

7 Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

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Social Objectives

7.1 The RSS seeks to promote cohesive, mixed and thriving communities, where people will want to live, now and in the future. It aims to deliver the objective of ensuring that everyone can have a decent home, which they can afford, in a secure environment, with reasonable access to health care, educational provision and recreational facilities.

It specifically seeks to:

- Build on current knowledge of housing markets in the region, so as to deliver a better balance between housing demand and supply;
- Provide for additional housing, so as to meet changing needs, support economic development, address the requirement for affordable accommodation, and ensure a choice in housing types;
- Improve the quality of the housing stock and its environment.

7.2 Local Authorities and other organisations should give a high priority to the development and improvement of infrastructure and services which are accessible to the whole community. Particular attention should be given to areas where social inclusion is being tackled by initiatives to address lack of employment opportunities (see Working chapter) and poor access to local services (including health⁽⁵⁹⁾, education and training opportunities). Many communities especially in rural areas, however prosperous, are experiencing a decline in local facilities and services⁽⁶⁰⁾ with disabled, younger or older people and those without access to a car being most affected. To maintain viable and sustainable rural communities it is essential to halt the continuing loss of commercial and public sector services, local employment, population, income and social and community services. Many of the problems associated with lack of access are often more acute within the sparse rural areas. Innovative ways of maintaining or re-introducing local services in centres of town and villages that are identified as being deficient or vulnerable to decline should be promoted (see Regional Development Framework chapter).

7.3 The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) have identified a potential need for the future development of prisons and other penal establishments in the region, there are currently 16 prison establishments in the North West provided in accordance with the provisions of the Prisons Act 1952. The identification of locations for these should be in accordance with guidance in Circular 3/98⁽⁶¹⁾.

59 "Technical Advisory Paper on NW Regional Spatial Strategy & Health" Pearl, Department of Civic Design, University of Liverpool, 2004.

60 The State of the Countryside in the North West 2003, Countryside Agency, 2003.

61 Circular 3/98: Planning for Future Prison Development.

Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society 7

Policy L 1

Health, Sport, Recreation, Cultural and Education Services Provision

Plans, strategies, proposals and schemes (including those of education, training and health service providers) should ensure that there is provision for all members of the community (including older people, disabled people and the black & minority ethnic population) for:

- the full spectrum of education, training and skills provision, ranging from childcare and pre-school facilities, through schools, to further and higher education and to continuing education facilities and work-related training;
- health facilities ranging from hospitals down to locally based community health facilities; and
- sport, recreation and cultural facilities.

In doing so they must take account of the views of the local community (including service users) and carry out an assessment of demographic, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational, skills & training and health needs in local communities. Furthermore, they should ensure that accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling is a central consideration.

Particular attention should be given to improving access to and addressing spatial disparities in service and facilities provision, in areas which have the greatest needs (in terms of poverty, deprivation, health and education inequalities, rural service provision), or where communities or the local economy are poorly served.

Proposals and schemes, for all major developments and regeneration schemes, and especially for housing, employment or mixed uses, should ensure appropriate health, cultural, recreational, sport, education and training provision from the outset including for example Children's Centres and SureStart Initiatives.

7.4 The spatial planning agenda stresses the need for local authorities to take issues beyond traditional land use into full account within their plans, strategies and programmes, making use of appraisal tools like health impact assessments. This policy does not seek to provide an exhaustive list of facilities or services which contribute to a healthy, sustainable community. Other strategies, for instance, address the promotion of participation in sport and physical activity for all groups.

7.5 RSS policy on wider service provision is concerned with the need to make these services accessible to everyone in the region. The quality of life of the region's population will be improved through good access to health facilities – one aspect of tackling inequalities. The health of the population is also enhanced by access to sport and recreational facilities. Good access to cultural, education and training provision will empower individuals and provide a more skilled workforce to meet the demands of local businesses (also see Policy W2). As well as helping to promote social inclusion, this policy aims to support North West educational institutions and encourage the retention of students and staff for the benefit of the regional economy. In addressing the implementation of this policy at local level, local authorities and their partners may need to consider issues including:

7 Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

- the location of specialist provision;
- the travel to work patterns of educational, health and other professionals;
- the location of student accommodation;
- provision of services for people in disadvantaged groups, including older people, black & minority ethnic (BME) communities, and rural communities;
- the demands of different economic sectors; and
- provision of services to serve areas of greatest need.

