

Briefing Paper

Northwest Housing Forum

March 2009

Introduction

The Northwest Housing Forum's Annual Conference was held in Bolton on 27th March 2009. The agenda included:

- Address by Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government and MP for Salford.
- Annual Report 2009 presented by Councillor George Davies and Rob Young, Chair and Vice Chair of the Forum.
- Government Response to Housing Market Conditions by Terrie Alafat, Director of Housing Delivery and Homelessness at Communities & Local Government
- Homes & Communities Agency in the Region by Deborah McLaughlin, Regional Director of the Homes & Communities Agency
- Delivering the Regional Housing Strategy by Peter Hart of 4Northwest and Peter Bailey of the Homes & Communities Agency
- Tools for delivery of Affordable Housing by Diane Walton of the Homes and Communities Agency and Sasha Deepwell of the Plus Dane Group
- Growth and Renewal by David Chilton of the Homes & Communities Agency, Steve Fyfe of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities and Sara Todd of Manchester City Council
- Demand by Bob Osborne of Salford City Council and Paul Beardmore of Rochdale Borough Council
- People by Paul Schofield of Government Office Northwest and Terrie Alafat of Communities & Local Government
- Regional Strategy for England's Northwest

Address by Hazel Blears

Hazel Blears wishes to use housing as a catalyst to bring together a wide range of agencies. She considers that the government is 'active' and 'brave' in that it is willing to give practical help to the people who need it most. Regarding housing the government has three main national priorities:

- Helping people to avoid repossession including through expanding the scope of free legal advice and help in managing debt.
- Helping first time buyers to get a foot on the housing ladder. There is currently a record level of interest in shared ownership.
- Ensuring that the construction industry is prepared for the economic upturn. There is a need to keep talent in the industry during the recession. The government has therefore brought forward spending on new affordable housing, the decent homes standard and major repairs.

Annual Report 2009

The Northwest Housing Forum has been operational since 1999. At that time low demand and severe problems of housing market collapse were the key priorities with the Forum being instrumental in lobbying for the Housing Market Renewal programme. Over recent years, however, there has been an increase in affordability issues in the region. The recession has led to rising repossessions, growing waiting lists, access to mortgage products becoming restricted and a slow down in new developments. There is also organisational change with the creation of the Homes & Communities Agency.

The Northwest Housing Forum is currently out to consultation on its future role and structure.

Government Response to Housing Market Conditions

The government's response to current housing market conditions is intended to address:

- Markets and increasing supply – to improve long term affordability and to respond to market changes
- Newly arising need – to prevent repossessions and homelessness.
- Modernising institutions – to improve deliverability and sustainability and to meet tenants' needs better. This includes progressing the review of the financing of council housing.
- Reforming rented housing – to address housing mobility, deprivation and the condition of the private sector stock.

The government considers that housing need continues to be high. It is expected that the number of households in England will increase by 252,000 (29%) between 2006 and 2031 and that the increase in Northwest England will be 27,000 (23%). The increase is expected to include mainly single person households. Despite the reduction in in-migration that has been caused by the recession these increases are still expected to take place. The government considers that falling house prices have increased affordability in Northwest England. However, there are fewer first time buyers in the market and lenders are requiring significantly larger deposits from borrowers. However, demand is still buoyant.

During the year ended December 2008 house completions were down by 13% in England and 21% in the Northwest. House starts showed an even greater reduction of 43% in England and 62% in the Northwest. This means that the sector is delivering fewer than the 223,000 houses a year that the government considers is required. The government therefore wishes to release more land to improve housing supply and to remove barriers to supply.

Between October and December 2008 1,200 households were accepted as homeless in Northwest England. This is a reduction of 40% since 2007 compared with a national reduction of 21%. Homelessness grant has been increased by £11.7million between 2008/09 and 2010/11. From December 2007 to December 2008 there has been a reduction of 35% in the number of people in temporary accommodation in the Northwest with eighteen councils already having achieved their targets.

There are currently 58,000 housing association homes and 36,000 local authority homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard in Northwest England.

There has been an increase in repossessions in the Northwest of 23%. The increase has been especially large in Manchester (41%), Salford (38%) and Oldham (35%). However, only 4% of homeless acceptances result from repossessions.

The government has brought forward £550million of the National Affordable Housing Programme, £250million for the Decent Homes Standard and £175million of the Major Repairs Allowance to stimulate the construction industry. There is also an additional £400million for Homebuy Direct and £175million for debt advice. The government considers that in 85% of cases repossession can be prevented through appropriate action in the courts.

