as more robust evidence of need and plan-led solutions are developed.

Environmental standards and use of brownfield land:

2.76 The quality of all subsidised developments will be governed by "Designing our Environment" principles (creating: excellence, 2004) and will meet at least 'very good' eco-homes standards from 2006-07 – see Section 3 for more details.

2.77 At least 50% of all new subsidised additions to the regions stock of affordable housing will be delivered on previously developed land, or through conversion of non-residential buildings.

Delivery and efficiency savings

2.78 The number of affordable homes that can be provided is highly dependent on the overall number of sites identified for housing; schemes with planning permission (in order to gain homes through

S106 agreements); and the levels of subsidy received from the Government and the efficiency with which the subsidy is used.

- 2.79 Although public funding has inevitably been limited, the Housing Corporation in the South West, with the help of local authority and RSL partners has an excellent track record in obtaining value for money from the AHP programme.
- 2.80 However, more needs to be done and the Housing Corporation will be seeking to increase the delivery of homes through further efficiency savings. Further development of innovative solutions through the private sector, which may include intermediate tenure homes, can also play a part in increasing the provision of affordable homes.

Action 6. Ongoing - Use allocations from RHP to support: increased social rented homes, strategic cities and towns and regeneration areas, small rural settlements, homelessness and BME lettings, key public sector workers, supported housing and additional Gypsy and traveller pitches.	HC	Short
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Finding additional resources for investment in new affordable housing

- 2.81 In addition to direct capital grant, there is a range of other resources that are sometimes available to contribute to affordable housing delivery. These funds will not be available in all local authorities, but serious consideration should for example, be given to identifying surplus public sector land, and developing common policies across authority areas to use this land to provide additional affordable housing.
- 2.82 It is quite legitimate for example, for authorities to commit to selling land they own at less than market value if this is in line with their strategic priorities for affordable housing.
- 2.83 Sources of additional resources, with can be cash or in-kind include:
- RTB receipts (25% of which are retained by the Local Authority)
 - LSVT receipts (a 20% levy is chargeable on eligible receipts)
 - S106 developer contributions
 - Using surplus public sector land or other assets to facilitate schemes containing a significant mix of affordable housing.
 - PFI schemes for non HRA fund projects. For example, West Wiltshire are taking forward a PFI scheme to deliver 500 affordable homes.
 - Additional Council Tax receipts from second homes and empty homes, if local authorities have exercised the appropriate powers.
 - Prudential borrowing
 - RSL reserves and capital borrowing.
 - County Council land or resources
 - Health Authority land or resources

- English Partnerships and Regional Development Agency land or resources
- 2.84 Developer contributions through S106 agreements already are an integral part of affordable housing provision in the region. These have an increasingly important role to play, particularly in the creation of balanced and mixed communities, although there is still insufficient understanding and consensus about the complexities and sensitivities of this mechanism, which is assisted by a strong housing market.
- 2.85 One of the important complexities is whether S106 benefits and direct public subsidy (e.g. Social Housing Grant) can contribute to the same project. There can be no presumption of the availability of SHG and many S106 arrangements will be expected to operate successfully without it. All parties are encouraged by the SWHB to fully investigate alternative solutions and implement innovative arrangements. However where it can be shown, in early discussion about a project, that SHG is necessary to achieve some important 'additionalities', then its availability will be considered.
- 2.86 The SWHB will encourage all partners to play their part in maximising the availability of non-AHP grant resources for investment in additional affordable housing provision.

II Reducing Homelessness and use of Temporary Accommodation

- 2.87 The Government's new Homelessness Strategy (ODPM 2005d) provides useful new policies and guidance on models of prevention that can be delivered in the South West.
- 2.88 A new **outcome target of reducing use of TA by 50% by 2010** is relevant to the South West and is adopted in this RHS. One aspect of SWHB's approach to this is to investigate the reasons behind differences in lettings to homeless households among RSLs and Local Authorities, and share models of good practice.
- 2.89 The introduction of **Choice Based Lettings** (CBL) while potentially very beneficial in terms of management of stock⁸ and the promotion of sustainable communities, also needs careful monitoring to ensure that the needs of homeless people, or other groups such as older people or the BME community are not disadvantaged.
- 2.90 The SWHB will therefore work with stakeholders to explore the issues of access to affordable housing, need and choice, and support the introduction of CBL across the region by 2010. The SWHB will also explore the value to stakeholders in establishing sub-regional systems.

⁸ In addition to CBL systems, moveUK, launched in "Homes for All" will bring together jobs and housing information in one place to help improve choice and mobility among social tenants.

Action 7. New - Investigate reasons behind differences in RSL and Local authority lettings policy and practice for homeless households, with a view to sharing good practice and encouraging a more consistent performance.	HC	Short
Action 8. New. Consider the value of sub-regional CBL systems, and whether regional co-ordination is required.	GOSW	Short

2.91 In addition, the RHS proposes actions to:

- i. Increase investment in social rented accommodation through the AHP programme 2006-08. (See Action 6 above.)
- ii. Investigate the role of the private rental sector in providing accommodation options for homeless households, linking to work at ODPM on legislative changes to discharging the homelessness duty through the private sector. There are also potential issues to explore the reasons for the loss of tenancy agreements often being cited as a cause of homelessness applications. (See Action 8 below).
- iii. Support local authorities to provide high quality homelessness prevention services through the spread of best practice, and use of ODPM's Innovation Partnership Fund. (See Action 26 in Section 4).
- iv. Make appropriate, cross-authority links between Supporting People services, such as floating support, and homelessness strategies, particularly at a sub-regional level. A risk assessment to achieving this should be undertaken due to potential cuts in SP funding in the region. (See action 7 in Section 4).
- v. Invest in the quality of private sector stock that is occupied by vulnerable households, including homeless households, which is often poorest in the private rental sector.

2.92 The proposed work group on this theme will be led by HC, and will seek partners' views on these proposed actions, and further consideration will be given to milestones, monitoring requirements and additional regional actions that will add value.

III. ACCESS AND MORE EFFICIENT USE OF THE CURRENT STOCK

2.93 To help balance housing markets, it will also be important to manage the existing housing stock effectively. This will involve reducing the incidence of long-term empty properties; having efficient social lettings policies that help tackle homelessness and other priority needs; and encouraging the development of a good quality, well managed, private rented sector.

Developing the role of the private rental sector

2.94 Government recognised the value of the private rental sector in its policy statement – Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All (ODPM, 2000). The private rental sector can enhance the flexibility of housing markets and provide a valuable alternative source of accommodation for those in housing need who are unable to access social housing or

owner-occupation. The use of rent deposit schemes can have success in enabling access to the private rented sector. The sector can also be the tenure of choice for many households seeking increased flexibility.

- 2.95 Competition for use of the private rental sector can be intense in some areas of the region, for example, from large and expanding student populations in Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, and Swindon. The inter-relationship with holiday lets is also an issue in many areas of the region.
- 2.96 However, relatively little is known about the overall role and quality of the private rental sector in the South West on a consistent basis, and the SWHB propose to research this sector and the role it can play in delivering the RHS. Particular niche markets may exist which force some households in to poorer quality housing and which reduce the overall flexibility of the sector. Housing assessments should also pick up sub-regional aspects of the characteristics of the private sector housing market.

Action 9. New – Research the role of the private rental sector in SW in relation to provision of affordable housing, the role it plays in sub-regional housing markets, and the impact of 2 nd homes/holiday homes.	GOSW	Medium
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- 2.97 The overall quality of private rented accommodation, which is often used as Temporary Accommodation, also needs to be improved (see Aim 2). Local authorities should be supported to implement new powers in the Housing Act 2004 which requires the **compulsory licencing of HMOs** (Houses in Multiple Occupation), and encourage use of **selective licencing** as required, participation in private leasing schemes, accreditation schemes, helping tenants to influence the quality of their housing and taking enforcement action against poor landlords.
- 2.98 The SWHB can help local authorities achieve this by supporting regional landlords fora and encouraging the spread of good practice between authorities – **see Action 10** below.

Lettings policies

- 2.99 Lettings policies within general needs housing need to encourage choice and should help achieve mixed and balanced communities. There is a wide variation between RSLs and local authorities in their rate of lettings to homeless people, or BME tenants for example.
- 2.100 In addition to Action 7 regarding lettings practices to homeless households, the **Supporting People** report (Pathways Research, 2004) for the SWHB suggests that local authorities should retain at least 5% of general needs housing as move-on accommodation for those wishing to move towards a more independent lifestyle, perhaps supplemented with floating support.

