

Housing Policies



4. HOUSING POLICIES

4.1 Amount and Distribution of New Housing

Policy H.1 PROVISION OF HOUSING LAND

Local Plans will make provision for the phased release of land for the construction of about 31,100 new dwellings in Warwickshire over the period 1996-2011, to be distributed between the district areas as prescribed in column (a) of Table H.1. In each district area, provision will be made in local plans for the maximum number of these dwellings to be built on previously developed urban land and buildings as indicated in column (b) of Table H.1, subject to site specific assessments by the district councils.

Table H.1	(a) Need 1996-2011	(b) Indicative Only 1996-2011
District Area	All housing types	% of new housing on previously developed urban land and buildings
North Warwickshire	3,200	63%
Nuneaton & Bedworth	5,600	55%
Rugby	6,100	40%
Stratford on Avon	8,200	56%
Warwick	8,000	45%
Total County Area	31,100	50%

INTENT

4.1.1 Policy H.1 sets out the total housing provision for the County during the Plan period (1996 – 2011) and indicates how this should be distributed across the five district and borough areas. It should be recognised that the total comprises both housing that can be bought on the open market and ‘affordable housing’, which is the subject of Policy H.2.

4.1.2 The Policy also provides indicative targets, as required by Government

policy, for the percentage of this new housing which should be developed on urban previously-developed land and thereby encourage urban regeneration. The overall target for the County is 50%, whilst the district/borough targets were refined, in liaison with the local councils, following the Examination-in-Public.

CONTEXT

The Housing Requirement

4.1.3 The overall housing requirement for the

County is laid out in revised Regional Planning Guidance (RPG11), published by the Secretary of State in April 1998. The 40,700-dwelling requirement was close to the advice on housing matters submitted to the Government by the West Midlands Forum of Local Authorities in April 1997.

4.1.4 The Warwickshire requirement forms part of a regional target that is based on 1992 Government household projections, converted into housing provision using the Forum's estimates of unmet need, demolitions and vacancies. In deciding on the distribution of the regional target, the Secretary of State has taken into account housing need and demand in each area; completions since 1991; the housing land supply pipeline including assumptions for windfall, densities, conversions and vacancies; and both urban and rural constraints to development.

4.1.5 In attempting to meet the housing target, the County Council has subscribed to the principles advocated by the Forum (as laid down in 'Option Y' (Appendix 1 – Technical Report, Section 6, para 6.2.19)) These include local housing needs being met first, initially from the housing land supply pipeline; any additional urban capacity should be added to the land supply before further greenfield land-take; migrant growth should be provided for

in the Central Crescent (RPG11 para. 4.4.1) and north-east Warwickshire towns, proportionate to their urban populations; and environmental impacts should be minimised.

4.1.6 The RPG housing requirement for the County is for the period 1991 to 2011. For the Plan period of the Structure Plan (1996 to 2011), it is therefore necessary to deduct from the requirement those dwellings built between 1991 and 1996. The total is thereby reduced, by 9,600 dwellings, from 40,700 to 31,100 (See Table A). It will also be seen by reference to Table A that this is made up from two principal components: the Local Housing Requirement and Intra-Regional Migration.

4.1.7 At any one time throughout the County there exists a 'bank' of land that has the benefit of planning permission for housing development. This, together with the number of dwellings under construction and assumptions made for the coming forward of 'windfall' schemes (i.e. permissions on land that has not previously been allocated in local plans) form the 'housing pipeline'. This contribution is deducted from the 31,100-dwelling requirement to leave the total number of dwellings to be found by means of new allocations. As will be seen in Table A, the number of completions

Table A: Components of the Structure Plan Housing Requirement

Component Number of Houses		
A	Inter-regional and international migration reduction	12,300
B	Local household growth	14,200
C	Housing replacement	2,100
D	Unmet need	1,200
E	Vacancies in existing stock reduction	1,900
F	Vacancies in new build	1,200
G	Local housing requirement	16,800
H	Intra-regional migration allocation	23,900
I	Local housing requirement plus Intra-regional migration allocation, which provides the total housing requirement for 1991 to 2011	40,700
J	Completions (1991 to 1996)	9,600
K	Total housing requirement minus completions 1991 to 1996	31,100
L	Completions (1997 to 2000)	8,930
M	Housing pipeline (at 2000)	8,456
N	New housing provision required over the Plan period at 2000	13,714

and the housing pipeline at April 2000 amounted to 17,386, thereby leaving a residual requirement for new allocations of 13,714 dwellings.

