

Chapter 6

Communities for the Future

Introduction

- 6.1** The Spatial Strategy in this RPG requires a significant redistribution of housing provision. This will involve moving from the recent position of two houses built outside the Major Urban Areas (MUAs) for each one within them, to less than one outside for each one within. To support this, residential environments within the MUAs will need to be made more attractive, so that they can increasingly retain their populations. At the same time new housing provision in the other areas will need to be reduced to levels where it is largely meeting local needs, hence discouraging decentralisation. This marks a shift from the previous RPG which provided housing in the Central Crescent towns, including Worcester, Telford, Warwick/Leamington and Lichfield, to meet the needs of those working in the metropolitan area.
- 6.2** The distribution, location and type of new housing development has an important role to play in delivering the urban and rural renaissance agendas and regard should be had to the relevant Chapters of this guidance. In increasing the level of development in the MUAs particular attention should be paid to the policies in the Quality of the Environment Chapter.
- 6.3** Delivering this strategy will require a co-ordinated approach to housing provision across administrative boundaries and between planning and housing authorities, private housing builders, the Housing Corporation and private and social housing landlords. The Regional Housing Board will be crucial in identifying Regional priorities and targeting resources.

Housing within the Major Urban Areas

- 6.4** Research into the Region's housing markets¹ indicates that substantial areas within the MUAs are failing to provide the attractive choice of home and community environments needed to encourage economically active and independent households to stay. In the worst cases the low demand for housing in these areas has led to abandonment and a localised collapse of the housing market. To effectively address these issues it is imperative that RPG and the Regional Housing Strategy develop a co-ordinated approach.

¹ The West Midlands Housing Markets: Changing Demand, Decentralisation and Urban Regeneration, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS), The University of Birmingham 2001.

POLICY CF1: Housing within the Major Urban Areas

- A. In order to create a variety and choice of good quality housing within the MUAs, local authorities (through their development plans and housing strategies) should work with the private sector as the major provider of new housing, and the Housing Corporation, to:
 - i) significantly improve the quality of the existing housing stock both through enhanced renovation programmes and increased rates of redevelopment;
 - ii) increase the scale and range of new housing development opportunities in appropriate locations;
 - iii) create attractive urban communities and living environments (QE3-4) within which more people will wish to live and invest by mixing housing types, tenures and densities; and
 - iv) ensure the provision of affordable social and low-cost market housing in accordance with policy CF5.
- B. This approach should be adopted across all parts of the MUAs in order to retain economically active households, provide support for local services and to create and maintain sustainable communities.
- C. Significant action and investment, including where appropriate large scale redevelopment, should be targeted within those parts of the MUAs where the housing market is particularly weak, particularly in the two market renewal/low demand pathfinder areas of west and north Birmingham/east Sandwell, and Stoke-on-Trent/Newcastle under Lyme.
- D. Action to renew and redevelop neighbourhoods should also be focused in those areas where there is a risk of problems of decline spreading to adjoining housing areas, particularly in parts of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. The Regional Housing Strategy provides a framework for action in these areas, which are shown as Housing Renewal Areas on the Communities for the Future Diagram. The intervention levels will be defined according to local needs, studies for the 'Black Country and South Telford' and 'East Birmingham/North Solihull' have already commenced.
- E. Both Market and Housing Renewal Areas should be reflected in local authority development plans together with details of where initiatives to rehabilitate the existing housing stock will be concentrated and where clearance and redevelopment is expected.

- 6.5 Local authorities and their partners should work together to ensure cross-sector co-ordination in support of the priorities for action agreed through the Regional Housing Strategy process. For market and housing renewal areas partnership boards and other fora, representing a wide range of interests including local strategic partnerships and the private sector, will need to be established and taken forward in the context of the Regional Housing Strategy. Active community engagement will also be critical to the success of the policy.
- 6.6 In implementing this policy local authorities and partners should take opportunities to restructure the urban fabric where necessary, which may for example involve consolidating employment and open space uses to release land for housing development as well as improvement of the housing stock.