- 2.101 Initial investigation by HC indicates that 8% of RSL general needs lettings are already to SP client groups. The SWHB will therefore work with Local Authorities and RSLs to understand the longer-term accommodation and support needs of vulnerable groups, using this initial analysis as a starting point for discussion. For example, this may support a shift from social services funded residential care to frail elderly schemes with additional floating or on-site support.
- 2.102 The work group exploring this issue will be commissioned with developing an appropriate target for lettings from general needs housing for SP clients.

Empty properties and under-occupancy

- 2.103 Long-term empty property rates in the South West are among the lowest of the English regions– only around 1.4% of the stock is empty for more than 6 months, and the region recorded the largest drop in empty properties in 2004 (ODPM, 2004d). There are however, variations in performance across the region, with more long-term empty properties in rural areas such as Torridge, North Devon, and North Dorset.
- 2.104 The SWHB will support the use by local authorities of new powers in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to use **Temporary Management Orders** to bring empty properties back into use, e.g. for additional affordable housing for priority groups such as the homeless.
- 2.105 Local authorities are also encouraged to consider offering incentives to reduce under-occupancy, which is a particular problem in rural areas, in both owner-occupied and rented accommodation. For example, local authorities can use the **cash incentive scheme** to help an existing tenant move out of their home and into home-ownership, freeing-up a valuable social rented unit.
- 2.106 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 also provides local authorities with powers to make effective use of stock by assisting homeowners whose properties are clearly unsuitable for them to purchase a new, more suitable home. This power could be used to assist in cases where older householder are under-occupying large properties that would be costly to adapt or improve, as well as being costly to heat effectively, thereby freeing up a family home for social housing use.

Other changes in legislation impacting access and the use of the existing stock

- 2.107 The impact of **RTB** sales in rural and urban areas where these have not been followed by appropriate reinvestment has always been recognised by Government as potentially damaging given the overall

limitations in the size of the sector in these areas. Research by Shelter (2004) also highlights this issue.

- 2.108 Since 1980, 19 local authorities in the South West are designated as rural for the purposes of RTB where additional restrictions can be applied to RTB sales. In these areas, and in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, landlords can impose restrictions on the resale of ex-RTB homes, so that these can only be resold to local people.
- 2.109 The Housing Act 2004 has also extended the tenant qualification period from 2 to 5 years for new tenancies, and the period within which discounts have to be repaid if homes are resold from 3 to 5 years. It has also clamped down on tenants who buy homes due for demolition or resell to property companies that avoid the repayment of discount.
- 2.110 Local Authorities should use the opportunities in RTB legislation and guidance to retain social housing in areas of high owner occupation or where second homes are an issue in order to achieve balanced tenure proportions for maintaining sustainable communities.
- 2.111 In England as a whole, **Housing Benefit** plays a key role in enabling accommodation to be affordable. 62% of households in the social rented sector were in receipt of Housing Benefit in 2003-04, and 21% in the private rental sector. Teignbridge in Devon, is one of a series of Local Housing Allowance pilots nationally where the money is paid to the tenant rather than landlord, and is aimed at offering more choice of property and location to the tenant.
- 2.112 To support the implementation of these legislative changes, the SWHB will ensure partners are aware of new powers to protect social stock, and improve access to the housing stock.

<p>Action 10. Ongoing – Promote through events and good practice examples, awareness of Government policy on empty homes, the private rental sector, RTB reforms, and Housing Benefit reforms.</p>	<p>GOSW</p>	<p>Medium</p>
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SECTION 3

STRATEGIC AIM 2

Achieving good quality homes - "To ensure that existing and new homes improve over minimum standards of quality, management and design by 2016."

Summary actions:

Theme	Work group lead	Actions	Action lead	Timescale
Promoting Sustainable Development and Good Design	EP	Action 11. Ongoing - Follow the Urban Design Compendium and celebrate good design in rural areas.	HC/EP	Short - Medium
		Action 12. Ongoing - Support partners to establish Design Review and Advisory Panels and promote the use of Enquiry by Design and Design Codes	SWRDA/EP	Short - Medium
		Action 13. New – Research the role that Lifetime Homes can play in the South West and work to provide a higher proportion of them as a percentage of new build.	GOSW/HC	Medium
		Action 14 – Ongoing. Champion participation in Future Foundations, and the take-up of the forthcoming Code for Sustainable Buildings.	SWRDA/HC	Short - Medium
		Action 15. Ongoing - Continue to work with the private sector to drive improvements in the design, environmental standards and levels of customer satisfaction of new developments.	SWRA	Medium
		Action 16. New - Commission research on the take-up and operation of energy efficiency and health programmes and the links between them to ensure that fuel poor households receive the maximum possible benefits.	GOSW	Short
Meeting the Decent Homes target	GOSW	Action 17. New and Ongoing - Facilitate the exchange of good practice in private sector renewal activity and continue to encourage innovative use of Regulatory Reform Order powers.	GOSW	Short - Medium
		Action 18. Ongoing – Complete outstanding option appraisals in 2005 and deliver through the Regional Housing Pot the resources required by authorities choosing retention, ALMO or PFI to achieve social sector Decent Homes by 2010.	GOSW	Short – Medium
		Action 19. Ongoing - Monitor progress of Local Authorities, ALMOs and Housing Associations towards the Decent Homes standard and encourage improvement over the Decent Homes standard in the longer term.	HC/GOSW	Medium - Long
		Action 20. New. Support RSLs and Local Authority landlords to work closely with Neighbourhood Renewal and Management partners, and facilitate the sharing of good practice in neighbourhood management.	GOSW	Medium

INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 This Strategic Aim of the RHS seeks to improve the quality of social and private sector housing stock, with a particular emphasis on good design, energy efficiency, reducing fuel poverty and health inequalities.
- 3.2 The actions proposed under this Aim also explain how the region proposes to mitigate the impacts of more housing development on the environment and climate change. It also stresses that good quality design and location choice for housing development, alongside positive public engagement can bring environmental, social and economic benefits to the region – as part of a strategy to support **Sustainable Development** and the achievement of sustainable communities.
- 3.3 Quality of **buildings** and of **place** are considered equally important elements of a sustainable community in this RHS.
- 3.4 For existing housing stock, the Government has defined an absolute minimum standard to reach – the Decent Homes Standard. For new social sector developments, the Housing Corporation's Scheme Design Standards (SDS) specify the minimum acceptable standard of features, space and energy efficiency levels to be achieved in individual properties.
- 3.5 Minimum standards for new private sector developments are determined by Building Regulations. Together with the forthcoming Code for Sustainable Buildings, these requirements would easily meet the Government's Decent Homes standard for existing stock. In the longer term, the SWHB is keen to see standards improve over these minimum levels.
- 3.6 In terms of the design and quality of place – the Urban Design Compendium produced by Housing Corporation and English Partnerships in 2000, gives guidance to developers and funding bodies on achieving good design in urban regeneration areas.
- 3.7 "Designing our Environment: Towards a better built environment for the South West" (creating:excellence, 2004) collates the regional view of good design and suggests ways to improve the quality of development in the South West.
- 3.8 The actions proposed under this Aim are based around four objectives:
 - I. **Ensuring Sustainable Development and Good Design**
 - II. **Delivering environmental and health benefits**
 - III. **Meeting the Decent Homes Standard**
 - IV. **Improving management of social stock and neighbourhoods**

3.9 The following Outcome targets are proposed in this Strategic Aim

- 50% of new development will meet the requirements of the Code for Sustainable Buildings by 2016.
- Average SAP ratings of properties housing vulnerable households will be higher than 65 by 2010 and for all remaining stock by 2016.
- All social stock will meet the Decent Homes standard by 2010, and at least 70% of vulnerable households in the private sector in the region will live in homes that meet the Decent Homes standard.
- An upward trend in the proportion of Lifetime Homes being built in the region will be established by 2010.

I. Ensuring Sustainable Development and Good Design

A. Improving design standards.

- 3.10 At a national level, the Sustainable Communities Plan requires that housing providers achieve a 'step change' in the quality of neighbourhoods built in the future and asks that developers, in both the public and private sector, consider how to create places which meet the needs of people for work, services and leisure.
- 3.11 The Government's Planning Policy Guidance note 3 states that all new housing and residential environments should be 'well designed'. A companion guide to PPG3 called "Better Places to Live" (DETR, 2000) identifies attributes of successful housing in a number of case studies. Good design, streets and public spaces make a positive contribution to the safety of the people who live there and can often generate additional property values for the developer that compensates for higher construction costs. Design should take full account of the community expected to inhabit a place and the requirements of housing managers in successfully managing places to achieve sustainable communities.
- 3.12 At a regional level, the Integrated Regional Strategy aims to enhance our distinctive environment through the promotion of good design and sustainable construction. This applies equally in urban and rural areas where good design and infrastructure are fundamental to new schemes being accepted by the local community. Waste management is also crucial to build into new developments e.g. providing space to store and segregate recyclables and provide for kerb-side collection.
- 3.13 New public investment in major developments will be conditional on schemes adopting the principles of the **Urban Design Compendium**. In rural areas new developments should have high design standards. Exemplars in the region include a Rural Housing Trust development at

Hinton Charterhouse that won RIBA Best Housing in the Countryside Award.

