



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England

## Draft Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) *Housing*

CPRE's response to the ODPM consultation paper

February 2006



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#### **Summary**

1. CPRE believes we can have the homes we need without destroying the countryside or neglecting urban areas. For this to happen, PPS3 needs to be made far stronger in areas where it is currently weak: namely the sequential approach and environmental sustainability. We are pleased the Government remains committed to a 'brownfield first' approach. Elements of the proposed approach, however, appear to conflict with this objective and would make it hard to achieve in practice. In particular, we are concerned about the emphasis on meeting demand for housing where it arises. The role of Housing Market and Housing Land Availability Assessments (HMAs and HLAAs) needs clarifying to ensure that these inform and support the plan-led system, rather than undermine it. The aim, after all, is not to plan to meet the needs of the housing market, but for sustainable development. Stronger policies and measures are needed to maintain and increase the proportion of new homes built on urban brownfield sites, raise standards of design, require higher environmental standards in construction and resist urban sprawl.

#### **Introduction**

2. CPRE welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We believe that a robust and effective planning system is vital for protecting and enhancing the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of the English countryside, fostering urban renaissance and meeting agreed needs for housing and other types of development.

3. CPRE has a well-established network of branches in every county in England. Our volunteers are active in local planning matters, scrutinise an estimated 100,000 planning applications a year and contribute to the preparation and review of local development plans and regional strategies.

4. In recent years, through our nationwide Sprawl Patrol campaign and with the help of our planning volunteers, CPRE has strongly supported national policy on housing set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 3 (PPG3) *Housing* (2000). With its emphasis on prioritising previously developed urban sites for housing and making more efficient use of land, PPG3 has delivered tangible benefits, most notably in the increasing efficiency with which land is developed for housing. The vast majority of new homes are now built on previously developed land (72% in 2004). As well as ensuring that green fields are used only as a last resort, by steering developers to brownfield, primarily urban sites, PPG3's sequential approach has acted as a catalyst for urban regeneration, helping to improve the environment and quality of life in some of the country's most deprived communities. This improvement in the efficiency with which land is developed for housing has occurred at a time when the number of homes built is at its highest level for over a decade. This suggests to us that a strong brownfield first approach is no obstacle to development. On the contrary, by sending a clear message to developers about preferred areas for development it may actually have encouraged it.

5. Where PPG3 has been less successful is over matters such as improving the design and sustainability of housing development, delivering affordable homes to those most in need (ie. social housing), and reducing the need to travel (and hence greenhouse gas emissions). While in some parts of the country and some markets it has helped drive a significant shift from development of 'housing estates' to mixed use development, this has been far from universal.

## Overview

6. While we welcome some aspects of the proposed approach, such as the need for a better understanding of housing markets, overall we believe the draft policy statement places a disproportionate emphasis on meeting the demand for housing where it arises. It will be vital that the housing market is not given pre-eminence, but looked at in the context of broader objectives, such as sustainable development and urban regeneration. Achieving ‘a better balance between demand and supply in every housing market’ may be a laudable aim, but this should not be at the expense of the environment, quality of life or meeting local housing needs that cannot be provided through the market.

7. We are concerned that under the new approach, many planning authorities will no longer be able to make an allowance for windfalls in calculating how much land they need to allocate, or use phasing policies to ensure development on urban brownfield sites takes priority over development on green fields. We are pleased that the Government has said it remains committed to a brownfield first approach (Foreword to draft PPS3). We believe achieving this in practice, however, will require far stronger measures than those outlined in the consultation paper, including requiring local authorities to make full use of phasing and windfalls.

8. The sequential approach set out in PPG3 is much broader than the brownfield first approach proposed in PPS3 and sets out guiding principles and criteria for assessing the sustainability of sites and locations and their suitability for housing. While we welcome some of the measures proposed in the draft PPS3, such as the emphasis on securing better quality housing which is well designed and sympathetic to context, the absence of clear criteria to guide development to the most sustainable sites and locations concerns us. An approach which aims to meet market demand where it arises but does not rigorously apply a sequential approach is potentially a recipe for dispersed, unsustainable patterns of development. If it became policy, we fear the approach set out in draft PPS3 would lead to a major increase in greenfield development and exacerbate problems of urban decline and blight. Indeed, the risk of greater greenfield development is identified in the Regulatory Impact Assessment which accompanies the draft PPS.

9. We welcome the proposed measures in draft PPS3 on affordable housing in rural areas. We particularly welcome recognition of the case for lower thresholds for affordable housing, the possibility of allocating sites solely for affordable housing in rural areas and the emphasis on high quality housing development.

10. We welcome the emphasis given to good design and strongly agree that new development should be of inclusive design and layout, be informed by its wider context, including the landscape and townscape as a whole and that a key consideration should be whether a development positively improves the character and environmental quality of an area and the way it functions. We do not believe that, as drafted, the policy will produce the results that are needed and the Government says it wants. We suggest that more clarity regarding Government aspirations for residential environments is needed in final PPS3.

11. We believe the planning system should give priority to meeting housing needs and, where appropriate, demand in ways that support rather than undermine wider objectives such as for protecting the countryside, conserving natural resources and urban regeneration. We suggest the following additions/changes are needed in final PPS3 and accompanying guidance to achieve this:

- criteria and measures to ensure a sequential approach is applied at regional, sub-regional and local levels, guiding the identification, allocation and release of land for housing;

- a statement in PPS3 that the Government expects local brownfield strategies to be comprehensive, robust and backed up by local resources and commitment, and that these strategies should be central to all policies, plans and decisions related to housing;
- a national brownfield target of at least 75% of new homes on brownfield land and through conversions;
- local planning authorities to continue to count ‘windfall sites’ towards meeting housing requirements, averting the need to allocate land, where experience shows such sites are likely to come forward;
- phased development of allocated sites, including sites in the five-year land supply, to ensure that brownfield sites are built on first - in line with the principles of ‘plan, monitor and manage’;
- robust assessments of environmental capacity at local, sub-regional and regional levels to inform the level, distribution and location of new housing – this should be a prominent feature of the application of Sustainability Appraisal to development plans;
- comprehensive assessments of urban capacity to be an integral part of HLAA’s which should prioritise environmental sustainability when assessing the suitability of broad locations and specific sites. Final PPS3 should clearly indicate that the role of assessments is to inform, not dictate, planning policies and decisions;
- a clearly expressed commitment to urban renaissance and stronger emphasis on urban renewal and refurbishment and measures to make urban areas more attractive and bring back into use empty and under-occupied buildings;
- where brownfield opportunities do not exist to meet identified housing need, criteria for identifying and designating growth points, growth areas and urban extensions which take full account of objectives on environmental sustainability, urban regeneration and reducing regional disparities; further new settlements should be the option of last resort;
- an effective Code for Sustainable Homes – backed by stronger policies in PPS3 itself – that sets demanding mandatory standards of sustainable design and construction for all new housing and whose scope includes aggregates and other construction materials, ecological impact and accessibility by public transport;
- priority to be given to meeting local housing needs rather than crude market demand, including need for affordable, subsidised homes for rent or part-ownership and for cheaper homes for sale, eg. to meet the needs of first time buyers or key workers;
- a clear expectation that pedestrians’ needs should take priority over vehicles in the design and layout of residential development.

## Detailed comments

### Objectives and overall approach

12. CPRE supports the Government's objectives that housing and planning policies need to support mixed and sustainable communities with high quality affordable housing for future generations. We also agree that people should be able to choose, within reason, where they live. The overarching policy objective should be to make living in urban areas a more attractive choice for more people. Moreover, rather than aspiring to ever greater levels of home ownership and unbalancing the planning system by focusing on owner occupation, CPRE believes the aim should be to ensure everyone has access to a decent home, regardless of whether they rent or own it.

13. We believe the draft policy places a disproportionate emphasis on meeting the demand for housing where it arises. This contrasts with the current approach, which emphasises the importance of responding to local housing needs and steering housing development to areas with the greatest capacity to accommodate development.

14. Achieving 'a better balance between demand and supply in every housing market and improving affordability' are laudable aims, but these should not be at the expense of the environment, quality of life or meeting local housing needs. While in some areas it may be possible to meet market demand without damage to the environment, in many areas demand is virtually unlimited (eg. in aspirations for second and larger homes) and attempting to meet it would irrevocably damage the environment and quality of life. This applies to both urban and rural areas. Housing demand and need are not the same, as the consultation paper makes clear in defining demand in terms of what people are willing or able to pay. We suggest it would be preferable to aim for a better match between housing supply and need (which might be met through market as well as subsidised housing) in every housing market area.

15. The planning system already takes much account of market demand in framing plans and policies. We strongly question the rationale which underlies the consultation paper – that the planning system needs to be made more responsive to market demand, since the overwhelming issue is a lack of affordable, subsidised – as distinct from market – housing. This is borne out by evidence which shows that while market housebuilding has remained relatively stable for the past 50 years, social housebuilding has virtually collapsed: in 2003, subsidised housebuilding was 84% below the average of the previous 50 years (CPRE, *Building on Barker*, 2005). Increasing market housebuilding is unlikely to solve the problem of a lack of affordable housing. An approach that aims to accommodate rather than manage market pressures could actually worsen problems of affordability (eg. by increasing competition for sites) and at the same time result in unsustainable patterns of development.

