

## 7. HOUSING

- 7.1 Good quality housing is a basic human requirement which everyone has a right to expect. The planning system has a role to play in ensuring a continuous supply of land which is adequate to meet housing need, having regard to market demand and Government policies. However, it must also ensure that environmental principles are recognised and given due priority. The conservation of natural habitats; the protection of the countryside and of the best agricultural land; the enhancement of the urban environment; and the conservation of mineral resources must be balanced against the need for housing.
- 7.2 This “balancing act” occurs across all the concerns of planning, but the position of housing as a basic human need and as the largest built use of land makes it a particularly important issue.
- 7.3 The 1992-based household projections published by the Government in 1995 indicated a need for 4.4 million new homes to be built between 1991 and 2016 in England. This level of growth is mainly due to reducing household sizes, which by 1996 averaged 2.4 persons per house. The projected growth in household numbers reflect a complexity of social and demographic factors. In particular, increased prosperity is allowing more people to live in separate homes, improved standards of living and health care are allowing people to live longer, and changes in behaviour, including attitudes to marriage, have produced more separate households. Household numbers would therefore increase even given a static population. The subsequent 1996-based household projections have indicated a somewhat reduced level of growth. Any future review of the Structure Plan and reassessment of housing provision can take account of any changes in demographic and household formation trends that may be reflected in revised household projections.
- 7.4 Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands Region (RPG11, as revised 1998) stresses that a substantial majority of the additional housing provision across the region should take the form of new housing on previously developed land and conversions within urban areas. The West Midlands Local Government Association have been asked to identify a target for the proportion of new housing to be developed from these sources up to 2011, and have indicated that at least 61% of new housing across the region as a whole should be found on recycled sites.
- 7.5 With regard to the level of housing provision in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, RPG11 proposes that, for the period 1991-2011, there should be 335,000 new dwellings provided in the region, of which 70,400 should be in the Plan Area.
- 7.6 Further work relating to these housing requirements has produced a perspective on how the 70,400 household figure should be distributed.
- 7.7 A consideration of migration flows using information available from both the 1991 Census and trends from the National Health Service Central Register suggests that, for the period 1996-2011, net inward migration into the Plan area is likely to be relatively modest equating to around 500 households. However, these net flows are made up by a major net inward flow from the West Midlands Conurbation, offset by net outward flows to other areas of the country. These different migration flows have different spatial impacts. Flows from the West Midlands Conurbation mainly relate to the Central Crescent. Flows to and from other parts of the country relate to all parts of the County but have particular implications for net outflow from North Staffordshire.
- 7.8 Local housing needs also differ across the Plan area, depending on the age structure of the population in different areas.

- 7.9 It should be recognised that all sources of available information used in the projections are imperfect and liable to considerable variation over time. Projections may, therefore, be used to inform the debate on the level and distribution of housing but should not be an absolute prescription for the Plan. In the final analysis, the main determinant of housing provision must be Government policy, as embodied in Regional Planning Guidance, together with the physical and environmental capacity of the Plan area.
- 7.10 It is apparent from the projections, however, that the requirement for new housing development across the Plan area is uneven. Local needs are greatest in the south of the Plan area, as is the pressure to cater for migration which is not offset in reality by the outflow of households currently being experienced in the north.
- 7.11 North Staffordshire must therefore be regarded as a largely separate housing market. It is anticipated that the presence of a continuing supply of housing land in this area (most of which is already committed or likely to take place on small urban sites) may, in due course, help to stem out-migration. Growth in the housing market will be stimulated further by current major employment initiatives and the provision of good quality housing will in turn assist the regeneration process.
- 7.12 It is in southern Staffordshire, however, where the greatest pressures for housing to meet the needs of local people and of migrants from the nearby West Midlands Conurbation will continue to be experienced. The problem of accommodating development is made particularly difficult by the numerous and extensive constraints on development which need to be taken into account. These include Green Belt, the best and most versatile agricultural land, mineral reserves, the limited capacity of major roads in transport corridors and the need to conserve the quality of existing settlements, including the historic City of Lichfield. The proposed strategy locates the bulk of new housing development yet to be committed within the Central Crescent area of southern Staffordshire in accordance with the numerical and locational provisions of Regional Planning Guidance.
- 7.13 The West Midlands Local Government Association's aspirational target for the Region as a whole of at least 61% of all new housing to be developed on previously used land poses challenges when attempting to locate suitable land with market potential, while preserving open land with amenity value within urban areas. The current total supply of land committed for housing development on recycled land throughout the Plan area, amounts to approximately 56%. However, this is not evenly distributed. In certain urban areas, including Stoke-on-Trent, the percentage is significantly higher than the 61%, while in the more rural Districts, it falls to below 40%.
- 7.14 Most new housing initiatives should concentrate on maximising the use of recycled land within the main urban areas and should minimise the impact of development on the countryside and specifically on greenfield sites. Nevertheless, given the paucity of land with potential for redevelopment for housing in the south of the County, a target of significantly more than 55% brownfield development for the whole of the Plan area to 2011 is considered to be probably unrealistic. Attempts should be made to encourage new development within urban areas without raising the problems of "town cramming". Mixed use developments are encouraged to provide attractive new urban environments and measures are proposed to bring into use large areas of vacant or under-used space in towns. Development in rural areas, except where major allocations are proposed, is discouraged unless exceptional circumstances exist, and then should only take place within village envelopes.