- 3.14 The South West is already working together to improve design standards and quality in new developments, and will continue to support work to implement the ideas in "Designing our Environment". Mechanisms for assessing design quality such as "Enquiry by Design", and Design Review and Advisory panels will be particularly encouraged as these help build expertise and share good practice.
- 3.15 **Design Codes** have been recognised as a means by which a set of instructions can be agreed with local planning authorities which help developers to achieve the aims set out in Masterplan frameworks. These can vary in detail from more general urban design principles of massing, form and layout, to the hierarchy of streets and energy efficiency. They can also increase the speed and efficiency of delivery.
- 3.16 The Government has sponsored a national pilot programme of design code projects to demonstrate how well the process works in different circumstances. English Partnerships in the South West operate Design Codes on all their developments, including national pilots of Cirencester and Swindon.
- 3.17 Further work led by creating:excellence to encourage the involvement of the public in decisions and planning of new developments will also be supported. The SWHB will also support the messages from ODPM on the need for more homes, which go hand in hand with economic regeneration, integrated infrastructure and environmental improvements.

Action 11. Ongoing - Follow the Urban Design Compendium and celebrate good design in rural areas.	HC/EP	Short - Medium
Action 12. Ongoing - Support partners to establish Design Review and Advisory Panels and promote the use of Enquiry by Design and Design Codes	SWRDA/EP	Short - Medium

- 3.18 The SWHB also fully supports the principles of **Secured by Design** and **Lifetime Homes** in new social sector stock.
- 3.19 Research shows that Secured by Design (www.securedbydesign.com) can reduce burglary and car crime by 50%, maintenance costs by up to 70%, and criminal damage by 25%. A series of design guides is available to housing providers on the principles and standards of Secured by Design, and expert advice is available from local Police Architectural Liaison officers.
- 3.20 The design requirements of Lifetime Homes make them sustainable and reduce the need for costly retro-fitted adaptations and/or the need to move to different accommodation as the householder ages and lifestyles change, for example following illness, disablement or the birth of children. Lifetime Homes standards go slightly further than the new

building regulations (Section M) and Housing Corporation’s SDS and differentiates the quality of the stock from other developments.

- 3.21 These higher standards can make developments attractive to a wider range of people, relative to the existing stock of houses, and demand for this type of property will increase as the benefits of Lifetime Homes are more widely recognised by the population as a whole.
- 3.22 Increasing the proportion of Lifetime Homes built may be thought to be prohibitively expensive and that more Lifetime Homes would cost in terms of total numbers of houses delivered. However research in Northern Ireland has shown that building a new Lifetime Home costs on average only £165 to £545 more than building to non-Lifetime Home standards.
- 3.23 The SWHB propose to investigate the baseline provision of Lifetime Homes in the region, and the scope for increasing the proportion of them in new stock, with a view to particularly addressing the housing needs of an ageing population.

<p>Action 13. New – Research the role that Lifetime Homes can play in the South West and work to provide a higher proportion of them as a percentage of new build.</p>	<p>GOSW/HC</p>	<p>Medium</p>
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B. Championing sustainable development

- 3.24 To promote sustainable development, some SWHB partners, including SWRDA, SW Regional Assembly and GOSW, are already members of the **Future Foundations** (www.futurefoundations.co.uk) charter. This regional initiative reinforces the need to have regard to the region’s particular sense of place – its landscape, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. It promotes the use of local materials, labour and the use of materials capable of being recycled and re-used. It also advises on how to improve energy, waste, water, sound efficiency, and to “future proof” sites and developments against the challenges of climate change.
- 3.25 Many public sector agencies and housing associations are already members of Sustainable Construction bodies such as Cornwall Sustainable Building Trust, and the Housing Corporation help fund “**sustainable homes**” (www.sustainablehomes.co.uk) – an initiative which helps housing associations minimise any negative effects of their developments on the environment.
- 3.26 As mentioned above, new sustainable developments should also involve people and communities in their planning and design. Future Foundations again provides guidance on **community involvement**, which should help to increase the proportion of people who feel able to welcome new development rather than oppose it.

- 3.27 The public sector is also promoting the use of **renewable energy** on new developments, with help from Government programmes such as Clear Skies which provides grants to support renewable technology installation. For example, Westlea Housing Association and Penwith Housing Association have installed technology using solar power and ground source heat pumps respectively using this funding.
- 3.28 The region will also need to consider whether to adopt a target for on-site renewable energy generation on all new developments, following work undertaken for regenSW as part of the review of RSS.
- 3.29 Energy efficiency and design standards in new social housing have been continually improving so that all but £5.2m of eligible schemes allocated to for 2005-06 meet or exceed the 'good' EcoHomes rating. In future new social sector homes will have to meet the requirements of the 'very good' EcoHomes rating which will contribute significantly to mitigating the effect of new development on energy use.
- 3.30 The SWHB will support the forthcoming **Code for Sustainable Buildings** for all public and private developments. This will establish higher standards for energy and water efficiency as well as waste and use of materials. The SWHB have also agreed to write to ODPM seeking the inclusion of EcoHomes standards in Building Regulations.
- 3.31 **Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)** are also encouraged by the public sector and can have economic, social and environmental benefits.
- 3.32 For the 2004 –06 AHP programme, 35% of all new affordable homes employ modern methods of construction. In future the SWHB will be seeking to improve upon this proportion and will treat 35% as an absolute minimum. The target for the region is to get to a level of 50% by 2010.

Action 14 – Ongoing. Champion participation in Future Foundations, and the take-up of the forthcoming Code for Sustainable Buildings.	SWRDA/HC	Short - Medium
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C. Engaging the private sector

- 3.33 The SWHB already has the valuable input of the private sector to its work. The region wishes to build on this good relationship by promoting and encouraging developers to champion high quality design and environmental standards in new housing developments. In turn, public providers can learn lessons from the private sector on how to improve business models and efficiency.
- 3.34 The tools listed above – such as Future Foundations, Secured by Design, MMC, and Lifetime Homes are all important ways to improve the quality of new development, and mitigate the long-term environmental impact of the additional homes.

- 3.35 The Barker Review of housing supply made a number of challenging recommendations to the development industry around its competitiveness and customer satisfaction levels. These included:
- Introducing measures to increase the proportion of house buyers who would recommend their house-builder from 46% to at least 75% by 2007. (Barker Review – Recommendation 32)
 - Taking forward work with National House-building Council (NHBC), CITB and others to address barriers to using MMC. (Barker Review – Recommendation 33)
 - Working with CABI to agree a code of best practice in the external design of houses (Barker Review - Recommendation 35).
- 3.36 The response of the industry to these challenges has been positive, and the SWHB will encourage developers operating in the region to continue to work with Government and partners on this agenda.
- 3.37 In addition, the quality standards governing private and public developments will blur further with the introduction of measures in the Housing Act 2004 to enable private developers (and other bodies not regulated by the Housing Corporation such as local authorities and ALMOs) to compete for the allocation of Housing Corporation funding.
- 3.38 A £200m pilot programme is being launched which will require equivalent standards and outcomes for tenants and residents in relation to the design, construction and management of their homes irrespective of whether they are provided by a developer or a Housing Association.
- 3.39 This theme of merging the standards operated by private and social housing providers is also picked up in the region's S106 good practice guide. This recommends that the Housing Corporation's SDS quality standards should be negotiated into all agreements for all social rented housing provision, whether or not the agreement includes any public subsidy.

Action 15. Ongoing - Continue to work with the private sector to drive improvements in the design, environmental standards and levels of customer satisfaction of new developments.	SWRA	Medium
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II. Delivering environmental and health benefits

- 3.40 Improving the condition and energy efficiency of the existing housing stock is clearly beneficial to the health and quality of life of the occupant and will be crucial to reducing the impact that it has on the use of natural resources and production of greenhouse gases through heating and lighting.
- 3.41 The links between poverty, poor quality housing and the surrounding environment and health outcomes - particularly for children and young families, and older people – are well known. For example, cold damp homes can lead to diminished resistance to respiratory infection and

can also increase the risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke. Other improvements in suitability of accommodation such as its energy efficiency can reduce the incidence of fuel poverty and improve quality of life for residents.