26,500, it is assumed that the equivalent of 12,300 dwellings will be lost to migration (Table A, Row A), thereby leaving a local housing growth (1991 to 2011) of 14,200 (Row B).

The Local Housing Requirement

4.1.8 The components that make up the local housing requirement are:

(i) **The Inter-regional and international migration reduction**

4.1.9 Historically, Warwickshire has lost population through inter-regional and international migration and Regional Planning Guidance has assumed that this trend will continue. Out of a total projected growth for the County of

4.1.10 This local household growth has been distributed according to the local need projection using the Chelmer household projection model. In so doing, it was assumed implicitly that net losses due to inter-regional and international migration are shared proportionately between the districts and boroughs. Evidence from Censuses of Population shows that net migration with other regions has varied both between Warwickshire districts and over time, with Nuneaton

and Bedworth the only district to lose population to other regions in both 1980 to 1981 and 1990 to 1991. Taking into consideration continued variation in the patterns of migration and planned job opportunities in the north of the County, it is nevertheless assumed that the largest outflow of migrants from Warwickshire to other regions is predicted still to be from Nuneaton and Bedworth. The EiP Panel noted that all parties appeared to accept the demographic assessment of local needs and, in noting the considerable fluctuation in recent migration trends, concluded that in the absence of the consideration of wider regional implications, concluded that the Structure Plan's estimate of local housing needs should be accepted.

(ii) Housing replacement

4.1.11 The 2,100 houses (Table A, Row C) identified to be replaced during the plan period have been distributed across the districts and boroughs according to the pattern of recorded demolitions and losses over the period 1991 to 1996. The EiP Panel felt that the Structure Plan should not take a position on a significant increase in the level of demolition or refurbishment in advance of a wider national debate, and concluded that the housing replacement component should be accepted.

(iii) Unmet need

4.1.12 The unmet need of 1,200 households (row D in Table A) has been distributed amongst the districts according to the pattern of concealed and sharing households from the 1991 Census. This was accepted by the EiP Panel.

(iv) Vacancy Levels

4.1.13 Throughout the County a 3% vacancy rate in new housing (Table A, Row F) has been assumed, the equivalent of 1,200 dwellings, and has been applied at this rate to the total housing requirement for each district/borough. In the existing stock, the reduction in vacancies, totalling 1,900 dwellings (Table A, Row E), has been shared according to the size of the dwelling stock in each of the districts/boroughs.

4.1.14 Local authorities within the Region are working together to implement the application of the 3% vacancy rate advocated in Regional Guidance. The Government expects that overall vacancy rates should reach the 3% level by 2005. According to the 1991 Census, vacancies in Warwickshire stood at 3.92%, a little lower than the regional figure of 4.08%. However, evidence from Housing Investment Programme returns for the county suggest a decline to 3.7% in 1997 and to 3.5% in 2000. The EiP Panel was

mind to support the Structure Plan assumptions on vacancy levels.

Intra-regional migration allowance

4.1.15 To arrive at the total housing requirement for the County for the period 1991 to 2011 an allowance for intra-regional migration (i.e. movement of people within the Region) needs to be added to the local housing requirement. This arises from households moving from the West Midlands metropolitan area, the principle of accommodating them in the County having been established in Regional Guidance. Of the 23,900 houses to be provided for intra-regional migration (Table A, Row H), 8,400 houses are a consequence of out-migration to the County from Coventry and the remaining 15,500 houses from Birmingham and Solihull.

