An Interim Housing Strategy for Berkshire
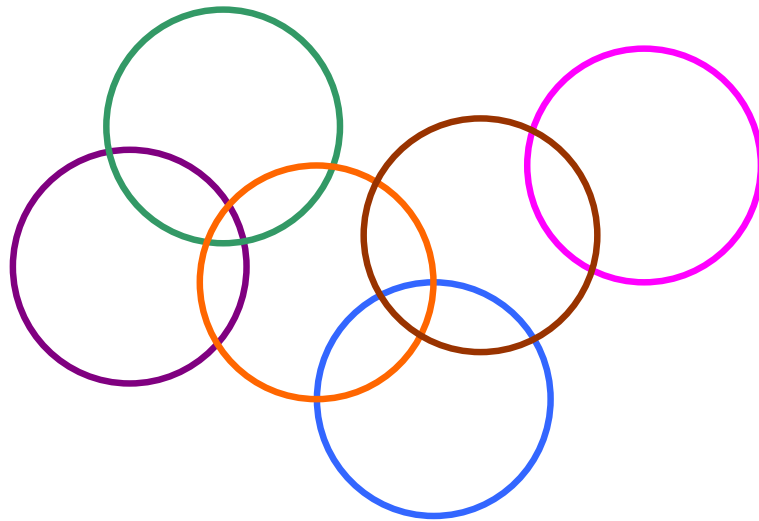
westberkshire.reading.wokingham.bracknellforest.windsor&maidenhead.slough

**Final Draft
10.10.05**

NBA
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Executive Summary

This document represents the first step in the preparation of a sub-regional housing strategy for Berkshire. As an interim strategy it sets the sub-region in context both nationally and regionally before identifying the specific local housing challenges faced by the 6 Unitary Authorities and their partners. It also recognises that a Berkshire sub-region may not best reflect future housing markets and that further work is needed to fully understand and identify the most appropriate sub-regional groupings.

It is hoped that all Berkshire's Local Strategic Partnerships, the 6 local authorities and their key housing partners will agree the shared vision and common themes. Once agreed they can then work together to collect and analyse information on a sub-regional level and agree the next steps needed to produce a full and effective strategy and action plan.

As it is developed the Strategy must continue to link back to key documents such as the Communities Plan, Regional Housing Strategy, Regional Economic Strategy and South East Plan. In turn the Strategy must contribute into these and a range of other national, regional and sub-regional strategies, plans and frameworks. It should also act as a positive driver for housing within Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Strategies.

Figure 1: Berkshire – Location & Unitary Authorities
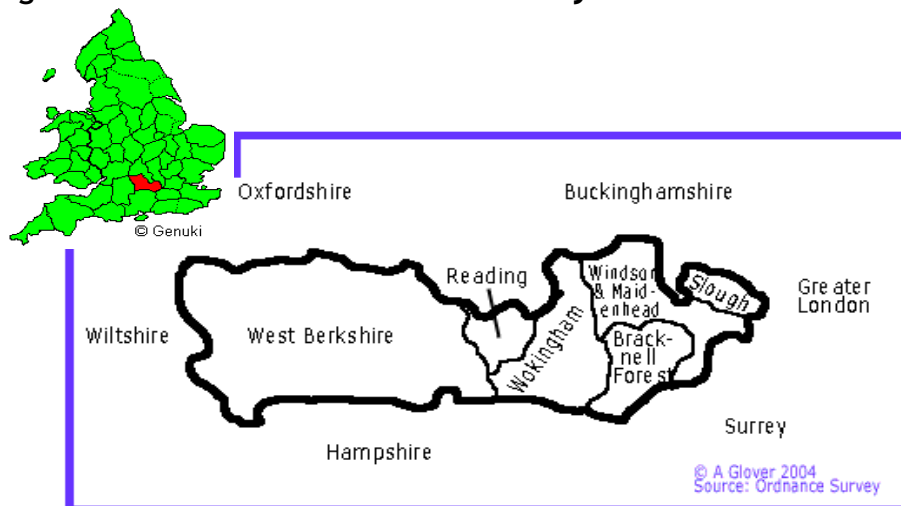
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Berkshire is perceived as an area of high affluence and economic success with continuing high levels of demand and development. It covers high density urban areas such as Reading and Slough as well as large areas protected as part of the Green belt or as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

But those positive factors bring with them pressures and challenges unique to this sub-region. High levels of development have brought pressure on both the environment and infrastructure of the urban areas as well as on the protected rural parts of the sub-region. The high levels of economic success and affluence have lead to the comparison between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' being exacerbated with high levels of real and perceived exclusion for those not sharing in the prosperity.

House prices, housing shortages and affordability are as acute, if not more so, in Berkshire as in the rest of the South East. In addition the need to improve living conditions in both the public and private sectors and meeting the housing needs of both the most vulnerable people and all sections of the community all place significant demands on strategists, front line service providers and resources.

The Strategy sets out a shared vision for Berkshire in line with that for the South-East as a whole contained within the current Regional Housing Strategy:

> *That everyone has the right to a decent home, but we want to make sure that this is an area where the quality of our homes is high and people have a choice about the homes they live in. And we want to create sustainable communities, which make a significant contribution to the quality of life and economic prosperity of our area.*

However this Strategy also adds:

> *We also recognise that by working together in partnership across the sub-region and beyond we have a better chance of making that vision a reality.*

It also identifies 4 common themes that reflect national and regional priorities and address local challenges:

1. **Maximising access & choice – focusing on increasing the supply of affordable housing**
2. **Contributing to successful & sustainable communities**
3. **Improving the quality of housing, living conditions & housing services**
4. **Meeting the housing needs of the vulnerable & those with specific requirements**

The Strategy also identifies a fifth theme which is vital to the success of this Berkshire-wide approach and is the main purpose of developing this strategy:

5. **Working together to achieve better results**

The Strategy sets out some of the initial progress line with those themes and highlights the likely level of resources available to partners. It also defines what makes a Sub-Regional Priority Project and proposes an assessment framework to help identify and agree which should be supported by the sub-regional partners.

Finally it explains the proposed structure and decision-making process and methods for monitoring and evaluating the success of the Strategy and begins to identify key actions and milestones for delivery

This interim Strategy has been developed through Berkshire Housing Strategists who will co-ordinate development of the full strategy and action plan and then have responsibility for ensuring its delivery.

Berkshire Housing Strategists

Purpose of Group
To work together to develop a coordinated approach to sub-regional housing issues across the former Berkshire authorities; to raise awareness of the needs of the sub-region with the Regional Housing Board; to consider issues relating to, and strategies to address quality and decency within the sub-regional housing stock, and to attract funding to develop new affordable housing, and to improve the quality of the housing stock to meet sub-regional need.

Achieve these aims by:
- improving the common understanding of strategic housing issues across the former Berkshire authorities
- developing and delivering against, a sub-regional housing strategy
- informing the development of regional and sub-regional housing and planning policy including participation in Regional Housing Board sub-groups, and also contributing to economic development and regeneration policy
- lobbying the Regional Housing Board for resources and to contribute to the development of Regional Housing Strategy
- developing cross—boundary protocols on common issues such as S.106 requirements, cross-boundary nominations, key worker housing
- jointly commissioning research, as appropriate
- bidding jointly for resources, as appropriate
- engaging with other adjoining housing authorities where opportunities or issues arise within wider sub-region area
- reporting to Berkshire Chief Executives Group and providing the overarching framework for a range of sub-regional housing working groups including homelessness, enabling, supporting people, private sector stock conditions

Membership:

A2 Housing Group	Reading Borough Council
Berkshire Strategic Planning Unit	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Slough Borough Council
Catalyst Housing Group	Southern Housing Group
Government Office for the South East	Sovereign Housing Association
Housing Corporation (South-East)	Thames Valley Housing Group
Housing Solutions Group	Warden Housing Association
London & Quadrant Housing Group	West Berkshire Council
Parkside Housing Group	Wokingham District Council

Contents

1 The World We Live & Work In - National and Regional Context

1.1 The formulation of the first Sub-Regional Housing Strategy covering the 6 Unitary Authorities across Berkshire takes place within the context of a continually developing national and regional housing agenda. The on-going delivery of proposals and actions initially launched through the *Communities Plan* and further detailed through programmes such as *Sustainable Communities – Homes for All* published in January 2005, the strengthening of local Community Strategies and Partnerships, the housing growth debate being fostered by the South East Regional Assembly, the growing influence of Regional Housing Boards and the emergence of an updated Regional Housing Strategy for the South East all help set the framework within which this Sub-Regional Strategy can be developed.

1.2 On a regional and sub-regional level this Strategy also needs to link to and contribute to a range of strategies, plans and frameworks such as *Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Social Inclusion Statement, Housing Corporation's Regional Investment Strategy, South East Regional Planning Guidance, Thames Valley Economic Strategy, Thames Valley Inclusion Framework* and *Berkshire Structure Plan.*

The Government's Communities Plan

1.3 *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future,* known as the *Communities Plan*, marked a step change in the Government's approach to housing and set out to remedy what were seen as deep-seated deficiencies in the effectiveness of housing policy. One of its key objectives was to develop a much stronger regional and sub-regional approach to housing policy – recognising the need for a more coordinated and coherent set of responses across local authority boundaries at the sub-regional level.

1.4 The Plan's long-term action programme for delivering sustainable communities also included:
- The regeneration of deprived areas
- Increasing housing supply in growth areas
- Providing more affordable housing for low income households and key workers
- Addressing low demand and abandonment
- Bringing council homes up to a decent standard

1.5 *Sustainable Communities in the South East* is a regional sub-strategy of the *Communities Plan*. The key priorities outlined in this sub-strategy include:
    Housing Supply
- Build more homes

- Build the homes that people need
- Make better use of land

Affordable Housing

- Make home ownership more affordable
- Tackle homelessness
- Develop more cost-effective methods of building

<u>Regional Housing Strategy</u>

1.6 The South East Regional Housing Strategy 2004-6 states:

Our vision is straightforward.

> *Regeneration & community leadership – **Themes 1, 2 & 3***
> ***Longwood Park** was an estate of four high rise blocks which had a poor reputation and the properties needed significant repair to make the homes decent. After extensive consultation, Slough Borough Council appointed Parkside Housing Group to the scheme (involving the demolition of two of the blocks and replacement with low rise new build housing and refurbishment of the remaining two towers) and Longwood Park Ltd., a subsidiary tenant led housing association to drive the transfer, was established.*
>
> *Tenants worked with the Association and its partner contractor and architects to design the estate. A key objective was to create a community with a wider range of housing mix than the one and two bed roomed flats in the towers had provided. The new build houses have therefore been designed to have attic conversions in the future and there is now a mix of two, three and four bed houses on the estate. Two towers have been refurbished to provide high standards of energy efficiency and low cost in use, the first phase of new build housing (105 new homes) has been completed and the second phase of construction is about to start.*
>
> *In addition to the physical regeneration of the estate, the Resident led community board has set the policies for management and maintenance of the estate and for the first time for many years, there is a waiting list of residents for the estate. Longwood Park has an office on the estate and an IT centre at which residents can learn to use the Internet and gain IT skills to assist with job applications etc.*
>
> ***GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY***

Everyone has the right to a decent home, but we want to make sure that the South East is a place where the quality of our homes is high and people have a choice about the homes they live in. And we want to create sustainable communities, which make a significant contribution to the quality of life and economic prosperity of our area.

Housing is about supply, quality and distribution. The right properties, which are fit to live in, in the right places and at the right price. We must help the most vulnerable members of our society with their basic housing needs. That leads to five key themes for this strategy:

- *Housing supply*
- *Affordability (which includes the need for inexpensive housing for key workers)*

- *Regeneration and neighbourhood renewal*
- *Homelessness and supported housing*
- *Quality and sustainability*

1.7 An updated Strategy for 2006-9, launched in July 2005, reiterates that the overall objective of the Strategy is for 'e*veryone in the south east to live in a decent home'.*

1.8 It sets out as priorities:
Our priority is to increase the supply of affordable housing, because prices and private sector rents are out of the reach of people on low and even average incomes and homelessness remains a significant issue. We are also concerned about the large numbers of non-decent and unfit properties across all sectors that cause some of the most vulnerable people in the region live in sub-standard accommodation.
So we believe;
- *We need to build more affordable homes*
- *We need to bring decent housing within the reach of people on lower incomes*
- *We want to improve the quality of new housing and of existing stock*

1.9 In addition it sets out the principles adopted by the Regional Housing Board as part of a long term strategy and their 2 year investment priorities reflecting their 3 key target areas:
- *Providing additional affordable housing to meet unmet and newly arising need, including for key workers*
- *Making decent all social housing*
- *Making decent any non-decent private sector housing occupied by vulnerable households and families with children*

1.10 The Strategy for 2006-9 also places Berkshire as a high priority investment area using the newly developed 'Affordable Housing index' recently adopted by ODPM. This index is combines indicators from the following 3 areas: Homeless households in temporary accommodation; Overcrowded and sharing households; Housing Affordability.