- 3.42 Increasing safety features in homes and incorporating lifetime home principles such as installing smoke alarms, disabled access doorways and staircases should also help to reduce the level of accidents in the home.
- 3.43 Two key health inequalities can be addressed through direct improvement in housing quality under Aim 2 of this draft RHS:
- **Life expectancy** – through tackling cold and dampness in homes;
 - **Infant mortality** – improving housing conditions for families in disadvantaged areas.
- 3.44 Aim 1 seeks to address the shortage of affordable housing and direct resources to helping house the homeless and those in Temporary Accommodation. Aim 3 will address homeless prevention services and supporting people services for vulnerable groups such as teenage parents, and those with mental health or drug and alcohol dependencies.
- 3.45 **Fuel poverty** is of concern to the region. 11% of homes in the South West do not have central heating, compared to 9% nationally. There are clear sub-regional disparities with the older stock in the peninsular particularly affected - Devon (19%), Cornwall (22%), Dorset and Somerset (11%) and Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and North Somerset (7%).
- 3.46 Average SAP ratings across the region are also low– the EHCS (2001) identified that the SW has the highest proportion of homes with SAP rating below 30 of any region (14% of stock). The average SAP rating across all properties in the SW is 49. The level at which there is minimal risk of a household being in fuel poverty is a SAP rating of 65 or higher.
- 3.47 It is important the region makes the most of the various programmes and initiatives that support sustainable development, energy efficiency, and the eradication of health inequalities in the housing field.
- 3.48 The Government has recently published its **“Fuel Poverty in England: The Government’s Plan for Action”** document (Defra 2004) which sets a target to eradicate fuel poverty in England for vulnerable households by 2010. The Government strategy also highlights that more will be done to target the Warm Front programme at those who are, or are more likely to become fuel poor and encourage increased activity in areas where there is greater propensity for households to be fuel poor.
- 3.49 The Government’s strategy also highlights that Warm Front activity has traditionally been focussed in urban areas. Over 30% of the fuel poor

live in rural areas, yet to date, less than 10% of Warm Front grants have been delivered to this sector.

3.50 In rural areas fuel poverty is exacerbated by a number of features:

- A lack of access to the gas network.
- A high proportion of older houses without cavity walls (hence, unable to provide cavity wall insulation).
- A high proportion of detached houses, leading to higher heat loss.

3.51 Links between government departments such as DEFRA, ODPM and Department of Health and NHS need strengthening across the region in order to use Warm Front and other programmes aimed at tackling fuel poverty more effectively. A better, shared understanding of the initiatives currently addressing this issue and of how they are operating is required in order to ensure that fuel poor households receive the maximum possible benefits.

Action 16. New - Commission research on the take-up and operation of energy efficiency and health programmes and the links between them to ensure that fuel poor households receive the maximum possible benefits.	GOSW	Medium
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3.52 The South West also faces an ageing demographic profile, and very strong demand for mandatory **Disabled Facilities Grants** from local authorities. These are required once an assessment of need has been made, and with the high levels of relatively poor quality owner occupied housing in the region, demands on DFG budgets are likely to remain high.

III Meeting the Decent Homes target

A In the Private Sector

3.53 The South West has above average levels of home ownership and private renting. 76% of the stock is owner occupied, and 11% is rented privately or with a job or business (252,000 out of 2,217,000 dwellings) (ODPM, 2003b). The English House Condition Survey 2001 'found that almost half (49%) of private tenants live in poor quality homes. The worst concentration of problems is among those with regulated tenancies...' (ODPM, 2003b)

3.54 The Government's target is that 70% of vulnerable households in the private sector should live in houses that meet the Decent Homes standard by 2010. An interim target of 65% exists for 2006-7 and the longer-term target is to reach 75% by 2020-21. The target covers households in both owner-occupation and the private rented sector.

3.55 In the South West, it is estimated that there are approximately 277,000 vulnerable households. Of these households, roughly 44% (approximately 122,000) are thought to be living in accommodation

that does not meet current Decent Homes standards. No local authority in the South West has yet reached the 2010 target, and estimates place authorities between 1 (South Gloucestershire) and 23 (Bristol) percentage points away from the target.

- 3.56 The benefits of addressing **private sector renewal** issues range from improving the health of vulnerable people, particularly children and young people; improving neighbourhoods and sustainable communities; sustaining home ownership and lengthening the useful life of the existing housing stock.
- 3.57 Given the good progress being made in social sector Decent Homes, and reflecting the scale of work required in the private sector, the SWHB believes that more attention must be paid to the private sector element of the Decent Homes target. The next 2 – 3 years will be critical, if the 70% target is to be met by 2010. The SWHB therefore proposes that private sector renewal remains the second regional priority for use of the Regional Housing Pot.
- 3.58 The tools to deliver private sector renewal have been provided by means of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 (RRO) that came into full effect on 18 July 2003. The RRO encourages authorities to develop local strategies and packages of assistance to address local circumstances. These strategies should be based on up-to-date, robust data and evidence gathered through a variety of sources including stock condition surveys, market assessments and health data.
- 3.59 Authorities can assist vulnerable groups directly, through grants or loans, or through a range of other agencies, such as **Home Improvement Agencies** (HIAs). National guidance encourages all authorities to carefully consider the future role of HIAs in their area, and how they link with other supporting people services for vulnerable households. With a growing population of older people in the SW, HIAs are already relevant and will become more so in future.
- 3.60 GOSW will expect to see PSR strategies being developed and robust plans for PSR activity in their assessment of Local Authority Housing strategies as being Fit for Purpose.
- 3.61 The private sector renewal schemes that were supported by the SWHB in 2004-05 and 05-06 are progressing and in particular, the loan scheme being developed by 10 partner authorities and the Wessex Reinvestment Trust, is establishing itself.
- 3.62 Lessons learned from these schemes and from more general innovation and good practice are important to share, and as such a regular forum for the exchange of good practice will be established by the SWHB.

<p>Action 17. New and Ongoing - Facilitate the exchange of good practice in private sector renewal activity and continue to encourage innovative use of Regulatory Reform Order powers.</p>	<p>GOSW</p>	<p>Short - Medium</p>
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- 3.63 As stated above in Section 1 paragraph 1.14, PSR remains the region's second priority for capital investment. As such the allocation of the Local Authority element of the RHP will be based on a simple formula that reflects each authority's position with regard to meeting the 2010 Decent Homes target.
- 3.64 ODPM estimates provide figures for the total number of vulnerable households in each authority and the proportion of them that are likely to be living in non-Decent accommodation. Authorities will receive an allocation in proportion to how far away they are from meeting the 2010 target for vulnerable households, subject to a maximum change of 20% higher or lower than their allocation from 2005-06. Provisional figures for each local authority are given in the complementary paper "Proposed allocations for the use of the Regional Housing Pot 2006-07 and 2007-08", published alongside the RHS 2005-16.

B In the social sector

- 3.65 In the South West, approximately 140,000 homes remain in Local Authority ownership, of which around 35% do not meet the Decent Homes standard. Since 2000, when the Government introduced the Decent Homes target, national policy has been clear on the options to help local authorities achieve the target by 2010. In addition to stock retention, authorities can consider:
- Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT);
 - establishing an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO); or
 - using the Private Finance Initiative (PFI).
 - a mix of any of the options. (e.g. partial transfer.)
- 3.66 Each authority with stock in February 2003, has been required to carry out a rigorous and robust appraisal of the options for achieving Decent Homes. These must be completed and approved by July 2005
- 3.67 For those local authorities where the tenants desire it, and an Option Appraisal has been signed off which selects stock retention, Pfi or an ALMO, funding will be made available from the Regional Housing Pot to help them meet the Decent Homes target. It should be stressed that Government has made it clear that this can be no more than has been previously spent on council stock. Current estimates of the amount of funding required to be found from the Regional Housing Pot is around £8m per year.
- 3.68 As the majority of Housing Association development has occurred since enabling legislation in 1974, their stock is generally younger. The exceptions to this are long established charitable Trusts, and Transfer associations.
- 3.69 In the South West, the Housing Corporation estimate around 23% of stock currently does not meet the Decent Homes standard. Through

its continuous monitoring of RSL asset management plans, the Housing Corporation is confident that the standard will be met by 2010, although a small amount of grant funding may be made available to RSLs in exceptional circumstances to meet the Decent Homes standard for their stock.

Action 18. Ongoing – Complete outstanding option appraisals in 2005 and deliver through the Regional Housing Pot the resources required by authorities choosing retention, ALMO or PFI to achieve social sector Decent Homes by 2010.	GOSW	Short – Medium
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3.70 Over the longer term, the SWHB wishes to see the region do better than the Decent Homes standard. For example, advice and guidance is already available to housing providers on additional environmental standards to reach when refurbishing existing stock.