16. We accept that to plan effectively requires a good understanding of housing markets and that planning authorities should take into account market conditions when drawing up plans. Good planning authorities have always done this. We are concerned though, that the proposed approach does not appear to recognise that the role of planning is not to simply accommodate market trends, but to steer the market in ways that are socially, environmentally and economically beneficial. An approach predicated on responding to market demand is essentially reactive and unlikely to fulfil Government aspirations expressed in PPS1 that 'planning is a positive and proactive process, operating in the public interest'. By failing to understand how planning influences markets (whether intentionally or not), it could simply stoke demand where capacity for acceptable development does not exist, thereby worsening problems of affordability, congestion and overheating and placing intolerable burdens on the environment. On the other hand, by providing a framework for renewal and investment, planning can act as a catalyst for transforming the fortunes of run-down areas and, at the same time, make the best use of existing resources. We recommend that the final version of PPS3

should more clearly set out how Government views the relationship between planning and housing markets, taking full account of the wider environmental considerations.

17. We fully support the objective that ‘developments should be attractive, safe and designed and built to a high quality. They should be located in areas with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure’ (paragraph 1c). We are disappointed, however, that explicit support for urban renaissance and the need for housing development to contribute to sustainable patterns of development are not among PPS3’s objectives. These are fundamental prerequisites for creating inclusive, sustainable communities. While some enlightened developers and planners realise this, it is disappointingly still not apparent from much of what is actually built. The objective of urban renaissance is especially important in order to focus attention on areas which have some of the most pressing needs and deprived communities, but also considerable potential and capacity for development. We recommend that these objectives be reiterated in final PPS3 along with the tools and criteria necessary for achieving them. Of the latter, by far the most important, in our view, is the sequential approach which we deal with in more detail in paragraphs 18 - 41 below.

18. Finally, in relation to the overall approach, we are concerned by what appears to be an arbitrary separation of planning policy from guidance. While it is important that policies are written clearly and concisely and avoid unnecessary repetition, pursuit of brevity should not be at the expense of clarity. PPSs need to provide sufficient context and guidance to avoid ambiguity about the Government’s intentions and secure clarity and certainty for developers, planners and the public alike.

### **Sequential approach – identifying, allocating and releasing land**

#### Brownfield first

19. CPRE is pleased that the Government remains committed to a brownfield first approach. We welcome the Minister’s statement in her foreword to draft PPS3 that the Government ‘expects local authorities to do more to bring forward brownfield land and continue with a clear priority for brownfield development’. On examining the draft PPS, however, it is unclear to us how a brownfield first approach will be achieved in practice. Moreover, elements of the proposed approach appear to run counter to this objective, notably the emphasis on meeting market demand where it arises. In our view, draft PPS3 implies a far weaker version of the sequential approach than we have currently and which has resulted in land being developed much more efficiently for housing. In 2004, 72% of homes were built on brownfield sites and average densities rose to 40 dwellings per hectare - up from 52% and 25 dpha in 1997). Since this policy was introduced, too, housebuilding has increased and is now at its highest level for 16 years. Requiring local planning authorities to allocate developable brownfield sites first and to prepare brownfield strategies should help, but these measures alone are not strong enough to deliver a brownfield first approach. Other measures, for example, to prevent developers ‘cherry picking’ greenfield sites and ignoring brownfield sites where the five-year land supply contains a mix of sites, are urgently needed.

20. We are disappointed that the Government is not proposing to raise the national target for the proportion of homes to be built on brownfield land or through conversions from the current figure of 60% by 2008. In the light of the fact that the achievements referred to above have happened within only six years of the new policy being in operation and that, simultaneously, housebuilding has risen to its highest since 1990, the 60% brownfield target in draft PPS3 is startlingly unambitious. There seems little point in adopting a target below that which is currently being achieved. Entec’s research into different housing scenarios found that in their lowest scenario, 65% of development could be accommodated on brownfield land up to 2016. Given that the Government says its proposed increase in housebuilding is less than all the housebuilding scenarios tested by Entec, and that 72% of

new homes are currently built on brownfield land, there is clearly scope for raising the target while meeting housing requirements. We recommend that the Government set a more challenging target than the 60%, which was met and exceeded four years ago. We suggest a target of securing at least 75% of new housing on previously developed land or through conversions by 2010, just 3% above that currently achieved, is reasonable and achievable. As well as raising its short-term target in final PPS3, we strongly recommend that the Government address the need for more ambitious brownfield targets through the review of the relevant Public Service Agreement as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.

21. CPRE also believes that greater consideration should be given to the true cost of greenfield compared with brownfield development. While undoubtedly some brownfield sites present challenges for developers and planners due to land being in multiple ownership or requiring remediation, brownfield land generally has the advantage of having much of the necessary infrastructure already in place. Greenfield development may be cheaper for developers, but it is not a cheap option for the public purse. According to Professor Anne Power of the LSE, public subsidy of infrastructure costs of greenfield housing is significant and estimated to be around £40,000 per dwelling in 2002. When assessing the viability and relative economics of sites, this hidden subsidy should be clearly understood.

22. We believe the following are the main obstacles in draft PPS3 to achieving the Government's stated aim of a brownfield-first approach:

- the emphasis on increasing housing supply in areas of high demand – as opposed to increasing supply in areas with the most capacity to accommodate development without harming the environment; this is best achieved by steering development to urban areas;
- the loss of the requirement for local planning authorities to carry out urban capacity studies which prioritise the search for urban brownfield land (a sequential approach should be built into the HLAA from the outset);
- the requirement for sites allocated to the five-year land supply to be 'developable', which might unnecessarily delay the regeneration of more challenging but essentially deliverable brownfield sites;
- the inability of local planning authorities to phase sites within their five-year supply of allocated land outside areas of low demand or where 'growth above planned levels would have unacceptable impacts' (paragraph 16);
- the general discouragement of local planning authorities from making an allowance for windfall sites in calculating how much land they need to allocate land to their five-year supply, except in particular circumstances;
- the danger that brownfield sites labelled 'undevelopable' and excluded from the five-year land supply may become locked into a cycle of neglect, decline and decay further deterring prospective developers;
- the lack of any challenging brownfield target – CPRE recommends a target of at least 75% of new homes on brownfield sites by 2010; and
- the failure to recognise the full cost of greenfield development.

### **The sequential approach: a success story in Nottingham**

The 1996 County Structure Plan allocated a huge amount of housing to the – very rural - Borough of Rushcliffe (an extra 14,400 houses – an increase of about one-third on the existing stock of between 42,000 and 43,000). This allocation was made on the assumption that new housing needed to be in the Nottingham ‘travel to work’ area. The City of Nottingham claimed it had practically no land for housing. Adjacent districts were already built up or in the Green Belt.

Most of the housing was therefore to go on greenfield sites. There followed heated debate to agree on the least damaging sites within Rushcliffe and considerable delay on the part of the borough council since it was impossible to accommodate this scale of development without major environmental damage.

Work on a new Structure Plan commenced following the publication of PPG3 in 2001 which brought with it urban capacity studies, phasing, sequential tests, etc. This fundamentally changed the approach in Nottingham and surrounding districts. A policy in the plan called ‘Ensuring Urban Regeneration’ requires all Local Plans to manage their release of housing land in two phases – basically urban land first. The City of Nottingham found brownfield sites to accommodate around 5,000 dwellings and Rushcliffe’s allocation was reduced to 5,600.

A recent Inspector’s report into Rushcliffe’s Local Plan praised the Plan for carefully following the sequential approach. The Inspector accepted that windfall figures could be relied upon for up to 10 years, but recommended provision should be made after that for housing on allocated sites.

Rushcliffe Borough Council carried out an analysis of windfalls which have come forward over the past few years. Since 1991, an average of 100 dwellings a year were built on sites of fewer than 10 dwellings and 73 dwellings a year on larger windfall sites – a figure which has risen since PPG3 was published to 110 dwellings a year. As a result of taking into account anticipated windfalls, Rushcliffe BC has reduced the number of houses for which land must be allocated from 3,261 to 1,236 and has only had to retain one large greenfield site.

A strong focus on the sequential approach in the Structure Plan and co-operation between planning authorities has led to the regeneration of areas of Nottingham which now has several housing developments on what were old industrial sites.

### Why the sequential approach matters

23. The sequential approach was drawn up in line with the Government’s approach set out in its 1998 White Paper *Planning for the Communities of the Future*, and in response to issues highlighted by the Urban Task Force in 1999: namely that the wrong type of housing was being built in the wrong place, leading to problems of urban sprawl and urban decline. The Government responded in 2000 with the Urban White Paper and revised planning policy on housing (PPG3). At the heart of this policy is the sequential approach. PPG3 provides clear, comprehensive criteria whose aim is to steer the majority of development to urban brownfield sites. Planners and developers are expected to apply these criteria. As Government policy, rather than guidance, the Courts have tended to back the sequential approach where contentious issues have arisen. Much of the success of this policy is attributable to the requirement that a sequential approach be applied to all stages of the planning process, from the initial search for sites to their subsequent development. In the absence of clear criteria or their relegation to accompanying ‘guidance’ we fear there is a strong likelihood of returning to a situation similar to that which prevailed when the Urban Task Force was set up.

24. Without a robust sequential approach and criteria and measures to implement it, we can expect more greenfield development, loss of countryside and neglect of urban areas. Under the proposed approach, which advocates meeting demand where it arises, there is a risk that current good practice might even be reversed. This is because it may be harder to justify steering development towards urban brownfield sites if most of the demand is in the countryside. Progress on using land more efficiently by raising the density of housing development could also be curtailed or reversed since densities on average are lower on greenfield than brownfield sites. The lack of an urban focus will make it harder to ensure new homes are built near services and jobs and the necessary infrastructure is in place, even though proximity to these remains a policy objective. We recommend that the final version of PPS3 should include clear measures and criteria the Government expects planners and developers to use to achieve a sequential, brownfield-first approach.