Figure 2: South East Region Investment Areas

South East Region Investment Areas

Key
Growth Areas
Priority Investment Areas
High Priority Investment Areas

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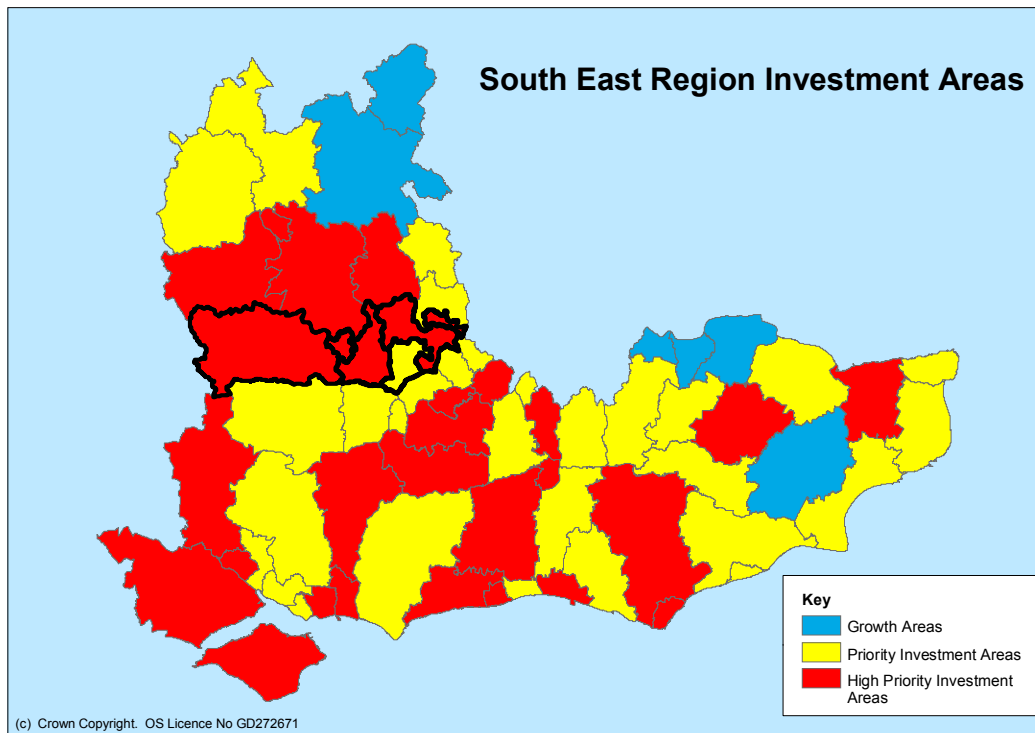
Source – South East Regional Housing Strategy 2006 onwards
(Copyright needed)

1.11 Other regional strategies and plans build on these themes and priorities, recognising the central role housing plays in the social, economic and spatial development and success of the region.

1.12 This sub-regional strategy has also been developed with reference to neighbouring sub-regional housing strategies such as that for West London where the vision of the 7 Boroughs reflects several similar challenges. Their vision is to:
- Increase the supply of housing
- Increase the provision of affordable homes
- Improve the quality of housing
- Create sustainable communities

South East Plan
1.13 The consultation draft South East Plan produced by the South East Regional Assembly takes as its theme 'A Healthy Region' and sets the challenge that there will be a sustained improvement in the quality of life by 2026, measured in terms of social well-being, the economy, environment and the management of the region's natural resources. It envisages strong and sustained economic growth over the period and so

recognises the need for significant levels of new housing to support that growth.

Figure 3: Western Corridor & Blackwater Valley Sub-Region
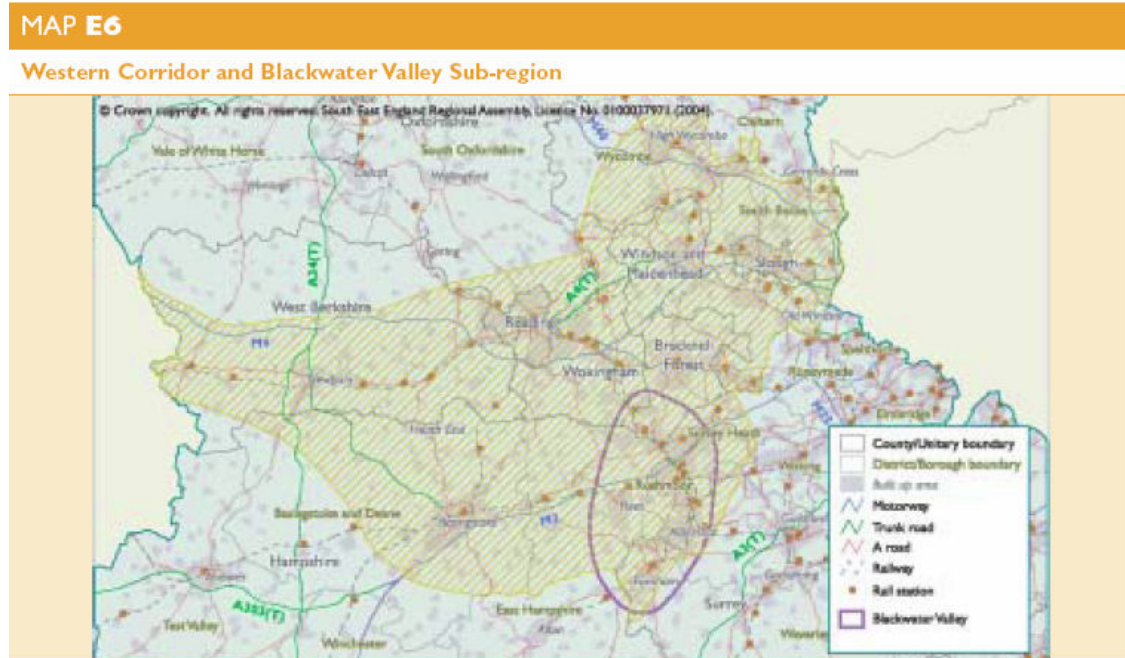
1.14 What becomes clear from looking at the development options put forward for consultation is that whilst much has been made of the new housing growth areas proposed in the Communities Plan (Ashford, Milton Keynes/South Midlands and Thames Gateway who between them have been allocated 20% per annum of the regional housing fund allocation for affordable housing over the next few years) it is the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley sub-region with Berkshire at its core where the highest levels of development are proposed.

Neighbourhood Agenda and 'The Harder Test'

1.15 It is critical that the Strategy is also reflected in a range of recent policy developments focusing on a more local neighbourhood agenda and with more emphasis on user focus and diversity.

1.16 Community engagement is central to the government's neighbourhood and local leadership agendas, as well as the development of local area agreements and sustainable community strategies. Housing has a key role to play in community engagement not least because tenants' and residents' forums are primary engagement mechanisms for many individuals and communities.

1.17 Housing should be at the heart of sustainable community strategies which should set out how sustainable communities can be achieved locally. It should also be one of the key issues to be monitored and addressed by effective Local Strategic Partnerships. Local Area Agreements, which will incorporate Local Public Service Agreements, will articulate the needs and outcomes for a locality as well as set locally agreed targets with all partners – again all housing partners need to play their full part.

1.18 The revised Corporate Performance Assessment framework for local authorities – 'The Harder Test' - will be more stringent with more emphasis on outcomes for local people and value for money. User focus and diversity is now a core element of the corporate assessment with judgements threaded throughout the key lines of enquiry from ambition through to achievement. With its key role within local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships, housing needs to embrace this fully.

The Gershon Review

1.19 This Strategy also needs to be developed in the light of the Gershon Review. In August 2003, the government asked Sir Peter Gershon to undertake a review of public sector efficiency. It focused on the Government's key objective to release resources to fund the front line services that meet the public's highest priorities by improving the efficiency of service delivery. The review proposed a year-on-year efficiency target of 2.5% for all public services.

1.20 The review emphasised the need to ensure that efficiency gains are not delivered at the expense of quality of service delivery. Service cuts will not count as efficiency gains. Rather, efficiency in the public sector involves making the best use of the resources available for the provision of public services. Efficiencies are achieved through reforms that:

- Maintain the same level of service provision while reducing the resources needed or deploying fewer staff;

- Result in additional outputs, such as enhanced quality or quantity of service, for the same resources; or

- Remodel service provision to enable better outcomes.

Emerging Government Agendas

1.21 As this Strategy is developed further it will also consider emerging government agendas such as Homebuy and Choiced Based Lettings.

1.22 In *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* (January 2005), the government announced new proposals aimed to provide simpler, fairer home ownership opportunities for more people, whilst protecting the supply of social housing and helping homeless households. In summer 2005 they consulted on a range of home ownership products including Social, New Build and Open Market Homebuy.

1.23 To contribute to the development of viable and inclusive communities the government has set a target that all local authorities should operate Choiced Based Lettings schemes by 2010. Partners across Berkshire are working together to achieve this target and will also consider to how these could work on a cross-boundary or sub-regional basis.

1.24 So we now have the national and regional framework within which the Berkshire Sub-Region has a clear and specific role to play in delivering against those priorities and targets. The Sub-Region faces many significant challenges, not least in housing, but through the development of this Strategy and other similar documents it is showing that it has the appetite to work together to create and maintain those successful and sustainable communities.

2   The Berkshire Sub-Region

2.1   The Berkshire sub-region consists of 6 Unitary Authority areas – Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and Wokingham District Council.

2.2   It covers high density urban areas such as Reading & Slough as well as large areas protected as part of the Green Belt or as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2.3   Although it can easily be defined geographically the sub-region is inextricably linked to its neighbouring areas – London to the east, Oxford & Wycombe to the north and Basingstoke/north Hampshire to the south – not least through travel to work patterns, retail catchment areas and population migration/movement.

2.4   Evidence of these linkages is strengthened through the work of DTZ Pieda, commissioned by the South East of England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and English Partnerships, to provide advice to the Regional Housing Board on the strategic pattern of housing markets in the region (see 2.12). The findings suggest that Berkshire straddles 2 housing market areas. The Regional Housing Strategy, whilst encouraging the use of the DTZ defined areas, also makes it clear that they should be used with a degree of flexibility and in some cases there is scope to combine more than one area.

2.5   Berkshire Housing Strategists welcome the work of DTZ and recognises the need to work with other partner authorities within the 2 identified housing market areas.

The Economy
2.6   Home to over ¾ of a million people Berkshire is thought of primarily as being affluent and successful. Located along the western corridor out of London, it is at the heart of the Thames Valley, economically one of the most competitive in Europe. Nationally the Thames Valley vies with Surrey for consideration as the most competitive sub-regional economy in the UK outside London and:
- Is the fastest growing economy (4.2%)
- Provides over 900,000 jobs
- Produces £25bn of output (5% of UK total)
- Generates wealth of £27,000 per capita

2.7   Berkshire's success is predicated on the area's excellent communications, high quality business locations, proximity to London & Heathrow and a

dynamic entrepreneurial economy. It is, in effect, a western extension of the central London economy.

2.8 Average incomes are high, the housing market remains strong and the overall quality of life is good for most people. However economic success brings with it huge pressures and these are recognised in the Regional Economic Statement which identifies the key task for this area as:
"to build on existing economic strengths in order to achieve sustainable growth with minimal additional pressure on labour or land"

2.9 Concerns over protecting the environment, levels of traffic congestion and the shortage and cost of housing are all recognised by the 6 authorities and their partners. However what is often overlooked by people from outside the sub-region, and is often masked by general statistics and the focus on the economic success of the region, is the level of inequality that exists. The comparison between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' is exacerbated in an area of affluence and leads to high levels of real and perceived exclusion for those not sharing in the prosperity.

Deprivation
2.10 The national Index of Deprivation 2000 identified 7 local authority wards (5 in Slough and 2 in Reading) within the 25% most deprived wards nationally. However when Housing Deprivation was mapped separately (looking at homeless households in temporary accommodation, household overcrowding and poor private sector housing) 30 wards were within the 25% most deprived including 10 (7 in Slough and 3 in Reading) within the most deprived 10% and 3 wards in Slough in the most deprived 1%.

2.11 The revised 2004 English Indices of Deprivation show Berkshire includes 23 'super output areas' (13 in Reading and 10 in Slough) within the worst 25% across the country in terms of multiple deprivation. When analysing the indicators for the new 'barriers to housing' index 117 are in the worst 25% with 19 in the worst 10% (10 in West Berkshire, 4 in Slough, 2 in Reading, 1 in Bracknell and 1 in Wokingham) and 2 (both in West Berkshire) in the worst 1%. The poor scoring of SOAs within West Berkshire reflects the focus on accessibility within the revised housing indicator.