3.71 The initiative, www.greenstreet.org.uk supported by Housing Corporation, Hastoe Housing Association, Sustainable Homes, and the Energy Savings Trust provides guidance and examples of capital works done to properties to improve property's waste, energy and water efficiency rates, over and above Decent Homes minima. In the South West, Penwith Housing Association and the Beacon Community Regeneration Project are included as case studies. Links should also be made to the **Regional Waste Strategy** (SWRA, 2004a) and **Regional Environment Strategy** (SWRA, 2004b) and actions relating to housing.

Action 19. Ongoing - Monitor progress of Local Authorities, ALMOs and Housing Associations towards the Decent Homes standard and encourage improvement over the Decent Homes standard in the longer term.	HC/GOSW	Medium - Long
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IV Improving the management of social stock and neighbourhoods

3.72 The SWHB wants to ensure that all social landlords are both committed and equipped, to provide top class housing management services to their tenants. Efficient, effective and responsive housing management is crucial in ensuring that tenants in social housing enjoy a good quality of life.

3.73 All social landlords are now inspected under the Best Value regime, which assesses landlords under four main headings – Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete. Social landlords should fully consult with tenants and residents when developing and implementing their housing management policy.

3.74 In Neighbourhood Renewal areas such as Bristol, Plymouth and West Cornwall – landlords should work closely with Neighbourhood Managers and associated partnerships. In other areas, landlords should consider good practice in neighbourhood management

agreements, as a way to help encourage social inclusion and community cohesion.

- 3.75 SWHB would expect that with new developments conforming to stricter design standards and the Sustainable Communities agenda, and with initiatives being taken around customer service and performance through Best Value and the NHF's iN business for neighbourhoods campaign, customer satisfaction with social housing should increase significantly.
- 3.76 Councils, housing associations and any private sector housing managers should regularly measure resident satisfaction levels through surveys and by continuous improvement actions, consistently raise levels of satisfaction.

Action 20. New. Support RSLs and Local Authority landlords to work closely with Neighbourhood Renewal and Management partners, and facilitate the sharing of good practice in neighbourhood management.	GOSW	Medium
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SECTION 4

Strategic Aim 3 - Supporting sustainable communities – “To ensure that housing makes a full contribution to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive communities”

Summary actions:

Theme	Work group lead	Summary actions	Action Lead	Timescale
Sustainable & Mixed Communities	SWRDA	Action 21. Ongoing - English Partnerships, HC and SW RDA will continue to demonstrate by practical example the processes and benefits associated with the development of sustainable communities.	EP/SWRDA /HC	Short - Medium
		Action 22. New - Engage in dialogue with key local authorities to explore barriers to housing supply and ways forward, linking to development of proposals in “The Way Ahead”.	SWRA/GOS W/SWRDA	Short
		Action 23 - New – Investigate new models of affordable housing provision with RSLs, co-operatives, and specialist private developers as appropriate.	SWRDA/EP /HC	Short
		Action 24. New. Promote the use of Community Cohesion toolkit in housing policies.	GOSW	Medium
		Action 25. New – Establish a housing-focused equality and diversity advisory group, with appropriate links to Equality South West and other key stakeholders	HC	Short
Support for homeless households	HC	Action 26. New. Support local authorities to provide high quality homelessness prevention services through the spread of best practice, and use of ODPM's Innovation Partnership Fund.	GOSW	Short
and vulnerable groups		Action 27. New. Make appropriate, cross-authority links between Supporting People services, such as floating support, and homelessness strategies, particularly at a sub-regional level. A risk assessment to achieving this should be undertaken due to potential cuts in SP funding in the region.	GOSW	Medium
		Action 28. New. Regularise the working relationship between the SWHB and the region's Supporting People Commissioning Bodies. The broad aim of the relationship will be to identify those supported housing issues to which value can be added by regional level dialogue and action.	HC	Short
		Action 29. Ongoing - Ensure local authorities work closely with their SP authorities to contribute to the provision move-on accommodation for vulnerable groups. (A regional benchmark is 8% of lettings excluding internal transfers)	GOSW/ SWLGA	Short
		Action 30. New – Provide a housing input to the SW Asylum and Refugee Forum and Regional Executive board for asylum and refugee issues.	SWLGA	Medium
		Action 31. New. - Facilitate the provision of additional Gypsy and traveller sites through the planning system, and support the development of robust assessments of local need.	GOSW/OD PM	Short - Medium
		Action 32. New – Review the housing issues of migrant workers in the South West, through the Housing Equality and Diversity advisory group.	HC	Medium

Introduction

- 4.1 This Strategic Aim brings together actions to develop sustainable communities. This requires fully integrating work around improving housing affordability and accessibility under Aim 1, work to improve housing quality, sustainability and design under Aim 2, with actions to support people, places and communities under this Strategic Aim of the RHS.
- 4.2 Genuinely sustainable communities and the principles of sustainable development will only be achieved if action under all three aims is taken forward together and in partnership with regional, local, and sub-regional stakeholders. It is vital that public, private and voluntary and community sectors work together to achieve these aims.
- 4.3 The development of links to other strategies and related policies are at an early stage, particularly Supporting People strategies, which themselves are currently in draft.
- 4.4 There are a number of key issues for supported housing, which will require further work across the region. These are:
 - The difficulty of the split between capital and revenue funding and the reduction to the later for the region projected over the life of this strategy.
 - The under-provision of accommodation to help people to move to independence.
 - Whether the resources committed to Floating Support services are sufficient to help people stay in their own homes as a balance against the amount of supported accommodation needed.
 - Establishing the level of need for purpose designed supported housing (often staffed to provide higher levels of support), refuges and specialist hostels.
 - The quality of some supported housing stock is unacceptably low. Both large – scale re-modelling programmes and localised initiatives are required to upgrade the stock
 - Work with private sector landlords
 - Home ownership options
 - Development of cross-authority and regional work
- 4.5 The ongoing nature of these issues means that measurable targets are not identifiable until the position becomes clearer following the short term actions identified and the development of other inter-related strategies. Measurable targets will be identified in future revisions to the Strategy.

- 4.6 **Outcome Targets for Aim 3** will therefore, be more fully developed in due course. However, the following indicative outcomes can already be identified.

- Measures of community cohesion will have improved across the region by 2010, particularly in areas most affected by social exclusion.
- Disadvantage among vulnerable groups will be reduced by 2010.
- There will be increased provision for Gypsy and traveller sites by 2016.

- 4.7 The actions proposed under this Strategic Aim are based around the following two themes:

- I. Working to achieve sustainable and mixed communities in the region
- II. Addressing the housing support needs of homeless households and vulnerable groups.

I. WORKING TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE AND MIXED COMMUNITIES

- 4.8 The Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003a) sets out some of the most important requirements of successful places. These include a flourishing local economy, a safe and healthy environment of sufficient size, scale and density with a well-integrated mix of decent homes to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes.

- 4.9 There should be effective engagement and participation by local people in the planning, design and long-term stewardship of their community and strong leadership to respond positively to change. Good public transport and other transport infrastructure should be put in place to support the uses and enable the right links to be made with the wider community. Buildings should be adaptable over time and minimise the use of resources.

- 4.10 English Partnerships and SW RDA are already working with partners in the region's main regeneration sites and other key brownfield sites to deliver places where people want to live and can afford to live. These places are supported with funds from EP, SWRDA, social housing grant, European Structural Funds, Neighbourhood Renewal funding and resources from the private sector.

- 4.11 The proposals contained in “The Way Ahead” are the region’s initial response to the Sustainable Communities Plan, and as described in Aim 1, these ideas will be worked up further during 2005 and 2006. The associated action (Action 2) to work with local authorities to accelerate delivery in key strategic places in the region is repeated below as Action 22.
- 4.12 The NHF have promoted the role that RSLs play in tackling disadvantaged places and helping support thriving communities, through the “**iN business for neighbourhoods**” campaign. Since its launch in September 2003, over 75% of RSL stock regionally is owned and managed by iN business adopters, who are committed to reinforcing and enhancing the role RSLs play in communities.
- 4.13 Intermediate housing can play a key role in creating sustainable communities in both urban sites and in rural areas, where, subject to local affordability constraints, it should enable a wider range of household types to buy into the neighbourhood. Aim 1, Action 4 supported the development of new models of affordable housing, and is repeated below as Action 23.