Housing Beyond the Major Urban Areas

- 6.7 Outside the MUAs progressively lower levels of housing growth are proposed, so that they ultimately meet local needs and do not provide for continued out-migration. In locating development priority should be given to using previously developed land in sustainable locations in the other large settlements and sub-regional foci identified on the Spatial Strategy diagram. The RPB should undertake studies to identify the role of each of the foci and through monitoring

and the review of this RPG will advise on the timing and broad scale of development likely to be required at each location. These studies will also need to consider the effects on employment, environment, and transport to ensure the foci are developed in a sustainable way.

POLICY CF2: Housing beyond the Major Urban Areas

- A. Beyond the MUAs, longer-term strategic housing development should be in those locations which are capable of balanced and sustainable growth. The five towns identified in the Spatial Strategy (Worcester, Telford, Shrewsbury, Hereford and Rugby) will fulfil this role as sub-regional foci for development. These towns:
 - i) act as sub-regional service centres;
 - ii) have the opportunity of balancing new housing and employment developments that will be consistent in terms of affordability and job skills;
 - iii) avoid the congested parts of the Regional transport network and have good accessibility by public transport;
 - iv) have the capacity to accommodate additional development without harm to local communities; and
 - v) have the potential to link areas of need with areas of opportunity.
- B. The function that each of the foci would be expected to fulfil should be determined through further study.
- C. Elsewhere the function of the other large settlements identified on the Spatial Strategy Diagram and the Region's market towns should not generally be to accommodate migration from the MUAs.
- D. In rural areas, the provision of new housing should generally be restricted to meeting local housing needs and/or to support local services, with priority being given to the reuse of previously developed land and buildings within existing villages enhancing their character wherever possible.
- E. "Local housing needs" constitute needs arising from the immediate area, excluding migration from elsewhere.

- 6.8** The delivery of policies CF1 and CF2 will rely on close partnership working between planning and housing authorities, private housing builders, private and social housing landlords and through the Regional Housing Board, the support of Government and its agencies including the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships and Advantage West Midlands. This partnership approach should take place at Regional, sub-regional and local levels. All housing development should respect the natural, built and historic environment in accordance with the QE policies.

Levels and Distribution of Housing Development

- 6.9** The metropolitan area of Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull and the Black Country is a major economic driver and source of employment opportunities. Provided a sufficient choice of attractive residential environments is made available, the Spatial Strategy assumes that net out-migration can be stemmed. Achieving the levels of housing identified for the metropolitan area to accommodate these people will depend upon a commitment to large-scale housing renewal and redevelopment, a proactive approach to redevelopment with high replacement ratios for cleared housing stock and a willingness to support a significant increase in overall densities.
- 6.10** Whilst a similar approach will be necessary in North Staffordshire the failure of the housing market is more pronounced than in the metropolitan area and the level of anticipated economic activity substantially lower. Renewal strategies will

need to take account of the extent to which out-migration can be stemmed and avoid over-provision. In this case high overall replacement rates may not be appropriate. This issue will evolve as the pathfinders are developed and will need to be kept under review by the RPB.

- 6.11** The distribution of housing in Table 1 sets out how the MUAs will increasingly meet their own generated needs while provision in the shires and unitary areas is correspondingly reduced. This shows a transition from the former ratio of new housing development between the MUAs and other areas of 1:2, through a position at 2007 where this is near 1:1, to 2011 where the ratio is in favour of the MUAs.
- 6.12** Although the completion of the transition may seem to be rather distant there are a number of important factors which dictate the timing. These include both the short-term impact of existing planning permissions and the need for significant work in some parts of the MUAs to develop the transport capacity, social infrastructure and quality environments to ensure they are attractive to a range of potential residents. This timing is also consistent with the Sustainable Communities Plan which anticipates healthy housing markets in the pathfinder areas nationally between 2010-2015, reflecting the time necessary to bring forward capacity and create confidence in the housing markets.