7.6 The Government’s objectives for housing are set out in PPS3⁽⁶²⁾ and the Housing Green Paper⁽⁶³⁾ and include the aims of providing sufficient housing, creating and sustaining mixed communities and improving affordability. Emphasis is placed on a ‘plan, monitor and manage approach’ to housing provision. At the regional level future policies on housing are to be influenced by the Regional Housing Strategy⁽⁶⁴⁾, which sets out strategic regional priorities and linkages between RSS policies and the Regional Economic Strategy. In line with PPS3, there is a need to develop an understanding of housing markets at sub regional and local level in order to inform preparation of plans and strategies.

Policy L 2

Understanding Housing Markets

Local Authorities should develop an understanding of local and sub-regional housing markets by undertaking Strategic Housing Market Assessments, in order to adopt a concerted and comprehensive approach to:

- influence housing supply across all types, sizes, tenures and values to achieve a better match between supply and need;
- improve the quality of the Region’s housing stock;
- support housing market restructuring and renewal;
- overcome increasing issues of affordability; and
- ensure the needs of the wider population are met, including disabled people, students, older people, black & minority ethnic communities and families with children, including single headed households.

7.7 In line with PPS3, Strategic Housing Market Assessments should be undertaken regularly by groups of local authorities, working in partnership with the Regional Planning Body, the house building industry and other interested parties (such as rural housing enablers). These will integrate existing and new studies into all aspects of housing needs, housing market assessment, existing housing stock condition, the availability of land for development and related issues. It will allow the collection of detailed information which can be used to inform policy relating to the management, renewal and regeneration of the existing housing stock, its renewal and regeneration and the building of new homes, including affordable housing and stock that meets specific local needs. Where appropriate these assessments should include joint work with

62 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, DCLG, 2006.

63 Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable, DCLG, 2007.

64 North West Regional Housing Strategy 2005, North West Regional Housing Board, 2005.

Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society 7

adjoining Local Authorities and other stakeholders in other regions (e.g. North East Wales, North Staffordshire etc). In some circumstances, especially in rural areas, it may be necessary to undertake further more detailed local survey work to assess particular needs.

7.8 Regular Strategic Housing Market Assessments must be accompanied by a continuous process of monitoring housing market trends and drivers, as set out in PPS3 and accompanying guidance⁽⁶⁵⁾. This should provide a basis for adjusting policy and management approaches at both local and regional level, as the impacts of current policies and changing market trends are understood.

7.9 Demographic trends will mean considerable increases in the proportion of older people by 2021. Coupled with the complexity associated with changing lifestyle and housing aspirations, this means that there is a need for:

- housing that more flexibly meets lifestyle changes;
- more variation in the housing offer to reflect the changing nature of household size and need; and
- specialist provision such as extra care homes.

7.10 There is also the requirement to assess the housing needs of gypsies and travellers in the Region. In this respect, the Regional Planning Body, in partnership with the Regional Housing Board has undertaken research on the future requirements of gypsies and travellers. This will inform a future review of both RSS and the Regional Housing Strategy.

7 Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

Policy L 3

Existing Housing Stock and Housing Renewal

Plans and strategies, across the North West, but particularly in:

- a. Housing Market Renewal Initiative Pathfinder Areas:
 - New Heartlands (- Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral);
 - Manchester and Salford;
 - Oldham and Rochdale;
 - Elevate (- Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale);
- b. West Cumbria and Furness Housing Market Renewal Areas;
- c. Lancashire Coastal Towns of Blackpool / Fleetwood and Morecambe;
- d. Other urban areas in the Manchester & Liverpool City Regions in need of housing regeneration \ market restructuring;

should:

- respond to any need to substantially restructure local housing markets;
- take account of and understand housing markets;
- manage the delivery of new build and its impacts on the existing housing stock;
- reduce vacancy rates to 3% in the existing dwelling stock, through the increased re-use of suitable vacant housing; and
- where appropriate make the best use of the existing stock.