7.15 Related to the problem of physically accommodating development in the right area is the critical need in some areas to make provision for affordable housing. The term affordable housing includes both low cost market housing for sale and housing for rent or shared ownership provided by a housing association, local authority or other registered social landlord. Housing need studies currently being prepared by several District Councils may assist in determining these requirements and also in determining the feasible levels at which this type of provision can be delivered in locations accessible to jobs and services. However, in some of the higher demand areas of the County, it will not be possible to meet all the potential needs for affordable housing. Housing associations and other providers of subsidised housing need to look at opportunities available within the existing housing stock and through conversions to meet an element of this need.

## **Housing Provision**

**H1 Sufficient land should be allocated to enable 51,800 dwellings to be completed 1996-2011, to be located as follows:**

**Staffordshire Moorlands 3,000 dwellings**

**Newcastle-under-Lyme 3,000 dwellings**

**Stoke-on-Trent 8,500 dwellings**

**Stafford 5,600 dwellings**  
- new allocations to be concentrated mainly in and adjoining the town of Stafford.

**East Staffordshire 6,500 dwellings**  
- new allocations to be concentrated mainly in and adjoining the towns of Burton upon Trent and Uttoxeter.

**South Staffordshire 5,100 dwellings**  
- to include a maximum allocation of 1,000 dwellings between Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay/Essington\* (see para. 1.12) and/or further possible developments around the new railway station at Brinsford, including land at the former Featherstone Ordnance Depot, subject to a commitment to the provision of this station having first been secured. These schemes will require the release of Green Belt land.

**Cannock Chase 7,300 dwellings**  
- to include provision for some 500\* dwellings as part of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme in the east of Rugeley that will involve a minor redrawing of the Green Belt boundary to follow the Eastern Bypass south of the A513, subject to a commitment to full funding for the completion of the Eastern Bypass having first been secured.

**Lichfield 7,800 dwellings**  
- to include new allocations:  
(i) for some 500\* dwellings as part of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme in the east of Rugeley that will involve a minor redrawing of the Green Belt boundary to follow the Eastern Bypass south of the A513, subject to a commitment to full funding for the completion of the Eastern Bypass having first been secured;

**(ii) for some 1,400 dwellings north-east of Lichfield centred around the former Fradley Airfield, with capacity allowed for at least a further 1,600 dwellings beyond the Plan period, subject to meeting the requirements of Policies IM1 and IM2;**

**(iii) for some 1,000 dwellings adjacent to the northern edge of Tamworth.**

**Tamworth 5,000 dwellings**  
**- where release of land in the Anker Valley area in the north-east of the Borough will be required to co-ordinate with the development proposed within Lichfield District, and the release of Green Belt may be required in the Dosthill/Hockley area.**

**\* The final distribution of 1,000 dwellings (or what the area will accommodate) proposed in the brownfield Rugeley Eastern Redevelopment Zone between Cannock Chase and Lichfield will follow on from a comprehensive study and the preparation of a joint development brief as part of the review of the local plans for those authorities.**

- 7.16 The assumption underlying Policy H1 is that sufficient land should be allocated in local plans, or otherwise committed by planning permission, to enable approximately 51,800 dwellings to be built in the Plan period. However, the state of both national and local housing markets at a particular point in time will be an important consideration as to whether this level of development can be achieved within the Plan period. Equally important will be decisions on the 'brownfield/greenfield' mix of sites and whether development on greenfield sites should be phased.
- 7.17 District Councils will have to determine, as part of their local plan preparation, the flexibility allowance which should be applied to housing proposals to secure an appropriate level of housing completions, while at the same time meeting the other objectives of the Plan. In making such assessments, authorities will, no doubt, recognise that many commitments have been recently defined via the plan-led system, and have been tested at local plan inquiries. Future site allocations should have regard to their capability of implementation, with a view to reducing the need for over-provision which could lead to the unnecessary loss of open land and a further dilution of the scarce resources available for services.
- 7.18 Some 18,800 houses were completed in the period 1991-1996. The proposals in Policy H1 relate to the residual requirement of 51,800 houses for the period 1996-2011 to bring the total to the 70,400 figure 1991-2011, stated in RPG11 (based on a figure of 18,600 housing completions 1991-1996). Since publication of the Deposit Plan, the calculation of completions 1991-1996 has been revised to 18,800 following consultation with the District Councils. It is not considered that the discrepancy is of sufficient magnitude to warrant a downward revision of the housing allocation and incumbent redistribution across the Plan area. Table 2 shows how the housing provision is made up for each local authority in terms of completions since 1996, outstanding commitments and the remaining balance to be found.