POLICY CF3: Levels and distribution of housing development

- A. Development plans should make provision for additional dwellings to be built at the annual rates specified in Table 1 below. These rates are to be applied as minima for the MUAs and maxima elsewhere.
- B. The following environmental safeguards will be applied in order to ensure that the aim of making the MUAs attractive places to live in is not undermined. In particular:
 - i) the levels of housing provision are to be subject to testing by detailed housing capacity studies;
 - ii) there should be no added pressure on urban open space/playing fields and greenspace consistent with PPG17;
 - iii) any provision above the Table 1 rates within the MUAs should be on previously developed land, consistent with PPG3 and any strategies arising from policy CF1C;
 - iv) compliance with locally adopted design guidelines consistent with PPG3; and
 - v) protecting other uses of land that will be critical to achieving urban renaissance (such as employment).
- C. Within the MUAs, the most efficient use should be made of previously developed land and conversions, consistent with raising the quality of the environment in accordance with policy QE3. Locations which extend the boundaries of the MUAs will not be acceptable as they would run counter to the approach taken throughout the Spatial Strategy and the policies set out within this document. Outside the MUAs, new development should be allocated in accordance with policy CF2.

- 6.13** In the context of the Spatial Strategy, policies CF2 and CF3 should be read alongside the guidance in PPG3 when applying the sequential approach to identifying and allocating land for housing.

TABLE 1: Housing

<i>Planning Area</i>	<i>Annual Average Rate of Housing Provision</i>		
	<i>to 2007</i>	<i>2007–2011</i>	<i>2011–2021</i>
Birmingham	2300	3000	3000
Coventry	650	650	830
Dudley	600	700	975
Herefordshire	800	600	600
Sandwell	900	900	975
Shropshire	1300	900	900
Solihull	400	400	470
Staffordshire	2900	2500	1600
Stoke-on-Trent	600	600	600
Telford & Wrekin	1330	1330	700
Walsall	500	500	825
Warwickshire	2000	1500	1350
Wolverhampton	500	500	825
Worcestershire	1900	1200	1000
MUAs (approx)	6450	7250	8500
Other Areas	10230	8030	6150
Total	16680	15280	14650
Ratio MUA: Other	1:1.6	1:1.1	1:0.7

- 6.14** The figures in Table 1 maintain the continuity with previous RPG11 by including the need for new dwellings together with the replacements for demolished stock.
- 6.15** The actual requirement for housing provision will vary with the level of demolitions and the replacement rates achieved. Table 2 provides the levels of demolitions assumed for each authority in preparing the figures in Table 1. A replacement rate of 1:1 is assumed except for Stoke-on-Trent where the ratio is 0.6:1. Authorities should strive to exceed the assumed replacement rates of 1:1 for demolished stock except in North Staffordshire where the low demand pathfinder analysis may conclude that a lower replacement rate is appropriate.
- 6.16** Current vacancy rates, by authority, have been used in determining demand for additional provision. As the rates decline (as a result of policy CF4) the needs must be reviewed.
- 6.17** The RPB should closely monitor the demolition, replacement, and vacancy rates in addition to the total new housing provision. The annual 'plan, monitor and manage' process, or a review, would determine the appropriate response to any divergences. In future reviews of this RPG, and in development plans, the RPB and local planning authorities should clearly define 'additional housing provision' and specify demolition, replacement, and vacancy rate assumptions.