Action 21. Ongoing - English Partnerships, HC and SW RDA will continue to demonstrate by practical example the processes and benefits associated with the development of sustainable communities.	EP/SWR DA/HC	Short - Medium
Action 22. New - Engage in dialogue with key local authorities to explore barriers to housing supply and ways forward, linking to development of proposals in “The Way Ahead”.	SWRA/G OSW/SW RDA	Short
Action 23 - New – Investigate new models of affordable housing provision with RSLs, co-operatives, local authorities and specialist private developers as appropriate.	SWRDA/E P/HC	Short

Promoting community cohesion

- 4.14 Housing plays a critical role in shaping communities – not only in terms of the quality of its building and places, and its accessibility, but also in terms of how the community operates and behaves towards each other – its community spirit. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 introduced a positive new duty to promote race equality and tackle discrimination, which should be implemented in all housing and planning policies.
- 4.15 Wider community cohesion, inclusive of people with disabilities, ex-offenders, or different lifestyles such as the travelling community is also vital, and the Government has launched a Community Cohesion and Race Equality Strategy (Home Office, 2005), and Community Cohesion – An Action Guide (Home Office, 2004). This will form the basis of a renewed programme of action to build cohesion and reduce race inequalities.
- 4.16 In the region, a Community Cohesion toolkit has been published (GOSW, 2005) to help embed these principles in areas of policy work.

A group to advise the SWHB on equality and diversity issues relating to housing will be established, linking closely with Equality South West. Use of the region's Community Cohesion toolkit will be encouraged.

Action 24. New. Promote the use of Community Cohesion toolkit in housing policies.	GOSW	Medium
Action 25. New – Establish a housing-focused equality and diversity advisory group, with appropriate links to Equality South West and other key stakeholders	HC	Short

II ADDRESSING THE HOUSING SUPPORT NEEDS OF HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

4.17 This section suggests policies and actions to address the housing needs of:

- Homeless people
- Vulnerable client groups under the Supporting People programme.
- Asylum seekers and refugees.
- Gypsy and traveller community.
- Migrant workers.

A. Homelessness services

4.18 The national Homelessness Strategy, "Settled homes; changing lives" is promoting positive models of homelessness prevention, delivered through Local Authorities, working closely with RSLs, private landlords and other agencies such as Shelter, Relate, and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

4.19 Prevention services can range from mediation services, rent deposit or bond schemes, and debt counselling, to improving access to floating support under the Supporting People programme.

4.20 Good practice can be shared in the South West among authorities, and the region should submit a bid for use of the Innovation Partnership Fund which is available to support joint action on reducing the use of Temporary Accommodation and develop more effective prevention services.

4.21 Better links should also be made to Supporting People services for vulnerable groups that are at risk of becoming homeless, particularly exploring the scope for floating support in conjunction with settled accommodation options. Links should also be made to local mental health services, drug and alcohol services, social services and education when tackling wider causes of homelessness.

Action 26. New. Support local authorities to provide high quality homelessness prevention services through the spread of best practice, and use of ODPM's Innovation Partnership Fund	GOSW	Short
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Action 27. New. Make appropriate, cross-authority links between Supporting People services, such as floating support, and homelessness strategies, particularly at a sub-regional level. A risk assessment to achieving this should be undertaken due to potential cuts in SP funding in the region.	GOSW	Medium
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B. Supporting people/Supported housing

- 4.22 In order to inform the RHS in making the links with supported housing, a joint study commissioned by Supporting People commissioners, GOSW, Housing Corporation and NHF was carried out in 2004. The study which has been subject to wide consultation including at the SW Regional Housing Forum, can be viewed at www.southwesthousingbody.org. (Pathways Research, 2004).
- 4.23 It identifies major trends issues and priorities affecting the supported housing sector in the region and also highlights the role supported housing has in promoting social inclusion and reducing health inequalities. Risks to funding from the proposed new distribution formula are known, and SWHB is engaged with a dialogue with ODPM on this issue. The potential impact of the new formula, if it is implemented in its current form, will become clearer later in 2005 and will be built into the Delivery Plan and risk assessment of this workgroup.
- 4.24 The Supporting People Commissioning Bodies are currently developing their strategies mindful of the context of national funding constraints. The RHS has identified a number of actions which will help the region to co-ordinate the provision of services and accommodation for need identified within those strategies.
- 4.25 In line with emphasising the wider impact of supported housing, and as a consequence of the study, a new conceptual framework is being adopted for this Regional Housing Strategy, based on four strands, or distinct housing-journeys of people in need of housing related support. This is an alternative to the traditional method of defining the supported housing sector by client group e.g. older people, drug misuse, mental health etc. The strands are:
- Maintaining quality of life, independence and inclusion
 - Preventing homelessness and events leading to homelessness
 - Re-building lives
 - Promoting opportunities for independent living

Maintaining quality of life, independence and inclusion

- 4.26 This strand focuses mainly on older people who have largely been independent throughout their lives but who need support due to increasing physical or mental frailty, social isolation or insecurity. The South West has just over 5,000 funded supporting people places for older people per 100,000 over 65 years – the lowest of all English regions, despite having the greatest number of older people in the population. It is also relevant to some younger people who live in their own homes and people with mental health problems; physical or sensory disability; learning difficulties and HIV/AIDS who do not have acute support or care needs but who are isolated and disengaged.

Preventing homelessness and events leading to homelessness.

- 4.27 This strand focuses on people who are at risk of losing their housing, usually as a result of a succession of negative experiences and events such as substance misuse, family estrangement or mental health problems. As people are still living in their own homes the type of service provided will be floating support. This strand is also relevant to people due to be released from prison.

Re-building lives

- 4.28 This strand is concerned with people who have already become homeless and who have support needs due to difficult social circumstances or who have complex and multiple needs requiring a combination of SP and other services.
- 4.29 This includes problem drug users, offenders and people at risk of offending; people with alcohol problems; refugees; rough sleepers; young people at risk and leaving care. As an illustration, women flee domestic violence both within the region and extra-regionally and the need for the provision of refuges, move-on accommodation and floating support services should be integral in all local Housing Strategies.
- 4.30 Providers report increasing levels of complex needs, often involving mental health problems, substance misuse problems and a history of offending. The increase in the prison population has led inexorably to an increase in the number of homeless ex-prisoners. Services for young people report that the average age is going down and that a growing number of 16 and 17 year olds are turning to supported housing after family or relationships break down. Again, local housing authorities and SP commissioners need to adopt a joined up approach to providing services to these groups, based on a sound assessment of needs

Promoting opportunities for independent living –

- 4.31 This strand applies to adults with physical or learning disabilities, or mental health problems who live with their parents or are in a residential care home or health managed residential unit or are in hostel accommodation. They can be characterised as having hidden needs and 'low impact' in that they are not formally recognised as having a priority for housing and may receive minimal social care services.

Move-on accommodation

- 4.32 The shortage of available housing for people to move on from high support accommodation is a persistent and widespread problem. The effect is that people stay too long in high support housing and others cannot move in. This is inefficient, as well as unhelpful to people who are ready to live more independently (with or without floating support) and need to maintain the momentum.
- 4.33 In order to help unblock high support provision it is expected that Local Authorities consider the need for move-on lettings in all social housing. This is within the context of a regional benchmark of the current RSL average of 8% of lettings (excluding internal transfers) to those previously in supported housing (CORE 2004).
- 4.34 While there are some positive examples of work with private landlords, particularly in connection with the prevention of homelessness, the use of this resource remains under-developed.
- 4.35 Home ownership options are currently under-exploited for people who need support. Some frail older people with private resources may well see benefits in moving to leasehold extra care housing. Adults living with their parents or in residential care may also find shared ownership attractive if they could reliably access combined care and support packages.
- 4.36 Overall, greater co-ordination of strategies, actions and resources is needed between SP authorities, local authorities and providers to establish local and sub-regional priorities for supported housing needs and provision.

Capital and revenue funding

- 4.37 The traditional distinction between supported housing and general needs housing has become blurred with the development of floating support services. The region has historically provided a higher proportion of the capital budget for accommodation based supported housing (including higher support schemes) than the national level. Where need is identified within SP strategies and there is clear support from the Commissioning Body that it is a priority within its 5 year

strategy, this will continue. Providers will need to demonstrate that they have an exit strategy for the accommodation should the Administering Authorities priorities change.

4.38 The SWHB is keen to continue to work with the Supporting People regional network to explore the issues raised above. In terms of homelessness prevention, links are currently not being well made in local authority homelessness strategies where, for example, only a third had addressed the wider health needs of the homeless. Similarly, links to the private rental sector and home ownership solutions need to be considered alongside supported housing solutions.