**TABLE 2: Summary of Housing Provision by Local Authority Area (at April 1999)**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Total Provision 1996-2011</b>	<b>Completions 1996-1999</b>	<b>Dwellings Committed<sup>1</sup> 1999</b>	<b>Balance<sup>2</sup></b>
Staffs. Moorlands	3,000	580	2,410	10
Newcastle	3,000	870	1,720	410
Stoke-on-Trent	8,500	1,900	5,810	790
Stafford	5,600	1,270	3,500	840
East Staffordshire	6,500	1,970	3,000	1,530
South Staffordshire	5,100	880	1,150	3,070
				including new major development at Great Wyrley/ Cheslyn Hay / Essington* (see para. 1.12) up to 1,000 and/or Brinsford/ Featherstone
Cannock Chase	7,300	1,250	2,980	3,070
				including new major development at Rugeley 500 <sup>3</sup>
Lichfield	7,800	770	2,740	4,290
				including new major development at Rugeley 500 <sup>3</sup> , Fradley 1,400, north-east of Tamworth 1,000
Tamworth	5,000	1,140	950	2,910
<b>STAFFORDSHIRE</b>	<b>51,800<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>10,610</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>16,930</b>

Totals may not agree due to rounding.

- NOTES:
1. Commitments are defined as dwellings under construction at April 1999, planning permissions outstanding, adopted local plan allocations, and allocations in deposit draft local plans (latest information). The figure includes commitments on small sites of less than 0.4ha. Figures for dwelling commitments reflect densities on sites with planning permission and District Council density assumptions on local plan allocations. The yield of dwellings from committed sites may rise subject to a review of site densities in the renewal of planning permissions and local plan allocations.
  2. The balance figure subsumes unidentifiable windfall and small sites not taken account of in local plans, and identified safeguarded land with development potential beyond 2001.
  3. Approximate figure – to be refined following further comprehensive study.
  4. To be consistent with the methodology of RPG11, the allocation in Policy H1 represents gross additions to the dwelling stock and includes an assumption for the replacement of an estimated 3,450 dwellings (1996-2011) lost through demolition. In the review of local plans, District Councils should assess the demolition assumptions, set out in Table 2 of the Housing Background Paper published in June 1999, on the basis of the latest available information.

- 7.19 As Table 2 indicates, approximately 20% of the total provision was completed and 47% already committed through planning permission or allocated in a local plan at April 1999. When revising their local plans, District Councils should investigate whether any of these allocations should still be retained or the site densities raised. Where planning permissions lapse, they should decide whether permission should be renewed in the light of the need to create more sustainable developments, in accordance with Policies D1 and H2. The proportion of commitments and small balance of sites to be found in some local authority areas requires this process to be rigorous to ensure that the housing requirement is not significantly exceeded and greenfield sites developed unnecessarily. In calculating the number of sites to be defined, local plan authorities should consider the number of dwellings which are likely to come forward in the future on unidentified sites, having regard to past rates of development and the future potential for such sites.
- 7.20 Policy H1 distributes the total provision of 51,800 to each local authority area in accordance with the general geographical prescription in RPG11, while having regard to local pressures and constraints. A high proportion of the additional provision to be found arises within the Central Crescent, to meet both local housing needs and the needs of migrants from the West Midlands Conurbation.
- 7.21 Within the Crescent area, major housing development is proposed mainly in or close to the main urban areas on the outer edge and beyond the Green Belt. The prime objective has been to facilitate the creation of communities with a mix of housing, employment and related uses which will progressively achieve a greater degree of self-containment, and are in line with sustainability objectives. Nevertheless, the existence of commuting is accepted and particular regard has been paid, when considering development options, to the existence of (or the potential for) regular public transport, especially rail links, to enable access to the West Midlands Conurbation and other main employment centres.
- 7.22 The potential and feasibility of areas to meet the development requirement within the period of the Plan has also been a determining factor. This has resulted in a spread of provision which is seen as being capable of meeting likely local needs, particularly from the main settlements across the area, while also catering for some migration.
- 7.23 Further locations should be sought in local plans which accord with the overall strategy and policies of the Plan. Limits on the amount of recycled land in southern Staffordshire generally and the limited number of practical development options available must, however, be recognised. Decisions need to take account of any requirement to breach major development thresholds, and therefore the cost of the necessary infrastructure.
- 7.24 There is also a requirement to give consideration to suitable development opportunities beyond the current Plan period. In the case of Lichfield, this has been addressed in this Plan, insofar as there is explicit reference in Policy H1 to the growth potential at nearby Fradley. Long term options in some other areas are, however, not so clear-cut. The expansion of Tamworth beyond 2011, for example, requires particular attention given the environmental, physical and policy constraints which apply around its boundaries. It is suggested that the situation has become sufficiently critical for it to be a matter for consideration as part of the review of Regional Planning Guidance, where the issue of the potential for making provision for Tamworth's development needs in the adjoining areas of Warwickshire should be highlighted.
- 7.25 District Local Plans in Staffordshire, prepared for the Plan period running up to 2001, have largely complied with the strategy set out in the Staffordshire Structure Plan 1991-2001, by making provision mainly on small to medium sized sites. This has had the consequence that capacity on such sites in Staffordshire is becoming limited. To meet the levels of provision to 2011, and in the interests of promoting a sustainable development pattern, it has been considered appropriate to make specific proposals for a limited number of substantial new developments in the southern Staffordshire sub-area. The development locations specified in H1 are described below.