TABLE 2²: Demolition Assumptions

<i>Planning Area</i>	<i>Annual Demolitions</i>	
	<i>to 2011</i>	<i>2011–2021</i>
Birmingham	1200	1200
Coventry	80	40
Dudley	110	150
Herefordshire	40	40
Sandwell	560	390
Shropshire	30	30
Solihull	10	10
Staffordshire	50	110
Stoke-on-Trent	500	500
Telford & Wrekin	5	5
Walsall	50	100
Warwickshire	130	110
Wolverhampton	110	150
Worcestershire	50	50

The Design of Housing Development

- 6.18** The Spatial Strategy redoubles the need for high density, high quality developments. Within the MUAs it is particularly important that the range of housing types and sizes is attractive to economically independent households. Development plans should follow the principles in PPG3 and the good practice in the “By Design”³ guide and “Better Places to Live: By Design”⁴ to ensure the most efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the environment (QE3-6). Attention should also be paid to energy efficiency (EN2) and to securing safe neighbourhoods.
- 6.19** The Regional Housing Partnership will also be important at the Regional level working with housing and planning authorities and housing providers to ensure quality developments, while community and neighbourhood strategies, town and village design statements, conservation area appraisals, and town and parish plans have a key role in providing local perspectives.

The Reuse of Land and Buildings for Housing

- 6.20** At least 76% of new housing in the Region should be on previously developed land (as defined in PPG3, Annex C). The estimated percentages for housing development in the 2001-2011 period are set out in Table 3. The RPB should undertake further work on appropriate targets for 2011-2021 to inform the review of this guidance. This work should take account of the functional housing sub-regions to be defined by the RPB together with the Regional Housing Board.

² Analysis of Regional Housing Land and Urban Capacity Survey 2001 – WMLGA March 2002.

³ By Design – Urban design in the planning system; Towards better practice, DTLR 2000

⁴ Better Places to Live: By Design; a companion guide to PPG3, DTLR 2001

TABLE 3: Housing Development on Previously Developed Land

<i>Planning Area</i>	<i>2001-2011 Target % on Previously Developed Land</i>
Birmingham	94
Dudley	98
Sandwell	100
Walsall	79
Wolverhampton	99
Coventry	93
Solihull	74
Warwickshire	64
Staffordshire	66
Stoke-on-Trent	84
Shropshire	59
Telford and Wrekin	53
Worcestershire	67
Herefordshire	68
Regional Profile:	
Metropolitan Boroughs	93
Shires and Unitaries	65
West Midlands Region	76

POLICY CF4: The reuse of land and buildings for housing

- A. Local planning authorities should optimise the opportunities for recycling land and buildings for new housing development through contributing to the achievement of a Regional target of at least 76% of future housing provision being on previously developed land between 2001-2011.
- B. The RPB should, through its overall monitoring, assess the progress being made on achieving the above percentages, and, where necessary, should advise where development plan reviews should seek to increase the scale of achievement in order to support the Spatial Strategy. In giving this advice, the RPB should take particular account of:
- i) the opportunities for the reuse of redundant employment land and premises in urban areas;
 - ii) the opportunities for increasing the scale of housing provision in areas where high quality public transport services are available in urban areas, such as city and town centres, or can be planned into new development; and
 - iii) the action taken by local authorities to reduce vacancy rates (e.g. by using Empty Homes Strategies) and the Government's target to reduce them.

- 6.21** The RPB, local authorities, private developers and relevant funding agencies such as English Partnerships and AWM should work together to bring forward the necessary levels of previously developed land. In implementing this policy account should be taken of the policies in the Quality of the Environment Chapter, in particular policy QE2.

Delivering Affordable Housing and Mixed Communities

- 6.22** Housing should be provided for those whose access to and choice of accommodation is restricted for reasons of affordability.
- 6.23** Local authority housing and planning departments should plan for mixed and balanced communities in accordance with PPG3. It is important that local authorities plan for affordable housing needs to be met where they arise.
- 6.24** For the period 2001-2011 the estimated 6,000-6,500 affordable dwellings needed each year across the Region will be used as the basis for monitoring. There are, however, marked differences in affordable housing needs across the Region⁵. Broadly speaking there is poor quality and lack of choice in the MUAs while insufficient affordable housing is the main problem in the south and east of the Region. In this area and the more rural areas generally, reliance on relatively small windfall sites makes it difficult to secure affordable housing. In these circumstances local planning authorities should consider whether there is a need to seek affordable housing on smaller sites, and bring forward proposals through the development plan process.