Plans and strategies should designate areas, where necessary, for comprehensive regeneration as part of a broader course of action to regenerate local communities, reduce health inequalities, improve the sustainability and resource efficiency of the housing stock and its local environmental quality and increase numbers of and access to local jobs and services. The approach to be adopted, whether clearance, or renewal and refurbishment, or a mix of these, will depend on local circumstances.

Plans and strategies for comprehensive regeneration should:

- involve and engage the local community in determining the future of its area;
- include a prior evaluation of the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of the way any proposed clearance and after-uses will affect the surrounding area and the local community; and
- incorporate a clear and comprehensive action plan for implementing proposals, linked to the availability of resources.

7.11 One of the biggest problems facing the North West is the condition of some of its existing housing stock and the subsequent need to restructure housing markets in certain areas. Research in 2004 ⁽⁶⁶⁾ concluded that the poor state of the region's housing stock should be recognised as

Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society 7

one of the most significant factors detracting from the health of NW residents. This is now being tackled in line with the Sustainable Communities Plan, Northern Way Growth Strategy, the Regional Housing Strategy and the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Initiative.

7.12 The challenge in these areas, and elsewhere in the North West, is to ensure that the right mix of housing stock – in terms of type, size and tenure – is available to meet the needs and aspirations of residents (including BME communities), and to create the kind of communities and neighbourhoods where people actually want to live, while at the same time ensuring that the region's economic growth is supported in a sustainable way.

7.13 Whilst existing stock will be retained and refurbished wherever possible and appropriate, there may be a need for housing clearance in areas where it is:

- unfit to inhabit;
- beyond economic repair;
- life expired and unsuitable for modern living;
- in areas of extremely low demand; or
- where clearance is necessary to assist the local housing market or overall improvement or regeneration of the area.

7.14 In addressing clearance, local planning authorities will need to take account of local circumstances and distinctiveness. The likely implications for the provision of future housing land should be assessed as part of the ongoing monitoring and review of RSS, regional and local housing strategies and Local Development Frameworks. It should also be considered whether properties need necessarily be replaced on a one-for-one basis.

7.15 In addition to new build and conversion activity, the opportunity exists to make better use of existing housing stock. Local authorities are encouraged to take a positive, coordinated approach towards dealing with under used housing stock, for example by identifying vacant and underused properties and introducing empty property strategies to help bring them back into full use. The domestic sector accounts for nearly 30% of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from energy use. If this is to be reduced, then high standards of energy efficiency in new and existing housing is crucial, and other measures, such as microgeneration of energy from renewable sources on residential property should be encouraged (see policy EM16 and EM18). In addition, the predicted changing climatic conditions⁽⁶⁷⁾ mean that climate proofing of new and existing dwellings, using future climate change data will also be important to ensure that the provision of housing stock is fit for purpose. New housing development should incorporate sustainable drainage systems and water conservation and efficiency measures to the highest contemporary standard, and retrofitting of sustainable drainage systems and water efficiency within existing development should be encouraged (see policy EM5).

67 "Spatial Implications Of Climate Change For The North West": Centre for Urban & Regional Ecology, University of Manchester and Tyndall Centre North, UMIST 2003.

7 Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

Policy L 4

Regional Housing Provision

Local Authorities should monitor and manage the availability of land identified in plans and strategies and through development control decisions on proposals and schemes, to achieve the housing provision (net of clearance replacement) set out in Table 7.1.