25. PPG3's sequential approach (paragraphs 30-36) is much broader than the brownfield first approach proposed in this consultation paper. As well as providing clear criteria for prioritising brownfield development, PPG3 sets out criteria for assessing the sustainability of sites and locations. This is a particularly helpful aid to decision making where potential issues of conflict arise.

#### Brownfield sites and the five-year land supply

26. CPRE also fears that the proposed approach will exacerbate problems of low demand and blight:

- where the allocated five-year land supply contains greenfield and brownfield sites - demand on the latter may be reduced simply because of developers' preference for the former (paragraphs 14-16); or
- because some brownfield sites may be less likely to be developed simply by virtue of not being allocated in the five-year supply on the grounds that they are considered undevelopable.

27. A major concern is the fate of brownfield sites considered to be undevelopable. We recommend that PPS3 should make it clear that the Government does not necessarily expect development to be completed across the whole of a site within five years in order for a site to be deemed 'developable'. Brownfield strategies should go a long way in helping to remove barriers to developing difficult sites, but are unlikely to provide the whole answer: large or complex sites may not be developable within five years; and problems may be so intractable on some sites that they never meet the criteria of 'developability' and remain permanently excluded from the five-year supply of allocated land.

28. We suggest that the simplest way to prevent developers cherry-picking greenfield sites where the five-year supply contains a mix of brownfield and greenfield sites is to allow planning authorities to use phasing or to withhold allocating or releasing further greenfield sites to the five year land supply where evidence suggests this is likely to occur.

29. We recommend that the final PPS3 should include a statement that proposals which come forward for developing brownfield sites not allocated to the five-year land supply on the grounds of 'undevelopability' should be considered favourably where these offer a more sustainable option compared with other sites in the five-year supply. Where this occurs, we suggest phasing should be used to enable less sustainable, allocated greenfield sites to be rolled back to the next plan period.

30. Whether a site is ‘developable’ or not may be not always be clear. To secure continuing public confidence and impartiality in the planning system, we recommend that transparent assessments of ‘developability’ should be determined by local planning authorities, using nationally agreed criteria and tested through independent examination of Development Plan Documents. Where developers decide to challenge a local authority on the developability of a site, they should be required to provide evidence, which should also be made available to the public.

#### **Unsuitable brownfield**

The emphasis on ‘developable brownfield land’ rather than the present sustainability-based sequential approach could lead to a number of unsuitable brownfield sites being developed, such as a range of former MoD sites in the East of England region, the Mabledon Hospital site in Dartford (rejected by the First Secretary of State in September 2005), and the Thorpe Willoughby pig farm in Selby District (rejected at appeal in August 2005).

#### Windfall sites

31. Many local planning authorities have relied on windfalls (ie. unforeseen brownfield sites) to help meet their housing requirements, in place of allocating land or developing less preferable, allocated sites. In many areas a significant proportion of new homes are built on windfall sites: among the local authorities which responded to the ODPM’s Planning for housing provision consultation, windfalls accounted for up to 50% of supply in their area. ODPM figures indicate that 87% of new housing was built on sites of 15 or fewer dwellings in 2003/4.

32. The importance of windfalls should not be underestimated. This approach has encouraged urban regeneration and discouraged unnecessary development on greenfield land. We are concerned that under the new approach, planning authorities may no longer make an allowance for windfalls in calculating their land requirements, except where they are actually unable to find suitable land to allocate or where Sustainability Appraisal indicates that allocating sufficient land would have unacceptable impacts (draft PPS3, paragraph 16). The proposed requirement to allocate five years’ land supply and cease relying on a proportion of windfall sites to count towards planned housing supply will inevitably mean local planning authorities will have to allocate greenfield sites they would not normally consider. The ability to treat windfalls in this way is a vital tool for applying a sequential approach. Removing it will have profound consequences, undermining Government objectives on countryside protection, Green Belt, urban renewal and sustainable communities.

33. We recommend the proposed requirement for planning authorities to allocate five years’ land supply should be modified to allow authorities whose past performance shows that windfalls have come forward in line with expectations and whose housing trajectory is proceeding as planned (paragraph 12c) to count windfall sites towards their planned housing land supply. This should reduce the need to find greenfield land to allocate. Alternatively, greenfield sites could be allocated as reserve sites to be considered as a last resort should anticipated windfall sites not materialise. We suggest that paragraph 12c be amended to read:

‘allocate sufficient land and buildings for housing or mixed use development to deliver the first five years of the housing trajectory, **taking into account a windfall allowance where there is clear evidence that suitable sites are likely to come forward to meet planned housing requirements.**’

## **Windfall capacity**

We can find little evidence that planning authorities' reliance on windfalls has been an obstacle to providing new homes. In Hampshire, for example, where housing supply exceeds regional planning requirements by 28%, windfalls (mostly brownfield) account for around 60% of all completions. Hampshire has identified reserve sites for around 15,000 dwellings. Research carried out by Green Balance for CPRE found that even in the most pressured rural areas windfalls played an important role, reducing the need to find suitable greenfield land and enabling housing requirements to be met (*Will they work? Planners' views on Government proposals on planning for housing*, 2005)

## Phasing

34. We are very concerned that PPS3 does not appear to recognise the crucial role of phasing, not only in ensuring that development does not happen before the necessary infrastructure is in place, but for achieving other objectives, such as urban regeneration and sustainable patterns of development. Phasing, along with judicious use of windfalls, is a crucial tool for achieving a sequential, brownfield-first approach.

35. Restricting planning authorities' ability to phase the release of sites in the five-year supply is likely to result in developers choosing more attractive (ie. easier and more profitable) greenfield sites and ignoring brownfield sites where the five-year land supply contains a mix of sites. Phasing is equally, if not more, important in areas of average or high demand where pressures and impacts need to be carefully managed in the first five years just as much as in later plan periods. In areas where demand is high, the suggestion that phasing may only be used where 'sustainability appraisal suggests growth above planned levels would have unacceptable impacts' (paragraph 16) is worrying and begs the question: why is growth above planned levels? (Simple accommodation of development pressure above planned levels contradicts the commitment to a plan-led approach. In line with the principles of plan, monitor and manage, changes to provision should come forward through DPD reviews, and the new system of LDF makes this easier than hitherto.) As the consultation paper acknowledges, phasing may be needed in areas where demand is weak or the market is failing and market pressures need to be managed to avoid exacerbating these. Problems of blight, neglect and overheating could be magnified in housing market areas containing pockets of low and high demand or in adjacent high- and low-demand areas. In all types of market area, phasing site release and development in a way that ensures infrastructure and environmental requirements are met prior to development is crucial. We recommend that final PPS3 should require planning authorities to use phasing wherever it is needed to avoid the type of problems described here. We suggest that the final PPS3 should also include a statement that planning authorities should assess whether phasing is needed or would be beneficial using Sustainability Appraisal and any other evidence.

36. Allowing local authorities only to phase in relation to an analysis of market demand (viz. draft PPS3, paragraph 16) is a weak substitute for a clear sequential approach to new housing development. Developers will continue to put forward any scheme economically viable for them regardless of whether the scheme is located in what the planning system considers to be an area of 'market failure' or 'weak' demand. This is seen in the 2003 Swale High Court case (see below) and greenfield schemes turned down by the First Secretary of State in 2005 at Combermere Abbey (Cheshire) and in Colne. The absence of a clear, positively stated planning objective of prioritising urban brownfield land could make decisions like this much more open to legal challenge, and in turn make decisions of the Courts much less predictable.

### **Brownfield before greenfield**

In *Redrow Homes (Eastern) Limited v The First Secretary of State and Swale Borough Council*, development on a greenfield site was rejected in an area of low housing demand specifically because greenfield release would make brownfield sites harder to develop – a factor that was seen to be of greater weight than the shortage of land to meet Structure Plan requirements. The implications of greenfield release for local brownfield regeneration were stated by the local planning authority in its evidence to the Inspector, and supported by the development of two non-allocated greenfield sites in the borough before any brownfield sites had been developed. This led the Inspector to reflect the local planning authority's concerns in his own report, which proved to be crucial in swaying the judge. Mr Justice Sullivan stated that: 'the inspector was entitled to accept that evidence, not least because a similar approach underpins the advice in paragraphs 31 to 33 of PPG3. A presumption that previously developed sites should be developed before greenfield sites is needed precisely because, in the absence of such a presumption, developers will be tempted to pick off the easier greenfield sites'.

In the North West greenfield sites and some brownfield windfalls have been rejected on the basis of planning policies directing new housing towards areas in need of regeneration. In reaching decisions the Secretary of State relied upon PPG3 phasing policies but those in RPG/RSS. At Knotts Lane, Colne in Pendle District (March 2005) involving a development of 198 houses on a greenfield site (admittedly allocated in a pre-PPG3 Local Plan), the First Secretary of State overruled his inspector and refused the appeal, despite the inspector having clear evidence that Colne is an area of low market demand. Similarly, at Combermere Abbey the First Secretary of State considered that allowing an enabling development of 100 dwellings would adversely affect regeneration policies aimed at improving the regional role of nearby Crewe. Clearly, such considerations had also not prevented the housebuilder from putting forward what they thought would be an economically viable development proposal!