POLICY CF5: Delivering affordable housing and mixed communities

- A. Local authorities, developers and social housing providers should co-operate to create more balanced and mixed communities through the provision of a range of housing types and tenures within new housing developments and sites across all parts of the Region.
- B. Local authorities should keep under review the need for affordable housing in their area, based on local housing needs assessments, using a broadly consistent approach, the production of which will be co-ordinated by the RPB. Both social and low cost market housing should contribute to meeting the need for affordable housing. Opportunities should be sought within the existing housing stock where this would help the creation of mixed communities, as well as through new build.
- C. The Regional Housing Partnership should facilitate partnership approaches to the assessment and delivery of affordable housing across common local housing market areas.
- D. Local planning authorities in their development plans should:
 - i) indicate how many affordable homes need to be provided throughout the plan area;
 - ii) in rural areas specify the balance of affordable housing to be achieved between market towns and villages where there is a need to retain or strengthen services; and
 - iii) consider the need to prevent the unjustified use of affordable housing provision for general market housing purposes.
- E. Local authorities should also consider whether there is a need for affordable housing to be sought on sites below the thresholds set out in national guidance in areas where low income households have particular difficulty in affording local general market house prices. Where local authorities can demonstrate that local circumstances, particularly the likely viability of developments, justify adopting a lower threshold, they should bring forward proposals through the development plan process. This applies especially in the south and east of the Region, in the corridor extending from the Malvern Hills to the Warwickshire border with the South East Region, and in some rural areas where appropriate thresholds should be set for settlements with populations of 3,000 or less.
- F. Development plans should ensure that adequate provision is made for suitable sites to accommodate gypsies and other travellers. Such provision should reflect the order of demand in the area as indicated by the trends shown by the ODPM annual count and any additional local information.

⁵ The West Midlands Housing Markets: Changing Demand, Decentralisation and Urban Regeneration, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS), The University of Birmingham 2001.

- 6.25 In implementing this policy local planning authorities and the RPB should work closely with the Regional Housing Board and in particular should have regard to the objectives and investment priorities of the Regional Housing Strategy and to any functional sub-areas for housing that may be defined.

Managing Housing Land Provision

POLICY CF6: Managing housing land provision

- A. Development plans should incorporate policies which:
- i) allow for the managed release of new housing land, so as to secure the development of previously developed land and conversions taking account of the need for any new infrastructure and ground preparation; and
 - ii) take account of potential housing land provision and the policy framework in adjoining local authority areas so as not to undermine urban renaissance in other districts.
- B. Development plans should include measures to manage the release of housing land in a manner consistent with the implementation of the Spatial Strategy of RPG and at the rates set out in Table 1.

- 6.26 In managing the release of housing land local planning authorities should have regard to the advice in “Planning to Deliver”⁶ in determining the most appropriate approach for their area.
- 6.27 The RPB will monitor permitted supply and demand on a sub-regional basis and provide an opportunity for the results to be discussed with other stakeholders at an annual seminar. The seminar will address the qualitative and quantitative impacts of the housing developments on the delivery of the Spatial Strategy.
- 6.28 The RPB will then issue advice to local planning authorities on whether there need to be any short-term changes in supply in particular areas to reinforce the Spatial Strategy. The RPB should also comment on the extent to which any policies may need to be reviewed or more strongly enforced.
- 6.29 The results of this monitoring process will also inform any decision on the need for a review of this RPG.