(see Appendix A for more information)

Housing Market Areas
2.12 As mentioned previously in May 2004 DTZ Pieda Consulting were commissioned to provide advice to the Regional Housing Board on the strategic pattern of housing markets in the region. Its main objective was to map the spatial extent of sub-regional housing markets across the South East, as a first stage in developing a better understanding of the

pattern and character of sub-regional housing markets in the region. The analysis, which was based on extensive analysis of data and informed through consultation with regional stakeholders, suggested that there are 21 sub-regional housing markets in the South East.

2.13 Although the analysis recognized the close links between sub-regional markets, their view was that Berkshire was not a distinct separate market but actually split into two broader east and west markets – 'Reading M4 West' & 'Inner West'

2.14 It is worth noting that the Study is a first step in defining and analysing Housing Markets and the Regional Housing Strategy recognises that the Berkshire sub-region as a whole is emerging as an area for further analysis. Partners across Berkshire look forward to further guidance from the Regional Housing Board but will continue to explore options for taking forward some form of sub-regional housing assessment.

Figure 4: South East Housing Markets
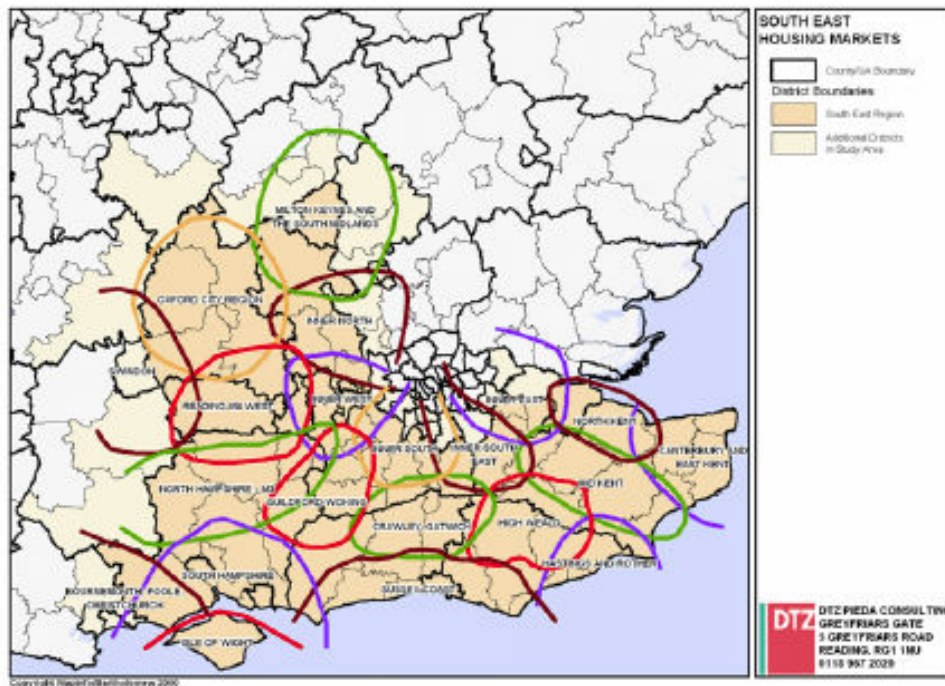
Source – DTZ Pieda Consulting
(Copyright needed)

Reading-M4 West

2.15 The DTZ Pieda analysis identifies the Reading M4-West sub-region as geographically one of the most extensive sub-regions in the South East, starting at the regional boundary in the west and encompassing the

western M4 corridor through to Windsor and Maidenhead in the east, where it overlaps with the Slough Inner-North area.

2.16 Reading, including the major business parks on the edge of the Reading urban area (which are in Wokingham and West Berkshire Unitary Authorities), acts as a major centre of employment in the region. Strong commuting patterns centred upon Reading are evident in the travel to work statistics and the number of significant employment nodes along the Reading-M4 Corridor is noticeable in the mapping of key regional employment nodes.

2.17 There are high levels of household movements between West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham, though this will in part reflect the fact that the urban area of Reading includes areas which are part of the administrative districts of Wokingham and West Berkshire. There are weaker linkages in terms of household movements to the east. Thus the extent of the housing market area has a bias to the west if one thinks of it being centred on Reading. Given the tendency for house prices to be higher the closer one gets to London, those working in Reading are more likely to live westwards of Reading than eastwards where house prices are generally high and the influence of competing employment centres (eg Heathrow) are greater.

2.18 Patterns of household movement show a relative absence of movement between Reading and Basingstoke. Thus there seems to be quite distinct housing markets covering the two areas – and this is confirmed by the existence of distinct travel to work areas (labour markets), which in itself will in part be due to the lack of high-speed rail and road connections between the two towns. The spatial extent of the sub-regional overlap

with the North Hampshire sub-region therefore lies along the northern district boundary of Basingstoke and Hart, and does not extend further into Basingstoke and the north Hampshire sub-region.

Inner West

2.19 The analysis also identifies an Inner-West sub-region extending from Runnymede in the south to South Buckinghamshire in the north, encompassing Spelthorne, the eastern part of Bracknell district, the eastern part of Windsor and Maidenhead district, with a central nucleus focused on Slough. Slough, like many districts within and bordering this sub-region, has a housing market heavily influenced by it's proximity to London, the economic strength of the Thames Valley, the relative affluence of neighbouring authorities and excellent road, rail and air links. As well as stretching into London, therefore, the inner-West area shows significant overlap on the western side with the Reading-M4 West sub-region.

2.20 However, the decision to define this area as a separate sub-region is largely influenced by the large quantity of employment located in the area, to such an extent that Slough has its own travel to work area. The presence of Heathrow as a major centre of employment in its own right and its influence on the surrounding area is an important characteristic of the market. Analysis of household movements display high levels of movements between Slough and Windsor and Maidenhead and South Buckinghamshire, but limited movement westwards to areas such as Wokingham and Reading. Travel to work patterns also indicate this area is a separate housing market to the Reading-M4 West sub-region.

<u>Partners</u>

2.21 **Local Authorities**: One of the sub-region's strengths is its partnership working across all aspects of housing. Although politically diverse the 6 local authorities have continued to find common ground where needed to work together to address shared challenges.

2.22 **Registered Social Landlords**: The RSL movement is also strong and active across Berkshire contributing not only as a developer and housing provider but also at the heart of broader regeneration and neighbourhood renewal as well as being closely involved in strategic planning and policy development.

2.23 **Private Sector**: Equally important is the partnership with the private sector – land owners, developers, property professionals, funders, maintenance contractors, private landlords etc – without whom the overall housing needs of the sub-region could not be addressed. Berkshire was amongst the first sub-region in the country to recognise fully the

importance of engaging with the private sector both in developing local housing strategies and in using their skills and experience to improve delivery.

2.24 **Voluntary Sector**: Voluntary sector partners add even more strength to the sub-region, working at the sharp edge of housing often with the most vulnerable individuals and communities. Berkshire has always recognised the benefits of such a strong network of excellent local and sub-regional voluntary organisations and is continuing to work in close partnership with them.

2.25 **Tenants & Residents**: The final strand to this partnership are the customers -local tenants and residents. Berkshire is justifiably proud of its long history of tenant and resident involvement across all aspects of housing – in strategy development, decision-making and project development and implementation.

3   Housing Challenges

3.1 Berkshire not only faces the challenge of responding to wider national and regional agendas but also to specific housing challenges within the sub-region. Changing demographics, shortage and affordability of housing, infrastructure not keeping pace with development, poor housing conditions and meeting the housing need of vulnerable people and all sections of the community. To a greater or lesser extent these challenges can be found in each of the 6 Unitary Authority areas.

Changing Demographics
3.2 Berkshire has experienced one of the fastest housing growth of any part of the south-east for the last 4 decades with the housing stock of the area almost doubling in size between 1961 and 1991.

3.3 The level of housing now being provided for Berkshire in Regional Planning Guidance 9 (March 2001) does not allow for substantial continued net in-migration. The new housing being proposed is likely to be broadly offset by an increase in the number of households forming amongst the local population. RPG9 suggests that although there will continue to be a substantial number of new arrivals in the area this is likely to be offset by large numbers moving out of the area.

Berkshire Structure Plan
3.4 The new Berkshire Structure Plan, adopted by the Secretary of State in July 2005, proposes that provision should be made for about 40,740 net additional dwellings between 2001 and 2016. These are split down by local authority as follows:

Figure 5: Berkshire Structure Plan – proposed new dwellings 2001-2016

Unitary Authority	2001- 2006	2006-2011	2011-2016	Total
Bracknell Forest	1,950	2,660	2,660	7,270
Reading	2,010	2,570	2,570	7,150
Slough	2,750	1,140	1,140	5,030
Wokingham	2,950	2,580	2,580	8110
West Berkshire	3,900	2,590	2,590	9,080
Windsor & Maidenhead	1,360	1,370	1,370	4,100
Total	**14,920**	**12,910**	**12,910**	**40,740**

Source – Berkshire Structure Plan

3.5 The Plan proposes that the scale of housing development in a settlement should be determined in relation to the accessibility of the settlement by public transport, cycling and walking and by the availability of infrastructure, services and employment. Major housing developments should be primarily located in and adjoining the major towns of Newbury, Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell, Maidenhead, Slough and Windsor and their contiguous built-up areas.

3.6 It also proposes that the priority for new housing development should be previously-developed land and in existing buildings in urban areas with accompanying higher levels of density (generally in excess of 30 dwellings per hectare but rising to in excess of 50 per hectare depending on levels of accessibility).

*Urban Renewal – **Themes 1, 2 & 3***
*In this major Reading town centre regeneration scheme, 98 mixed tenure flats and maisonettes have been built in one building on the site of an empty derelict office block. The design of **Crossway Point** has a visually interesting facade and external environment. It has enhanced the look of the immediate area.*

Innovative features include the fact that all of the flats have been fitted with prefabricated bathroom and kitchen pods to a single specification. This off-site production has resulted in top quality finishes and excellent value-for-money. To aid energy efficiency the South facing aspect of the roof has a photovoltaic membrane to generate solar energy for communal lighting. The interior specification to all flats and the communal areas is high. All residents will benefit from an on-site caretaking service provided by a local, specialist, professional company, CCTV and key-fob security access system. The affordable rented units are fitted with washer-dryers. The intermediate rented units and shared ownership units also have fitted cookers and fridges.

From a development perspective, Crossway Point is a very good illustration of repeatable quality in the production and management of high quality homes. The design concept is already being used in a parallel development of 75 new homes in Slough.
GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

3.7 Both RPG9 and the Structure Plan recognise that the affordability of housing is a problem and RPG9 gives a provisional guideline that about 46%-49% of the total new provision across the south-east should be affordable (figure used for monitoring purposes only and relates to ROSE area). The draft South East Plan however proposes that an average of 25% of all new housing across the region should be social rented accommodation and 10% other forms of affordable housing. The Structure Plan proposes that each local authority should set its own level based on local needs

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assessments.

Population & Household Information

3.8 Over the past 10 years there has continued to be a significant increase in population across Berkshire as a whole pushing up the demand for housing across all sectors, types and sizes. Between 1991 and 2001 Slough experienced the 2nd highest percentage increase in the south-east and the 11th highest nationally whilst Bracknell Forest was the 5th highest in the south-east.

Figure 6: Population growth, density and household size 2001

	Total population 2001	Increase since 1991	Population Density (per hectare)	Household Size
Bracknell Forest	109,617	11,600	10	2.46
Reading	143,096	8,300	35.4	2.4
Slough	119,067	13,700	36.6	2.63
West Berkshire	144,483	5,700	2.1	2.46
Windsor & M'head	133,626	- 100	6.8	2.39
Wokingham	150,229	9100	8.4	2.55
Berkshire	**800,118**	**48,300**		

Source – Census 2001

3.9 The urban areas of Berkshire also show high levels of population density with Slough being ranked 3rd in south-east and Reading 4th.

3.10 On household size Slough is ranked 1st in the south-east and 2nd nationally and Wokingham is 2nd in the south-east and 7th nationally.

Access to Housing

3.11 Despite significant growth there remains a general under-supply of housing and this impacts on both house prices and affordability which remain major challenges across the sub-region.

Affordability

3.12 House prices across Berkshire have continued to rise to levels well above the national average and in many cases above the average for the south east. Slough for example has seen house prices rise by 96% between 1999 and 2004 and the average house price in Windsor & Maidenhead is now £328,000.