4.1.16 Regional Guidance refers to this migrant growth being provided for in the Central Crescent and north-east Warwickshire towns, proportionate to their urban populations. The impact is shown in Table B. The EiP Panel was content with the assumptions on migration from the metropolitan areas, and accepted the figure of 23,900 houses.

Urban Previously-Developed Land Housing Targets

4.1.17 Government policy, through Planning Policy Guidance 3 (Housing) (PPG3) requires local authorities to maximise the re-use of previously-developed ('brownfield') land and for each region to set its own land recycling targets. The target set out in Regional Guidance is 61% and that for Warwickshire has been set at 50%. The main purpose of the urban previously-developed land housing targets is to achieve the regeneration of urban areas throughout the Region and to minimise the amount of greenfield land being taken for development.

4.1.18 The previously-developed land targets set out in Table B for each district/borough are indicative and intended to play a positive role by setting out an expectation for the local plan reviews. They are believed to be realistic and have been reached by working closely with the districts/boroughs. In arriving at such targets, use has been made of residential land availability information, together with an assessment of land allocated in local plans for housing, an assumption that all future windfall sites would be previously-developed land and buildings, and a judgement made of the extent of urban previously-

Table B District / Borough Housing Requirement (Number of houses)

District/ Borough	Type of Housing	Total Housing Requirement 1991-2011					Completions 1991-1996	Total Housing Requirement 1996-2011					Indicative Amount on PDL
		Local Need	Migration from Coventry	Migration from Birmingham	Sub - Total	Local Need		Migration from Coventry	Migration from Birmingham	Sub - Total			
North Warwickshire	Market	1,300	0	1,500	2,800	900	800	0	1,100	1,900	2,000		
	Affordable	900	0	700	1,600	300	700	0	600	1,300			
	Total	2,200	0	2,200	4,400	1,200	1,500	0	1,700	3,200			
Nuneaton & Bedworth	Market	2,900	700	1,200	4,800	1,700	1,900	400	800	3,100	3,100		
	Affordable	1,800	400	500	2,700	200	1,700	400	400	2,500			
	Total	4,700	1,100	1,700	7,500	1,900	3,500	800	1,300	5,600			
Rugby	Market	2,000	2,900	0	4,900	1,500	1,400	2,000	0	3,400	2,400		
	Affordable	1,200	1,800	0	3,000	300	1,100	1,600	0	2,700			
	Total	3,200	4,700	0	7,900	1,800	2,500	3,600	0	6,100			
Stratford on Avon	Market	1,100	0	5,700	6,800	2,300	800	0	3,700	4,500	4,600		
	Affordable	2,100	0	2,000	4,100	400	1,900	0	1,800	3,700			
	Total	3,200	0	7,700	10,900	2,700	2,700	0	5,500	8,200			
Warwick	Market	1,800	1,600	2,800	6,300	1,900	1,300	1,100	2,000	4,400	3,600		
	Affordable	1,700	1,000	1,100	3,700	100	1,600	1,000	1,000	3,600			
	Total	3,500	2,600	3,900	10,000	2,000	2,800	2,100	3,100	8,000			
County Total					40,700	9,600				31,100			

NB. Figures in italics may show discrepancies due to rounding.

developed land not allocated for housing in local plans. An allowance was made for previously-developed land sites with high nature conservation value.

4.1.19 Urban previously developed land is defined as previously-used land and buildings within the built-up area of settlements. These include the main towns of the County and other settlements that fall within the settlement hierarchy (see Policy RA3)

4.1.20 Indicative urban previously-developed land targets are also set out for industrial land under Policy I.2. In pursuing Government policy, there is a need to maximise the re-use of non-residential land and buildings for housing purposes as well as for town centre and employment uses. The appropriateness of competing uses will vary in different parts of the County. For example, the need for small investment employment sites (SIS) in Leamington could be greater than the need for high density housing and the achievement of the indicative urban previously-developed land housing target.

4.1.21 The initial work to derive the district/borough targets was undertaken before the publication of PPG3 in March 2000 and its appended definition of previously-developed land

that has now been adopted by the Council. Accordingly, the district and borough indicative targets may need to be reviewed in the light of this definition.