The Homes and Communities Agency had £200million available for unsold stock and has already spent £198million on acquiring new dwellings.

The government's short term objectives focus on providing more affordable housing and empowering tenants. In the medium to long term they favour fundamental housing reform including better design and climate change.

Housing reform will address:

- The National Tenant Voice
- Review of Council Housing Finance – the government now considers that changes should only be made where necessary and that any changes are likely to be made in 2010.
- Private Rented sector review
- Housing Benefit review
- Overcrowding and worklessness
- Cross domain regulation (extending the regulatory role of the Tenant Services Authority to local authorities)

Homes and Communities Agency in the Region

The Homes and Communities Agency has been operational for 100 days. It arrived as a new organisation with increased flexibility and new approaches to business processes and business products. The Agency intends to work through partnerships and to be the government's 'Voice of Delivery'. Expectations, challenges and opportunities are all significant.

The Homes and Communities Agency's main initiative is the 'single conversation'. The focus of the 'single conversation' is on local authorities but it is intended to involve all agencies that operate in a locality.

The vision of the Agency is to be a national agency that works locally to create opportunity:

- For people to live in homes they can afford in places they want to live
- For local authorities and communities to deliver the ambition they have for their own areas

In Northwest England, the Homes and Communities Agency plans to deliver the following during their first year:

- Establish the Homes and Communities Agency in the region
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- Build strong relationships with key stakeholders
- Deliver on affordable housing, renewal and growth programmes
- Develop effective and innovative responses to the downturn
- Review programmes and activity to strengthen the focus on 'place'.

It is intended to launch the Business Plan in May 2009. It will be:

- Ambitious and Pro-active
- Prioritised with a spatial focus
- Gain maximum impact from the resources available
- Create opportunity and build capacity
- Based on partnership working with the Regional Housing Board and the Leaders' Forum
- Supportive of the Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy and Regional Strategy

A key challenge is how to respond to the market downturn. It is believed that the market downturn is set to continue, that house prices will continue to fall and that there will continue to be limited new housing starts. Ongoing liquidity problems for the major banks and difficulties in accessing finance are anticipated. Rents in the private sector are expected to increase. The demand for social housing is expected to increase. These factors are causing ongoing financial restructuring in the housing and regeneration sector.

The market downturn has caused a number of development sites to stall or shut down and this is a particular problem in Northwest England. Few sites are coming forward for planning. The number of vacant properties is increasing, especially in city centre fringes and medium sized towns. The previous buy-to-let market has stagnated, some developers have become insolvent, banks are raising issues with the viability of schemes and there has been a rise in re-possession of owner-occupied and private rented housing. The private rented sector is still considered to have some poor conditions and bad practices.

The Homes and Communities Agency has responded to the market downturn by:

- Bringing forward £1.2billion of investment nationally for housing and regeneration
- Introducing the 'Clearing House Scheme', 'Homebuy Direct' and 'Mortgage Rescue'
- Holding practical meetings with banks, developers, local authorities and housing associations
- Working with the Northwest Development Agency on priority regeneration projects
- Introducing tailored programmes for individual housing associations
- Playing a full role in the joint Economic Commission – establishing a wide range of actions and dealing with stalled and incomplete sites. These actions are designed to address demand, the impact on people (repossessions and jobs), investment in the existing stock and supply.

Local Authorities have been asked to identify the key development sites that have stalled as part of a major site review. They have identified 447 sites representing 81,835 properties or three years' supply. Nearly 60% of these are apartments. 31 sites have been completed but they contain 2,250 unsold homes. There are 32 stalled sites potentially containing 3,600 homes. There are 166 sites with planning permission where building has not started potentially including 21,000 homes.

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The principal blockages were found to be scheme viability (268 sites), access to mortgages (53 sites) and infrastructure and remediation (35 sites). Schemes that now lack viability need recalibration of master plans, new funding models and/or changes of planned use – either of housing type or tenure.

The Homes and Communities Agency's approach is to prioritise sites based on the Regional Spatial Strategy, Housing Market Renewal plans, deliverability, existing investment and potential. They are attempting to accelerate option appraisal activity with local authorities and their delivery partners on twenty prioritised sites of immediate importance and 25 longer term sites. They have established a dialogue with the major lenders in Northwest England to strengthen the viability of schemes. They have met with developers – who they describe as 'not very cheerful'. They are attempting to bring in institutional investors. They are attempting to bring stock back into use as private rented housing. Yields are now about 8%.