In doing so they should:

- work in partnership with developers and other housing providers to address the housing requirements (including local needs and affordable housing needs) of different groups, (for example disabled people, students, older people, black & minority ethnic communities and families with children including single headed households) to ensure the construction of a mix of appropriate house types, sizes, tenures and prices, in line with policies L2, L3 and L5;
- use the results of up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments ⁽⁶⁸⁾ to inform the allocation of and development control decisions upon specific sites;
- encourage new homes to be built to Code for Sustainable Homes ⁽⁶⁹⁾ standards and promote the use of the Lifetime Homes standard;
- ensure that new housing development does not have an adverse cumulative impact on the existing housing stock and market;
- ensure that new dwellings will be served by adequate water supply and sewage management facilities;
- allow for clearance replacement to reflect local circumstances, as a mechanism for the recreation of viable and sustainable neighbourhoods;
- introduce phasing policies which secure the orderly and managed release of housing land over the period of the plan in line with the sequential approach set out in Policy DP4, taking into account the need for co-ordinated provision of necessary infrastructure and the overall availability of land for housing;
- ensure that the transport networks (including public transport, pedestrian and cycle) can accommodate additional demand generated by new housing; and
- maximise the re-use of vacant and under-used brownfield land and buildings in line with Policy DP4 and indicative targets set out in Table 7.1.

For the purpose of producing Local Development Frameworks, local planning authorities should assume that the average annual requirement set out in Table 7.1 will continue for a limited period beyond 2021.

7.16 The scale of housing provision and its distribution seeks to support the economic growth of the North West in line with the overall aspirations of the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy. In doing so, it seeks to focus development in those locations which are the key future economic drivers of the regions economy, whilst also taking account of ⁽⁷⁰⁾:

68 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance, DCLG, 2007.

69 "Proposals for Introducing a Code for Sustainable Homes - A Consultation Paper", ODPM, 2005.

70 Further details on how this approach has been derived are set out in the RSS Technical Appendix.

Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society 7

- regional development framework, sub regional policies and sustainable development principles embedded within RSS;
- impacts of economic growth scenarios on household growth and its distribution across the NW;
- need to address regional and sub regional disparities;
- future supply constraints;
- impact on existing housing markets and stock especially in those areas identified in Policy L3;
- need to support regeneration;
- need to provide affordable housing; and
- need to sustain rural communities.

In this respect the majority of new housing will be located in the three City Regions.

7.17 The Regional Flood Risk Appraisal provides a broad overview of flood risk issues in the North West, identifying higher risk areas including Salford, Manchester, Chorley, South Ribble and Lancaster. Plans, strategies, proposals and schemes should appraise, manage and reduce risk, with early completion of Strategic Flood Risk Assessments a key objective to facilitate this.

7.18 The recommended distribution of housing provision between different parts of the North West (Table 7.1), reflects RSS and Regional Housing Strategy objectives, regional development framework and sub regional policies within RSS and takes account of the various strategic priorities and functional linkages, described below, that should be focused upon, in each area⁽⁷¹⁾. Clearly, housing market characteristics and conditions cannot be precisely or uniformly pinpointed to particular districts and these priorities are not necessarily the only issues that apply in each area.

- Manchester / Salford and Liverpool / Knowsley** – provision of sufficient new residential development to support the role of the Regional Centres and inner city areas, including those parts involved in the Government’s Housing Market Renewal Programme’s Pathfinder Initiative (including replacement and renewal of housing stock), as priority areas for economic growth and regeneration. Outside the inner city areas, development should be complementary to the regeneration of the inner core, and be focused on regenerating existing housing areas which suffer from high levels of deprivation.
- Pennine Manchester, Central East Lancashire and East Lancashire** – support for potential economic growth and regeneration, particularly in Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas; including replacement and renewal of housing stock and, where appropriate, the development of a wider range of housing types (including high quality market housing). This should be achieved while ensuring that local and affordable housing needs can be met elsewhere.
- Southern Manchester / North East Cheshire** – except in that part of Trafford lying within or adjacent to the Regional Centre, continued careful monitoring and management of housing provision will be necessary to ensure that new housing development does not result in an adverse cumulative impact on local and neighbouring housing markets. Provision should focus on meeting local and affordable housing needs, and support agreed local regeneration strategies. Within Macclesfield and Congleton, this development should take place within the context of the economic and social linkages with both the rest of the

⁷¹ They are not meant to represent distinct housing market areas. These will vary dependant upon different segments of the market and their functionality.

7 Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

Manchester City Region and also the Potteries and the North Staffordshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder.