4.39 In the short term, the SWHB is able to support a number of actions:

Action 28. New. Regularise the working relationship between the SWHB and the region's Supporting People Commissioning Bodies. The broad aim of the relationship will be to identify those supported housing issues to which value can be added by regional level dialogue and action.	HC	Short
Action 29. Ongoing - Ensure local authorities work closely with their SP authorities to contribute to the provision of move-on accommodation for vulnerable groups. (A regional benchmark is 8% of lettings excluding internal transfers)	GOSW/ SWLGA	Short

C. Asylum seekers and refugees

4.40 Asylum seekers resident in the South West, refugees who have been given leave to remain, or failed asylum seekers potentially risk meeting prejudice. Those given leave to remain can experience particular difficulties in finding suitable housing when they are required to leave the accommodation provided for them while their asylum claim was being considered by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

4.41 These difficulties may be compounded by language problems and a lack of understanding of how to obtain mainstream services in this country.

4.42 Around 1,000 asylum seekers and refugees are currently housed in NASS (National Asylum Support Service) accommodation in the region mainly in Bristol/South Gloucestershire, Plymouth and Swindon.

4.43 The SW Local Government Association (SWLGA) is working with local authorities, GOSW and other stakeholders in the region to develop a co-ordinated regional response to NASS reforms. The SWHB can support this work by ensuring a housing input is made to the Regional Executive Board and to the SW Asylum and Refugee Forum.

Action 30. New – Provide a housing input to the SW Asylum and Refugee Forum and Regional Executive board for asylum and refugee issues.	SWLGA	Medium
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D. Gypsies and travellers

4.44 ODPM have undertaken a wide ranging review of Government policies relating to Gypsies and Travellers, and the issue is also rising up the

community cohesion agenda given recent increases in unauthorised encampments and developments. Caravan numbers have increased 7% and unauthorised encampments by 14% since July 2002 in the South West.

- 4.45 Research by ODPM in 2002 found that there was a national need for approximately 4500 new pitches by 2007 to meet need. This represents an increase of around 30% on current levels. (ODPM, 2002).
- 4.46 A series of measures have been introduced to help integrate the needs of Gypsies and travellers into local and regional policies, while at the same time, giving additional powers to local authorities to clamp down on unauthorised sites. The Housing Act 2004 requires housing assessments to include the needs of Gypsies and travellers, and Homes for All and the Homelessness strategy all recognise the needs of this community for accommodation.
- 4.47 Planning circular 1/94 is also being revised to help overcome the barriers to planning permission for sites that have been experienced in the past. This includes a role for RHB in reviewing local housing assessments of Gypsies and traveller needs, and for RSSs to develop policies to meet the evidenced needs of gypsies and travellers.
- 4.48 A commitment to make some of the new Regional Housing Pot available to provide more sites, as evidence of local needs comes forward is contained in Aim 1 (Action 6).
- 4.49 ODPM are also providing an additional resource in the South West to help facilitate the delivery of new sites, initially to be based at GOSW.

Action 31. New. - Facilitate the provision of additional Gypsy and traveller sites through the planning system, and support the development of robust assessments of local need.	GOSW/ ODPM	Short - Mediu m
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E. Migrant workers

- 4.50 Migrant workers are attracted to the region for mainly low-skill and low paid employment opportunities in agriculture, tourism and the food industry. Research by the TUC on migrants from the new Eastern European accession EU states (TUC, 2004) has shown that 40% are working in rural areas of the country, including the South West.
- 4.51 The SWHB will undertake a review of the housing issues for migrant workers in the South West and consider appropriate actions to take, in discussion with the housing Equality and Diversity advisory group, Equality SW and other stakeholders.

Action 32. New – Review the housing issues of migrant workers in the South West, though the Housing Equality and Diversity advisory group.	HC	Medium
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Annex B – Glossary

Affordable Housing	Affordable housing is defined throughout the RHS as an umbrella term for housing of a good standard which is affordable by local people on low – moderate incomes. At present, in most parts of the region this means housing, of any tenure, that is available at significantly below the normal cost of housing available on the open market. Local variations in housing costs against household incomes define relevant affordability constraints. Reference should also be made to ODPM Circular 6/98.
Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) (previously known as the Approved Development Programme (ADP))	One element of the Regional Housing Pot, administered by the Housing Corporation and used to fund social housing.
Area Actions Plans	AAPs are used to provide a planning framework for areas of significant change. AAPs will have the status of development plan documents.
Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs)	A company set up by a local authority to manage and improve all or part of its housing stock.
Barker Review (2004)	Review (March 2004) by Kate Barker setting out a range of policy recommendations for addressing the lack of supply and responsiveness of housing in the UK.
Black & Minority Ethnic (BME)	Black and minority ethnic persons/ households.
Brownfield land	Land which has been previously developed.
Cash Incentive Scheme	The Cash Incentive Scheme enables local authorities to offer financial assistance to existing tenants to enable them to move into owner occupation.
Choice Based Lettings	Choice based lettings are lettings policies that enable households to exercise greater control in deciding where they wish to live.
CITB Construction Skills	The Sector Skills Council for the Construction Industry and the Built Environment provides assistance in all aspects of recruiting, training and qualifying the construction workforce.
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)	An executive Non-departmental public body, funded by both the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and ODPM to act as a design champion for the built environment.
Community Cohesion Toolkit	Guidance, advice and ideas to help local authority communications officers to work with elected members, key spokespeople and the media on community cohesion, issued by the Community Cohesion Review team set up by

	the Home Office following the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in the summer of 2001.
Decent Homes Standard	To be defined as 'decent' a home must: meet the current statutory minimum for housing (the 'Fitness Standard'); be in a reasonable state of repair; have reasonably modern facilities and services; provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (effective insulation and efficient heating)
Design Codes	A set of specific principles, rules or requirements that provide a way of guiding, regulating and controlling the physical development of an area.
Design Review Panel	A means of providing advice to planning authorities and others on the design of selected development projects in England.
Disabled Facilities Grant	A means tested grant paid to the owner of a property to enable it to be adapted for a disabled person
EcoHomes	Building Research Establishment (BRE) rating for the environmental sustainability of housing.
English House Condition Survey	Five yearly stock survey undertaken to assess the condition of stock and its improvement, in all tenures and sectors.
English Partnerships	The national regeneration agency, helping the Government to support high quality, sustainable growth in England.
Enquiry by Design	An approach which invites the stakeholders in a proposed development - the local authority, residents, developers, landowners, voluntary groups, etc - to collaborate in producing a masterplan for a development
Exception sites	A site which is developed for affordable housing where there is a normal presumption against housing development.
Fuel Poverty	A household which needs to spend more than 10% of its income on all fuel use in order to comfortably heat their home would be defined as being in fuel poverty.
Future Foundations	The sustainable construction charter for the SW. This Charter is one of a series of initiatives by Sustainability South West and its partners that seek to turn the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Framework into real change on the ground.
Government Office for the South West (GOSW)	Government Office South West represents the interests and drives the activities of a number of 10 central Government departments in the South West.
Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs)	Not-for-profit organisations who help homeowners and private sector tenants who are older, disabled or on low income to repair, improve, maintain or adapt their homes, enabling clients to remain in their own home, safe, secure, warm and independent.
Homebuy	Proposed low cost home ownership scheme designed to help tenants of RSLs and local authorities, key workers, and others in priority need buy equity stakes in either their existing home (Social HomeBuy), a new home (New build HomeBuy), or a home on the open market (Open Market HomeBuy).
Home Builders	National trade body for house builders

Federation (HBF)	
Housing Act 2004	The Act introduces changes to Right to Buy policy; the HMO licensing scheme; Home Information Packs; the Housing Health and Safety Rating system, and; a new requirement on local authorities to assess the particular housing needs of gypsies and travellers.
Housing Association (HA)	See registered social landlord
Housing Corporation (HC)	A public body, sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), whose role is to register, regulate and fund Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in England.
Housing Health and Safety Rating System	The HHSRS will replace the current Fitness standard and will establish minimum legally enforceable condition standards for all housing.
Housing Market Assessment	A study into the long-term housing demand, supply and needs of a market area. A market area can be defined, in simple terms, as the geographic area within which the majority of households move.
“iN business for neighbourhoods” campaign	A national alliance of housing associations working to create good neighbourhoods in cities, towns and villages across England. National Housing Federation initiative born out of the necessity to change the poor image of housing associations.
Integrated Regional Strategy	A set of long-term objectives and priorities. The Regional Assembly, together with partner regional agencies, is preparing an implementation plan called 'Now Connecting'.
Intermediate housing	Housing that can provide a bridge between full owner occupation and full social renting. Examples can include Shared Ownership and Low Cost Market Housing.
Key Workers	Those workers who are essential to the provision of public services and who are employed by a public body.
Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)	An RSL, which has received a wholesale transfer of housing stock from a local authority. Also used to describe the process of transferring large-scale housing stock to an RSL.
Lifetime Homes	Lifetime Homes have sixteen design features that ensure a new house or flat will meet the needs of most households with an emphasis on accessibility and design features to make homes flexible enough to meet changing requirements.
Local Area Agreements (LAAs)	Local Area Agreements simplify the number of funding streams from central government. By focussing on a core set of outcomes for an Area, the Agreements significantly simplify the arrangements which have previously been in place, and give local areas much greater freedom to spend on local priorities.
Local Development Frameworks	The local development documents, set out in the form of a portfolio, which collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the local planning authority's area.
Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO)	A general term covering shared ownership schemes, Voluntary Purchase Grant (VPG), Right to Acquire (RTA) and the Homebuy scheme.