## South Staffordshire District

- 7.26 While urging the consideration of larger increments of new housing development close to employment opportunities and with good access to existing or proposed public transport, two possible strategic development locations have been identified in South Staffordshire District - at Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay/Essington\* (see para. 1.12) and Featherstone/Brinsford.
- 7.27 Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay/Essington\* (see para. 1.12) is seen as a location with existing employment, retail, recreation and entertainment facilities both locally and in neighbouring Cannock which, combined with public transport links (bus and rail) to the West Midlands conurbation, meet many of the basic criteria for achieving long term sustainability. Improvements to the services and infrastructure on the Walsall-Cannock railway line (proposals have been made in the Railtrack Network Management Plan 1999, for the electrification of the Walsall-Cannock line and for further measures at Landywood Station, included in the Local Transport Plan for Staffordshire) and bus showcase routes on the A34 to Walsall and the A460 to Wolverhampton would provide opportunities to reduce the use of private cars. Comprehensive, mixed development will provide the opportunity to increase the range of facilities in the village(s) helping to reduce the need to travel.
- 7.28 Brownfield land at Featherstone not in the Green Belt (the former Featherstone Ordnance Depot) close to both the existing settlement of Featherstone and the conurbation/Wolverhampton, and a proposed new station at Brinsford, including a major park and ride car park (included in the Local Transport Plan for the West Midlands) provides the potential for a new mixed use community with potentially strong sustainability credentials.
- 7.29 The District Council is advised to assess the development potential of both these strategic locations in deciding on how and where to provide the new housing necessary to meet the requirements set out in Policy H1. These assessments should include appraisals of the necessary transport infrastructure. In accordance with the principle of providing specific strategic guidance for development of at least 1,000 dwellings, the potential of providing major development at each of the above locations (Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay/Essington\* (see para. 1.12) and Featherstone/Brinsford) should be considered. Development at either/both locations will require the release of Green Belt land.

## Rugeley

- 7.30 Rugeley has benefited from a number of substantial investment projects following the closure of the Lea Hall Colliery. These have included the construction of Phase 1 of the Rugeley Bypass, the introduction of passenger rail services to Walsall and Stafford, and the redevelopment of part of the former colliery site. The presence of a large area of brownfield land (the Rugeley Eastern Redevelopment Zone) immediately to the east of the town is seen as presenting a most sustainable location for mixed use development, which would complement the above schemes. This would comprise some 1,000 dwellings (subject to further study as to the area's capacity) and also incorporate at least 40 ha. of industry on already committed employment land and potentially other uses. The administrative boundary between Cannock Chase District and Lichfield District at this point suggests that, for the time being, about half the proposed housing scheme should be assigned to each authority, although it is intended that the proposal be subject to a comprehensive and detailed study to determine site definitions. The successful delivery of the scheme will also, to a large extent, be dependent upon the completion, in full, of the Rugeley Eastern Bypass, necessary to relieve unacceptable traffic congestion on the A51 adjoining the town centre. Funding of the remaining phase(s) of the bypass will involve both public funding and private sector contributions from anticipated development in the town not only from the Eastern Redevelopment Zone. Improvements to the services and infrastructure on the Walsall-Cannock-Rugeley railway line will provide improved access to the West Midlands Conurbation.

## **Fradley**

- 7.31 Development is proposed at Fradley for 1,400 dwellings during the Plan period, and thereafter to a minimum of 3,000 to form a new settlement which will achieve a considerable amount of self-sufficiency. The location can accommodate a development of this scale, is outside the Green Belt, and is close enough to Lichfield to benefit from its facilities. It is considered that this major proposal is justified given the high numbers of houses required in Lichfield District and the need to restrict development in and immediately adjoining the historic City of Lichfield. Special circumstances also apply at Fradley, due to the existence of a major employment area at Fradley Park, and the potential for developers to provide much improved public transport links to Lichfield. In addition, development could facilitate the extension of the cross-city rail link, providing direct access to the West Midlands Conurbation and associated transport networks. Improvements to the A38 will need to be assessed as part of the development package for the Fradley area.
- 7.32 As part of the review of the Lichfield District Local Plan, an integrated master plan for the new settlement should look afresh at the location of various land uses, existing and proposed in combination with an assessment of the most effective public transport links. Included in the preparation of the master plan should be testing of the feasibility and viability of a new station and park and ride facilities and the electrification and reintroduction of passenger services on the appropriate part of the Lichfield-Burton line.

## **Tamworth Area**

- 7.33 The proposed provision of 5,000 new dwellings within Tamworth Borough will include expansion into the area to the north-east of Tamworth town centre, accepting the need to respect, as far as possible, environmental constraints (including floodplain, sites of nature conservation interest and common land). Elsewhere in the Borough, development in the south-east would involve a limited review of Green Belt boundaries to allow for the release of land to the west of the A51 at Dosthill and east of the main railway south of Hockley.
- 7.34 To provide additional housing capacity to meet, in part, total local housing need in the Tamworth area, a further 1,000 dwellings are proposed to the north of the Borough in Lichfield District, outside the Green Belt, in an area of limited landscape quality and within walking/cycling distance of the railway station and town centre. Development of land each side of the District/Borough boundary should be undertaken in a co-ordinated way to provide a mixed use development, incorporating permitted employment areas and provide access to the railway station and town centre. This will require close co-operation between the two adjoining authorities to meet Tamworth's housing needs and to provide the necessary infrastructure.

