

## Chapter 4: Where do we want to be and how do we get there?

precisely the levels and nature of need, across London, for supporting people services and supported housing, and ensure that its aims and spending plans are aligned with the investment plans of the London Housing Strategy.

### 4.3.3. Creating mixed and sustainable communities

*The aim of this strategy is to encourage more mixed neighbourhoods – in terms of income, economic activity, tenure, household size, ethnicity; more sustainable communities and a more even spread of social housing across London.*

**4.64** In the interests of sustainability, social cohesion and equality, there is a need to ensure that sites across all of London continue to be exploited for affordable housing and that new developments and regeneration lead to more mixed and sustainable communities. Where this means investing in areas with higher land and housing values, it also means that a balance needs to be struck between the overall number of new homes that could be developed and a more even spread of affordable housing across London.

#### Means

**4.65** Planning guidance already encourages local planning authorities to support the development of mixed and balanced communities in order to avoid areas of concentrated deprivation.<sup>xii</sup> In addition, Office of the Deputy prime Minister has proposed lowering the threshold above which affordable housing can be sought, from 25 dwelling to 15 dwellings. This will facilitate a better mix of housing on smaller development sites. Practice guidance that outlines the principles of creating mixed communities will also be published by the end of 2004. And the Government is currently consulting on the reform of S.106 Agreements and will ensure that any reform supports the development of mixed communities.

**4.66** Additional means proposed to encourage the development of more mixed and sustainable communities are:

- using sustainability criteria for judging investment and lettings proposals;
- promoting choice and mobility among tenants;
- promoting estate renewal and best practice in designing and planning;
- developing good practice in managing mixed community sites and anti-social behaviour, and recommending its incorporation into planning guidance; and

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- reducing overcrowding.

### **4.67 Developing and using sustainability criteria for investment and lettings policies:**

Measures of sustainability could be developed and adopted, building on the Housing Corporation's sustainability toolkit.<sup>xiii</sup> These would be used in evaluating all housing investment proposals and lettings policies. Such measures could include existing tenure mix, dwelling size mix, child density, the proportion of residents who are or will be economically active, ethnic mix etc, as well as infrastructure. Housing associations are required to use the toolkit before applying for funding for a scheme. The London Housing Board proposes developing and promoting the use of this toolkit, and its development, possibly in combination with other sustainability criteria – like that developed by the Sustainable Communities Taskforce - in agreement with Office of the Deputy prime Minister.

### **4.68 Promoting mobility and choice based lettings.**

Choice based letting schemes increase mobility in the social sector by giving council tenants more say about where they want to live. They have a higher stake in their community as a result. Existing borough based and sub-regional schemes are at an early stage in their development, but has been estimated that 239,000 people in social accommodation in London would like to move home and 35,000 of these would consider a move outside London. If more people could be encouraged to move, this would free up properties for homeless and overcrowded households.<sup>xiv</sup>

**4.69** Historically, social lettings have taken place within boroughs, although there have been various schemes to help social tenants who wish to move across London or to other regions. However, the focus has now shifted to providing opportunities for people who want to move within their sub-region, across London, or out of London.

**4.70** Schemes such as Housing Organisation Mobility and Exchange Services (HOMES) and London Alliance West and North (LAWN) have provided assistance with moves to other regions. These schemes are to be transferred to a new Housing and Employment Mobility Services (HEMS) scheme that is being introduced in 2005 by Office of the Deputy prime Minister. And the Housing Corporation, London Housing Federation and Association of Local Government are developing protocols for sub-regional housing allocations and lettings in London.

**4.71** Against this background, there are opportunities to promote the further development of choice and mobility by:

- establishing a pan-London choice based letting scheme that covers all local authority and housing association properties in London;
- adopting common local authority and housing association housing registers;

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- boroughs identifying, through their housing needs surveys of existing social tenants and waiting list applicants, who is interested in moves across or outside of London;
- developing more effective links with the HEMS scheme for promoting moves outside of London; and
- considering the role of the private sector in choice based lettings and moving towards tenure-neutral schemes.

**4.72** In addition to increasing satisfaction for tenants and housing staff, contributing to more sustainable communities and reducing homelessness, accelerating the development of choice based lettings schemes could also contribute to reducing under-occupation and overcrowding. A pan-London scheme could also help to better match supply and demand, since the capacity for delivering new housing and the excess demand for housing are often in different sub regions within London. And a pan-London accessible housing register could be developed as part of such a scheme. The Board will develop detailed proposals on how a proposed pan-London choice based letting scheme would work.

**4.73 Supporting estate or area renewal** schemes involving large-scale refurbishment or replacement of stock can also support the development of more mixed and sustainable communities. Where there is the potential to increase the total number of homes over and above the existing numbers of social homes, new intermediate and private sector homes can contribute to a greater mix. Many such schemes are underway across London, generally as part of wider regeneration or neighbourhood renewal programmes.

**4.74 Promoting best practice guidance on designing, planning and building for mixed communities.** There are many examples of successful mixed communities and some best practice has already been developed – in terms of building design, area planning and management. Further work on articulating and spreading this best practice remains important though – particularly in addressing concerns held by some developers that mixed communities lead to a reduction in property values. The Board proposes pulling together by existing best practice guidance, and combining it with other best practice in the design, planning and building conducive to successful mixed communities. This best practice guidance will feed into the review of the London Plan.

**4.75 Developing good practice in managing mixed community sites and anti-social behaviour:** Not only do mixed communities need to be planned and designed well (see paragraph 4.74 above), they also need to be managed well. The Board proposes pulling together some best practice guidance on how to manage such communities so as avoid potential pitfalls and ensure they function well.