Future regional issues appear to be:

- Falling prices
- Continued restricted access to mortgages
- Likely reduction in home ownership levels.
- Increased private renting.
- Pressure on social housing.
- Developer assumptions and funding models need fundamental review

However:

- Underlying household growth remains strong
- Aspirations for tenure choice, space and quality will remain high.
- Aligned regeneration and growth continues to be important.
- Varied access routes to housing choices continues to be important
- The role of the Homes and Communities Agency is to work with partners to meet aspirations

The Homes and Communities Agency considers that they bring opportunities for genuinely new approaches to delivering housing and regeneration. Their immediate priority is to ensure that they maintain delivery and capacity during the downturn. They consider that their strategies were right in the good times and are essential now. The agency is looking to build on delivery of these through:

- Further strengthening partnerships
- Focused, prioritised investment
- Building on excellent relationships with local and national government

The Agency is moving to a 'place focused approach to housing and regeneration.

Delivering the Regional Housing Strategy

The Regional Housing Strategy Action Plan has been developed in accordance with the three integrated objectives set out in the Regional Housing Strategy 2009:

- Achieving the right quality of housing
- Continuing to raise the quality of the existing housing stock
- Connecting people to the improved housing offer.

The Regional Housing Group, in securing the implementation of the Regional Housing Strategy is looking to:

- Maintain an overview of the Regional Housing Strategy – there are key roles for implementation and delivery
- Encourage the alignment of local, sub-regional and regional strategies to secure the delivery of services and investment
- Ensure that the Regional Housing Strategy provides a clear platform for the integration of housing into the emerging Regional Strategy
- Develop understanding and evidence to support a robust case for the region through the next Comprehensive Spending Review and for strategy improvement.

It is intended to focus on a limited number of key actions to ensure the effective delivery of the Regional Housing Strategy 2009, including monitoring progress and measuring impacts in the following areas:

- Building Capacity, Sharing Skills, Experience and Good Practice.
- Measuring Impact and Performance.
- Developing the Evidence Base.
- Implementation of the Strategy.

It is considered that together these provide a framework for the development of strategic housing policy. The Homes and Communities Agency will look to ensure the efficient and effective use of resources as the Regional Strategy emerges and underpins the roll out of the Agency's single conversation business model across Northwest England.

The Agency intends to build capacity and share skills, experience and good practice through:

- Identifying and promoting good practice case studies through the Housing Northwest website to support the delivery of the Regional Housing Strategy
- Establishing Housing Northwest with a clear leadership role to promote good practice, training and skills through networks, events and seminars.
- Supporting development of sub-regional housing capacity.

The Agency intends to measure impact and performance through:

- Maintaining a local authority monitoring framework based around a set of core outputs and outcomes.
- Development of Strategic Housing Indicators (SHIs) Implementation Analysis report.
- Homes and Communities Agency monitoring reports.

The Homes and Communities Agency intends to develop an agreed research programme to support the implementation of the revised regional housing strategy and the development of the evidence base for the regional strategy. They also intend to undertake a regular housing market review including developing a more in depth awareness of the impact of particular sectors in localities. They intend to undertake futures thinking and scenario planning. They will carry out an affordability assessment and develop regional and housing market area targets. The Northwest England needs assessment model will be updated and maintained to support the development of a strategic framework for housing support services.

The implementation of the strategy will include:

- Development of a regional loan scheme
- Development of a strategic framework for housing support services and its implementation
- Implementation of a regional homelessness strategy and delivery plan
- Specific actions identified in the 2009 regional housing strategy and the JEC housing group, including:
 - Worklessness and allocations
 - Access to housing
 - Private rented sector
 - Optimising the use of the existing stock – including under occupancy and empty homes
 - Rural housing
 - Fuel poverty and energy efficiency
 - Affordable housing

Sub-regional housing strategies are being developed as a means of pooling resources to lobby for funding and carry out research. In Northwest England progress with sub-regional strategies varies with Cheshire considered to be the most advanced. In contrast, limited progress appears to have been made in Cumbria where Cumbria Vision appears to be reluctant to engage effectively with the housing agenda. However, Allerdale District Council, Barrow Borough Council and Copeland Borough Council have worked together effectively to secure Housing Market Renewal funding. It is expected that the Homes and Communities Agency will produce guidelines on sub-regional housing strategies.

Tools for delivery of Affordable Housing

The Homes and Communities Agency plans to use existing tools and new tools and to think about what additional tools may be needed.