- d. **Northern Manchester, Mid Mersey and Greater Preston** – provision of sufficient new residential development to support the potential for economic growth and local regeneration strategies (including replacement and renewal of housing stock), a wider range of general and high quality market housing (in sustainable locations which are well served by public transport), while at the same time ensuring the ability to meet local needs and requirements for affordable housing. In Warrington the focus will be on housing provision which meets local and affordable housing needs, and development in support of agreed local regeneration strategies, with continued careful monitoring and management of housing provision, to ensure that new housing development does not result in an adverse cumulative impact on local and neighbouring housing markets.
- e. **South West Lancashire** – continued careful monitoring and management of housing provision will be necessary to ensure that new housing development does not result in an adverse cumulative impact on local and neighbouring housing markets. Housing provision should focus on meeting local market and affordable housing needs, especially in Ormskirk, Burscough and the northern part of Sefton; and on development in sustainable locations well served by public transport to support agreed local regeneration strategies in Skelmersdale. In the southern part of Sefton the focus will be on providing sufficient new residential development to support inner areas as a priority area for economic growth and regeneration and Housing Market Renewal Initiative Pathfinder activity.
- f. **Wirral** – provision of sufficient new residential development in the eastern part of the district to support the inner areas as a priority for economic growth and regeneration, including via the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder scheme (including replacement and renewal of housing stock). Elsewhere in the Wirral provision should focus on meeting local and affordable housing needs, with careful monitoring and management of housing provision, to ensure that new housing development does not result in an adverse cumulative impact on local and neighbouring housing markets.
- g. **Fylde Peninsula** – support for regeneration (including replacement and renewal of housing stock) and the potential for economic growth in Blackpool and Fleetwood, while ensuring that local and affordable housing needs can be met elsewhere in the Fylde Peninsula.
- h. **West Cumbria and Furness** – provision of sufficient new residential development to support housing market restructuring and regeneration (including replacement and renewal of housing stock), while ensuring that local and affordable housing needs of rural communities can be met elsewhere in West Cumbria and Furness.
- i. **Lakes & Morecambe Bay** – continued provision of housing to meet local and affordable housing needs of the area's communities, by delivering a choice of properties to suit the local population and workforce. General market housing should be focused in support of regeneration priorities and meeting agreed community priorities, especially within Morecambe and the Furness Peninsula part of South Lakeland, in and around Ulverston. Housing in the Lake District National Park must be developed in keeping with the scale and type that has been identified as appropriate to the area's strict requirements on meeting identified local and affordable needs of the locality.
- j. **North Cumbria** – provision of sufficient new residential development to support the economic growth and regeneration of Carlisle, while ensuring that the local and affordable housing needs of rural communities can be met elsewhere.
- k. **South Cheshire** – provision of housing to meet local and affordable needs, plus general market housing (in sustainable locations which are well served by public transport) to support agreed local regeneration strategies, and the role of Crewe as a key regional town and gateway to the North West. All development should take place within the context of

Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society 7

the economic and social links with the rest of Manchester City Region, West Cheshire, the Potteries and the North Staffordshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder scheme.

- I. **West Cheshire** – provision of sufficient new residential development to support the economy of Chester and regeneration of Ellesmere Port, while ensuring that local and affordable housing needs can still be met. All this development should take place within the context of the significant economic and social links that exist with North East Wales and the Liverpool City Region. In Vale Royal sufficient housing development to support key local regeneration priorities particularly in Northwich town centre and to address affordable housing needs.

7.19 Detailed advice on managing the supply of housing land is given in PPS3 and in subsequent CLG advice⁽⁷²⁾. Local authorities should manage their allocation of land and granting of planning permissions to maintain a minimum five year supply of deliverable housing land, and use their housing trajectory to help monitor and manage the achievement of the figures shown in Table 7.1, and the extent to which this meets local need and demand for housing. The requirement figures are expressed as ‘net of clearance replacement’, that is to say they are net dwelling gains or the increase over and above the replacement of any dwellings lost through conversion to non residential use or demolition. The overall housing requirement figures for the period covered by this RSS from 2003 to 2021 and the annual average figures are not absolute targets and may be exceeded where justified by evidence of need, demand, affordability and sustainability issues and fit with relevant local and sub-regional strategies. Policies DP1-9 and policy RDF1 should be considered in the application of this policy. Some areas will achieve lower levels in the early years, for example during major housing renewal, which will be compensated later. It is important to ensure that a range of house types, sizes, tenures and prices, which address the housing requirements (including local needs and affordable housing needs), of different groups in the community, whilst making the best use of available land. To achieve this it will be important to build housing at appropriate densities taking account of local circumstances.