## **Elsewhere**

- 7.35 Other housing proposals should generally be concentrated in a small number of locations in public transport corridors (i.e. where there is existing access or where new development can be integrated with the provision of new public transport services), closely related to those larger settlements where employment, retail and service facilities are already concentrated, and should have regard to the possible need for additional school provision. Such development provides the potential to create mixed use communities and progressively achieve a greater degree of self-containment. This applies throughout the Plan area, although in North and East Staffordshire the high level of existing commitments and the potential for regeneration or reuse of land within the urban areas suggests that there should be no need for large scale incursions into greenfield areas. New housing within smaller rural settlements should be limited to local needs and to supporting local services and employment.

## **Location, Phasing and Density of Housing Development**

**H2 The provision of new housing land should complement rather than duplicate the existing stock of sites and encourage the concentration of development in urban areas and the use of recycled land, before the release of greenfield sites, accordingly:**

**(a) A substantial majority of new housing allocations and proposals should, as a first preference, be located within the main urban areas and should utilise previously developed land. As a target, 55% of all development across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent over the Plan period should be on recycled land.**

**(b) Where large, new developments on greenfield land are required, these may be subject to a phased release in local plans to ensure that their availability does not prejudice the achievement of the local plan target for development on recycled land and the early development of urban or brownfield sites.**

**(c) District Councils should consider the use of minimum density policies and ensure that housing within urban areas should include high density development located within and adjacent to town and local centres and at other points of high public transport accessibility.**

**Development should be consistent with the creation of attractive living environments, be in keeping with its surroundings and must not take valuable amenity open space.**

7.36 To achieve a sustainable form and pattern of new development and provide the balance of housing to be found, local plan authorities should, as far as is practicable, adopt a sequential approach to the allocation of sites in accordance with Policies D1 and H2 and the guidance of PPG3. An assessment should be made of the potential contribution of the existing stock to meeting future housing demand, including opportunities for conversion and sub-division and reducing the level of vacant property.

7.37 In following a sequential approach, first preference should be to allocate sites within the existing main urban areas, where new housing will be accessible to employment, shops and services and the use of non-car modes can be maximised. PPG3 encourages all local authorities to undertake housing capacity studies to establish how much additional housing can be accommodated in urban areas. The potential for raising residential densities, the reallocation of land to housing from other uses, such as historic employment allocations and the opportunities for land assembly to contribute to area-wide redevelopment should be realistically assessed.

7.38 Following development within urban areas and the potential for increasing capacity, PPG3 places extensions to urban areas next in the search sequence subject to physical and environmental constraints, the capacity and potential of the infrastructure to absorb new development and sustainability objectives. In assessing the potential of urban extensions, full regard should be given to the objectives of Green Belt and the guidance of PPG2 and Policy D5A. The areas of major land release from Green Belt to meet the housing requirement of Policy H1 have been identified as strategic development locations. Where further release of greenfield land is required, account should be taken of the advice of RPG11, paragraph 3.19 and Policy D1, and development generally restricted to a limited number of strategic nodes in transport corridors.

- 7.39 The use of previously developed land will be preferred to the release of greenfield sites in all locations, although the most important consideration should be to achieve sustainable balanced communities where the need for travel is minimised. In locations with poor public transport accessibility and without a balance of housing, employment and service provision, development of brownfield land is unlikely to provide the most sustainable development option.
- 7.40 It will be an issue for local plan authorities to define 'urban areas' in the context of local circumstances. However, it is envisaged that the main urban areas will generally have a range of retailing and other facilities, including public transport.
- 7.41 Local plans should specify the number of additional dwellings to be provided in urban areas and on previously developed land. The proportion of dwellings that can be provided on these brownfield sites will vary significantly between Districts, depending on local circumstances. It is envisaged that, for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent as a whole, a target of 55% housing development on recycled land should be achievable and is consistent with the advice of RPG11 to the West Midlands Local Government Association to improve on a target of 61% for the West Midlands Region. The great majority of this development will be within urban areas.
- 7.42 The indicative targets for brownfield development for Districts set out in Table 3 reflect an assessment of the potential supply of recycled land up to 2011 taking into account housing completions since 1996, outstanding commitments, the likelihood of windfall sites being developed and the strategic development locations specified in the Plan. The main urban areas of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent will yield the great majority of development on recycled land. The District targets should be interpreted as indicative percentages and local plan authorities may well be able to exceed them. Following a more detailed assessment of land capacity, it may be appropriate to raise a District target as part of the process of reviewing the local plan.

**TABLE 3: Indicative Targets for Proportion of Dwelling Requirement to be Met on Recycled Land by Local Authority Area, 1996-2011**

Local Authority	Total Housing Provision 1996-2011	Percentage Target for Development on Recycled Land
Staffordshire Moorlands	3,000	45
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3,000	70
Stoke-on-Trent	8,500	85
Stafford	5,600	50
East Staffordshire	6,500	50
South Staffordshire	5,100	40
Cannock Chase	7,300	45
Lichfield	7,800	45
Tamworth	5,000	45
<b>STAFFORDSHIRE</b>	<b>51,800</b>	<b>55</b>

- 7.43 Local plan authorities, having ascertained their requirement for greenfield sites, should consider whether it is necessary to phase their release to ensure a steady flow of such sites throughout the Plan period. However, they will need to ensure that a five year supply of genuinely and readily available building land is maintained at all times.