Existing tools include:

- Continuous market engagement
- Developer stock - £200million has been made available for the acquisition of stock from developers
- Clearing house – working with developers
- Switches from sale to rent – intermediate and social housing. In Northwest England this has been applied to about 900 units of which half are intermediate housing and half are social housing.
- Flexed grant efficiencies – although grant rates have been increased as the market is no longer competitive. £51million has been invested directly in housing in Northwest England through signed arrangements with the Homes and Communities Agency.
- Tailored conversations with partners
- Homebuy Direct
- Mortgage Rescue – This includes shared equity schemes where the Homes and Communities Agency purchases a house and rents it back to the former owner occupier.

There are nineteen development partners of whom four are arms length management organisations, six are private developers and nine are housing associations. The Homes and Communities Agency wants continued investment in return for their financial support.

Recent additions to the tools of the agency include:

- Grant for land purchase – This is to take advantage of falling land values. The plans for land to be purchased at competitive prices for building to start in 2011.
- Grant as investment – The Homes and Communities Agency wishes to take a share of the ‘overage’ where land values increase after grant is put in.
- Homes and Communities Agency acquisition of land
- Building out whole sites as an alternative to sites being developed partly by a housing association and partly by a private developer.

New tools may also be needed to keep development moving. The JEC sub-group has identified priority sites. Key issues that have been identified include: infrastructure, access to mortgages and equity.

Issues to think about include:

- Mutual starting points – strategic outcomes
- Value for Money
- Sufficiency of information to make a case or decision
- Resources including time

The Housing Corporation spent money on acquiring properties for demolition with the objective of buying up low demand obsolete homes and replacing them. An example is Castlefields that was a project to regenerate a large deck access estate in Runcorn including introducing mixed tenure and mixed income. This was part of a wider scheme involving Halton Borough Council, Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council and the Northwest Development Agency.

The Homes and Communities Agency is considering applications with increased speed following the ending of the system of bidding rounds.

Wellington Place is a Plus Dane Group scheme involving refurbishment of a school and new build. It was originally intended that the scheme would include open market sales but this has not been possible due to the recession. There was therefore a change and homes have been offered on the basis of ‘rent to homebuy’ and 24 people have taken advantage of the offer.

Open market Homebuy has been popular in Northwest England with allocations being taken up.

Sweden and the Netherlands are sometimes cited as examples of good practice in social housing. In these countries homes are let at market rents with subsidy being paid to individuals who cannot afford market rents. Subsidy is not paid to people who rent high quality properties. These are public led models where the public sector takes the lead and takes a broad and strategic view. Public sector schemes often address issues including: land use, transportation, building materials, energy, water and sewerage and waste.

The 'old model' of development was led by the private sector. The private developer provided 60% to 70% of homes as a three year investment with the housing association providing 30% of homes (20% social rented and 10% shared ownership) as a thirty year investment. The Homes and Communities Agency provided grant to the Housing Association that was retained in the property as Social Housing Grant. The local authority would often provide land and would seek a short term (three year) return.

The 'new model' of development could be publicly led. 30% of homes would be provided by the Homes and Communities Agency, Housing Associations and the private sector. Of these, 10% would be for social rent (in the short term) moving to shared equity and ownership, 10% shared ownership and 10% market rent. Private developers would provide 40% of homes of which 30% would be for sale and 10% would be shared equity. This would represent a reduction in private sector investment. Housing Associations would provide 30% of homes (half funded by the Homes and Communities Agency and half by private finance) of which 20% would be for social rent and 10% for intermediate rent. There would be a move away from three year returns and the local authority could take equity. This approach is already being piloted by Rochdale Borough Council.

The roles of the parties would be as follows:

- Public Sector – Strategic lead including planning, infrastructure, waste, transport, land, economy, green space and partnerships.
- Homes and Communities Agency – Investment including grant and equity and tools for delivery; and Standards including design, affordability and materials.
- Housing Associations – Co-ordination including management and procurement; Investment including private finance and revenue; and Development and Neighbourhood management.
- Private Developers – Development and investment or contracting.

Issues to address include:

- Opportunities to add value.
- Emphasis on quality and sustainability.
- Employment and enterprise.
- Neighbourhood management.
- Real flexibility of tenure and income.
- Inclusivity and resident focus
- Real partnerships for long term gain
- New role for housing associations as co-ordinators

Growth and Renewal

Despite the current housing market conditions, the Northwest region remains committed to growth and renewal in the housing market to meet the affordable housing requirements of the region and to ensure that housing is available to match the long term aspirations for economic growth. There is a need to examine the current barriers to growth and renewal and to consider what can be done in the short medium and long term to remove these barriers and move forward.