Figure 7: Average House Prices 1999-2004
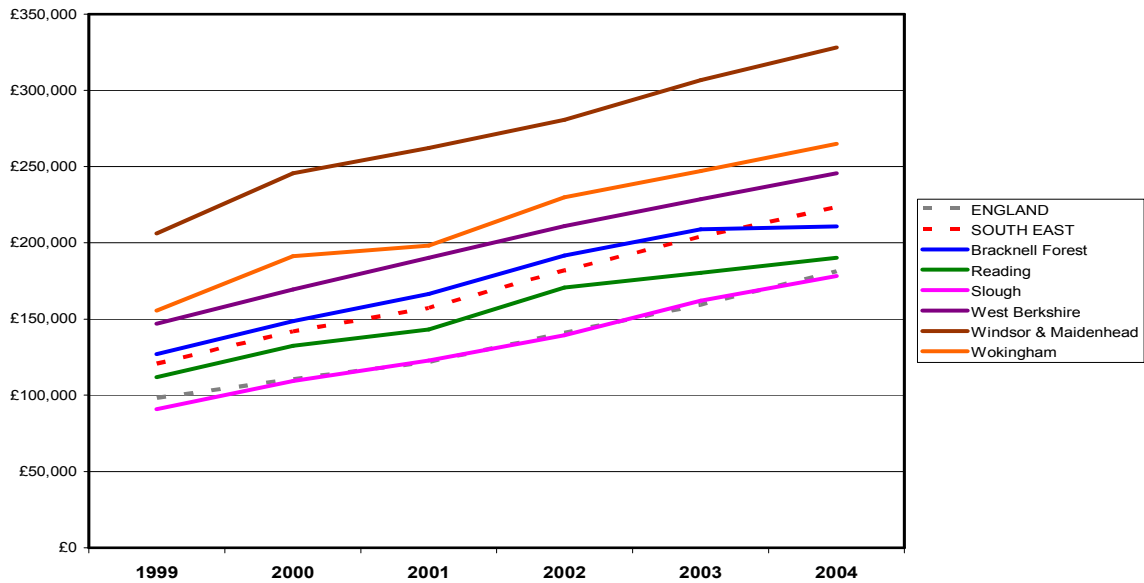
Source – National Housing Federation 'The Evidence 2005'

3.13 Whilst prices have risen consistently across the sub-region, income levels have not shown the same pattern. Not only do they actually show a general fall since 2002 but care needs to be taken when considering this average information which, because of a number of very high income households across Berkshire, masks the large number of households on significantly lower levels of earnings.

Figure 8: Average Annual Earnings 1999-2004
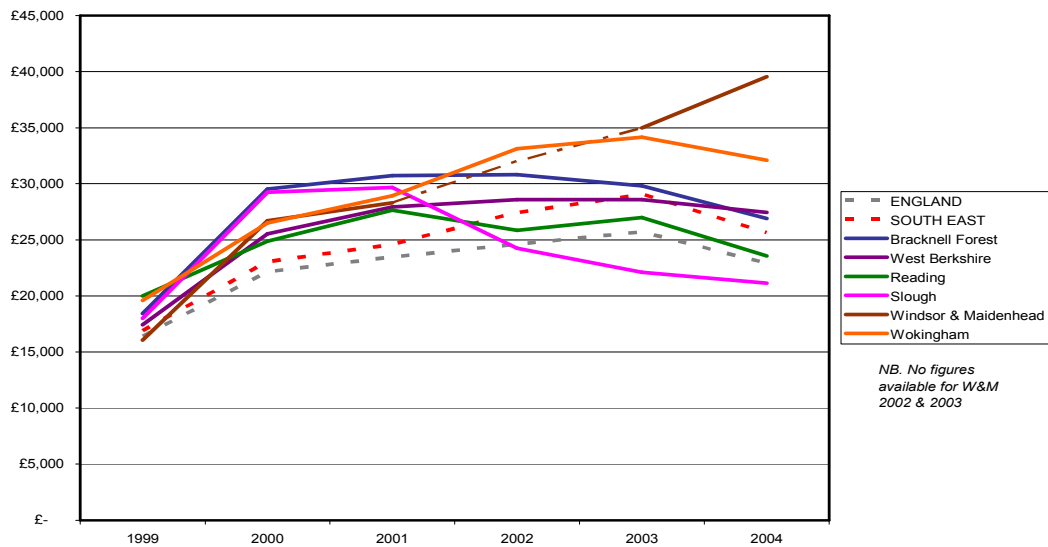
Source – National Housing Federation 'The Evidence 2005'

3.14 When the house price and earnings figures are set against each other they provide clear evidence of how unaffordable owning your own home has become across the sub-region. Average affordability indices of between 7.8 and 8.9 for all properties and even between 5.1 and 6.3 for those homes in the lower quartile price bracket.

Figure 9: Average House Price Affordability Ratios (2004)

	Average House Price	Average Earnings	Affordability Ratio	Salary needed for Mortgage (3.5x earnings for 95% mortgage)
ENGLAND	**£181,280**	**£22,893**	**7.9**	**£49,205**
Bracknell Forest	**£210,787**	£26,919	7.8	£57,214
Reading	**£190,047**	£23,549	8.1	£51,584
Slough	**£178,145**	£21,152	8.4	£48,354
West Berkshire	**£245,595**	£27,448	8.9	£66,662
Windsor & Maidenhead	**£328,245**	£39,565	8.3	£89,095
Wokingham	**£264,823**	£32,093	8.3	£71,881

Source – National Housing Federation 'The Evidence 2005'

Figure 10: Lower Quartile House Price Affordability Ratios (2004)

	Lower Quartile House Price	Average Earnings	Affordability Ratio	Salary needed for Mortgage (3.5x earnings for 95% mortgage)

24

ENGLAND	**£105,000**	**£22,893**	**4.6**	**£28,500**
Bracknell Forest	**£150,000**	£26,919	5.6	£40,714
Reading	**£143,963**	£23,549	6.1	£39,076
Slough	**£133,000**	£21,152	6.3	£36,100
West Berkshire	**£160,000**	£27,448	5.8	£43,429
Windsor & Maidenhead	**£203,625**	£39,565	5.1	£55,270
Wokingham	**£181,000**	£32,093	5.6	£49,129

Source – National Housing Federation 'The Evidence 2005'

3.15 Although relatively small (about 9.1%), Berkshire does have a strong **private rented sector**. Limited up to date analysis is available for affordability within the private rented sector but the Regional Housing Strategy does provide details of private sector rents in 2000 as percentages of average incomes by local authority area.

3.16 Difficulty in accessing the private rented sector is a particular problem in Bracknell Forest and Reading who are grouped with 8 other authorities across the south-east where private sector rents account for the highest percentage of average earnings.

Figure 11: Private Sector Rents as a Percentage of Income (2000)

Local Authority	**Private sector rent as a % of average income (2000)**
Bracknell Forest	19.2 – 24.2
Reading	19.2 – 24.2
Slough	13.9 – 15
West Berkshire	10.1 – 13.9
Windsor & Maidenhead	15.6 – 17.7
Wokingham	13.9 - 15

Source –South East Regional Housing Strategy 2006 onwards

Key Workers

3.17 The shortage of housing supply and high prices has an impact across all sectors of the community however the difficulties experienced by public sector organisations and other vital services and businesses in attracting and retaining key workers has become more acute. Berkshire in particular saw recruitment and retention rates fall and, in line with national and regional priorities, have worked together to address that challenge (see 5.10).

Affordable Housing Need

3.18 Social housing (local authority and Registered Social Landlord) accounts for over 15% of all homes across the sub-region with the highest concentration in Slough.

Figure 12: Total Social Housing in Berkshire (March 2004)

3.19 Each of the 6 local authorities across Berkshire operate a Housing Register showing the number of households in their area who are seeking affordable housing. The following graph combines those registers and shows a continuing increase in demand – even allowing for the fact that the length of these registers often puts off many households from applying.

Figure 13: Households on Housing Register 1999-2005

	Total social housing dwellings (% total of all dwellings)
Bracknell Forest	7933 (17.9)
Reading	11467 (18.7)
Slough	9638 (24.2)
West Berkshire	8653 (13.6)
Windsor & Maidenhead	7907 (13.8)
Wokingham	4481 (7.6)
Berkshire	50079 (15.4)
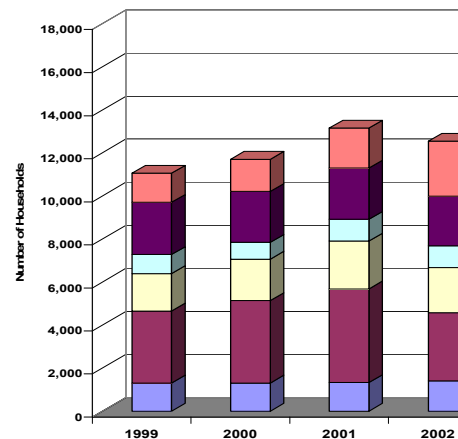
3.20 Figures for households accepted as homeless and in priority need have been high across Berkshire since 1999 but 2004/05 figures show a significant fall – suggesting the growing focus and effectiveness of preventative work. This trend is also seen in

the numbers of households in temporary accommodation at the end of each year now reducing from a peak in 2002/03.

Figure 14: Households Accepted as Homeless & in Priority Need 1999-2005
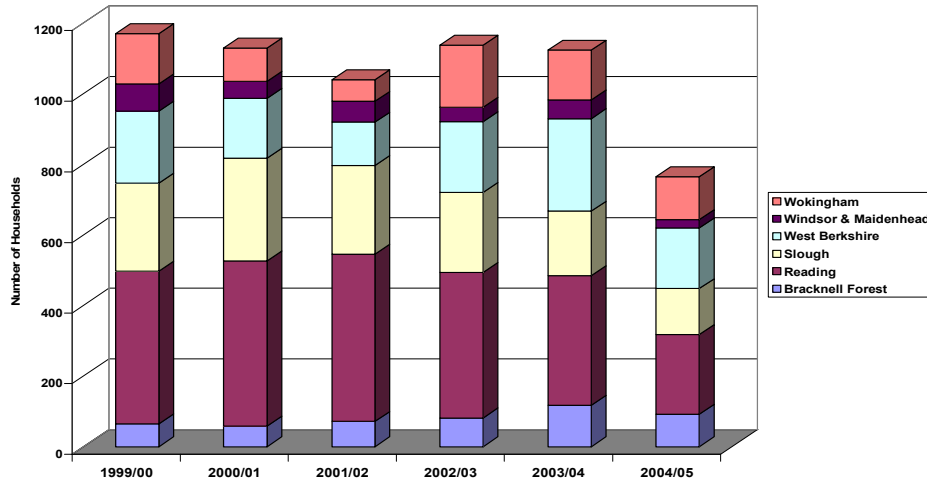
Figure 15: Homeless Households in Priority Need in Temporary Accommodation on 31st March 1999-2005
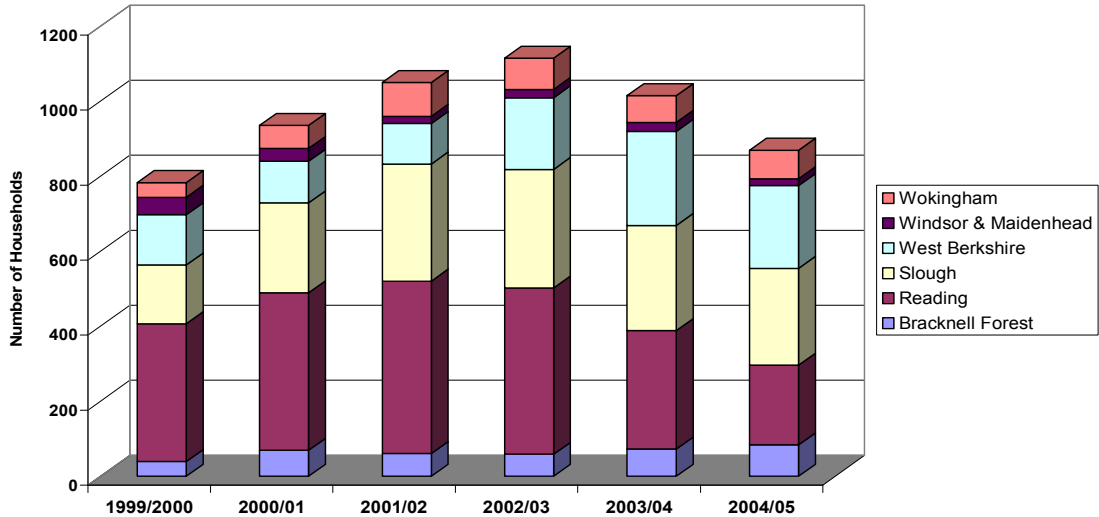
Affordable Housing Supply

3.21 As the overall demand for affordable housing has increased the total numbers of social housing lettings have remained relatively constant over

recent years.(2004/5 figs not available from West Berkshire & Windsor & Maidenhead)