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)	Construction that uses modern processes to help provide more, better quality houses in less time.
National Asylum Support Service (NASS)	National organisation responsible for overseeing support arrangements for asylum seekers.
National Housing Federation (NHF)	The trade body of housing associations, working with and in support of members and other partners to promote the values and strategic interests of the social housing sector.
Neighbourhood Renewal	National strategy aimed at preventing, arresting and reversing the wholesale decline of deprived neighbourhoods. Funding available for supported regeneration in the 88 most deprived local authority districts over three years. The fund is administered by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in ODPM.
ODPM PSA7 – the Decent Homes Target	By 2010, bring all social housing into a decent condition with most of this improvement taking place in deprived areas, and for vulnerable households in the private sector, including families with children, increase the proportion who live in homes that are in decent condition.
Option Appraisal	A consultation exercise involving local authority staff and members, tenants and leaseholders looking at different options for increasing investment in a local authority's housing stock
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004	Introduces a statutory system for regional planning; a new system for local planning; reforms to the development control, compulsory purchase and compensation systems; and removes crown immunity from planning controls
Planning Policy Guidance Notes (in particular PPG3)	Issued by central Government setting out its national land use policies for England on different areas of planning. These are being replaced by Planning Policy Statements. PPG 3 covers housing policies.
Planning Policy Statements	Issued by central Government to replace the existing Planning Policy Guidance Notes, in order to provide greater clarity and to remove from national policy advice on practical implementation, which is better expressed as guidance rather than policy
Principal Urban Area (PUA)	Identified in the South West Regional Planning Guidance as the 11 largest urban areas in the South West. These are: the Bristol conurbation, Bath, Weston-Super-Mare, Swindon, Gloucester, Cheltenham, the Bournemouth/ Poole conurbation, Exeter, Taunton, Plymouth and Torbay.
Private Finance Initiative (PFI)	When companies enter into a PFI agreement, they agree to build large-scale capital projects and lease them back to the public sector over a period of 30 years or more. Housing PFI is intended to be an alternative to direct procurement, stock transfer or Social Housing Grant for providing investment in social housing.
Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000	The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 came into force on Monday 2 April 2001. It strengthens and extends the scope of the 1976 Race Relations Act; it does not replace it. The legislation seeks to prevent discrimination directly or indirectly in any functions carried out by public authorities.

Regional Economic Strategy	The Regional Economic Strategy is prepared by the SW Regional Development Agency on behalf of the region. It provides the framework for the sustainable economic development of the South West.
Regional Housing Pot	Total capital funds that the Region has to invest.
Regional Planning Guidance (RPG)	A strategy and framework to manage the future distribution of land-use activities with a region over the medium to longer term. Regional Planning Guidance for the South West was issued in September 2001. From September 2004 this is now the Regional Spatial Strategy.
Regional Spatial Strategies	Statutory frameworks for regions covering a 15-20 year period, within which local development frameworks and transport plans can be prepared.
Regional Sustainable Development Framework	Guides and influences decision makers in business, government and the voluntary sector on how best to achieve sustainable development.
Registered Social Landlord (RSL)	Term introduced by the 1996 Housing Act applying to all housing associations or not for profit companies registered with the Housing Corporation to provide social housing. Only such organisations were eligible to receive social housing grant.
Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002	Order giving new powers to local authorities regarding the provision of private sector renewal assistance.
Right to Buy (RTB)	Policy that enables local authority tenants to buy their homes at a discounted price.
Rural Enablers	Rural enablers work with rural communities, local authority housing and planning officers, landowners, developers and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to facilitate and increase the supply of affordable housing in rural areas.
Scheme Design Standards (SDS)	A set of standards published by the Housing Corporation setting out the essential and desirable standards for social housing grant (SHG) funded property acquired or developed by registered social landlords (RSLs).
Section 106 Agreement (S106)	A legally binding agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, rather than a condition of planning permission, that secures facilities or aspects of a development.
Secured by Design	Police led initiative to ensure that housing, amongst other things, is designed and built in a way that helps reduce crime.
South West Housing Body (SWHB)	The Regional Housing Board for the South West and its constituent parts: Steering Group, Working Group and Regional Forum.
South West Local Government Association (LGA)	Body representing all local authorities, police authorities, fire authorities and passenger transport authorities in the South West to promote better local government.
South West Regional Assembly	The Regional Assembly represents the interests of the region in relation to the work of SWRDA. It is also the

(SWRA)	Regional Planning body for the region. Assembly members include local authority members and representatives of other sectors including education, industry, unions, small businesses, NHS and other regional stakeholders.
South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA)	Established in 1999. SWRDA is a non-departmental public body. SWRDA aims to coordinate regional economic development and regeneration, enabling the South West to improve its relative competitiveness and reduce the imbalances with other regions.
South West Regional Housing Forum.	South West Forum that meets quarterly to discuss housing and other related issues which affect the region. Members include representatives from local authorities, registered social landlords, and external partners such as National Housing Federation, Regional Development Agency and Chartered Institute of Housing.
Spending Review	Spending reviews set firm and fixed three-year departmental expenditure limits and, through Public Service Agreements (PSAs), define the key improvements that the public can expect from these resources. Successive spending reviews have targeted resources at the Government's priorities, matched these resources with reforms and set ambitious targets for improvements in key public services. The 2004 Spending Review set plans and PSAs for 2005/06 to 2006/07.
Stock Retention	Option to deliver Decent Homes that means existing council housing remains owned and managed by the local authority.
Supported Housing	Schemes for particular client groups requiring additional management support or care, e.g. people with learning difficulties, young at risk, frail elderly etc. Previously referred to as special needs housing.
Supporting People	General term used to cover the programme of reform of funding support services for vulnerable people to improve their quality of life and independence, providing people with housing related support services to remain independent or gain independence in their own home. Existing funding streams for support services have been brought together and placed into a specific grant paid by central Government, administered by local authorities in partnership with NHS bodies and probation services.
Sustainability	The most widely used definition of sustainable development, is the 'Brundtland' definition, which refers to 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The ODPM defines sustainable development based on four broad objectives: social progress which recognises the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
Sustainable Communities	Sustainable communities are places where people want to live work and relax. They are inclusive, safe and are of the

right size, scale and density to support a vibrant range of social, economic and cultural uses. They have well designed inter-connected streets, parks and other public space. Local people should feel engaged and able to influence the planning, design and long-term stewardship of their community. Guidance on how to create such places is contained in the 'Urban Design Compendium' published by the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships 2000.

Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future	Comprehensive programme of action announced in February 2003 to take forward Government policies to tackle deprivation and shortage of affordable housing and deliver sustainable communities for all. The £22 billion package represents a critical step change in delivering the supply of high quality, affordable housing; reforming the planning system; reversing the causes of decades of low demand and abandonment; and ensuring all social housing reaches a decent standard by 2010. Also known as the Communities Plan.
Urban Design Compendium	The Urban Design Compendium was published by English Partnerships in partnership with The Housing Corporation and examines the factors that make neighbourhoods stimulating and active places in which residents feel comfortable and safe. It aims to provide accessible advice to developers, funding agencies and partners on the achievement and assessment of the quality of urban design for the development and regeneration of urban areas.
Warm Front	Warm Front is the Government's main grant-funded programme for tackling fuel poverty. The scheme was launched in June 2000 and before its name changed to Warm Front, it was called the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme.
"The Way Ahead"	The South West's proposal for delivering sustainable communities in the region.
Wessex Reinvestment Trust	An organisation established to help rural communities in the South West become more sustainable by providing business loans, home improvement loans and advice about how villages and small towns can own and develop land for the benefit of their communities.
West of England Housing Market Study	An analysis, published on 14 June 2004, of the housing market and regional economy for the neighbouring authorities of Bristol, Bath & NE Somerset, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.