4.1.22 The achievement of the targets will be monitored through the annual residential land availability survey, and any future refinement of the district/borough level targets will follow careful consideration of this information by the district/borough councils and the County Council.

Plan, Monitor and Manage

4.1.23 Government policy, as laid down in PPG3, now requires local planning authorities to pursue a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to housing provision. It is incumbent, therefore, on the County Council and the district/borough councils to ensure that housing requirements and the way they are met are kept under regular review.

4.1.24 This is a change to past practice. The implementation of the Structure Plan includes monitoring the location and land type of new housing and industrial development in addition to information already collected by districts and boroughs on an annual basis, and embraces the indicators suggested for monitoring and review in PPG3. With plan, monitor and manage this

monitoring information collected will be judged not only on progress towards meeting housing projections but also the achievement of the policy objectives of the Structure Plan. The importance of maintaining an adequate supply of land and buildings for housing and to enable its managed release is recognised in the Plan. Policy H.4 sets out a phasing mechanism for the release of allocated greenfield sites during the Plan period.

Urban Housing Capacity Studies

4.1.25 In pursuing its commitment to the recycling of previously-developed land, the Government, through PPG3, requires local planning authorities to undertake urban housing capacity studies to establish how much additional housing can be accommodated within urban areas and, consequently, how much greenfield land may be needed for development. It recommends that such studies should consider various options in relation to density of development, levels of parking provision, different residential layouts and the mix of housing types. The Development Plan Forum, which consists of planning policy officers from the districts/boroughs and the County, has prepared a joint urban housing capacity framework. This will help to ensure that urban capacity

work is carried out early in the local plan review process and that there is a consistency of approach throughout the County.

OPERATION

4.1.26 Policy H.1 sets out the total housing provision required for each district/borough for the Plan period. In determining the scale of new housing allocations in their local plans district/borough councils will need to take account of the following:

- Dwellings built since 1 April 1996, dwellings under construction and dwellings with outstanding planning permission (where development is yet to start). Table A shows this position at April 2000.
- Previously-developed land windfall allowances. The scale of the allowance in each district/borough is a matter for consideration within the local plan review process.

In identifying sites to be allocated for housing in local plans (see Policy GD.5 and the RA Policies) the first step in the search sequence stems from the urban housing capacity studies which will establish how much additional housing can be accommodated within the main urban areas through the reuse of previously-developed land and buildings. The second step is through identifying sites which are adjacent to the main urban areas

- (urban extensions), and
- are within recognised transport corridors;
 - can be integrated into the fabric of the town;
 - are not within the Green Belt;
 - are easily accessible to town centre services and facilities;
 - are well-served or can be made to be well-served by public transport.

Through following this search sequence to identify sufficient land to meet the housing requirement, and not extending the search further than is required, the amount of greenfield land allocated will be minimised and progress towards, and achievement of, the indicative target for the percentage of new housing built on urban previously-developed land should be gained.

4.2 Affordable Housing Provision

Policy H.2 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Local Plans will provide for affordable housing development to meet local needs however these have arisen. The provision should be based on the District Council's assessment of the needs for affordable housing and should not be released for general market housing purposes unless justified by a change in that assessment based on up-to-date surveys and other information. In carrying out the assessment of affordable housing need, district councils should take into account the indicative figures set out below:

District Area	Indicative Figure (1996-2011) <i>Dwellings</i>
North Warwickshire	1,300
Nuneaton and Bedworth	2,500
Rugby	2,700
Stratford-on-Avon	3,700
Warwick	3,600
Total County Area	13,800

INTENT

4.2.1 Policy H.2 aims to ensure that sufficient provision is made for affordable housing throughout the County in the Plan period. The Policy contains indicative figures for each of the districts and boroughs and a County total, providing clear guidance and a strategic steer on the scale of affordable housing likely to be required across the Plan period.

4.2.2 This Policy reflects the need to provide affordable housing for all in the community, including people moving into the County from Birmingham and Coventry (referred to in the Plan as the Metropolitan Area).