Demand

Local authorities and their partners are considering what they can do to help to meet the growing demand in the region. They are looking at a range of products, including mortgages, to help to meet demand in their areas.

People

It is considered that timely advice and support is crucial if people are to be helped to remain in their homes. The scale of support needed has grown over the past year and is set to increase further.

Regional Strategy for England's Northwest

The Northwest Regional Development Agency has issued a 'Principles and Issues Paper' for consultation. It was published in February 2009 and consultation is open until 30th April 2009. The paper is not, however, a Regional Development Agency paper as it has been produced in partnership with all stakeholders in Northwest England. It is possible to respond to the consultation online at www.nwregionalstrategy.com.

The Northwest Regional Strategy 2010 is a single regional strategy that integrates strategies that existed previously:

- It is the joint responsibility of the Northwest Regional Development Agency and For Northwest (the Leaders' Forum).
- It will ultimately replace the Regional Employment Strategy (RES), Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and Regional Housing Strategy (RHS).
- Legislation and policy guidance is expected throughout.

However, some consider that the timescale for preparation of the Regional Strategy 2010 is too tight to allow any significant changes to be made to the strategies that are already in place.

During 2008 evidence has been gathered to inform the Regional Strategy 2010. The issues paper was issued in February 2009 and is out to consultation until April 2009. Strategies will be further developed during 2009 and the Strategy produced in 2010. Running in parallel with this there is a sustainability appraisal.

The Principles and Issues paper considers assumptions, strategy development, goals, the unique offer of Northwest England and challenges and identifies the issues that arise from these. It is supported by evidence including the State of the Rural Northwest 2008 report and the 'State of the Region' report of the Regional Intelligence Unit.

The introduction to the Principles and Issues Paper states that:

“The Northwest Region has made significant progress in the last twenty years. Skills levels have risen and overall prosperity has increased. But important challenges remain such as ill health, worklessness, productivity, and social inclusion. On environmental sustainability we have made limited progress relative to the rest of the UK or some of our global competitors. Regeneration in our city centres has been impressive, but we still have areas of considerable deprivation. As part of the world economy the region has the opportunity of rapidly emerging markets in Brazil, Russia, India and China. It also faces the global challenges of ever scarcer natural resources including food and energy security, improving sustainable consumption and production patterns, and adapting to climate change.

“The UK and Northwest economies are in recession. This is affecting the different parts of the region in varying ways. Working with national Government, the region has put in place immediate actions to enable businesses, communities and individuals to manage the effects of an economic downturn. But it is also important to position the region for future sustainable recovery and long term resilience and success. It is therefore the right time to think about the future drivers of the regional economy.

“There will be many lessons we will need to learn from this recession, as well as dealing with the aftermath of it. We will need to think carefully about the nature of future growth. Big questions include the importance of the retail sector and the high street in the future, if financial services will drive growth again, a possible rapid shift in consumption patterns, and identifying the opportunities arising from the recession. We do know that the future is very uncertain, with the likelihood of rapid technological and social changes, which themselves could drive growth.

“We also know that there will be increasing, and sometimes competing, land-use pressures on the countryside, urban fringe, open spaces and brownfield land. All will be needed to deliver economic growth, infrastructure, housing, energy, adaptation to increased flood risk and climate change, recreation, less intensive farming, food and a valued landscape. The amount of land available could also be reducing due to climate change. Indeed climate change may be the single most important issue facing the region, country and world at this time, so developing a low carbon economy will therefore be essential to delivering sustainable growth and remaining competitive.

“All these issues mean that we must ask ourselves fundamental questions about how our economy and society work. We will need to be radical in considering how we can integrate environmental, economic and social issues to achieve economic prosperity without unsustainable use of resources. We will need to address what sustainable models of business look like post recession, where the jobs of the future will come from and any fundamental long term changes in the world economy. For example, future models of growth may rely less on consumerism and credit and be based on more efficient use of natural resources.

“Despite being in a global economy some of these pressures on resources could lead to increasing "localism" with stronger clustering of activities, increased home working and increased focus on local communities. We need to understand how we can develop alternative models and measures of growth that reflect the importance of quality of life, culture and quality of experiences. All of these are potential long term trends and this paper suggests a number of specific assumptions about how they might affect the region over the next 20 years.