Figure 16: Total Social Housing Lettings 1999-2005
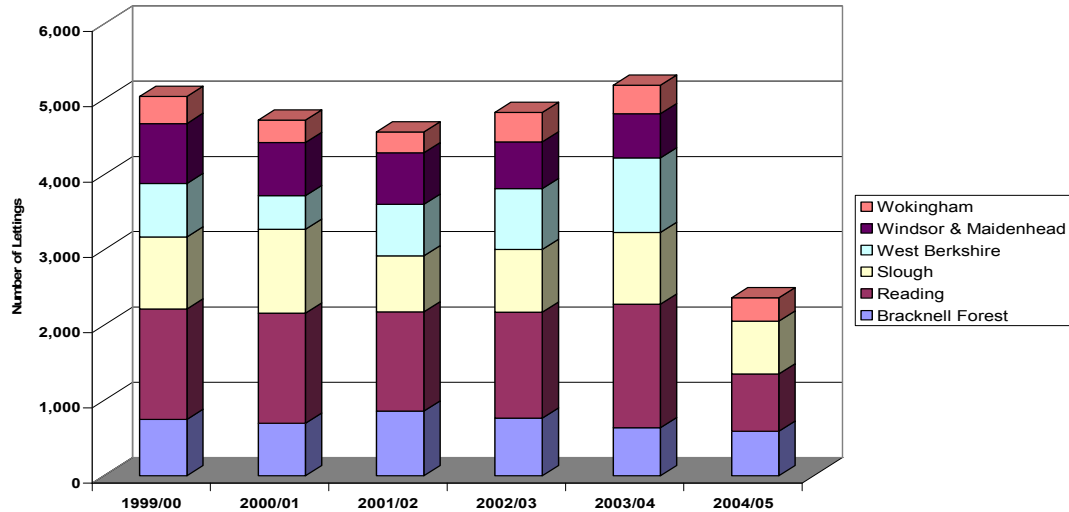
3.22 Although the local authorities, their RSL partners and private developers have worked closely together to maximise the provision of new affordable housing, increased costs per unit, higher proportions of low cost home ownership properties and continuing high numbers of Right to Buy completions (averaging 445 a year across Berkshire over the past 6 years) have been some of the factors contributing to this relatively level profile.

Projected Affordable Housing Shortfall

3.23 In developing this interim strategy it has become clear that projecting accurately the level of affordable housing shortfall across Berkshire is not possible given the current available information and/or the lack of consistency in approach.

3.24 This key information gap will need to be addressed as this strategy and sub-regional approach is developed further.

3.25 Research undertaken by the Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research for the Regional Assembly concluded that 25% of housing over the lifetime of the south East Plan needed to be social rented and a further 10% should be provide as other affordable housing (shared ownership, low cost home ownership and sub-market rent).

Infrastructure to support growing communities

3.26 The 1994 Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9) concluded that Berkshire and its surrounding areas were '*now entering a period of adjustment, enabling infrastructure and services to catch up with the rapid growth of the recent past and should no longer need to absorb continuing net inward migration*'.

3.27 For many people in Berkshire it is this perception that infrastructure improvements have not kept pace with new housing development that has led, understandably, to a degree of NIMBYism both at a local and sub-regional level. They have seen increased pressure on roads and the transport system, public utilities, schools, medical services and other facilities as well as on the support services necessary to develop and maintain successful and inclusive communities.

3.28 Work is underway by the 'Western Corridor' authorities to improve the understanding of infrastructure needs associated with any future growth, including existing shortfalls.

3.29 Another challenge being faced by all housing partners across the sub-region is changing customer expectations. In line with government emphasis on user-focused services most partners are continuing to increase the way they engage with their customers and in which the customers shape the service they provide. As a result better value for money, greater transparency in service delivery and tougher service standards are being put in place across the sub-region.

Quality of housing
3.30 Although new homes are critical most people in Berkshire live in older properties that are in varying states of repair. There are approximately 350,000 separate dwellings across the sub-region split between 28% detached and a similar proportion semi-detached properties. 24% of all properties are in terraces and 14% in purpose built blocks of flats.

3.31 Due to the high levels of housing demand & need very few are considered 'low demand' (0.4%). Only 1% of those dwellings have been vacant for over 6 months suggesting that the existing supply of housing is being well used.

Figure 17: Total Dwellings, Low Demand & Vacant Properties (as at 31.3.04)

	Total Dwellings	Total 'Low Demand' (%)	Vacant 6 months+
Bracknell Forest	44416	379 (0.9)	279 (0.6)
Reading	61154	395 (0.7)	1735 (2.8)

Slough	39788	0 (0)	393 (1.0)
West Berkshire	63379	0 (0)	637 (1.0)
Windsor & M'head	57473	116 (0.2)	168 (0.3)
Wokingham	58969	342 (0.6)	0 (0)
Total Berkshire	**324906**	**1232 (0.4)**	**3212 (1.0)**

Decent Homes

3.32 The Government has set a target of ensuring that all social rented homes are made decent by 2010 and the 6 Unitary Authorities and their RSL partners in Berkshire are working towards that target and in many cases to a higher standard developed in consultation with their tenants.

Figure 18: Non-Decent Social Rented Homes 2005

<table>
<tr><td>

High Quality & Sustainable New Housing - **Themes 1,2,3**

Slough Council desired a sustainable & well designed development when they sold a former council depot site at **Windmill Road**. *A high density scheme was designed that encompassed several sustainable principals, including using sustainable materials, non-allocated parking (greater parking efficiency), and a futuristic design with glass walling to many units. Thames Valley Housing Association worked in partnership with George Wimpey, Slough B C and the Housing Corporation on this site, funding was made available under Challenge funding and ADP.*

The 53 affordable properties are divided into 6 blocks spread over the site, there is nothing to distinguish private and affordable units. 11 of the affordable units are intended for "flexible living" and have a large open area that could be used for a work space or as a bedroom. Of the 53 properties there are 23 apartments for shared ownership and 30 houses and flats for affordable rents, giving a sustainable mix of unit types and tenure. An Eco Homes rating of Good was achieved on this site.

GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

</td><td>

As at 31.3.05

Source – HIP Business Plan

(NB, West Berkshire Council & Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead have transferred their housing stock and so figures included within RSLs)

*Statistical Appendices &
Housing Corporation*

</td></tr>
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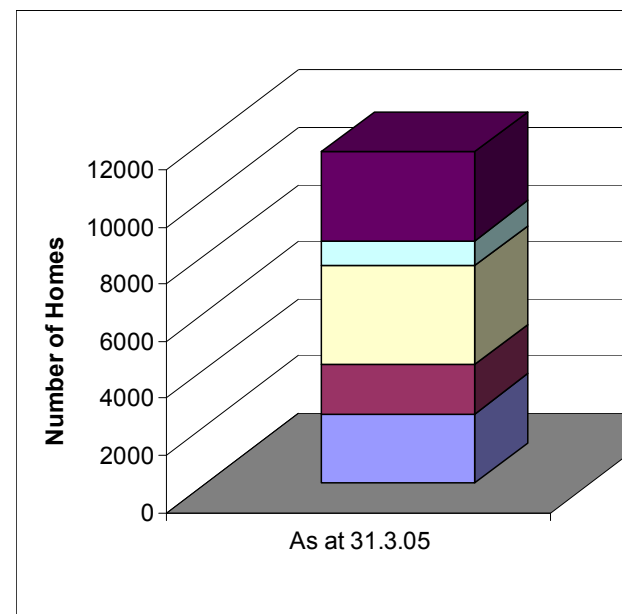
3.33 Non-decent homes in the private sector are a particular challenge as they often house vulnerable groups such as the elderly or those on low incomes. The Government has set a challenge to ensure that 70% of these homes are made decent by 2010. Further work is needed by the sub-regional partners to identify better the scale of the problem across Berkshire and the actions needed.

3.34 At 31.3.04 there were approximately 8,532 homes across Berkshire in the private sector that were classified as unfit (3.5% of the total).

Environmental Sustainability

3.35 Environmental sustainability including energy efficiency is recognised as an important issue by all sub-regional partners in their local strategies etc. However there is currently very limited information that can be collated and assessed on a sub-regional basis and this information gap will need to be considered further as the strategy is developed.

Meeting the housing needs of all sections of the community

3.36 Also impacting on the housing requirements is the profile of the population. The sub-region may have a relatively young population compared to the rest of the country but as with elsewhere in the country there are a growing number of older residents – some requiring specific housing services.

> *Enabling Independent Living* - ***Theme 4***
> ***Loddon Court,*** *Early is a successful scheme providing independent homes for people who would otherwise be forced to live with parents or carers, or in an institutionalised setting. It is the result of effective partnership working between local parent fundraisers, The Loddon Home Appeal, Ability Housing Association and Wokingham District Council. The Loddon Home Appeal campaigned for 24 years to raise £400,000 and Wokingham District Council provided both the land and funding.*
>
> *The scheme provides an eight-place respite care unit for adults with learning disabilities and eight self-contained, one bed roomed supported living flats. In addition there are also five key worker units on the site, built as part of the same development and owned and managed by Thames Valley Housing Association.*
>
> ***GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY***

3.37 The urban areas of Slough and Reading are also home to many different ethnic communities which add to the strength and vibrancy of those towns. Previous studies have suggested that whilst some specific ethnic groups have distinct housing needs most have exactly the same aspirations and requirements as the overall population.

3.38 Demand for rural housing is a significant issue in some parts of the sub-region with, in particular, a widespread shortage of affordable housing as well as shortage of land for the provision of new stock. The Rural Housing Enabler project (see 5.6) has been launched to help address this specific issue.

3.39 Overcrowding is also an issue, particularly in Slough reflecting it's larger than average household sizes.

3.40 Further work is needed to identify, evidence and agree sub-regional priorities for those sections of the community with specific housing needs.

4   Shared Vision & Common Themes

4.1   Each of the 6 local authorities has distinct strategies and priorities reflecting both the shared challenges and aspirations across the region and more local housing issues and influences.

<u>Shared Vision</u>
4.2   At the sub-regional level the Regional Housing Strategy vision remains true:
That everyone has the right to a decent home, but we want to make sure that this is an area where the quality of our homes is high and people have a choice about the homes they live in. And we want to create sustainable communities, which make a significant contribution to the quality of life and economic prosperity of our area.

4.3   However for this sub-regional vision we can add:
We also recognise that by working together in partnership across the sub-region and beyond we have a better chance of making that vision a reality.

<u>Common Themes</u>
4.4   The previous *Housing Challenges* section sets out the shared challenges under 5 main headings:
- Changing demographics
- Access to housing (including affordability)
- Infrastructure to support growing communities
- Quality of housing
- Meeting the housing needs of all sections of the community

4.5   The sub-region has therefore agreed 4 common themes reflecting national and regional priorities as well as addressing those challenges:

1) **Maximising access & choice – focusing on increasing the supply of affordable housing**
2) **Contributing to successful & sustainable communities**
3) **Improving the quality of housing, living conditions & housing services**
4) **Meeting the housing needs of the vulnerable & those with specific requirements**

Appendix B shows how these themes have emerged from the 6 local housing strategies.

4.6 In addition the sub-region has agreed a fifth theme which is vital to the success of this Berkshire-wide approach and is the main purpose of developing this strategy:

5) Working together to achieve better results

4.7 These themes contribute towards a number of wider shared aims of the sub-region which include:
- Economic Strength
- Social Inclusion
- Community Cohesion
- Urban Regeneration
- Rural Sustainability
- Environmental Enhancement
- Healthier People
- Resource Efficiency

4.8 **Theme 1**
Maximising access & choice – focusing on increasing the supply of affordable housing
- *Important because* everyone should have a place they can call home, that they choose to live in and that they can afford.
- *A focus on* affordable housing reflects Berkshire's high housing costs and housing needs and the significant shortfalls against new supply and available affordable housing.

4.9 **Theme 2**
Contributing to successful & sustainable communities
- *Important because* everyone should live in a flourishing, fair society based on opportunity and choice for everyone. A place where there are decent homes at prices people can afford; clean, safe, green environments; access to jobs and excellent services – schools, health services, shops and banks; and people having a say in the way their community is run.
- *A focus on* both urban renaissance and rural sustainability reflects Berkshire's diversity of living environments and includes the need to focus on protecting and enhancing the existing environment and where necessary creating high quality and sustainable new living environments.

4.10 **Theme 3**
Improving the quality of housing, living conditions & housing services
- *Important because* everyone should live in a decent home that contributes to improving rather than impacting negatively on their

health, educational attainment, happiness and general quality of life. Everyone should receive the best possible standard of housing service that addresses their specific needs whilst delivering value for money

- *A focus on* quality reflects Berkshire's lack of available land for development coupled with the dual challenge of high density urban living in some areas and wishing to maintain the character of local (and in particular rural) communities.