### **Market constraints**

Discouraging local planning authorities from phasing sites within the five-year supply suggests a misunderstanding of the development process as well as planning objectives. The Home Builders' Federation Director of Economic Affairs has recently stated that housebuilders often do not develop the whole of a single location with planning consent immediately, a fact often misunderstood, he suggests, by Government Ministers. This is due to constraints on the local labour supply. He also stated that 'few if any housing markets can absorb 1,000 additional homes over a relatively short period...there are supply and demand constraints limiting the construction and sale of new homes in any single market'. (Stewart J: 'Responding to Barker', *Housebuilder* January / February 2006, pp.16-17).

### Reducing the need to travel

37. Explicit support for steering development to locations which reduce the need to travel is an integral part of the sequential approach set out in established Government policy (PPS1 *Delivering Sustainable Development*, PPG3 *Housing* and PPG13 *Transport*), but its absence from draft PPS3 is a serious mistake. We are particularly surprised that this is proposed at the time that there is renewed interest in and pressure for integration of transport with spatial planning: the new Regional Spatial Strategies incorporate Regional Transport Strategies and PPS12 *Local Development Frameworks* (2004) makes it clear that 'the integration of transport and spatial planning is central to the development and delivery of effective local

development frameworks' (PPS12, Annex B, paragraph B9). Yet, despite the fact that housing is the single largest consumer of use of development land and thus a major influence on travel patterns, draft PPS3 has nothing to say about the role of housing policy in helping reduce the need to travel and average journey length. As it stands, PPS3 could undermine progress on reducing the need to travel, tackling congestion and creating safe, attractive environments that encourage people to walk and cycle. The omission is all the more serious because PPG13 makes extensive reference to policy in PPG3 and quotes directly from it. Without replacement policy on the role planning for housing and mixed use development has to play in addressing transport and accessibility issues, the effectiveness of the Government's policies on planning and transport will be undermined at strategic and local levels. (See paragraphs 81 – 86 below for our comments on the local dimension of this issue, including parking controls).

38. While we agree that it is important for locations to have 'good access to jobs, services etc.' (paragraph 1c), this is a poor substitute since this might mean access by public transport or car. Reducing the need to travel is essential for responding to climate change, which requires a huge reduction in carbon dioxide emissions to which motorised transport is a major contributor, and for creating inclusive neighbourhoods, since not everyone has or wants access to a car. The Government has clearly recognised the need to respond to climate change in its commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, its own target of a 20% cut in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2010 and much larger reductions over the long term. Well-located housing development can help to meet these targets. We recommend that the second sentence of objective 1c be amended to read:

'They should be located in areas with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure. **Preference should be given to brownfield sites in locations which reduce the need to travel.**'

### Brownfield strategies

39. We strongly welcome the suggestion that local planning authorities should draw up brownfield strategies and that they should make full use of their compulsory purchase powers (paragraph 17). More detail of what they should contain is needed. CPRE recommends that brownfield strategies should:

- focus primarily on seeking out opportunities for regeneration, and unlocking them for development;
- be owned and implemented by a dedicated team in each local authority, working jointly across local boundaries where appropriate and;
- have ready access to necessary expertise, eg. on site remediation, transport, development economics etc.;
- assess each potential site for obstacles to its development;
- contain precise information on what the obstacles to development are for each site;
- list, for each site, the actions planned to address the obstacles to development for , with the person or body responsible for carrying it out, the resources required and the timetable for action;
- be up-to-date, revised at least as often as new monitoring information becomes available;
- be linked closely to annual monitoring of development plans, so that sites may be brought forward to the five-year supply as efficiently as possible;
- enjoy the active support of Regional Development Agencies; and
- be co-ordinated with the investment and management plans for local services (eg. education health, local transport etc.)so as to maximise the chance that local infrastructure will be in place to support urban regeneration or intensification.

40. Strategy teams within local planning authorities should be responsible to senior managers for brownfield delivery, and their members should be closely involved in HLAAs. We also suggest that the Government's implementation of final PPS3 should include support for local authorities in building up necessary supporting staff skills in areas such as Compulsory Purchase Orders, for example.

41. If they are to be successful in achieving their objectives, these strategies will need to be comprehensive, robust, backed up by resources and commitment and have status in decision-making. We recommend that final PPS3 should state that brownfield strategies should be taken fully into account in policies, plans and decisions.

42. The consultation paper lists various strategies local planning authorities should have regard to (paragraph 11a). We suggest that empty homes and brownfield strategies should be listed among these.

### **Determining housing provision and distribution**

43. Valuable tool though it is, we are concerned that too much is being left by draft PPS3 to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to resolve. On its own SA is unlikely to be effective in 'protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities' as advised by PPS1 (paragraph 5); in particular, 'the protection of the wider countryside and the impact of development on landscape' (PPS1, paragraph 20) will seldom be black-and-white issues. We believe that plans are more likely to meet the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive where environmental considerations are an integral part of the whole planning process, including HMAs and HLAAs.

44. We recommend that in considering environmental implications (criterion 7f), the final PPS3 should highlight the need for the scale and distribution of housing provision proposed to respect environmental limits in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 1 *Delivering Sustainable Development* and the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005). As it stands the criterion is very broad and vague and could result in environmental implications being treated in a cursory or superficial manner, rather than as central to deliberations about the number of homes needed, or to be provided, of what type and where. This could leave plans open to legal challenge. PPS1 makes clear that policies should aim to integrate environmental, social and economic objectives as far as possible, not trade them off against each other. We recommend the following criterion be added to paragraph 7:

**'the capacity of areas to accommodate further development without harming the environment.'**

45. We suggest that regional sustainable development strategies or integrated regional frameworks should be listed among strategies RPBs will be expected to have regard to in paragraph 3. Similarly, we recommend that environmental strategies should be listed among strategies which local planning authorities should have regard to in paragraph 11a.

46. In determining housing requirements it is important that planning authorities take into account community as well as individual households' needs in their area, and that this information informs the level and distribution of housing agreed through the regional planning process. We recommend that final PPS3 should state that in determining the number and type of homes needed and their distribution account should be taken of objectives and aspirations as expressed in LDFs, RSSs and Community Strategies as well as criteria 7a to 7g.

47. It is unclear how the Government expects regional planning bodies to take into account the Government's ambition for affordability (criterion 7a) and whether this concerns provision of affordable subsidised housing or affordability of market housing or both. How regional planning bodies are to address the latter in particular needs clarifying.

48. Much more should be done to ensure that market housing, as well as affordable, subsidised housing, contributes to meeting needs. Simply increasing supply is not the answer since what is most profitable for developers may not be what is needed. We believe a closer match between housing supply and needs would be best achieved by giving local planning authorities more control over the size, type and affordability of market housing so that it responds better to identified needs – for example, through controls on floorspace, mix and density. We recommend that PPS3 should state that where there is a mismatch between existing housing stock and identified local needs, planning authorities should prescribe the mix of housing sought in the light of assessments of what is needed to achieve sustainable communities locally.

49. Many local authorities are concerned about appeals and the prospect of costs being awarded against them and are therefore reluctant to insist that developers provide the type of development their community needs. A clear message is needed in final PPS3 that the Government supports planning authorities in their efforts to secure development that meets locally identified needs in the broader sense of what is required to achieve mixed, sustainable communities. This should include, where appropriate, specifying the type, size and cost of housing - and supporting local authorities which refuse applications which do not meet these requirements where they are not satisfied would help address this.

50. With regard to taking into account household projections (criterion 7b), we recommend that the final PPS3 should highlight the need to treat projections with caution, to avoid making assumptions that trends will necessarily continue or treating projections as predictions of what will happen in future (a copy of our briefing is enclosed with this response). An understanding of changing demography (eg. age structure and household composition) is also important, since this has profound implications for the type of homes that are needed. We suggest this be highlighted in the final PPS.

51. In taking into account economic growth (criterion 7b) we suggest that PPS3 should state that allowance should be made for the possibility that economic growth can be qualitative and based on making better use of indigenous skills and resources rather than relying on immigration and a growing labour force.

### Housing Market Areas

52. Planning on the basis of housing markets raises several issues which need to be addressed but on which the consultation paper is silent. Housing markets (paragraph 7) can overlap and co-exist in the same areas. There is a danger that assessing needs on a sub-regional basis may cover too wide an area and consequently overlook some local needs. Provided the housing market is not given pre-eminence, but looked at in the context of broader objectives, eg on sustainable development, and urban regeneration, and planning authorities co-operate, a market area approach may enable housing needs to be met more effectively and sustainably. We suggest clarification should be given on:

- how to address needs in areas where housing markets overlap or are very localised or polarised (eg. high and low demand areas in close proximity or within the same market area);
- how to ensure approaches in neighbouring and related housing market areas are complementary and assist broader objectives;

- the extent to which demand for housing (including demand for second or holiday homes) as distinct from need should be met in certain areas.

53. Areas where potential conflicts between safeguarding valued environments, dealing with market pressures and meeting the need for affordable housing are most acute are perhaps most in need of a clear policy steer in PPS3, to avoid uncertainty and delay in the planning system and poor decisions. We find the lack of such a steer worrying. We understand that the that examples given in Annex D are supposed to be purely illustrative, but as a result it is unclear why they are included in the draft PPS itself rather than as accompanying guidance. While the Annex is not intended to cover every possible situation, a serious omission in our view is the failure here and elsewhere in the draft PPS to recognise areas which have a high demand for housing but where no growth or strictly limited growth to meet affordable housing needs only (eg. an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) is the most appropriate and sustainable option, rather than medium to high growth as suggested. Such areas will certainly include nationally or internationally significant landscapes and valued other countryside (as set out in PPS1), as well as urban areas with limited opportunities for development.