The assumptions that have been made include:

- Northwest England is becoming increasingly integrated economically. The Development Agency considers that this is good.
- It is imperative to compete on quality and differentiate the economic offer of rural Northwest England.
- Innovation is required to address climate change and carbon reduction targets.
- Volatility in the price and supply of gas, oil and other natural resources will continue with increased prices in the long term likely.
- Food and commodity prices are expected to fluctuate.
- People will still need to commute and travel for work and leisure.
- Cities and other urban centres will continue to be the main focus for living, economic activity and growth.
- There will be an ageing population and lower than recent levels of immigration.

The goal of the Development Agency is sustainable economic growth. This means economic growth that can be sustained and is within environmental limits, but also enhances the environment and social welfare and avoids greater extremes in future economic cycles. This includes addressing: Environment, Employment, Community, Health, Housing, Connectivity, Vibrancy, Low Carbon, Education, Productivity and Equity.

The Strategy will be a framework for sustainable economic growth of the Northwest rather than a detailed plan for each place. It is intended to be a vision of long-term success delivered through competitiveness and differentiation. The intention is to develop a unique offer as a place to live, work and succeed, based on complementary assets and the strengths of Northwest England.

The potential elements of a unique Northwest England offer are considered to be:

- The region has 'critical mass' with diverse culture, sport, image and environment.
- The workforce is relatively high skilled and low cost with great connectivity.
- The region has significant environmental assets and employment land.
- Clean energy generation and security.
- Advanced engineering and materials.
- Opportunities to develop biomedical, digital and creative businesses.
- Facilities for innovation, science, research and universities.
- International ports and airports.

The final point may ring hollow in Cumbria where efforts to develop Carlisle airport have been ongoing for many years but have failed, so far, to come to fruition; and where the ports of Barrow, Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport have received significant investment during recent years but cannot seriously be described as international ports.

The challenges that have been identified for rural Northwest England include:

- Ill Health and economic and social impacts.
- Relatively poor housing stock, housing choice and supply of new build.
- Deprivation, inequality and poor social cohesion.
- External perceptions and low expectations and aspirations.
- Attraction and retention of people.
- Low education and skills profiles.
- Low employment rates.
- Low enterprise levels.
- Challenges to competitiveness.
- Transport – congestion and public transport cold spots.
- High levels of energy use and poor utility infrastructure.
- Challenge to integrate urban areas with rural hinterlands (some people in rural areas feel that the use of expressions such as ‘hinterlands’ imply a dependence of rural areas on urban areas that does not reflect reality).
- Volume and management of waste (Although recycling services in some rural areas, such as Eden, are very poor. The provision of doorstep collection of recyclables and local recycling centres could improve recycling rates).
- Climate change and flooding.
- Threats to and management of environmental, cultural and historic assets.

The Development Agency also considers that rural Northwest England is behind other regions of England in the development of skills and is certainly behind most regions of Europe.

The issues that are identified in the consultation paper are:

- Low Carbon Economy, Resource Use and Water
- Urban Growth
- Connectivity
- Places and Communities
- Natural Environment and Rural Areas
- Skills and Talent
- Health and Worklessness
- Innovation
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Nature of Growth and role of the Public Sector

The consultation paper asks the following questions:

- Do you believe that things have fundamentally changed as a result of this recession and that issues of climate change, low carbon economy, competing land use pressures and the nature of future growth are important to consider?
- Do you agree with the assumptions above? If not, what alternative assumptions would you make? Are there any assumptions missing?
- Do you agree that the focus of this strategy should be on sustainable economic growth and contribute to sustainable development?
- In the delivery of this, do you agree with the elements outlined above? Are there elements missing? How would you prioritise them?
- How do you believe these aims and goals should best be measured?
- Do you agree that these elements adequately summarise the Northwest’s unique offer in a world economy? Are there any current or future potential elements missing?

- Do you disagree with any of these statements?
- Do you believe these elements will still be unique about the Northwest in twenty years' time?
- Do you agree with the challenges outlined above for the Northwest over the coming twenty years? Are there any missing?
- Do you agree that the list of major issues for the region to address via the Regional Strategy are correct and will lead to sustainable and equitable economic, social and environmental wellbeing? Are there any issues you would remove? Are there any issues missing from your perspective? How would you prioritise these issues?
- Do you agree with the assertions made in these issues? Have you got any specific comments on the issues raised or the inter-relationships between them?

Adrian Waite
March 2009