- 7.44 Raising the average dwelling density of new sites can contribute to a more sustainable pattern of development providing greater potential patronage for public transport services, allowing more economic provision of local services and reducing the overall land-take. PPG3 states that local planning authorities should avoid developments of less than 30 dwellings/ha. Housing densities on new sites should generally be higher than have been achieved in the past. The greatest proportional benefits can be achieved by generally discouraging low density development as well as promoting high densities in locations well related to a range of services with adequate access to public transport. High density development is typically defined as that yielding over 50 dwellings/ha., medium density 20-50 dwellings/ha., and low density less than 20 dwellings/ha.
- 7.45 Dwelling densities should be measured on a net site basis, including all land directly associated with the development, such as access roads and open space, but excluding any land associated with activities serving a wider area or other uses as part of a mixed use development. More detailed guidance on the measurement of density is provided in Annex C of PPG3.

### **Mixed Use Developments**

**H3 In order to create sustainable communities, proposals for large residential schemes should include a mix of compatible land uses which incorporate phased provision of employment, social, educational, local needs shopping, recreation, community and open space facilities as appropriate or which enhance existing local facilities.**

- 7.46 Mixed use developments can help to create diversity, vitality and reduce the need for people to travel, thereby enhancing sustainability. PPG1 encourages local authorities to promote and retain mixed use developments, especially in relation to major new development proposals. Developments should be in locations with an adequate infrastructure provision and should be integrated with the character of surrounding areas. They should have good access to, and be integrated into the public transport networks. Schemes may follow the "urban village" model, comprising an entity with a mixture of dwelling types and land uses, including employment, leisure and community facilities. There is a danger that large residential schemes may become dormitories for people commuting to either the West Midlands or North Staffordshire Conurbations. Mixed use proposals can at least provide the opportunity for people to reduce their reliance on the car by working, shopping and enjoying their leisure time in places close to their homes. Proposals should be compatible with the environment policies set out in Chapter 9.

### **Portfolio of Sites**

**H4 Provision should be made for sites suitable for a wide range of dwellings to meet differing and changing housing needs, including the special needs of people with disabilities, elderly people and other groups in the population who require specialist accommodation, and to overcome any identified local deficiencies. Proposals for large residential schemes should include as wide a mix of dwelling types, sizes and affordability as possible to increase choice within the local area and reduce the likelihood of social exclusion.**

- 7.47 The need for new housing is being created by a population which is living longer, and by people increasingly living on their own. The requirements of special needs groups, for example those with learning difficulties, the young homeless, and those people subject to care in the community, must also be considered. These trends indicate a need for a variety of dwelling types to cater for changing demands. There is a need for sites to be identified which can provide the full range of dwellings required, and to respond to local needs and deficiencies (further covered by Policy H8). This policy encourages the provision of a range of sites across the County to meet those varying needs. It may not be necessary for every individual site to provide for all these needs.

## **Housing Renewal**

**H5 An area-based approach to housing renewal and environmental improvement should be adopted integrating improvement and reuse or clearance and redevelopment and taking account of the possibilities for new residential development on other land within the area.**

- 7.48 Housing renewal can make a significant contribution to urban regeneration initiatives, improving both the image and the reality of living in urban areas. RPG11 emphasises the importance of improving the existing housing stock to minimise the amount of new building which will be necessary. Such renewal may be achieved through the use of SRB bids or other Government schemes such as Estate Action. PPG3 advocates the full and effective use of land in urban areas, including the conversion, redevelopment and improvement of existing stock and the use of derelict and neglected sites for small scale housing developments. Development which provides regeneration prospects for an area should be welcomed.
- 7.49 These proposals will interact with policies encouraging housing within urban areas and promoting mixed used development, both of which may include housing renewal schemes.

## **Conversions**

**H6 Provision for increased residential capacities either from within the existing housing stock or through the reuse and conversion of other buildings should be encouraged, where this:**

- (a) would retain the amenity and character of existing residential areas;**
- (b) would provide opportunities for regeneration and enhancement of urban and rural areas;**
- (c) would allow the retention or improvement of buildings of historical or architectural importance;**
- (d) would not create sporadic development in the countryside where first preference will be given for the reuse of existing buildings for employment purposes;**
- (e) would not impose a significant detrimental impact on the local transport network.**

- 7.50 Converted buildings can make an important contribution to the provision of new dwellings, both market and affordable, but a contribution which is sometimes overlooked since no “new” building is involved. Adaptation of the existing stock can contribute to meeting the needs of smaller households and reduce the level of vacant and underused property. Any conversions should respect the character of the surrounding area, and the amenity of existing areas.
- 7.51 There is also a potential for converting other buildings to housing. A number of examples of the conversion of offices, factories, hospitals, colleges of further education and other redundant buildings, recently completed in Staffordshire, have made a contribution to urban regeneration and introduced innovative housing styles and designs. Opportunities also exist in releasing under-used space above shops as part of the “living over the shop” initiative. Further conversion of redundant buildings should be encouraged, particularly within urban areas where it is well related to services and employment.
- 7.52 In rural locations, housing development in the open countryside is to be resisted (Policy H11), and the priority for the conversion of any building is to provide spaces for employment and community uses. Any conversion proposal in urban or rural areas should have particular regard to the policy provisions of Chapter 9.