54. We therefore question the usefulness of the table in Annex D as it stands. For example, environmental constraints and infrastructure requirements should always be considered and occur in all types of market area. The table fails to recognise the considerable underutilised capacity that exists in many areas, especially in areas of low demand. This suggests to us that a column on ‘opportunities’ might be as helpful as a column on ‘constraints’. Should the table be retained, we recommend that Option C be amended or a further option added to clarify any uncertainty about how PPS3 should apply in these areas. We recommend that final PPS3 should indicate that areas with significant environmental constraints or where development would cause significant adverse environmental impacts should focus on meeting local needs for affordable housing only, regardless of the level of market demand – which it may or may not be possible to accommodate through sub-regional HMAs. This is effectively a low or no growth option.

55. We are concerned by the statement in the consultation paper (paragraph 9) that in sub-regional housing market areas where demand is high, regional planning bodies should aim to increase housing supply by exploring and identifying growth areas, growth points, new freestanding settlements and major urban extensions as necessary and appropriate. In the absence of clear criteria, it is not clear what ‘necessary and appropriate’ mean. In line with established policy we believe that new settlements should only ever be considered as a last resort and should meet strict criteria. We suggest PPS3 should stipulate a requirement that they should be on brownfield sites, provide models of sustainable living, such as car-free development, and incorporate the highest standards of sustainable construction and design. We recommend that the final version of PPS3 include criteria that should be used to ensure that decisions about areas of growth take full account of environmental capacity (or limits) and sustainability requirements.

56. In focusing on increasing supply in areas of high demand there is a very serious risk that the opportunities and potential of other areas will be missed. Shifting the emphasis away from steering development to urban brownfield sites to areas where demand arises could have devastating consequences for areas afflicted by low demand, blight, market failure and decline. At the same time, this approach fails to make use of significant capacity for development that exists in many of these areas and could thwart efforts to achieve more sustainable patterns of development, such as in the West Midlands (example below). To ensure this does not happen, we recommend that the final PPS3 should more clearly set out the Government’s preferred approach in areas of low and average demand. We suggest that it should state that in areas of low demand with significant capacity for development priority should be given to addressing market failure, through a comprehensive range of measures aimed at making areas attractive to residents and prospective developers. While in some cases

this may will entail some combination of renewal and limited demolition, other measures may also be needed. PPS3 should require a full range of options to be considered.

57. The consultation paper states that in sub-regional housing market areas where demand is low, regional planning bodies should identify the need for the renewal or replacement of the housing stock. It is generally far more sustainable to make the best use of existing resources than demolish and start from scratch. Taking into account whole life energy and financial costs it can be cheaper too. A full range of measures should be considered to revive markets and make areas more attractive before demolition. We recommend that the final PPS3 should indicate a presumption in favour of refurbishment and retention and indicate that demolition should only ever be contemplated where it represents the most sustainable option as identified through the Sustainability Appraisal.

58. There is no widely shared understanding of what a housing market is. To avoid confusion, we suggest that a definition should be given in the glossary. This should make it clear that a housing market, in the sense the Government intends, encompasses both demand for market housing and need for a certain type of housing, including affordable, subsidised, housing.

#### **Planning for the housing market – a cautionary tale**

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy published in 2004 places a strong emphasis on urban regeneration. The strategy aims to achieve more sustainable patterns of development across the region by steering development to urban areas and stemming the out-migration of the population to the shires. This strategy could be fatally undermined by attempting to meet demand where it arises, as opposed to encouraging development where capacity exists. As the West Midlands Regional Assembly explained in its response to the ODPM *Planning for housing provision* consultation last year, as a result of the approach in RSS it had been successful in persuading developers to consider sites they previously might have ignored:

*'Housing land supply is being increased in the Major Urban Areas and private developers have shown increased interest in working within the Metropolitan areas, for example, more executive homes are being built in the conurbation. However, in consultation over both the RSS and Regional Housing Strategy 2005, private developers have made it clear that they would prefer to see a greater release of greenfield sites outside the conurbation.'*

Housing Market Assessments and Housing Land Availability Assessments (see also paragraphs 92 – 111 of our response below)

59. Our main concerns are the quality of assessments, how they influence local and regional policies on land allocations, housing provision and distribution and the extent to which housing/planning policies take into account other factors, such as community aspirations for their area, environmental protection and the need for more sustainable patterns of development. To maintain the integrity of the plan-led system, it is important that assessments inform, rather than drive, decision making.

60. With regard to the role of the proposed National Advice Unit, we suggest that the final PPS3 make it clear that this is to advise and assist on methodologies, not prescribe. It would be helpful if the National Advice Unit could provide specialist support, for example, on rural housing issues. A particularly helpful role for the advice unit we believe would be to exercise a degree of overview to help ensure that approaches between different market areas are complementary and consistent with objectives on sustainable development.

## **Affordable housing**

61. CPRE finds much to welcome in the draft PPS on affordable housing but we also believe there are serious weaknesses. In particular, we fear the clause on balancing the need for affordable housing against site viability (paragraph 27) could further undermine the chance of providing affordable housing in some cases. We welcome the continuing presumption that affordable housing should be provided on site (paragraph 28). We suggest final PPS3 should be clearer about the limited circumstances where this may not be required and provision off-site or a financial payment in lieu may be an acceptable alternative. For example, in circumstances where there is already an overwhelming preponderance of such housing.

62. We welcome the proposed lowering of the site size threshold for contributions toward affordable housing, and the retention of the ability among local planning authorities to stipulate lower thresholds where affordable housing will be required where evidence justifies this. Nonetheless, CPRE believes that local authorities would be better equipped to address the need for affordable housing if reference to standard thresholds were removed altogether from the final PPS3, and we recommend this. In rural areas such a change would bring PPS3 in line with the one-for-one policy already provided for in the Rural White Paper. As a minimum, we recommend that the final version of PPS3 should indicate that in some circumstances a threshold of zero may be the most effective way to meet local housing needs. We also welcome the draft PPS's recognition of the need to take into account levels of affordable housing sought and the objective of creating mixed and sustainable communities.

63. We suggest that lack of affordable housing should not be attributed to a failure to provide land or meet overall housebuilding targets but is the result of a lack of investment in affordable housing and a failure on the part of local planning authorities' to secure higher proportions of affordable housing when granting planning permissions as the situation in the East Midlands, described below, amply illustrates.

### **Housing supply and affordability in the East Midlands**

In most parts of the East Midlands the number of new houses built in recent years has consistently exceeded targets in the Regional Plan (*Proposals for a Review of the East Midlands Regional Plan to 2026*. East Midlands Regional Assembly, April 2005). At the same time the proportion of new homes that are affordable has fallen far short of requirements. The present RSS, and former RPG8, indicates that 25% of all new housing should be affordable. In practice, less than 10% of homes built in recent years have been affordable (*East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Annual Monitoring Report 2003/04*. DTZ Piedad Consulting for East Midlands Regional Assembly February 2005). The latest monitoring data suggests this has now fallen to less than 7.5% despite overall housing completions being 15% above the RSS target (*Draft Annual Monitoring Report for 2004/05* East Midlands Regional Assembly February 2006).

## Rural housing

64. We strongly welcome the statement in paragraph 31 that 'the focus for significant development should be market towns or local service centres that are well served by public transport and other facilities' and that 'the priority for development is developable brownfield land.' With regard to the proposed use of greenfield land to meet local needs in rural areas, we recommend that PPS3 should indicate that account should be taken of the wider effects this might have, eg. on the environment.

65. We welcome the inclusion of the policy, originally introduced in amendments to Annex B of PPG3 last year, allowing planning authorities to designate small sites in rural areas exclusively for affordable housing. To maintain the integrity of the plan-led system, we believe sites for affordable housing should be agreed through the development plan process, rather than through the use of exceptions sites. We welcome the stipulation that where exception sites are used they should be designated for affordable housing in perpetuity. We strongly recommend it should be made clearer that this should also apply to sites designated in the development plan for affordable housing. We are unsure why the draft PPS suggests that sites may only be designated for affordable housing in larger villages and market towns. There may well be a need to designate small sites for affordable housing elsewhere (where the supply of both affordable housing and suitable sites may be even more limited), and we suggest that final PPS3 should recognise this.

66. While CPRE is aware of the small contribution that rural exceptions sites can make to meeting housing needs, we strongly believe that the problems this approach raises outweigh any benefits it may bring. The use of exceptions sites undermines the plan-led system, whereby decisions are made according to the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It can lead to sites being developed for housing that would not normally be considered suitable for any development, with consequent harm to settlement character, ecology and landscape – often in highly sensitive places. By definition, sites may well be peripheral, remote and inaccessible, forcing car dependency on those least able to afford it. The exceptions approach also increases the likelihood of local opposition to affordable housing. We believe land should be allocated through the development plan, since this allows for public engagement, independent scrutiny and is tested by sustainability appraisal. This process is vital for securing public consensus, maintaining confidence in the planning system and ensuring sites are suitably located. While we would prefer the final PPS3 to signal a shift away from the rural exceptions policy, if the Government is determined to retain it, the final PPS should state that exception sites should be considered only as a last resort after all other options have been considered and should take fully into account the impact on the environment.