4.11 **Theme 4**
Meeting the housing needs of the vulnerable & those with specific requirements

- *Important because* the most vulnerable people in our society should be provided with the support and opportunity they need to live as full and as independently as they can and want to. Everyone should have access to a home that works for them and their needs rather than the individual having to adapt to fit the restraints of their home.
- *A focus on* the individual reflects the wider shared aim of Berkshire's 6 community strategies

4.12 **Theme 5**
Working together to achieve better results

- *Important because* people's housing needs and demands and the way they live their lives are not and should not be constrained by administrative boundaries. People's housing needs can not be met through one local authority, organisation or agency but requires them all to work together effectively and efficiently.
- *A focus on* partnership working reflects Berkshire's wish to maximise the available skills, knowledge and resources to the benefit of its residents and is the over-riding aim of this sub-regional strategy.

5 Initial Progress

5.1 Although this sub-regional strategy is in its first stages of development the various partners have been working individually and together for many years to address the common themes identified in the previous section.

5.2 By working together the Berkshire partners are already developing strategic approaches to cross-boundary working including addressing the needs of key workers and those living in rural communities, cross-boundary nominations, private sector stock condition surveys, joint financing of special needs housing schemes and research into the housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic communities across the sub-region.

5.3 By working locally but to a shared vision and common themes the Berkshire partners are already addressing key themes. Throughout this document are a number of good practice case studies that demonstrate this.

5.4 Below are details of 5 areas of work where either sub-regional working or joint action are addressing those common themes.

Providing New Affordable Housing – **Theme 1**

5.5 In line with **Theme 1** the 6 Unitary Authorities and their Registered Social Landlord partners, along with the Regional Housing Board and the Housing Corporation, continue to work together to maximise the provision of new affordable housing. As figure 20 shows in 2003/4 almost 870 new affordable homes were delivered, the majority being for social rent but with a high proportion being low cost home ownership as well as some for intermediate rent and other affordable housing options. In 2005 that figure had risen to over 1,160 with the bulk of the increase coming in the social rented sector.

Figure 19: New Affordable Housing Provision 2003/4 & 2004/5
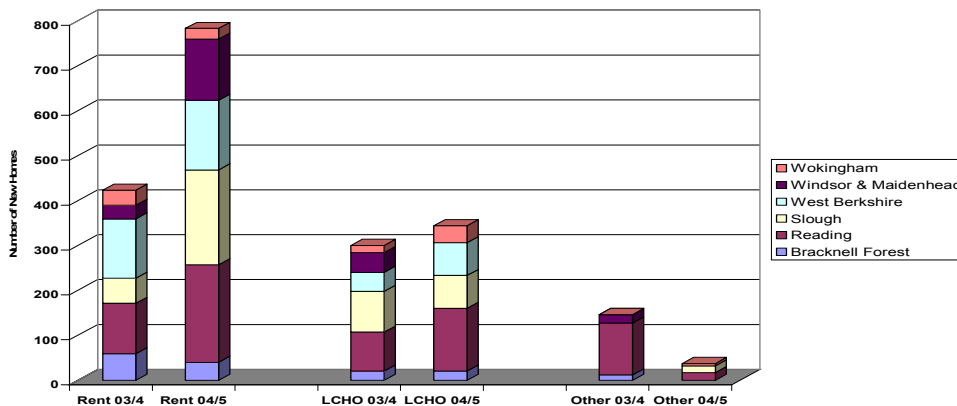
Source – HIP Housing Strategy Statistical Appendices

Identifying and Addressing Rural Housing Need - **Themes 1 & 2**

5.6 Wokingham, West Berkshire and Windsor and Maidenhead councils have worked with the Community Council for Berkshire, and our RSL partners to appoint a **Rural Housing Enabler** for the three authorities.   DEFRA/GOSE have provided some of the funding, and this has been matched by contributions from RSL partners and the local authorities.

5.7 The Rural Housing Enabler will work with local parish councils to identify local housing need, and with the local authorities and their RSL partners to find opportunities to develop local housing for local people.

5.8 The Enabler has been employed by the CCB, but their work will be overseen by a steering group comprises the local authorities, RSL partners, GOSE/DEFRA and other stakeholders.

Improving the Quality of Private Sector Homes - **Theme 3**

5.9 In line with **Theme 3** over 740 homes in the private sector where residents with disabilities were improved with the help of improvement or renewal grants in the past 2 years.

Figure 20: Private Sector Homes Improved Through Local Authority Improvement or Renewal Grants 2003/4 & 2004/5
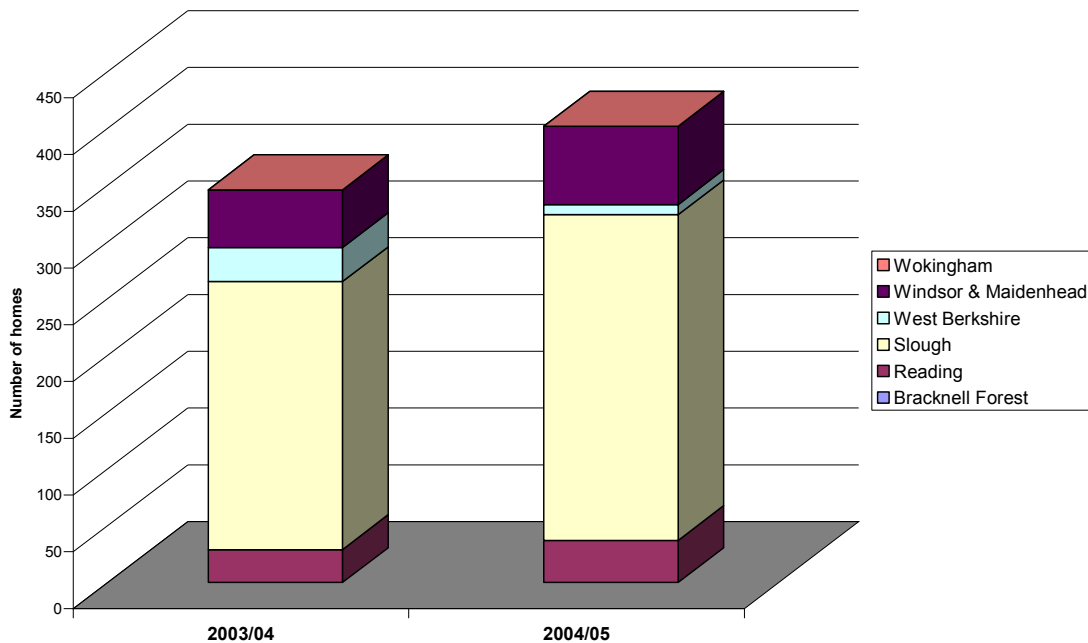
Source – HIP Housing Strategy Statistical Appendices

Housing Key Workers – **Theme 2**

5.10 Reading, Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham Councils are working together on a **Thames Valley West Key Worker Strategy** to develop a local definition of key workers, and to assess their needs across the four authorities.

5.11 Overseen by a Project Board chaired by SEEDA, and working through our respective Local Strategic Partnerships, a sub-group has identified key functions which are essential to our local economies, and the key employers that delivery these. A specialist consultant will then be appointed to carry out a survey of those employers to establish which posts are key to their success, and which of those they have difficulty with recruiting and retaining. A random survey of those posts will then take place to assess housing needs and aspirations of local key workers, and from this we will be able to identify what provision needs to be commissioned in the future.

5.12 Further work will take place to develop a mechanism for registering key workers applications for assistance, and to allocate accommodation and/or assistance in finding a home on the open market.

5.13 It is anticipated that the survey will be completed by April 2006.

5.14 Initial funding for the study has come from Section 106 payments from the Prudential to Reading and Wokingham Councils, and this helped define the original geographical remit of the work. However, Slough and Windsor and Maidenhead Councils are being approached to see if they would like to participate in the study, or use the methodology to carry out a similar piece of work.

Enabling Independent Living – **Theme 4**

5.15 In line with **Themes 4** approximately 640 residents with disabilities were given additional help in their own home through *Disabled Facilities Grants* in the past 2 years.

Figure 21: Private Sector Homes Improved Through Disabled Facilities Grants 2003/4 & 2004/5
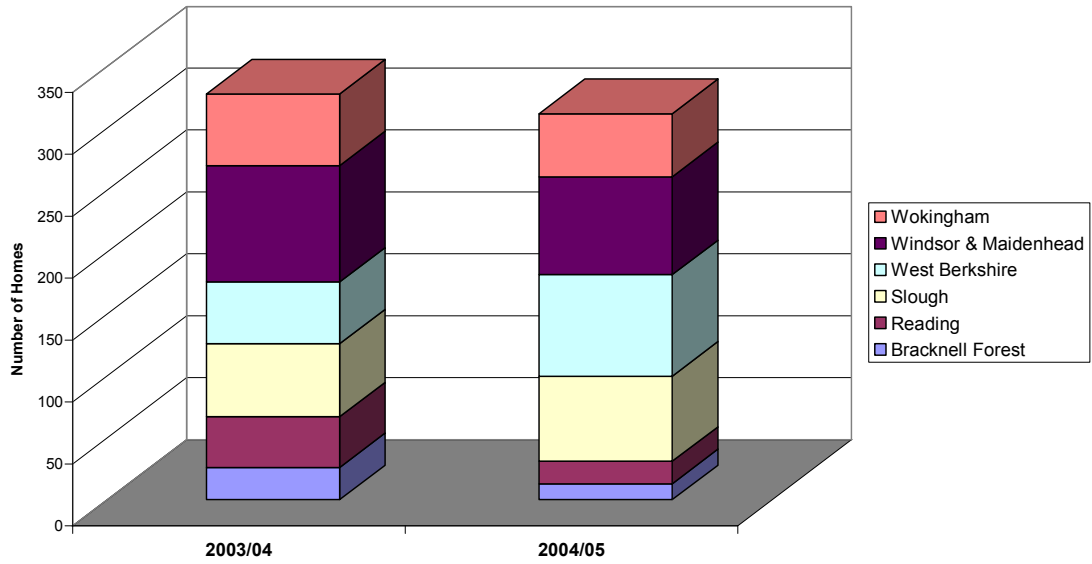
Source – HIP Housing Strategy Statistical Appendices

6   Resources

6.1 This section currently sets out existing sources of funding and expenditure but will be expanded as the strategy is developed towards mapping overall funding available against overall expenditure requirements to meet identified needs and agreed priority projects.

Regional Housing Board

6.2 The South East Regional Housing Board not only provides strategic direction for housing policy in the region but also co-ordinates housing investment for new affordable housing provision, decent homes and private sector renewal. It assesses the key housing issues and priorities in the South East and recommends criteria for funding new housing across the region.

6.3 The Board comprises senior figures from the Government Office for the South East, the South East England Development Agency, the South East England Regional Assembly, The Housing Corporation and English Partnerships.

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*New Funding for Estate Regeneration – **Themes 2 & 3***
*The **North Whitley** project is one of seven pathfinder PFI (Private Finance Initiative) housing projects currently running in the UK. Affinity was set up to modernise 1370 council homes in North Whitley, Reading. It is a joint venture between Southern Housing Group and Windsor Housing (as a partnership), Wates Construction and Wates Maintenance. Nationwide Building Society is also a partner providing the long term finance. Together these companies have taken over all aspects of the management of the homes in North Whitley for 30 years, during which time they will invest over £50 million to bring the properties up to the Government's 'Decent Homes' standard.*

Wates is able to offer local labour and education schemes, for example by working with local schools. It also works with the community generally by way of events such as fun days. The dedicated Housing Management team work closely with the community to address many of the issues that affect residents' quality of life, such as community safety and anti-social behaviour. The team is working alongside Reading Borough Council, TPAS and other agencies operating in the area to ensure that the residents of North Whitley are linked to, and benefit from community regeneration activities elsewhere in the borough, as well as developing locally based initiatives.

Since its launch, extensive refurbishment has taken place in the area. Around a quarter of North Whitley homes have already had new windows and doors installed with the remainder of the refurbishment programme ahead of schedule.

GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

6.4 The Board will allocate funding in the future on a geographic basis and will be influenced by sub-regional housing market assessments.

The Housing Corporation

6.5 The Housing Corporation's South East Regional Investment Policy reflects the Regional Housing Strategy and the views of the Regional Housing Board with their 4 investment priorities for schemes which link to:
- Affordability and Homelessness
- Urban Renaissance / Regeneration
- Growth Areas
- Rural Settlements

6.6 They also identify 3 client groups that new schemes should be looking to address the housing needs of:
- Key Workers
- Homelessness and other priority groups
- Supported Housing

6.7 The following page gives details of Housing Corporation allocations for 2004-6 broken down by Unitary Authority. In total £54m is being allocated across Berkshire – to fund 1,700 new affordable homes.