### **Windfall Sites**

**H7 In determining the level of new land to be released for housing, an assessment should be made of the amount of provision it is reasonable to expect will be found by way of “windfall” sites. Any proposed development on “windfall” sites should be consistent with other planning policies, including nature conservation policies.**

- 7.53 Sites not identified in the development plan process can make a significant contribution to the land supply for housing. These sites frequently come forward as redevelopment or infill opportunities within urban areas and can contribute to a sustainable pattern of development. Proper account of the potential of windfall sites is fundamental to the sequential approach to site allocation advocated in this Plan.
- 7.54 In previous Government advice, the consideration of large windfall sites of over 1 hectare was excluded. However, evidence shows that sites of this size repeatedly become available over the timescale of a plan, often from redundant industrial and other employment locations. While local plan authorities may unofficially be well aware of the likely cessation of employment use on such sites, they are unable to allocate these sites in a local plan, until the employment use has actually ceased.
- 7.55 In guidance on the assessment of windfall potential, PPG3 (March 2000) makes no reference to size of sites. Local plan authorities need to make realistic assumptions on the likely contribution of windfall sites, of all sizes, taking into account past trends and on the basis of their local knowledge. To achieve a consistent approach, it is advised, in including allowance for windfalls in housing provision calculations in local plans, that a breakdown of assessments by site size is continued to be used (for small sites up to 0.4ha. and sites over 0.4ha.).
- 7.56 PPG3 indicates that no allowance should be made for windfalls on greenfield sites. This is consistent with proper identification and justification for the release of such sites through the review of local plans and should apply to assumptions for sites over 0.4 ha. However, as small sites (up to 0.4 ha.) are not generally allocated in local plans, assumptions should continue to be based on all sites regardless of previous land-use.

- 7.57 It is important that any assumption is realistic, since over-estimates may lead to a shortfall in the housing provision, whereas an under-estimate may lead to unnecessary allocations on greenfield sites. In addition, local plans must consider the take-up rate of windfalls which are granted permission when they make assessments. Past rates of development may show the proportion of sites coming forward which actually progress to completion.

### **Affordable Housing**

**H8 Provision for the affordable housing needs of the local community should be a fundamental consideration in the allocation of sites and the release of land for housing on windfall sites. Local authorities should assess their needs for affordable housing and, where there is a demonstrable lack of such housing, include policies in their local plan for:**

- (a) negotiating with developers for the provision of affordable housing to be made on suitable allocated or windfall housing sites of an appropriate size; and**
- (b) encouraging the supply of affordable housing through other means, such as policies for the reuse and conversions of buildings for housing, mixed use development, higher densities, and bringing forward affordable housing proposals on smaller sites.**

**Binding agreements should be established to ensure that dwellings for those in need of affordable homes remain available and at low cost for initial and successive occupants.**

- 7.58 The general term for affordable housing encompasses two broadly distinct types;
- (i) Housing provided by an organisation – such as a registered social landlord or local authority allocating on the basis of need. While such dwellings will normally be made available for rent, they may also include subsidised home ownership, such as shared ownership, where a registered social landlord or local authority retains a continuing interest;
- and
- (ii) Low-cost market housing, helping to meet the needs of first-time buyers, single people, the elderly and other low income households, who cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market.

Affordable housing, irrespective of whether it is provided for rent or sale, must be made available at a price level that can be sustained by local people in housing need. What constitutes 'affordable', in terms of price and income, is for each local authority to define through its Housing Strategy Statement.

- 7.59 The County and City Councils, with the co-operation of the District Councils, are making an assessment of the realistic provision for affordable housing which can be made in each part of the County up to 2011, given both locally based need estimates, the potential for negotiation with private developers on existing commitments and future allocations; the likely building programmes of registered social landlords, and the potential for the reuse of the existing housing stock for affordable housing.

- 7.60 Such indicative figures provided by the structure plan authorities should supplement more detailed and ongoing local assessment of affordable housing needs by housing authorities in their own areas. These should be given high priority, as part of the District's housing strategy, before entering on a review of the local plan. Local plan authorities will need to determine the amount of affordable housing which should be negotiated on sites to be allocated in the local plan, in line with the proposals set out in Circular 6/98. The mix of size of housing sites likely to be allocated in any particular area will be an important factor in a consideration of the suitable thresholds for negotiating a proportion of affordable housing. New provision to meet affordable housing needs has to be made, however, within the overall housing proposals set out in Policy H1. Given that the main mechanism for providing affordable housing is likely to remain through negotiations with private developers to provide a level of such provision on their housing schemes, and given that over half of the Structure Plan proposals are already committed through planning permission or allocation in a local plan, the provision of affordable housing on new sites may not fully meet anticipated requirements in all parts of the County. A significant proportion of the required provision may, therefore, have to come through reuse of the existing housing stock.
- 7.61 PPG3 indicates that plans may need to encourage a mix of dwelling types and tenures to cater for need. In order to achieve this, negotiations should be entered into with developers to include an allowance of affordable housing (including the needs of people with disabilities and elderly people) on sites committed by policy, or, if possible, at pre-application discussions on other sites. It is important to ensure that such an allowance, once agreed, is available in perpetuity for people in need. This may be achieved through the use of planning conditions or agreements.