CONTEXT

4.2.3 Affordable housing is defined in the glossary. This definition was agreed by regional authorities in July 1999 and is in accord with Government policy as set out in DETR Circular 6/98 (Planning and Affordable Housing), a fact acknowledged by the EiP Panel.

4.2.4 Research undertaken for the review of housing for Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 11) included an assessment of affordable housing in the Region, and the policy decision was taken in RPG11 to provide for affordable housing needs arising from

both the local population and from people moving from Birmingham and Coventry. The research indicated that there is a backlog in the provision of affordable housing in the County. It revealed that between 1991 and 1996 1,300 affordable houses were built, leaving approximately 13,800 affordable houses to be built over the Plan period. This indicates that four out of every nine new houses (44%) should be for affordable housing in the Plan period.

4.2.5 Consequently, although it is not wholly explicit in RPG11, the overall housing figure for Warwickshire contains an affordable housing assumption, and it is important that housing delivered through the Plan Period addresses the factors that led to the formulation of the regional housing requirement.

4.2.6 Circular 6/98 states in para. 9(b) that 'where local planning authorities are able to demonstrate a lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, based on up-to-date surveys and other data of local need, they should...indicate in the plan how many affordable homes need to be provided throughout the plan area...'. The significant shortfall in affordable housing provision across all the districts and boroughs apparent from the research undertaken for the review of housing for RPG11 and the annual

residential availability information, provides substantial weight for a policy in the Structure Plan to help facilitate the strategic delivery of affordable housing. The importance of providing access to housing for those in greatest need is further emphasised in RPG11 (paras. 9.18-9.19).

4.2.7 The Policy is based on the principle that the overall housing requirement is based on an element of general market housing and an element of affordable housing. The indicative figures included in the Policy derive from the research undertaken for the review of housing for RPG11 and do not determine local plan provision, but provide a robust indication of the scale of the level of affordable housing likely to be needed in each district/borough area.

4.2.8 The Policy requires affordable housing provision to be based on the district/boroughs local housing needs assessment, which must take account of affordable housing needs however these have arisen, and none of this provision should be released for general market housing unless justified by a change in the local housing needs assessment based on up to date surveys or other information. Affordable housing needs arising from households moving into the County throughout the Plan period should be

reflected through the regular updating of the local housing needs assessments.

4.2.9 The importance of providing sufficient affordable housing has been particularly highlighted recently. The Housing Green Paper (June 2000) puts forward the Government's housing policy, and contains various initiatives such as a starter home initiative to help key workers in the housing market. The Rural White Paper expresses a desire for 'a high proportion of affordable and decent housing, both for rent and sale, in market towns and in villages to support a living, working countryside with inclusive rural communities which help young people to remain in the area where they grew up'. It calls for a better use of the planning system to secure more affordable homes as part of mixed developments in towns and rural areas, and sees 'no reason why, in small villages if there is evidence of need and subject to financial viability, every new market house should not be matched with an affordable home'. This shows a growing recognition of the need for the planning system to secure sufficient affordable homes.

4.2.10 The table below shows the requirement for affordable housing for the period 1991 to 2011 (15,100 affordable houses) which came

through from the work undertaken on the current RPG and the make up of this figure which consists of two elements, local need and from people moving into the County from Coventry and Birmingham/Solihull. By subtracting the 1,300 affordable houses built between 1991 and 1996 the indicative figure for the County of 13,800 affordable houses is arrived at.

OPERATION

4.2.11 Policy H.2 provides clear guidance for the scale of affordable housing provision that is likely to be appropriate in each of the districts/boroughs. These indicative figures provide a starting point.

4.2.12 In the absence of up to date and robust local housing needs assessments undertaken by the districts/boroughs, the indicative figures should be used to secure affordable housing in each district/borough area over the Plan Period. As part of the local plan review process, the opportunity needs to be taken to include within the local plan affordable housing provision based on local housing needs assessments that embrace all affordable housing needs, however they have arisen.