67. We suggest that Community Land Trusts might play a positive role in helping to secure suitable sites for housing which could be highlighted in PPS3. They can help secure a greater degree of public consensus on the use of land as well as retaining a community interest and control over future management and use.

### **Sustainable design and residential quality**

68. CPRE welcomes the emphasis on designing for high quality and commends the approach set out in paragraphs 34-37. We entirely agree ‘that the key consideration should be whether a development positively improves the character and environmental quality of the area’ (paragraph 37). We are disappointed, though, that measures proposed fall far short of what is needed to achieve any genuine greening of the residential environment. Sustainable design and construction are an integral part of development quality, though they are seldom seen in this way, and essential if new development is to respond to formidable challenges such as climate change. The environmental performance of development and energy and materials used in construction and subsequent use are key determinants of an area’s environmental quality and how it functions. Planning can and should do much more to ensure that high environmental standards are achieved in new development and to minimise the wider ecological footprint of development and subsequent use/activities. Environmentally friendly design should therefore be required, not just encouraged, as stated in paragraph 39. We strongly recommend that the final PPS make it absolutely clear that local planning authorities may make sustainable design, construction and layout a condition of granting planning permission, defensible at appeal.

## Design codes

69. CPRE supports the use of design coding in principle, representing as it does common sense and application of time-honoured principles of well-mannered urban design. We are concerned that this should not be used an excuse to circumvent proper public scrutiny of the principle or details of development proposals, however. Design codes should therefore be developed and adopted via the development plan process. We consider that the most appropriate vehicle may be Area Action Plans.

## Urban and suburban intensification

70. CPRE broadly welcomes the more nuanced approach to intensification set out in paragraph 36. In many areas there is considerable scope to use land more wisely. For example, in many developments an unnecessarily large amount of land is devoted to car parking. This wastes land which might be used more beneficially for housing or some other purpose. Provided it is done in a way that is sympathetic to context, intensification provides an opportunity for development while making more efficient use of land.

71. We recommend that the final PPS3 should highlight the need for intensification to be carried out in a way that conserves and enhances places' special quality and character, and helps local authorities to discern where it will and will not be appropriate. The statement that 'although residential gardens are defined as brownfield land, this does not necessarily mean that they are suitable for development' is important; further guidance is needed, however, if communities are to gain the maximum benefit from the potential for intensification without giving rise to undesirable side-effects and provoking a public backlash. We believe the welcome emphasis on the emergence of the approach to small-scale intensification through local strategies (paragraph 36) provides the basis for this. We would like to see this reinforced and elaborated on in the final PPS3 and accompanying guidance. We recommend that these should set out how local authorities can respond to pressure for random intensification from investors and developers by planning positively for intensification in urban and suburban areas. The focus should be on areas around local centres (eg. the 'pedsheds' – pedestrian watersheds - approach used in the Sustainable Residential Quality work by Llewelyn Davies in London), to maximise the potential of places that have easiest access on foot to a range of jobs, local services and public transport. A much better understanding of local context is needed which would in turn inform Local Development Frameworks and enable local planning authorities to assess intensification proposals and potential.

72. The ultimate aim should be a plan-led approach to intensification of urban and suburban areas, using much more intelligent policies based on neighbourhood characterisation to harness intensification pressures for wider sustainability benefits. For this approach to work and find greater acceptance with the public, local authorities need to take other policies seriously too, especially those concerned with historic townscape and environmental quality (eg. in Conservation Areas), conserving wildlife and catchment management (every garden built on seals more ground surface and potentially increases run-off, with implications for local infrastructure and flood risk elsewhere).

## **Sustainable design and construction**

73. Rather than encourage developers to apply sustainable and environmentally friendly design and construction principles to their developments (paragraph 39) we recommend that PPS3 should require this. We recommend that the final Code for Sustainable Homes set demanding mandatory standards of sustainable design and construction for all new housing, and that its scope be extended to cover aggregates and other construction materials, ecological impact and accessibility by public transport. These are all important aspects of the spatial

planning theme that runs through the new planning system, in PPS1, PPS11 and PPS12 and in the revised UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005).

74. Unlike PPG3, draft PPS3 does not require priority to be given to people over the movement of traffic in housing development, new housing to be located in areas which can be easily reached by public transport or local authorities to seek to reduce car dependency. Instead, local planning authorities are expected to develop policies 'having regard to expected levels of car ownership in different areas' (paragraph 20). This is not a clear or helpful approach. In the light of the Government's recognition of the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is inexplicable that draft PPS3 offers no objectives, policy or support for local authorities struggling to address these urgent problems. What is needed is stronger policy on planning for housing and transport and more effective implementation.

75. Because they are where people live and spend most of their lives, housing developments perhaps more than any other type of development should place the needs of the pedestrian before those of the car and provide a decent, safe living environment for the whole community. PPG3 included many helpful statements in this regard: these have been extensively quoted with practical illustrations in CABE guidance published recently but which will quickly become out of date should these statements no longer be Government policy. Applying the approach in PPS3 as it stands could result in a disproportionate focus on accommodating the car in residential developments, when the needs of pedestrians should be paramount. We recommend that the final PPS3 include a clear, unequivocal statement on this issue.

### **Density and housing mix**

76. CPRE broadly welcomes the intention to make further progress in raising housing densities set out in the draft PPS (paragraph 19 and Annex C), but we suggest that a more sophisticated approach is needed. We strongly support the retention of a minimum density figure for development in the body of the PPS, and recommend it should be raised to 40 or 50 dwellings per hectare in order to bring the figure to the approximate level needed to support a viable bus service – a basic criterion for sustainable communities. We believe there is scope for higher densities in many suburbs and parts of town centres and we suggest the final PPS3 should indicate this more clearly. We have three main areas of concern about the density policy in the draft PPS which we deal with in more detail below:

- the potentially harmful consequences of the way the density ranges appear to prescribe density by type of area for the efficient use of land;
- the need for a more sophisticated assessment of density than simply dwellings per hectare on its own; and
- the need for a better informed and more tailored approach to density at the neighbourhood level.

### Density ranges

77. The proposed density range in Annex C appears to try to determine what densities are appropriate according to the location of a site. We suggest that this approach should be refined to be helpful and avoid damaging consequences. We fear it could lead to wasteful use of greenfield sites on the urban periphery, for example, where the scale and accessibility of development should lead to urban densities. If this range were applied logically to a major urban extension, eg. the Upton extension to Northampton, the outcome could be significantly lower densities. This is despite the opportunity such sites offer to create a much more sustainable compact, and essentially urban development pattern on a scale that can support a wide range of uses. By contrast, there will be peripheral potential development sites where

efficient densities are inappropriate because of their relative inaccessibility. In these cases, rather than perpetuating unsustainable patterns of car-dependent, single use development, such sites should probably not be developed at all. There will also be sites in urban areas where development is appropriate but not at the densities suggested in the range, because what is needed in the area may be a different kind or mix of housing development. We recommend that the range be excluded from the final PPS3 itself and included in a refined form in guidance, to make clear its illustrative status. If, however, it is included in the final PPS3 it should be accompanied by policy relating to site accessibility, housing and use mix, and local neighbourhood character.

### Measuring density

78. PPG3's emphasis on raising density, supported by the Density Direction, has been instrumental in increasing the efficiency with which housing sites are developed. This emphasis on density, however, has also led to certain problems. There is considerable misunderstanding among planners, developers and the public about what even very modest densities of 30-50 dwellings per hectare entail in practice. In numerous cases this fuels hostility to proposals designed to make more efficient use of land. We believe that PPS3 provides a crucial opportunity to address this problem by improving the way densities are measured, expressed and therefore understood by those who make and are affected by planning decisions.

79. As a result of discussions with developers, designers and CABE, CPRE has concluded that another measure of density is needed, to be used in conjunction with dwellings per hectare, in order to provide a better perspective of what densities actually mean in real life. We recommend that the best measure for this purpose would be some assessment of plot ratio (ie. built floor space in relation to site area). Together, the number of dwellings (eg. 40 dpha) and the plot ratio (eg. 75 square metres for a two-bedroom flat) provide a far more accurate picture of the scale of building proposed and the size and mix of units. This should help in reaching better, more informed decisions about density of new development, especially in relation to its context, while not detracting from the overall policy objective of making better use of land.

80. Another issue with the current housing output is the quality and size of what is built. Price and profit margins are generally much more important factors in determining these than density, but there is evidence that those buying houses are dissatisfied with much of current production. There is a need for the planning system to promote more adequately proportioned and better quality housing, particularly at the cheaper end of the housing market - where space and environmental standards are often lower than in the social housing sector - alongside higher densities if it is to address both environmental needs and market demands. Floor area is increasingly used in the UK by estate agents selling housing, and we believe the use of this second plot ratio measure could serve the additional purpose of helping people buying or renting housing to assess the size and quality of what they are being offered. The improved awareness should in turn put pressure on developers to provide better product.

### Density in context

81. Density should not be considered in isolation, but requires careful consideration to be given to the design and mix of housing and other uses (where proposed or which already exist) in the light of local circumstances. For example whether a need has been identified for a particular type of housing, how a proposed development relates to its setting and what is needed to create mixed, sustainable communities. In some areas too many flats are being built; in other areas, not enough flats and too many houses. We believe that, for density to be raised successfully, given the large contribution smaller brownfield sites make to new housing supply, the context of development demands much greater attention. Essentially, this requires

the use of some form of design coding in established urban and suburban areas, so that new development takes account of the existing character, housing mix and built form. The approach we recommend in paragraph 59 above would help achieve this.

