



HOUSING VISION

# Strategic Review of Affordable Housing Delivery in the West of England

**Client:** Bristol City Council and Bath and North East Somerset; North Somerset; & South Gloucestershire District Councils

## INTRODUCTION

This project was a strategic review of HomesWest, a partnership of RSLs selected by the four client local authorities to deliver affordable housing in their sub-region.

HomesWest was found to be performing well yet there was plenty of scope for higher targets to be achieved through strategic and operational success factors identified in the research. Detailed suggestions were made to improve performance and options developed for the future delivery of the HomesWest agenda.



## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In April 2008, Housing Vision was commissioned to undertake a strategic review of 'HomesWest', a partnership of Registered Social Landlords chosen by the four client local authorities to be the main means of delivering affordable housing in their sub-region.

The aims of the review were (a) to learn what steps should be taken to achieve an increase in the provision of affordable housing; and (b) to determine if the existing partnership, in its present or in a strengthened form, would be able to deliver more affordable homes, or whether an alternative sub-regional delivery vehicle might be required.

## PROJECT APPROACH

The review is a good example of how an understanding of relevant research and policy developments in other parts of the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe can help to inform the evaluation of policy and practice in a sub-regional or more local area.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis showed a continuing emphasis from government on the importance of sub-regional strategies and governance; a growing interest in the use of local delivery vehicles (LDVs); the importance of public-private partnerships in spreading risk between stakeholders; and the need for local and sub-regional partnerships to adopt a radical approach in order successfully to compete with other sub-regions or city-regions.

The comparative analysis showed also that

HomesWest was at a more advanced stage of development than other similar partnerships and delivery vehicles. HomesWest was found to be performing well, with overall output of affordable homes having increased significantly in the four years since the partnership was created in April 2004. There was plenty of scope, however, for higher targets to be achieved through a number of strategic and operational 'success factors' identified through the team's research on other sub-regional strategic and partnership approaches, and case studies of delivery partnerships in action, including LDVs.

Suggestions to improve the performance and achievements of HomesWest included the need for clearer and more structured leadership, greater clarity of decision-making and co-ordination, and the importance of recognising affordable housing as a major strategic priority for the sub-region. The achievement of affordable housing within sustainable communities requires housing to be treated equally with other strategically important policy areas such as education, training and employment.

Options were developed for the future delivery of the HomesWest agenda. These included (a) a strengthening of the present approach, by adopting the recommendations made for enhancing future performance; and (b) a strengthening of the HomesWest Consortium by including existing developer partners to provide an enhanced delivery vehicle. More radical proposals were also made, to provide the clients with a full range of options for future development.

## SO WHAT?

All Housing Vision output has to pass our simple “So what” test – “So what does this mean for the client or householder?” and “So what practical applications can this information be used for?”.

This test means that everybody is able to understand how the research and analysis has been conducted **and** the final results; how conclusions have been reached **and** how they can best be applied.

So, it’s as simple as that.

### So what for this project ...

The robustness and independence of this review gave confidence to the client that significant improvements could continue to be made in the delivery of affordable housing across both urban and rural areas.

## WHAT WE OFFER

Established in 2001, Housing Vision has completed over 100 projects for local authorities and housing associations; for the private sector and for sub-regional consortia, regional and national bodies including the CRC and HCA. We can offer the following core services:

### Dynamic Area Profiles

GIS-based profiles of user-defined areas incorporating demographic, housing, health, education and socio-economic data to provide 20 year projections of change.

### Site/Place-Based Housing Market Assessment

We have undertaken over 50 Assessments to determine the market potential of sites proposed for development, including affordable housing requirements.

### Strategic Housing Market Assessment

We have completed analyses of housing need and housing market dynamics at local authority and sub-regional levels throughout the country.

### Neighbourhood Sustainability Appraisals

We construct social, economic and housing profiles to determine the sustainability of local housing areas, then identify the interventions required to secure their future.

### Research and Intelligence

We undertake challenging and original research, for example a sheltered housing sustainability toolkit and analysis of the interrelationship between housing and health.

### Policy Review, Analysis and Revision

We specialise in reviewing and refining policies, for example, a project to evaluate the effectiveness of delivering affordable housing in the Bristol sub-region.

### Strategic Development

We work with officers and stakeholders to develop housing and related policies and strategies at sub-regional, local authority and neighbourhood levels.

### Testimonials

We work hard for and with our clients, and here are just a few of their views:

*“The report produced by HVC was very, very good. It was clear, could be read and understood by a wide range of people”.*

*“One of the most successful aspects was the working relationship and communication; the sense of joint working and good engagement”.*



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