Planning for Sustainable Communities

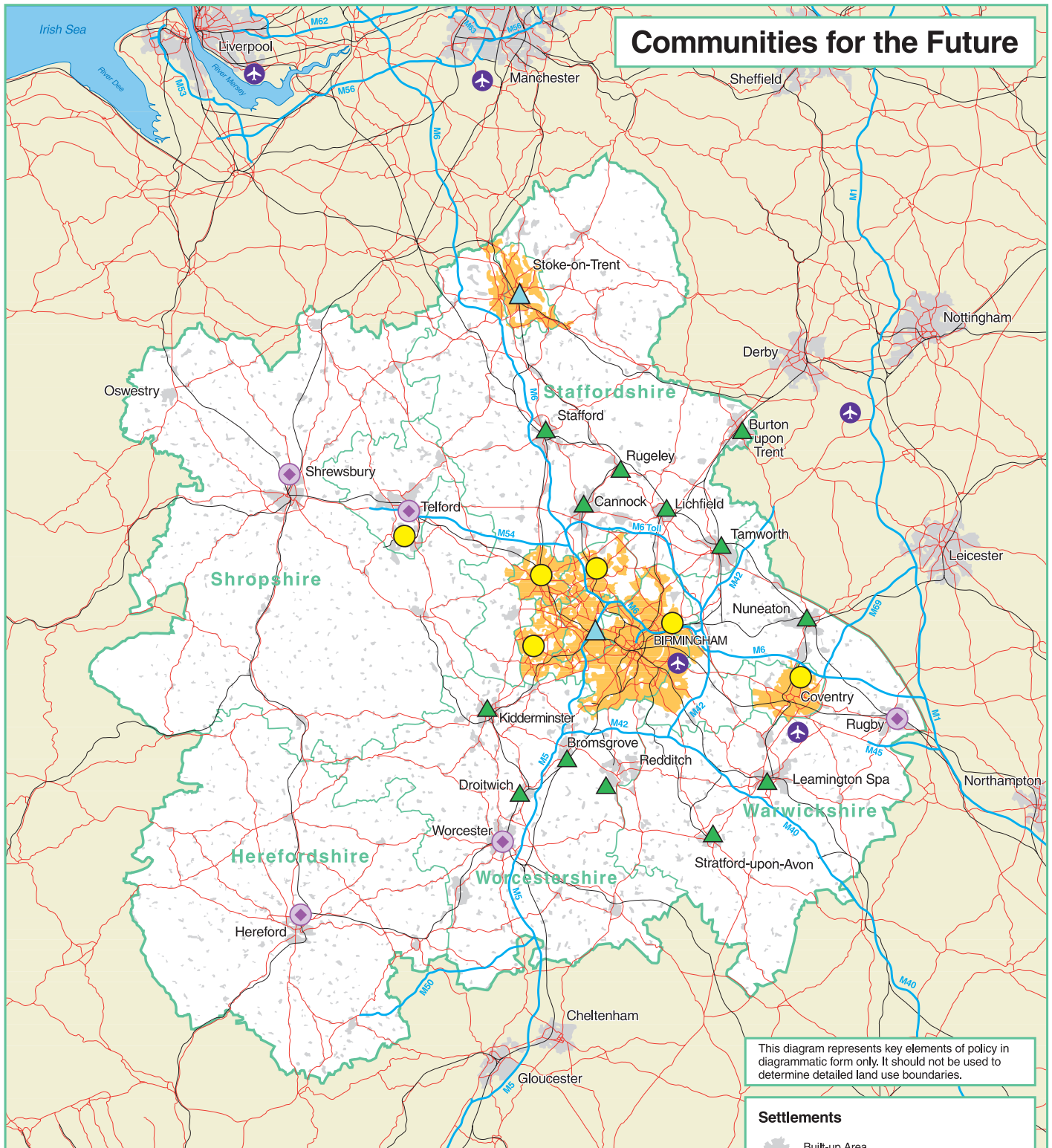
- 6.30 The perception of factors such as crime and school performance can have a considerable influence on people's decisions about where to live. To create sustainable communities it is crucial that actions are co-ordinated and integrated across a wide range of agencies.
- 6.31 In order to ensure communities can be provided with necessary services and social infrastructure, development plans should consider the need to identify opportunities for the development of key facilities, including those for health, education, spiritual, and leisure purposes. In identifying such opportunities, consideration should be given as to the most appropriate and sustainable locations that accord with the Spatial Strategy.
- 6.32 Effective partnership working between planning authorities and partners is needed at all levels to ensure that the necessary linkages are in place between the various strategies and initiatives. The relevant considerations are set out in policy UR4.