82. Net site density (ie. the number of dwellings on a given site) is itself a poor measure of the sustainability of development patterns. To gauge this an understanding of neighbourhood density is required. For the benefits of density (eg. in terms of a critical level of households to support local services, public transport etc) to be realised, overall neighbourhood density is what matters. Gross, neighbourhood density takes account of all land uses in a given areas, including roads, parks, gardens employment, shops, schools etc. It is directly determined by the net density of development on sites wholly or partly used for housing. The net densities referred to in PPS3 therefore need to be seen in the context of the gross neighbourhood densities they determine. CPRE recommends that the final PPS3 should refer to the importance of net site housing densities for achieving the neighbourhood densities needed to secure or maintain sustainable patterns of development. PPS3 and accompanying guidance (which can provide the necessary detail) should set out how local planning authorities can address this issue. There are three key stages:

- deciding the level of accessibility and intensity of uses (essentially the character) they wish to see in defined areas;
- assessing what gross neighbourhood housing density is required to achieve or maintain this; and then
- setting policies for the net housing density required or permissible on sites within the area to secure the desired neighbourhood character.

### **Residential development and parking**

83. CPRE finds the approach of the consultation paper to car parking deeply worrying (paragraph 20). While we understand that car ownership is not necessarily an obstacle to reduced car use, as Government policy in PPG13 *Transport* (2001) states:

*‘The availability of car parking has a major influence on the means of transport people choose for their journeys. Some studies suggest that levels of parking can be more significant than levels of public transport provision in determining means of travel (particularly for the journey to work) even for locations very well served by public transport. Car parking also takes up a large amount of space in development, is costly to business and reduces densities. Reducing the amount of parking in new development (and in the expansion and change of use in existing development) is essential, as part of a package of planning and transport measures, to promote sustainable travel choices’* (paragraph 49).

84. The increasing pressure from a significant minority for not one or two but several off-street parking spaces per household demands a strong statement of national policy on maximum parking provision. Without a clear maximum the prospect of planning helping achieve more sustainable patterns of development could be seriously undermined. In this context, the suggestion in draft PPS3 that ‘local planning authorities should development parking policies for their plan area with local stakeholders and local communities having regard to expected car ownership...’ (paragraph 20) appears hopelessly inadequate. Simply responding to ‘expected’ levels of car ownership is directly contrary to established Government policy set out in PPG13, which sees residential parking as a means of reducing dependence on the private car.

85. The problem of the extensive omission of policy on this issue from draft PPS3 goes much further, however. It could undermine the relevance and effectiveness of PPG13 as well, since

paragraphs 12-17 of the latter document quote directly from the advice set out in PPG3. While PPG13 includes parking maximum parking standards for all other kinds of development, it relies entirely on PPG3 for the parking standards for residential development. The new planning system is attempting to integrate transport and spatial planning, eg. through inclusion of Regional Transport Strategies in Regional Spatial Strategies, and co-ordination of Local Development Frameworks with Local Transport Plans. Parking provision - at both ends of a journey - has an important influence on people's transport choices. Integration of planning and transport will be undermined, however, if strong controls over parking provision for other uses is not accompanied by corresponding controls where people live. As drafted, PPS3 would therefore leave a large gap in planning policy on a critically important issue.

86. As a minimum, we recommend that the final PPS3 should:

- set clear maximum standards for off-street parking for different housing sizes and types;
- actively encourage housing that aims to reduce or eliminate car use and the need for parking through higher density, mixed use development, car clubs for residents and attractive, conveniently laid out streets that make walking and cycling quick and enjoyable ways to get around;
- make it clear that access to daily needs on foot, and to public transport, should be a key factor in deciding how much parking should be provided; and, by extension,
- make it clear that places which might require extensive car parking to be viable will not, therefore, generally be appropriate locations for development (with the exception of very small-scale developments of affordable housing in some rural settlements).

87. PPG3 makes it quite clear that the needs of pedestrians should take precedence over traffic movement in residential developments and that planning authorities should seek to reduce car dependence. The final PPS3 should indicate that a similar presumption should continue. It could also help promote more efficient ways of providing the parking space which will be needed using less land, for example through well-designed streets, squares, courts etc. which provide ample on-street parking for communal use and are secured by overlooking and activity ('passive surveillance'). If well designed and managed, such spaces can serve a range of uses, including meeting different parking needs at different times of day (especially in mixed use development), enabling access for servicing and waste collection, and providing a space for community events or activities.

88. We welcome the reference in the draft guidance to the desirability of lower parking standards (HLAA paragraph 54) and acknowledgement of the need to carry out assessments in the light of PPS3 on density, and not apply existing plan standards. We recommend that this be set out explicitly in the body text of PPS3 itself.

### **Managing and delivering development**

89. When considering applications for housing in advance of a development plan review (paragraph 41), it is important that broader planning objectives are also taken into account, whether the proposal positively contributes to the character and quality of the environment.

90. CPRE is concerned by the statement in the consultation paper that local planning authorities should no longer be able to refuse an application where this would prejudice a review of a site allocation plan (draft PPS3, paragraph 42). Granting permission under such circumstances is undemocratic and could undermine the plan-led system. Where a site is

significant, raises contentious issues or is the subject of a DPD review, we recommend that PPS3 should state unequivocally that in these circumstances permission should not be granted. We welcome the acknowledgement that permission should not be granted where this would delay the development of an allocated developable brownfield site. We are concerned, however, that this is another example of where the final PPS needs to be much stronger if local planning authorities are to be able to make it work, and the laudable objectives achieved.

91. We strongly object to the suggestion that planning authorities might bring sites allocated for later in the plan period forward through a review of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). SPDs are not subject to the same degree of scrutiny and public consultation as a DPD and original timings for the release of land would have been agreed through the latter. In our view a DPD is the proper vehicle for allocating land in a fair and democratic way which allows for independent scrutiny. We question the statement in paragraph 41 of the draft PPS that policies in PPS3 may carry greater weight than relevant policies in an up-to-date development plan, since PPS3 has not been subject to Sustainability Appraisal, whereas the development plan will have been. In some circumstances this may fall short of requirements of the EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment, and be open to legal challenge.

## **Annex A Definitions**

### Brownfield land

92. The definition of brownfield land given here concerns us as it could provide a loophole for development to take place on undeveloped land in inappropriate locations. PPG 3 explicitly excludes hospital grounds and airfields from the definition of previously developed land. We suggest that final PPS3 should include a statement explicitly excluding airfields and hospitals (and other extensive grounds which form the curtilage of other types of building(s) or structure, eg. MoD sites) from the definition of brownfield sites. We also suggest that the final sentence of paragraph 2 should be amended to read 'or there is a clear reason that could outweigh the use of the site – such as its contribution to nature conservation or it has subsequently been put to an amenity use **or is of amenity value** and cannot be regarded as requiring redevelopment'.

93. Given the considerable misunderstanding that surrounds the concept of 'brownfield' and 'curtilage' a statement in PPS3 such as that recently issued by the ODPM would be helpful. We suggest that this should make it clear that the whole area of the curtilage should not necessarily be redeveloped and that where a building only occupies the proportion of a site which is predominantly open land, the whole site should not normally be developed to the boundary of the curtilage (as note 2 PPG3, Annex C indicates).

## **Annex B: Sub-regional Housing Market Assessments and Housing Land Availability Assessments** (comments here also relate to draft practice guidance.

### Housing Land Availability Assessments

94. CPRE welcomes the statement that the new approach is more comprehensive than Urban Capacity Studies and that a wider range of brownfield sources should be considered. We are concerned by the lack of any reference to urban capacity within the draft PPS, however, and question the assertion that planning authorities have made unrealistic assumptions about the likelihood of sites coming forward (paragraph 2, draft guidance on HMAs). We have found no evidence suggesting this is the case and suggest other practices, such as developers landbanking are a more likely cause of delay: the main housebuilders' landbanks with outline planning permission or better increased by more than 30% to over 330,000 since between 1998 and 2003.

95. The requirement in PPG3 to produce Urban Capacity Studies has been a major step forward. Although their use by local authorities has in some cases been patchy and slow, and their quality variable, without them it seems unlikely that we would have achieved 72% of housing development on brownfield sites. To avoid some of the problems encountered with implementation of PPG3, it will be important for the advice in *Tapping the potential* to be updated or replaced, either to accompany publication of final PPS3 or to follow it more quickly than was the case with PPG3. We are pleased that ‘the new approach to identifying land for housing does not mean authorities and their partners should abandon all previous work and techniques used for urban capacity studies’ and that the aim is ‘build on existing practices, in particular techniques developed to identify brownfield development opportunities.’ (draft guidance on HLAAAs, paragraph 2). We nonetheless have some concerns about the way assessments are to be carried out.

96. We suggest that in searching for sites size thresholds should not be imposed. What is significant at a local level might not be at a sub-regional or regional level and cumulatively, many small sites can be significant. We recommend that this point be highlighted in PPS3. We strongly agree that all small vacant derelict sites should be considered; this is reinforced by the ODPM figures suggesting that 87% of new housing development recently has been on sites of fewer than 15 dwellings.