Figure 22: Housing Corporation 2004/06 South East Allocation Summary

Local Authority (£'000s)	MAIN PROGRAMME				
	Housing for Rent	Intermed. Mkt. Rent	Shared Ownership	Homebuy Market (1)	Homebuy Newbuild
Bracknell Forest	£3,481	£30	£2,260	£163	£210
Reading	£7,590	£646	£4,873	£3,021	£50
Slough	£7,452	£0	£1,115	£0	£0
West Berkshire	£3,060	£0	£444	£0	£0
Windsor & Maidenhead	£3,141	£0	£270	£207	£0
Wokingham	£71	£0	£672	£0	£0
SUB-REGION TOTAL	**£24,795**	**£676**	**£9,633**	**£3,392**	**£260**

Local Authority (£'000s)	KEY WORKER PROGRAMME		
	Intermed. Mkt. Rent	Shared Ownership	Homebuy Newbuild
Bracknell Forest	£163	£925	£0
Reading	£4,438	£5,913	£0
Slough	£350	£1,750	£230
West Berkshire	£0	£0	£0
Windsor & Maidenhead	£0	£960	£0
Wokingham	£300	£563	£0
SUB-REGION TOTAL	**£5,251**	**£10,110**	**£230**

Local Authority (£'000s)	TOTAL ALLOCATION	TOTAL UNITS
Bracknell Forest	**£7,232**	294
Reading	**£26,530**	745
Slough	**£10,896**	227
West Berkshire	**£3,504**	175
Windsor & Maidenhead	**£4,578**	138
Wokingham	**£1,606**	125
SUB-REGION TOTAL	**£54,346**	**1,704**

(excludes Key Worker Living Homebuy Market Purchase allocations to Zone Agents)

Source – Housing Corporation South East Regional Allocation Statement 2004-6

<u>Local Authorities</u>

6.8 The table below shows the level of resources spent by the 6 Unitary Authorities on the 4 key funding areas – Decent Homes, Private Sector Renewal, Disabled Facilities and New Affordable Housing.

Figure 23: Local Authority Funding 2004/5
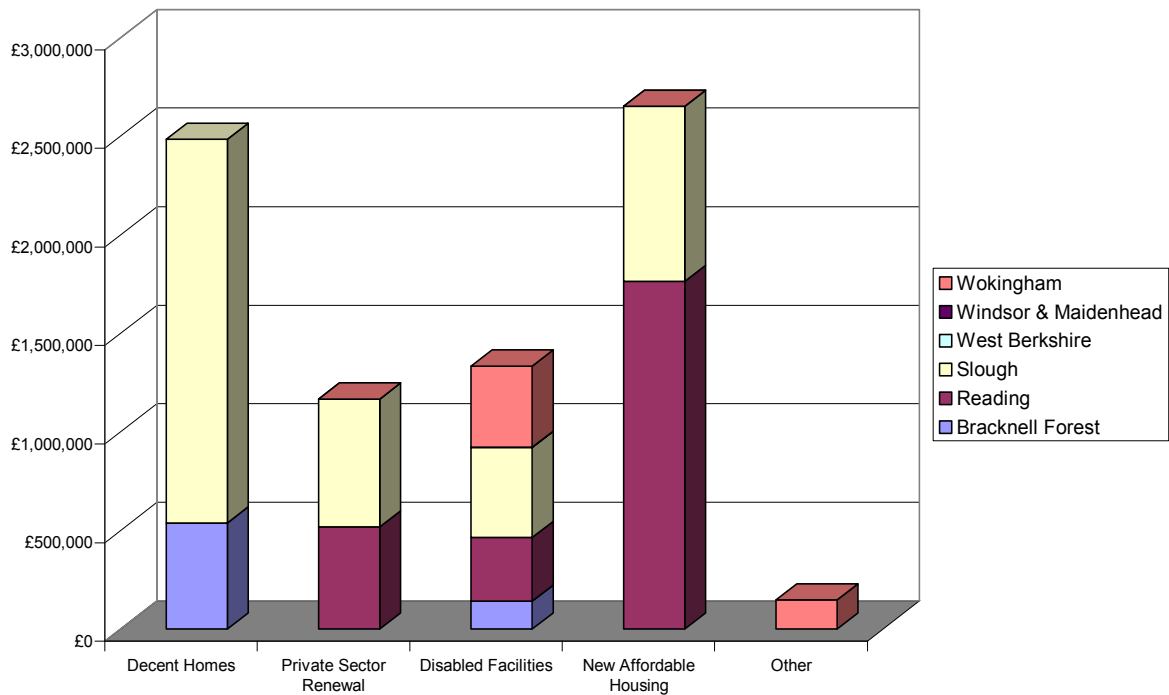
Source – HIP Housing Strategy Statistical Appendices

<u>Working Together</u>

6.9 By working together the sub-region expects to achieve noticeable economies of scale and efficiency savings in addition to those already being delivered by individual authorities following the Gershon Review.

6.10 These efficiency savings will hopefully be quantifiable through the on-going monitoring and evaluation of this Strategy.

7 Sub-Regional Priority Projects

<u>What is a Priority Project</u>
7.1 A sub-regional priority project is one which meets one or more of the following criteria:

   1) Addresses one or more of the Sub-Region's agreed common themes
   2) Sufficient Scale – financially and/or geographically or part of larger project
   3) Addresses needs across local authority boundaries – geographically located in one Unitary Authority but benefiting other Berkshire Authorities as well
   4) Agreed as being a pilot or best practice project
   5) Adding value or making efficiencies by working together

7.2 Once agreed as a priority project it would be supported and monitored by partners across the sub-region during its development and delivery. This would include agreeing on the best source of funding and supporting any subsequent funding application. Once completed partners would be involved in its evaluation, share any best practice and learn from any difficulties that arose or mistakes made.

<u>Assessment</u>
7.3 The following could be used as a basis for an assessment framework for projects to help identify and agree those considered as sub-regional priority projects. Further work is needed on this including agreeing weightings (see 8.7)

	Assessment Score	Weighting	Total
Addresses one or more of the Sub-Region's agreed themes	Score 1-5 on number sub-regional themes addressed	*tbc*	X
Sufficient Scale	Score 1-5 on scale	*tbc*	X
Addresses needs across local authority boundaries	Score 1-5 on number other local authorities	*tbc*	X
Agreed as being a pilot or best practice project	Score 1-5 on number other LAs to benefit from pilot	*tbc*	X
Adding value or making efficiencies by working together	Score 1-5 on scale	*tbc*	X
	Total Assessment Score		X

8   Developing & Delivering the Strategy

8.1   As the title suggests this document is an 'Interim housing strategy for Berkshire'. It is hoped that all 6 local authorities and their key housing partners will agree the shared vision and priorities and the next steps needed to produce a full and effective strategy and action plan. Once agreed the aim is to have them endorsed by the 6 Local Strategic Partnerships allowing all partners to work together to collect and analyse data on a sub-regional level.

Structure & Decision-Making Process

8.2   The Berkshire Housing Strategy will be developed further through the Berkshire Strategists Group but with input from various other sub-regional groups and partners.

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                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │   Local Strategic    │
                    │    Partnerships      │
                    └──────────────────────┘
                               ▲
                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │   Berkshire Leaders  │
                    └──────────────────────┘
                               ▲                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    ┌──────────────────────┐        │   GOSE & Housing     │
                    │   Berkshire Chief    │        │    Corporation       │
                    │    Executives        │        └──────────────────────┘
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                    │   Berkshire Housing  │ ◄────► │  Berkshire Planners  │
                    │    Strategists       │        └──────────────────────┘
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        ┌──────────────────┐                        ┌──────────────────────┐
        │ Housing Enablers │                        │  Supporting People   │
        └──────────────────┘                        │       Forum          │
      ┌──────────────────────┐                      └──────────────────────┘
      │ Housing Management   │                    ┌──────────────────────┐
      │      Forum           │                    │  Housing Needs Forum │
      └──────────────────────┘                    └──────────────────────┘
     ┌──────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
     │ Sub-Regional Priority│        │ Private Sector Housing│
     │   Project Groups     │        │    Liaison Group      │
     └──────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────┘
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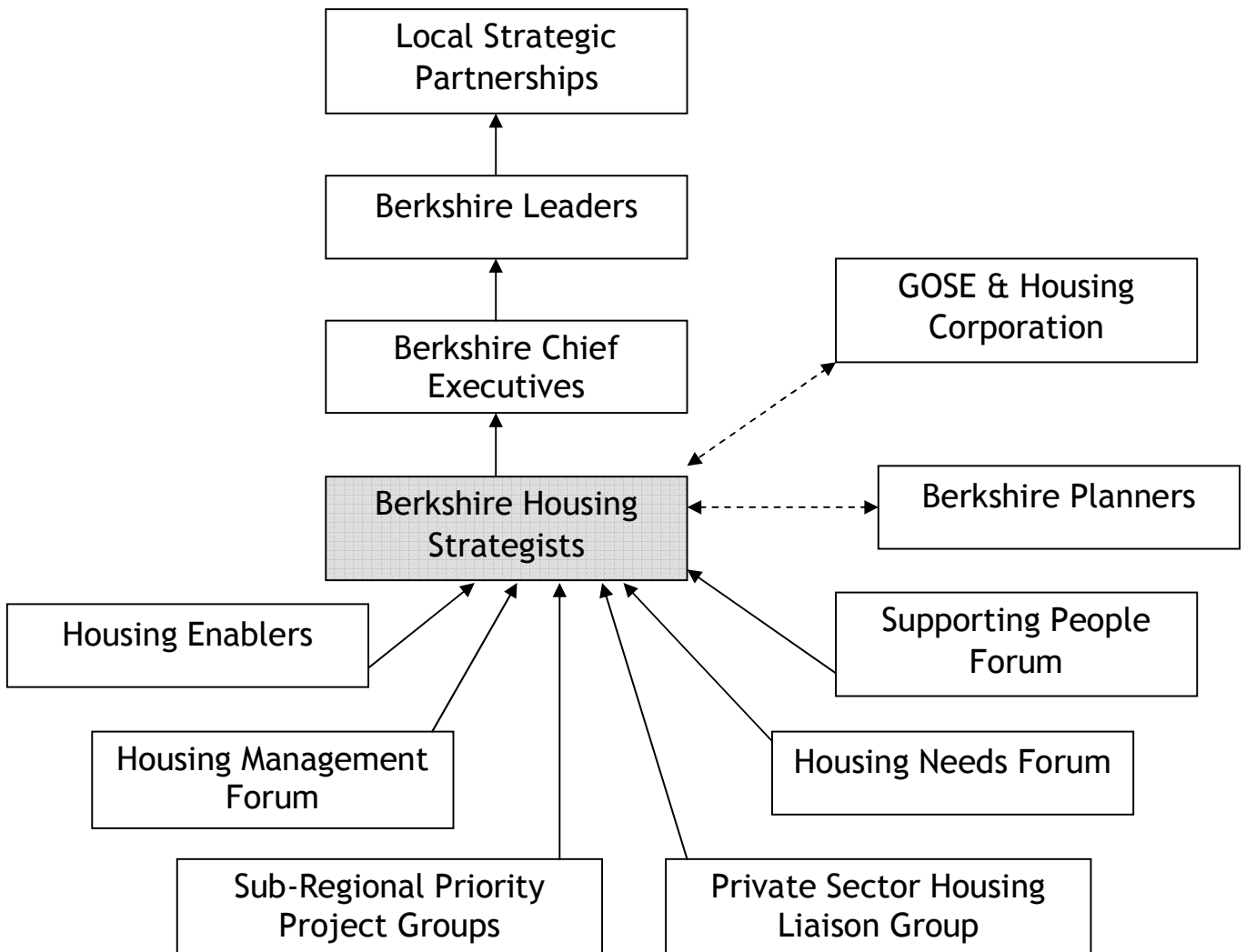
8.3 Customers and stakeholders (such as residents, tenants, leaseholders, private sector and voluntary sector partners etc) are represented on the various groups feeding into the core Berkshire Strategists group. They will play a key role in developing this strategy further, agreeing the action plan and are essential partners in its delivery.

Developing the Strategy & Action Plan

8.4 The next stage in the development of the Strategy will include:
- Identifying information gaps
- Identifying areas for improvement
- Agreeing the Sub-Regional Priority Projects
- Agreeing key indicators to measure delivery against themes
- Developing a detailed SMART Action Plan to deliver on the vision, common themes and the agreed projects.

Monitoring & Evaluation

8.5 Monitoring and evaluation of the delivery and effectiveness of the final Strategy will be the role of Berkshire Housing Strategists. The Group will meet quarterly to review the Strategy and progress against the Action Plan as well as monitoring its effectiveness against a group of agreed indicators and progress on the identified strategic sites and priority projects.