7.20 The location of housing will be determined through the Local Development Framework process, using a sequential approach taken to development form in line with DP4. Land supply management should be developed in line with results of Strategic Housing Market Assessments, an assessment of existing housing provision and the potential of urban areas to accommodate more. Local Planning Authorities should take the following guiding principles into account when deciding how development should be phased:

- phasing will be based on the Local Development Framework process; housing land supply should be actively managed in line with PPS3;
- new housing should be located so as to prioritise the re-use of brownfield land and buildings within existing urban areas that are accessible by a choice of transport methods in line with DP4 and W4;
- sites should not be released unless sufficient capacity including water supply and waste-water treatment exists or can be provided ahead of the development without environmental harm in line with EM5.

Local authorities should be aware of the policy framework and potential provision of housing land that exists in adjoining areas taking a joint approach where possible. A consistent approach across the sub region will ensure that an early release of land in one district does not undermine urban renaissance in another.

72 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3), DCLG, 2006; and Demonstrating a 5 Year Supply of Deliverable Sites, CLG advice available at <http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk>.

7 Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

7.21 Where housing market areas cross administrative (and in some cases regional) boundaries, or where major disparities in levels of previously developed land exist between neighbouring authorities, cooperation and joint working will be necessary to ensure that sites are released in a way that supports sustainable patterns of development. The Local Planning Authorities involved should take care not to either pursue Local Development Framework allocations or else grant planning permissions that result in over provision and early release of land in one district to the detriment of urban renaissance either in the same district or in other Local Authority areas. Where a particular district has insufficient sustainable sites that match the above criteria to meet their target, they should consider working with their neighbours to find ways of meeting the balance elsewhere in the sub region.

Table 7.1 Distribution of Regional Housing Provision 2003-2021

	Total Housing Provision 2003 – 2021 (Net of clearance replacement)	Annual Average rates of Housing Provision (Net of clearance replacement)	Indicative target proportion of housing provision to use brownfield land & buildings
NORTH WEST	416,000	23,111	At least 70%
Manchester / Salford			
Manchester	63,000	3,500	At least 90%
Salford	28,800	1,600	
Pennine Manchester			
Oldham	5,200	289	At least 80%
Rochdale	7,200	400	
Tameside	13,500	750	
Southern Manchester / North East Cheshire			
Stockport	8,100	450	At least 80%
Trafford	10,400	578	
Congleton	5,400	300	
Macclesfield	7,200	400	
Northern Manchester			
Bolton	10,400	578	At least 80%
Bury	9,000	500	
Wigan	17,600	978	
Liverpool / Knowsley			
Knowsley	8,100	450	At least 65%
Liverpool	35,100	1,950	At least 90%
Mid Mersey			
Halton	9,000	500	At least 65%
St Helens	10,260	570	At least 80%
Warrington	6,840	380	
Wirral			
Wirral	9,000	500	At least 80%
South West Lancashire			
Sefton	9,000	500	At least 65%
West Lancashire	5,400	300	
Greater Preston			
Chorley	7,500	417	At least 70%
Preston	9,120	507	

Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society 7

	Total Housing Provision 2003 – 2021 (Net of clearance replacement)	Annual Average rates of Housing Provision (Net of clearance replacement)	Indicative target proportion of housing provision to use brownfield land & buildings
South Ribble	7,500	417	
Central East Lancashire			
Blackburn with Darwen	8,800	489	At least 65%
Hyndburn	3,400	189	
RibbleValley	2,900	161	
East Lancashire			
Burnley	2,340	130	At least 65%
Pendle	3,420	190	
Rosendale	4,000	222	
Fylde Peninsula			
Wyre	3,700	206	At least 65%
Blackpool	8,000	444	
Fylde	5,500	306	
West Cumbria and Furness			
Allerdale (outside of National Park)	4,800	267	At least 50%
Barrow in Furness	2,700	150	At least 80%
Copeland (outside of National Park)	4,140	230	At least 50%
Lakes & Morecambe Bay			
Eden (outside of National Park)	4,300	239	At least 50%
South Lakeland (outside of National Park)	7,200	400	
Lake District National Park	1,080	60	
Lancaster	7,200	400	At least 70%
North Cumbria			
Carlisle	8,100	450	At least 50%
South Cheshire			
Crewe and Nantwich	8,100	450	At least 60%
West Cheshire			
Chester	7,500	417	At least 80%
Ellesmere Port and Neston	7,200	400	
Vale Royal	9,000	500	

7 Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

Policy L 5

Affordable Housing

Plans and strategies should set out requirements for affordable housing⁽⁷³⁾, and the location, size and types of development to which these requirements apply. Evidence, including from Strategic Housing Market Assessments, should be used to support the setting of quotas and thresholds for affordable housing provision along with an indication of the type, size and tenure of affordable housing required.

It is anticipated that the greatest need will be in areas of high demand where affordability issues are unbalancing local communities, due to high prices and low wages and/or the adverse effects of second homes, although affordability is an increasing concern in many parts of the region.

Plans and strategies should set out a range of delivery mechanisms to secure the provision of affordable housing. Local authorities should consider all or some of the following where appropriate:

- seeking a proportion of affordable housing on all development sites which are above the relevant thresholds;
- allocating the development of sites solely (or primarily) for affordable housing use (i.e. up to 100% affordable in rural areas), where necessary;
- using local occupancy criteria to support provision for local housing need so long as this need can be clearly demonstrated, to be implemented through the use of planning conditions and obligations;
- actively promoting the rural exception site policy;
- for all sites containing housing in rural settlements with populations of under 3,000 promote onsite affordable housing provision and where on site affordable housing provision is not possible, seeking developer contributions towards affordable housing;
- making the most of publicly owned land;
- making the most of existing housing stock;
- in line with Policy W4, permitting the conversion of buildings in sustainable locations to residential use (including as part of mixed use schemes), particularly where commercial premises which are vacant or under-used and offer no long term potential or viable contribution to the local economy;
- encouraging employers to provide housing for their key workers;
- ensuring that wherever possible (and subject to continuing evidence), that property remains affordable and available in perpetuity.

73 Affordable housing is defined in Annex B of Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS), DCLG, 2006.

Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society 7

7.22 The affordability of housing is established by taking into account the ratio between income levels and house prices or rents (a more detailed and reliable picture can be obtained by mapping lower quartile incomes to lower quartile house prices). To a greater or lesser extent, there is a shortage of supply of affordable housing in all parts of the North West ⁽⁷⁴⁾, and certain issues are relevant to both rural and urban areas, not least the need to maintain sustainable, balanced communities. Additionally in some locations affordability needs are compounded by low wage levels, which inhibit access to the housing market. The holistic approach necessary to address the problems caused by this shortage is considered in more detail in the Regional Housing Strategy ⁽⁷⁵⁾, whilst action to tackle the low wage economy of some areas is tackled by both the economic policies of this RSS and the Regional Economic Strategy.

7.23 Using the results of up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessments and local studies where appropriate, local authorities must address the need for more affordable housing and identify the methods by which they will aim to introduce an element of affordable housing into residential and mixed use development schemes, ensuring long term provision and availability in perpetuity, which may include the need to set conditions relating to occupancy. Such assessments should identify the specific needs of particular groups within the community.

7.24 For monitoring purposes, in line with current practice, all affordable housing constructed (including that built on 'rural exceptions sites') will count towards an individual districts housing provision figures set out in Table 7.1.

74 Table 4.11 Appendix 4 – "North West Household Growth Estimates Study" prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners for North West Regional Assembly, 2005.

75 Priority 2 of "The North West Regional Housing Strategy 2005" North West Regional Housing Board, 2005.