97. We are particularly concerned by the proposed requirement for local authorities to consider greenfield sites in and around urban areas: ‘in order to take a comprehensive look at land availability and in order not to narrow down options for the plan-making process the assessment also needs to identify greenfield sites adjacent to or within existing settlements’ (draft guidance, paragraph 44). While we agree that local authorities should look comprehensively at land availability, to ensure a brownfield first approach and to avoid problems of blight and speculation, we suggest this should not be a requirement where sufficient brownfield land exists or windfall sites are likely to come forward to meet agreed housing requirements.

98. We recommend that consideration should be given to the role of the local community and its potential contribution to preparing the HLAAAs. Local communities can possess an intimate knowledge of local opportunities, issues and constraints at a level of detail which planning authorities lack. We suggest local planning authorities should be required to provide opportunities for constructive involvement. This will help fulfil Government aspirations for meaningful and continuous community involvement in planning.

99. Draft guidance on HLAA refers to the need to parcel larger sites up where these are likely to be developed slowly. Care should be taken to ensure that this is done in a way that does not lead to developers avoiding providing affordable housing.

100. We welcome the requirement that all authorities will be expected to assess windfalls (paragraph 62, draft guidance). As set out in paragraphs 31 to 33 above, however, we are disturbed that in many cases they will not be able to take adequate account of these in planning future housing provision.

101. Draft guidance on HLAAAs states that it is the role of the plan making process to determine whether a site is developable; the role of HLAAAs is to identify sites and constraints. This is in our view a very important distinction as is the statement that the assessment ‘should not judge whether a site offers the most sustainable option for development’, again this is a matter for the plan-making process’. So as not to pre-empt the plan-making process, we recommend that the final PPS3 require a range of options to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and consulted on as part of the LDF and RSS process.

Housing Market Assessments (draft PPS3 paragraph 7, Annex B and practice guidance)

102. CPRE welcomes the positive role that HMAs could play in enabling planning authorities to ‘develop a good understanding of housing markets, particularly in terms of their characteristics and the drivers of market change’ (draft guidance, page 5). A concern for us is the extent to which the assessment will take into account other factors, eg. environmental constraints and broader objectives, and will inform rather than determine the overall number of additional dwellings sought. This is not clear from the following statement (page 5):

*‘As a minimum, the practice guidance will enable authorities to derive figures for housing need and demand in their areas and to determine what this might mean in terms of market and affordable housing provision.’*

103. For example, ‘derive figures’ might be interpreted as ‘determining the level of market and affordable housing provision’. We suggest this sentence be rephrased to avoid confusion arising about the proper role of the assessment, which is to ‘provide authorities with a robust evidence base which will inform the development of LDF policies’ (draft guidance, page 5). The level and distribution of new housing should be determined through the development plan process, which is subject to public consultation, scrutiny by an independent inspector and SA. We suggest this sentence be replaced with the following or similar wording:

**‘As a minimum, the practice guidance will enable authorities to gain a thorough understanding of the nature and level of housing need and demand in their areas and suggest a range of options available to respond to these.’**

104. Rather than determine the level of market and affordable provision, we suggest that the HMA should suggest a range of options to be consulted upon as part of the LDF/RSS development plan process, and subject to SA, along with other options which may come forward but not considered in the HMA.

105. The list of bodies listed as appropriate to lead housing market partnerships (page 9, draft guidance) suggests to us that partnerships will be dominated by economic and social interests. Unless partnerships involve individuals/organisations with a thorough understanding of the environmental implications of housing development - in terms of built form, locational, ecological and landscape impact – we believe there is a danger that the environment will be overlooked or considered in a superficial manner. Representation via Local Strategic Partnerships, which currently suffer serious shortcomings in community representation and environmental awareness, is unlikely to provide the breadth of knowledge and expertise required. Given that partnerships are expected to consider the implications of the HMA, sign-off outputs and agree follow up actions (page 9) the importance of possessing a thorough understanding of environmental implications and requirements for sustainability cannot be underestimated. Failure to do so will seriously undermine the robustness of the evidence base, raising questions about the soundness and public credibility of the development plan, as well as its capacity to achieve sustainable development. Leaving the application of SA to a later stage would contradict a key feature of the methodology: iterative application of SA, and use of the resulting findings throughout the process of plan-making. Failure to apply the SEA Directive properly through SA would also leave a plan open to challenge.

106. It is good that the draft guidance recognises that ‘purely statistical approaches may fail to reflect particular local issues’ (Working with communities, page 10). At the same time it fails to recognise that a considerable wealth of knowledge and expertise exists within local communities which should be drawn on wherever possible. The new planning system places considerable emphasis on meaningful and continuous community involvement. Understanding local housing needs, requirements and aspirations is likely to require significant participation by the local community.

107. As well as existing planning and housing policies and practice, the final guidance should highlight the importance of considering emerging policies and plans since these are more likely to reflect current aspirations and circumstances (acknowledged in HLAAs guidance but not in the draft guidance on HMAs - see establishing objectives, page 10).

108. A better understanding is needed of the extent to which the availability and provision of different types of market dwellings affects the number of households in housing need. For example, if new housing caters primarily for wealthier households moving into an area or moving to a larger or more expensive home, potential first-time buyers may be pushed into housing need' since their 'demand' (or need) for cheaper market housing has not been met. Guidance on how this might be resolved is urgently needed. We suggest that a stronger policy in the final PPS3 to enable local authorities to control the type of market housing provided would go a considerable way to addressing this problem (see paragraph 38 above).

109. In assessing past trends (draft guidance on HMAs, page 15, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph) it is crucial that assumptions are not made that trends will or should continue. Trends are not policy-neutral. Rather than simply accommodating unsustainable trends, planning has a vital role to play in encouraging more sustainable patterns of development. An important element of HMAs should be to understand the various drivers of particular trends and mechanisms or events which influence these.

110. The draft guidance indicates various steps required for understanding the socio-economic context. We strongly suggest that an understanding of other factors affecting demand, such as the quality of the environment and local schools, is also needed.

111. The statement 'survey data is less robust than secondary data' is of concern (paragraph 1, page 28). This surely depends on the nature of the survey and secondary data. Nationally published household and population projects are considered in general to be robust at a national and regional level, but concerns have been raised about their reliability at a local level. Given the acknowledged limitations of household projection techniques, (draft guidance, Table 4.1 page 30), it will be important that housing market partnerships examine data to check whether and to what extent it is relevant and reliable at a local level. We question the usefulness of housing-led forecasting (among methodologies listed in the draft guidance) since predicting the number of households on the basis of housing supply seems tautological.

112. It is important to have clear objectives and not to undertake research and analysis in a policy vacuum. We are concerned that the draft guidance is silent on a number of important matters, such as overlapping housing markets; the extent to which speculation might be a factor in increasing house prices; consideration of what is needed to achieve more sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities. The relationship between HMAs and decisions about the level of housing and distribution needs clarifying, to ensure that the assessment informs, rather than drives, decisions about how many homes are built and where. We strongly object to the suggestion in page 52 of the guidance that assessments and their outputs should not be discussed at the Independent Examination, since proper scrutiny would ensure assessments were robust and credible. Even where all criteria for robustness are met to everyone's satisfaction, there is still legitimate scope for interpreting results differently. Given the importance the Government attaches to this assessment and to gain the maximum value from it, it should be openly discussed at the examination where this would lead to greater understanding of issues raised.

113. Draft PPS3 places considerable emphasis on the role of HMAs in informing housing provision, mix and distribution. Draft guidance on HMAs focusses primarily on economic, social and demographic context, existing policy and past trends. To avoid HMAs providing a

rationale for a return to 'predict and provide', PPS3 should include the goal of creating mixed, inclusive sustainable communities as among the factors to be taken into account in determining housing provision and distribution at local and regional level. Similarly, we recommend that consideration should be given in HMAs to modelling sustainable patterns of housing development which take account of broader goals such as the need to respect environmental limits, rather than simply projecting past trends into the future. We think it is vital that the final PPS3 should require environmental capacity and the objective of sustainable communities to be taken into account when considering the number and type of households an area might be expected to accommodate.

### **Consultation Questions**

114. The consultation paper asks whether policies in draft PPS3 will deliver the Government's housing objectives for mixed sustainable communities set out in paragraph 1. We believe this is unlikely, for reasons set out above. For communities to be sustainable certain requirements, currently absent from draft PPS3, such as measures requiring sustainable design and construction and to reduce the need to travel by car, will need to be in place, and others, for example, on recycling brownfield land, significantly strengthened. The Regulatory Impact Assessment acknowledges that more greenfield land is likely to be required for development. The footprint of development extends far beyond the immediate site area it occupies. As well as having an urbanising effect on the countryside, we believe the proposed approach would undermine urban regeneration.

115. With regard to the affect that policies in PPS3 might have on particular groups, we are concerned that PPS3 will have a disproportionate adverse impact on pedestrians and non-car users. Those who depend more on walking, cycling and public transport tend to be children, older and disabled people and those on lower incomes (among whom car ownership levels are lower). PPG3 gave a clear message about the type of residential environments the Government expected developers/developments to provide. This included an explicit requirement on local authorities to 'place the needs of people before ease of traffic movement in designing the layout of residential developments' and to 'seek to reduce car dependence by facilitating more walking and cycling' and improving links between housing, jobs, local services and local amenity. It is not clear from the draft PPS whether these requirements are to remain in place. We suggest that the final PPS3 should include a statement such as:

**'the Government continues to be committed to reducing car dependency. Design and layout of residential developments have a key role to play. Residential environments should give priority to meeting the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and to facilitating the use of public transport over the needs of the car'.**