	Affordable housing 1991 to 2011		Total of affordable housing 1991 to 2011	Affordable housing completions 1991 to 1996
	Local Needs	Through migration from Coventry and Birmingham		
North Warwickshire	900	700	1,600	300
Nuneaton and Bedworth	1,800	900	2,700	200
Rugby	1,200	1,800	3,000	300
Stratford on Avon	2,100	2,000	4,100	400
Warwick	1,700	2,100	3,700*	100
Warwickshire	7,700	7,400	15,100	1,300

** indicates a discrepancy in the figure due to rounding*

4.3 Minimising Amount of Greenfield Land for New Housing

Policy H.3 GREENFIELD LAND FOR HOUSING

Local plans should minimise the amount of greenfield land needed for new housing development by, amongst other measures, maximising:

- a) the use of the existing built stock through measures to reduce vacant dwelling numbers, enable the subdivision of large houses into flats and bedsits, and secure conversion of vacant premises to dwellings.
- b) opportunities for use of previously developed land and buildings for new housing, firstly by development within towns and villages and then, secondly, in locations adjoining towns and villages, including the redevelopment of unsatisfactory housing and the use of vacant land for housing, other than in identified 'Areas of Restraint' or where there are other environmental constraints
- c) the use made of sites through increased housing densities by good design and layout.

INTENT

4.3.1 Policy H.3 seeks to minimise the amount of greenfield land needed for new housing development by ensuring best use is made of the existing housing stock, that previously-developed land and buildings are utilised and that there is an increase in housing densities.

CONTEXT

4.3.2 Policy H.1 of the Plan includes an urban housing target for each district/borough in respect of the re-use of previously-developed land and

buildings. Obviously, the achievement of these targets, or development in excess of them, will greatly assist in minimising the amount of greenfield land needed for new housing development. Policy H.3 reinforces these targets by emphasising the need to maximise the use of previously-developed land for new housing development, firstly within, and then secondly, adjoining towns and villages. Reflected in this is the locational search sequence included in Policy GD.5 and the requirements of the Rural Area Policies. Within this context it is recognised that the development of previously-developed

sites can often help to regenerate centres and parts of settlements.

4.3.3 Policy ER.6 requires local plans to consider the identification of 'Areas of Restraint' within or adjoining the built up areas of towns. This Policy seeks to reflect the identification of such areas and the regard that needs to be given to them in maximising opportunities for the use of previously-developed land for new housing.

4.3.4 Emphasis placed on the effective and efficient use of land for new housing development has increased in recent years. Primarily this has come about from a growing recognition that resources need to be used wisely so that we do not jeopardise options for the future. The Government has set a national housing previously-developed land target of 60% by 2008. This has helped bring to the fore the issue of the use of land for future housing development not just to those involved in planning but to all in the community.

4.3.5 The housing revision made to RPG11 in 1998 included within its strategy the emerging Government emphasis of making the best use of the existing housing stock and previously-developed land for new housing in and, where appropriate, adjoining built-up areas, in order to minimise the amount of greenfield land needed to

meet the housing provision without running the risk of 'town-cramming'.

4.3.6 As highlighted earlier, the publication of PPG 3 in March 2000 signalled the Government's attempt to minimise the amount of greenfield land needed for housing development by the promotion of more sustainable patterns of development and by making better use of previously-developed land. As a means of giving support to this, the Government has introduced a greenfield land direction whereby planning applications for schemes of 150 dwellings or more or on a site of 5 hectares or more have to be notified to the Secretary of State before planning permission is granted.

4.3.7 As a means of making better use of urban land, PPG3 encourages local planning authorities to specifically adopt positive policies:

- to identify and bring into use empty housing, vacant commercial buildings and upper floors above shops, in conjunction with the local authority's housing programme and empty property strategy and, where appropriate, acquire properties under compulsory purchase procedures;
- to promote such conversions, by taking a more flexible approach to

development plan standards with regard to densities, car parking, amenity space and overlooking;

- to encourage the increase in density of new developments by considering design, layout and by setting maximum car parking standards.