### **Rural Settlements**

#### **H9 New development within larger villages and market towns identified in local plans as being suitable for additional residential development should:**

- (a) be of a scale which reflects the existing settlement;**
- (b) be designed sympathetically and laid out in keeping with the character of the settlement and the local environment;**
- (c) be closely related to housing provision to meet identified local housing needs.**

**Only identified settlements where development can be demonstrated to assist in sustaining local employment and facilities such as schools and shops, which could become unviable without some modest growth should be considered suitable. New development should be located within boundaries defined in local plans. Significant incremental expansion should be avoided when this is likely to result largely in commuting by car to urban areas.**

- 7.62 The application of the sequential approach to land release for housing and the focus of development in existing urban areas, in accordance with Policies D1 and H2, should ensure that the pressure for housing development in rural settlements is relatively limited. It is expected that rural settlements will only contribute a very modest proportion of the overall housing provision. Over-provision in rural settlements can encourage migration and an imbalance between homes and jobs available locally and lead to additional commuting and increased car dependency.

- 7.63 New housing development should be limited to settlements where it can make a contribution to sustaining the local community and the availability of services, which might otherwise become unviable and should closely relate to local housing need. The location and accessibility to employment, higher order shops and services, the utilisation of previously developed land, the capacity of the infrastructure to absorb new development and the availability of public transport services will be important considerations in assessing the appropriateness of new development.
- 7.64 In larger villages and market towns considered suitable for modest growth, any development should be within boundaries defined in local plans and should not create fragmented or ribbon development. Proposals should be of a high standard of design, should reflect the local character and tradition, and should be consistent with the environmental policies found in Chapter 9.

### **Affordable Housing in Rural Areas**

**H10 Exceptionally, affordable housing may be allowed within or on the edge of, villages in rural areas on land that would not normally be released for development, provided that:**

- (a) the scheme would meet a genuine local need that would not otherwise be met;**
- (b) there are secure arrangements to ensure that the benefits of low-cost housing will be enjoyed by local people on low incomes in perpetuity;**
- (c) any such land released will be additional to the provision made for general housing demand;**
- (d) the scheme is of a scale and of a character appropriate to the location.**

- 7.65 PPG3 makes allowance for affordable housing developments to be allowed in rural areas where housing development would not normally be allowed. Rural locations often have a lack of affordable housing, and prices of houses are forced up by the ability of in-migrants to pay higher prices than local people. Such a situation may jeopardise the viability of the community. Where the need for affordable housing can be proved, it can be treated as a material consideration when planning applications are decided. Any development allowed will not count against the overall provision of housing for the District until completed. In Staffordshire, such development has, to date, been on a very small scale.
- 7.66 Proposals should still have regard to local character and should be in line with other local planning policies, and should be constrained by a planning condition or Section 106 Agreement to ensure that the dwellings will always be available as affordable housing.

### **Housing in Open Countryside**

**H11 Subject to the specific provisions of Policy H1, housing development by means of new buildings in the open countryside, outside of development boundaries, will not be permitted except where special circumstances exist, such as where such development is essential to the operation of rural activities and must be located in the countryside rather than in a nearby town or village. Any proposed development must be of a scale and character appropriate to the local environment, and have full regard to countryside protection policies.**

- 7.67 Building in the open countryside in locations unrelated to any settlement should be strictly controlled. For such development to be permitted, special justification such as the need to pursue farming or forestry work will be required. Sporadic development which harms the character of the countryside environment will be resisted. Where such development is allowed, it should be of a scale and design suitable for its surroundings.

### **Provision for Gypsies**

**H12 Adequate sites to meet an identified demand for Gypsies residing or resorting to the Plan area should be available for both short term and long term accommodation needs. The detailed criteria for suitable locations will be set out in local plans but in general sites should:**

- (a) not be located in areas of open land where development is severely restricted;**
- (b) not be permitted in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or in the Green Belt.**

- 7.68 This policy covers persons of nomadic habit of livelihood, whatever their race or origin, and includes persons living in largely static or mobile homes that have ethnic or cultural associations with the historical travelling community. It excludes members of organised groups of travelling showmen or of persons engaged in travelling circuses.
- 7.69 The provision of sites for gypsies is a form of affordable housing provision and additional authorised provision is the most effective means of ameliorating the difficulties for owners, neighbours and gypsies alike, that arise from unauthorised encampments. The levels of proposals should broadly relate to the numbers of unauthorised encampments shown in official counts over the last few years, but be further informed by discussions with representatives of the travelling community, and providers of education, social services and health services to them. The locational criteria should reflect Government guidance. The current criteria are stated in Circular 1/94 and are reflected in the policy. Local plans should also have regard to the guidance set out in PPG12.