8.6 As part of developing the Strategy further work will be done to agree key performance indicators to measure its delivery and effectiveness. (see 8.7)

8.7 <u>Key Actions & Milestones for Delivery</u>

<u>Key Actions & Milestones for Delivery</u> **Theme**	**Key Action**	**Milestone or Measurement of Success**	**By When**	**Resources Needed**	**Delivery Lead**
All	Berkshire chief executives and local strategic partnerships to agree interim housing strategy for Berkshire and approve ongoing work to annually produce an updated detailed strategy and action plan.	Chief Executives and local strategic partnerships to agree interim strategy and approve ongoing work	31/3/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
All	Hold away-day to establish project leads, and create a reporting framework whereby sub-regional housing working groups can report to Berkshire Strategists Group	Away-Day held, key project leads identified and reporting framework in place	31/03/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
1, 2 & 5	Explore scope to extend Key Worker project	Slough and RBWM approached	31/03/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
3 & 5	Develop Berkshire Housing Management Forum	Membership confirmed, TOR and work programme in place	31/03/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
3 & 5	Develop a Berkshire-wide Housing Benchmarking and Efficiency group	Membership confirmed, TOR and work programme in place	31/03/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
All	Identify information gaps in interim housing strategy	All current gaps in the interim strategy	30/06/06		Berkshire Strategists Group

Key Actions & Milestones for Delivery Theme	Key Action	Milestone or Measurement of Success	By When	Resources Needed	Delivery Lead
		are filled			
All	Agree current areas for improvement		30/06/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
All	Agree sub-regional priority projects (including strategic sites)	Priority projects approved by 6 local authorities	30/06/06		Berkshire Strategists Group and local authorities
All	Agree key performance indicators to measure delivery & effectiveness of detailed strategy		30/06/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
All	Ensure customer involvement framework that ensures detailed strategy reflects the customer viewpoint.		30/06/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
1 & 5	Extend choice – consider sub-regional allocations, cross boundary nominations & choiced based lettings	Sub-regional information day for elected members held	30/06/06		Berkshire Housing Needs Managers Group
4 & 5	Explore options for managing reductions in Supporting People funding		30/06/06		Berkshire Supporting People Group
1, 2 & 5	Develop Rural Housing initiatives	3 rural housing needs studies carried out	31/08/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
1 & 5	Explore options for new funding for affordable housing		30/09/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
All	Collect and analyse information on a sub-regional level and feed into detailed strategy and action plan.	Regular updating of strategy and action plan with new data	30/09/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
5	Explore opportunities for shared		30/09/06		Berkshire Strategists

Key Actions & Milestones for Delivery **Theme**	Key Action	Milestone or Measurement of Success	By When	Resources Needed	Delivery Lead
	procurement				Group
All	Agree overall levels of need and resource requirements		30/09/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
All	Complete detailed strategy and action plan and gain approval for the strategy and action plan from 6 local strategic partnerships, Berkshire Chief Executives and Berkshire Leaders.		31/12/06		Berkshire Strategists Group representatives from each local authority
All	Identify the most appropriate sub-regional grouping for the future and adapt detailed strategy for 2007	Agreement reached between Regional Housing Board and Berkshire local authorities	31/12/06		Berkshire Strategists Group
1, 4 & 5	Carry out a sub-regional housing market assessment	Assessment complete	31/07/06		Berkshire Strategists Group working with Berkshire Planning Officers Group

Index of Deprivation 2000 – Housing Deprivation by Local Authority Ward (map to follow)

Bracknell Forest
- Ascot
- Little Sandhurst
- St. Mary's
- Warfield
- Garth
- Owlsmoor
- Priestwood
- Crowthorne
- Great Hollands North
- College Town
- Binfield
- Old Bracknell *(Yellow)*
- Central Sandhurst *(Yellow)*
- Cranbourne *(Yellow)*
- Wildridings *(Yellow)*
- Harmanswater *(Yellow)*
- Hanworth *(Yellow)*
- Great Hollands South *(Yellow)*
- Bullbrook *(Yellow)*

Reading
- Thames
- Tilehurst *(Yellow)*
- Peppard *(Yellow)*
- Caversham *(Orange)*
- Kentwood *(Orange)*
- Minster *(Orange)*
- Southcote *(Orange)*
- Norcot *(Orange)*
- Battle *(Orange)*
- Church *(Orange)*
- Redlands *(Orange)*
- Whitley *(Orange)*
- Abbey *(Red)*
- Park *(Red)*
- Katesgrove *(Red)*

Slough
- Kedermister *(Orange)*
- Cippenham *(Orange)*
- Langley St. Mary's *(Orange)*
- Haymill *(Orange)*
- Colnbrook & Poyle *(Orange)*
- Foxborough *(Orange)*
- Upton *(Orange)*
- Britwell *(Orange)*
- Wexham Lea *(Red)*
- Chalvey *(Red)*
- Farnham *(Red)*
- Stoke *(Red)*
- Central *(Red)*
- Baylis *(Red)*

West Berks
- Falkland
- Pangbourne
- Hungerford
- Chieveley
- Basildon
- Purley on Thames
- Cold Ash
- Westwood
- Theale
- Birch Copse
- Burghfield *(Yellow)*
- Compton *(Yellow)*
- Hermitage *(Yellow)*
- Mortimer *(Yellow)*
- Greenham *(Yellow)*
- Thatcham East *(Yellow)*
- Sulhamstead *(Yellow)*
- Thatcham South *(Yellow)*
- Thatcham West *(Yellow)*
- Speen *(Yellow)*
- Bradfield *(Yellow)*
- Downlands *(Yellow)*
- Bucklebury *(Yellow)*
- Calcot *(Yellow)*
- Kintbury *(Yellow)*
- Northcroft *(Yellow)*
- Lambourn *(Yellow)*
- Thatcham North *(Yellow)*
- Aldermaston *(Yellow)*
- St. John's *(Yellow)*
- Turnpike *(Yellow)*

Windsor & Maidenhead
- Bray
- Sunninghill
- Bisham and Cookham
- Sunningdale & South Ascot
- Old Windsor
- Cox Green
- Trinity
- Park
- Eton West *(Yellow)*
- Castle *(Yellow)*
- Hurley *(Yellow)*
- Eton North and South *(Yellow)*
- Furze Platt *(Yellow)*
- Clewer South *(Yellow)*
- Clewer North *(Yellow)*
- Horton and Wraysbury *(Yellow)*
- Pinkneys Green *(Yellow)*
- St. Mary's *(Yellow)*
- Oldfield *(Orange)*
- Datchet *(Orange)*
- Boyn Hill *(Orange)*
- Belmont *(Orange)*

Wokingham
- Emmbrook
- Evendons
- Coronation
- Barkham
- Sonning
- Finchampstead North
- Wokingham Without
- Little Hungerford
- Remenham & Wargrave
- Swallowfield
- Norreys
- Redhatch
- Wescott
- Shinfield
- South Lake
- Twyford & Ruscombe
- Loddon
- Winnersh *(Yellow)*
- Charvil *(Yellow)*
- Arborfield *(Yellow)*
- Finchampstead South *(Yellow)*
- Hurst *(Yellow)*
- Whitegates *(Yellow)*
- Bulmershe *(Yellow)*

Highlight Key:
Red – Within 'Most Deprived' 10% nationally, Orange 10-25%, Yellow 25-50%, Others – Within 'Least Deprived' 50%

2004 English Indices of Deprivation

Map to follow

Housing Across Berkshire - Common Themes		Maximising access & choice – focusing on increasing supply of affordable	Contributing to successful & sustainable communities	Improving the quality of housing, living conditions & housing services	Meeting the housing needs of the vulnerable & those with specific requirements	Working together to achieve better results	Contributing to: ES - Economic Strength SI - Social Inclusion CC - Community Cohesion UR - Urban Regeneration RR - Rural Sustainability EE - Environmental Enhancement HP - Healthier People RE - Resource Efficiency
Bracknell Forest	Provide for Bracknell Forest's future needs and developing more affordable housing	✔	✔		✔		ES SI
	Building integrated communities, enhancing partnership working and social inclusion		✔				SI CC HP
	Enhancing the environment, building sustainable homes & encouraging innovation		✔	✔			UR RR EE ER
	Maximising current resources and future investment		✔				RE
Reading	Lasting communities		✔				SI CC
	Increased access & choice	✔	✔		✔		ES SI

Housing Across Berkshire - Common Themes		Maximising access & choice – focusing on increasing supply of affordable	Contributing to successful & sustainable communities	Improving the quality of housing, living conditions & housing services	Meeting the housing needs of the vulnerable & those with specific requirements	Working together to achieve better results	Contributing to: ES - Economic Strength SI - Social Inclusion CC - Community Cohesion UR - Urban Regeneration RR - Rural Sustainability EE - Environmental Enhancement HP - Healthier People RE - Resource Efficiency
	Improve the quality of housing overall in Reading		✔	✔			UR EE HP RE
	Continuously improving the Council's own housing services and promoting good practice amongst others		✔	✔			SI
	Supporting people where help is needed		✔		✔		SI

Housing Across Berkshire - Common Themes		Maximising access & choice – focusing on increasing supply of affordable	Contributing to successful & sustainable communities	Improving the quality of housing, living conditions & housing services	Meeting the housing needs of the vulnerable & those with specific requirements	Working together to achieve better results	Contributing to: ES - Economic Strength SI - Social Inclusion CC - Community Cohesion UR - Urban Regeneration RR - Rural Sustainability EE - Environmental Enhancement HP - Healthier People RE - Resource Efficiency
Slough	Maximising the supply of affordable housing and making best use of existing buildings	✔	✔		✔		ES SI UR
	Strengthening communities to make sure all of our neighbourhoods are safe, viable and attractive areas to live in		✔				SI CC UR EE
	Preventing homelessness & tackling housing need	✔	✔		✔		SI
	Promoting independent living and providing appropriate support for those who need it		✔		✔		SI HP
	Improving housing conditions in the public & private sectors and making sure new homes are designed & built to a high standard		✔	✔			EE RE
West Berkshire	Addressing immediate and urgent needs for more	✔	✔		✔		ES SI

		Maximising access & choice – focusing on increasing supply of affordable	Contributing to successful & sustainable communities	Improving the quality of housing, living conditions & housing services	Meeting the housing needs of the vulnerable & those with specific requirements	Working together to achieve better results	Contributing to:
	affordable housing						
	Addressing the housing needs of rural communities	✔	✔		✔		ES SI RR
	Preventing homelessness		✔		✔		SI
	Facilitating provision of decent homes for tenants in both affordable and private sectors & ensure all tenants get an excellent service from their landlord		✔	✔			SI
	Improving housing conditions for vulnerable people across all tenures & ensuring they can receive the support they need to live as independently as possible		✔	✔	✔		SI HP
	Ensuring all our communities are sustainable and have a clean, safe and attractive environment		✔				EE RE
Housing Across Berkshire - Common Themes		**Maximising access & choice – focusing on increasing supply of affordable**	**Contributing to successful & sustainable communities**	**Improving the quality of housing, living conditions & housing services**	**Meeting the housing needs of the vulnerable & those with specific requirements**	**Working together to achieve better results**	**Contributing to: ES - Economic Strength SI - Social Inclusion CC - Community Cohesion UR - Urban Regeneration RR - Rural Sustainability EE - Environmental Enhancement HP - Healthier People RE - Resource Efficiency**
Windsor & Maidenhead	Delivering quality & choice in the housing market	✔	✔		✔		ES SI

Region	Objective						
	Providing a range of services for clients with special needs		✔		✔		SI HP
	Developing innovative housing solutions	✔	✔				SI UR RR
	Investing in the private sector & improving energy efficiency across all tenures		✔	✔			EE RE
Wokingham	Addressing our housing needs & requirements, particularly in respect of key workers and the provision of affordable housing	✔	✔		✔		ES SI
	Promoting quality & choice by ensuring that homes are safe secure and sustainable		✔	✔			SI RR EE RE
	Continuing to encourage self-reliance and independent living		✔		✔		SI HP
	Preventing & providing for homelessness	✔	✔		✔		SI
	Providing high quality, value for money housing services for our tenants		✔	✔			SI

Berkshire Housing Strategists

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Strategic Sites

The Regional Housing Strategy includes a list of 'Strategic sites' where land releases are planned over the next 5 years. The Strategy states that the Regional Housing Board would like to support these with funding where they are aligned with areas of greatest need. It also states that they will prioritise strategic sites where affordable housing is used to meet the needs across a sub-regional housing market.

Although the Strategy also makes it clear that the list may not be definitive and that inclusion on the list does not guarantee funding it only includes 6 sites from within the Berkshire sub-region. They are:

- Bracknell Town Centre Regeneration – Bracknell Forest
- Staff College – Bracknell Forest
- Peacock Farm – Bracknell Forest
- Kenavon Drive – Reading
- Reading Gateway - Reading
- Heart of Slough Regeneration - Slough