4.3.8 The Urban White Paper, published by the Government in November 2000, stresses that re-using existing buildings is important not only to revitalising declining urban areas but also to sustainable development, because they are usually supported by existing infrastructure and, overall, their re-use is likely to be more energy efficient and resource friendly than building new properties (p.56). The Government is encouraging authorities to develop empty property strategies and is in the process of introducing fiscal incentives to encourage the use of empty or under-used properties.

OPERATION

4.3.9 Policy H.3 requires districts/boroughs to consider formulating policies in their local plan reviews to maximise the use of previously-developed land for new housing development, firstly within towns and villages, and then, secondly, in locations adjoining towns and villages, and also to:

- reduce the number of vacancies in the existing and newly built housing stock;
- encourage, where appropriate, the subdivision of large houses into smaller units;
- encourage the conversion of vacant premises, such as empty offices or floors above shops to residential use;
- encourage the redevelopment of unsatisfactory housing and the use of vacant or underused land for new housing where appropriate; and
- encourage where appropriate increased housing densities.

Districts/boroughs should consider the ways in which they will encourage and deliver increased housing densities.

4.4 Managing the Release of New Housing Land

Policy H.4 RELEASE OF HOUSING LAND

Local plans will provide sufficient land, taking account of an allowance for windfalls, for new housing development over the plan period to 2011.

District planning authorities must ensure that there is a supply of housing land capable of keeping the supply of dwellings in line with housing needs in that district.

In the process of selecting land for allocation and release for housing development, where there is an adequate supply, no more greenfield land should be released for housing development. Exceptionally, however, authorities will need to consider whether there are circumstances that might justify early release of allocated greenfield land where it is required to maintain an adequate housing land supply and

- (a) it will bring forward the development of previously-developed land and/or buildings of at least a similar size; or
- (b) the proposed development includes affordable dwellings in a proportion justified by the assessment of housing needs produced by the district council; or
- (c) it will make a significant contribution to affordable housing provision elsewhere.

Local plans should provide for those exceptional circumstances when an outstanding need for either affordable housing or accommodation for those households with special needs may outweigh planning objections which would otherwise cause rejection of similar proposals for general market housing.

INTENT

4.4.1 Policy H.4 provides a phasing mechanism for the delivery of the housing provision (set out in Policy H.1) during the Plan period. Its intent is to ensure that the release of allocated greenfield land for housing development is not quickly exhausted at the expense of bringing forward

previously-developed land for development.

CONTEXT

4.4.2 The Policy sets out the need for districts/boroughs to ensure that there is at any time an adequate supply of housing land which keeps the supply of houses in line with housing needs in

the district or borough. An adequate housing supply will need to have regard to the capability of the land and buildings to keep the supply of houses in line with housing needs in the district/borough as well as development lead times.

4.4.3 The Policy lays down the criteria within which allocated greenfield land may be released early for development – for example, where it might trigger the development of previously-developed sites or generate affordable or special needs housing which would not otherwise be forthcoming.

4.4.4 To deliver the total housing provision and the appropriate scale of affordable housing alongside the achievement of the urban previously-developed housing targets presents districts/boroughs with a challenging task in their local plan reviews. Accordingly, to assist with this process, a policy introducing a phasing mechanism for the release of allocated greenfield land was considered necessary.

4.4.5 Government policy, as stated in PPG3 (and foreshadowed in Regional Planning Guidance), firmly requires local plans to include policies for the release of sites for housing development and demands that a sequential approach is adopted whereby previously-developed sites are developed before greenfield

sites. Obviously, without such a mechanism there would be a danger of greenfield land being utilised first.

4.4.6 The ability to bring forward the development of allocated greenfield land in specific circumstances is considered to be necessary in Warwickshire. This ability could be required to bring forward previously-developed land in the north of the County where the market alone may not be strong enough to do so, and could help to deliver sufficient levels of affordable housing in the south of the County where the general housing market is strong and prices are often prohibitive for lower income workers, particularly in the tourism associated industries.

4.4.7 In short, this Policy helps to shift the emphasis from greenfield housing development towards development of previously-developed land and buildings and in doing so reduces the rate of development of greenfield land. It also helps to bring resources forward for the development of affordable housing, and should act in a positive way to achieve the broad strategy of the Plan.