6 Planning to Deliver – The managed release of housing sites: towards better practice, DTLR 2001

COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE – MONITORING:

Policy	Target	Indicator	Source of information
OUTPUT INDICATORS			
1. Housing completions and conversions (This is based on proposed National Indicators, see Chapter 10)			
CF1 – Housing within the Major Urban Areas	(a) To provide dwellings in the Region in accordance with the rates set out in Table 1 of policy CF3	(a) totals by planning area	Annual Residential Land Survey.
CF2 – Housing beyond the Major Urban Areas	(b) MUA/Other ratio of:	(b) Housing completions in Major Urban Areas/Other	
CF3 – Levels and distribution of housing development	1:1.6 by 2007, 1:1.1 by 2011 1:0.7 by 2021		
	(c) Target to be determined		
		(c) Number and proportion built at densities of less than 30 dwellings per hectare (net); between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare; and above 50 dwellings per hectare. (This is based on proposed National Indicators, see Chapter 10)	
CF4 – The reuse of land and buildings for housing	(d) 76% of dwellings completed on previously developed land or by reuse of existing buildings by Planning Area between 2001-2011, as set out in Table 3.	(d) Housing completions on greenfield and previously developed land and through conversions of existing buildings (compared with RPG target). (This is based on proposed National Indicators, see Chapter 10)	
CF5 – Delivering affordable housing and mixed communities	(e) 6,000-6,500 affordable dwellings to be provided across the Region each year between 2001-2011	(e) Number and proportion built, split between social housing and affordable/low cost housing financed through S106 agreements, compared with RPG target.	

COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE – MONITORING: continued			
Policy	Target	Indicator	Source of information
OUTPUT INDICATORS – continued			
CF3 – Levels and distribution of housing development	Monitor against Table 2 demolitions	2. Gross number of demolitions and conversions away from residential use	Annual Residential Land Survey
CF3 – Levels and distribution of housing development	Replacement ratio to be 1 : 1 except in Stoke-on-Trent where target is 0.6:1	3. Average replacement ratio of sites in Major Urban Areas.	
PROCESS INDICATORS			
CF5 – Delivering affordable housing and mixed communities	(a) 100% of development plans to make reference to local and sub-regional housing needs assessments.	4. Development Plan conformity: (a) Mix of housing types, etc. related to a local housing needs assessment.	Conformity checks
CF6 – Managing housing land provision	(b) 100% of development plans to contain appropriate phasing policies.	(b) Appropriate phasing (against analysis of completions and site finding)	
CF3 – Levels and distribution of housing development	No adjustment of boundaries at the inner edge of the Green Belt for housing development. Any adjustments to Green Belt boundaries in Shire County areas beyond the MUAs to follow the application of the Communities for the Future policies.	5. Monitor land released for development through the redefinition of Green Belt boundaries	Development Plans
CONTEXTUAL INDICATOR			
CF4 – The reuse of land and buildings for housing	To reduce vacancies	6. Change in the number of vacant dwellings by tenure and location	



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Settlements

- Built-up Area
- Major Urban Area - Main focus for development and investment
- Low Demand Pathfinder
- Housing Renewal Area
- Sub-Regional foci for development beyond MUAs
- Other large settlement

Strategic Links

- Motorway
- A Road
- Railway - Passenger
- Airport
- Strategic Authority Boundary