OPERATION

4.4.8 Policy H4 requires local plans to operate within the framework laid

down within PPG3 and its sequential approach, but also to acknowledge the criteria (as laid out in the policy) that might occasion the release of allocated greenfield land.

4.4.9 Local plans should also set out the order of priority for the release of land through the Plan period. Further advice on this matter is provided in 'Planning to Deliver - The managed release of housing sites: towards better practice'.

4.4.10 Agreements will be needed to secure the requirements of this Policy. Although this could be onerous, the EiP Panel felt that they would be no more onerous than entering into and complying with Section 106 Obligations. It will be necessary for local plans to set out clearly the phasing mechanism and its operation, and the need for an agreement to be

entered into on allocated greenfield sites for their phased release.

4.4.11 Through the regular and frequent monitoring of housing supply the phasing mechanism will enable allocated greenfield sites to be released for housing development only when fully justified by at least one of the three specific circumstances set out in this Policy. The increase in frequency of updating monitoring information will ensure that there is greater certainty in the accuracy of the housing supply and will help to ensure that the phasing mechanism does not unduly delay the bringing forward of allocated greenfield sites for housing development.

4.4.12 Any early release of allocated greenfield land justified through this Policy will also need to have regard to the other policies in this Plan.

4.5 Review of Existing Housing Provision in Stratford-on-Avon District

Policy H.5 HOUSING PROVISION IN STRATFORD-ON-AVON DISTRICT

A review of existing housing provision in Stratford-on-Avon District should be undertaken to reduce the rural housing provision in locations that do not meet the locational criteria of this Plan.

Significant weight should be given in the determination of planning applications to the locational criteria pending the completion of this review.

INTENT

4.5.1 Policy H.5 is intended to reduce the large number of housing commitments in locations in Stratford-on-Avon District that do not accord with the strategy of this Plan. The Policy flags up the need for an early review of housing provision in the District. This will provide greater scope to lessen the imbalance between the scale of the housing pipeline and local need in the District, and will provide a distribution of housing which more clearly meets the objectives of the Structure Plan, by means of strengthening the emphasis on the main urban area, Stratford-upon-Avon. It encourages the District Council to embark on a review of existing housing provision as soon as is possible.

CONTEXT

4.5.2 The need for this Policy stemmed from the EiP Panel Report, following its consideration of the scale of the housing pipeline and local need in Stratford-on-Avon District, and the distribution of housing development across the County and this District.

4.5.3 The EiP Panel considered that the scale of the housing pipeline in Stratford-on-Avon District was so out of scale with local need that it should

be reviewed where possible, and noted the considerable benefit in maintaining the allocations around the main urban area of Stratford-upon-Avon. The scale of the housing pipeline needs to be reduced to a position where the total housing provision for the District in the Plan period totals 8,200 houses.

4.5.4 In strategic planning terms there is a firm basis for including this Policy. Mainly this derives from the increased opportunity for a more sustainable pattern of development in this part of the County, focusing on the main urban area and strengthening the overall development strategy across the whole of Warwickshire.

4.5.5 Added impetus to undertake a housing review has come through the revised PPG3. This guidance introduces a new approach to planning for housing which, for many authorities will mean an early review and alteration in respect of housing. The explanatory text to Policy H.1 provides further detail on this matter.

OPERATION

4.5.6 The Policy requires Stratford-on-Avon District Council to review its existing housing provision in order to reduce the rural housing provision in locations that do not meet the locational criteria

of the Structure Plan. This stems from the underlying development strategy and the specific policy steer given to the location of new housing development in Policies GD.3, GD.5, RA.1, RA.2 and RA.3. In addition, to maximise the opportunities available to reduce the rural housing provision the Policy sets out that significant weight should be given in the determination of planning applications to the locational

criteria pending the completion of the review.

- 4.5.7 Once the review of existing housing provision has been fully undertaken and a reduction in the rural housing provision in locations that do not meet the locational criteria of the Structure Plan is achieved, the requirements of this Policy will have been met.

