



6

HARNESSING THE BENEFITS OF POPULATION GROWTH AND MANAGING THE IMPLICATIONS OF POPULATION CHANGE

6.0.1 This Section of the Draft RSS takes forward the *'Just Connect!'* aim of harnessing the benefits of population growth and managing the implications of population change by setting out an approach to deliver two important ingredients of sustainable communities outlined in Section 1; plentiful and affordable housing and good quality public services and community infrastructure.

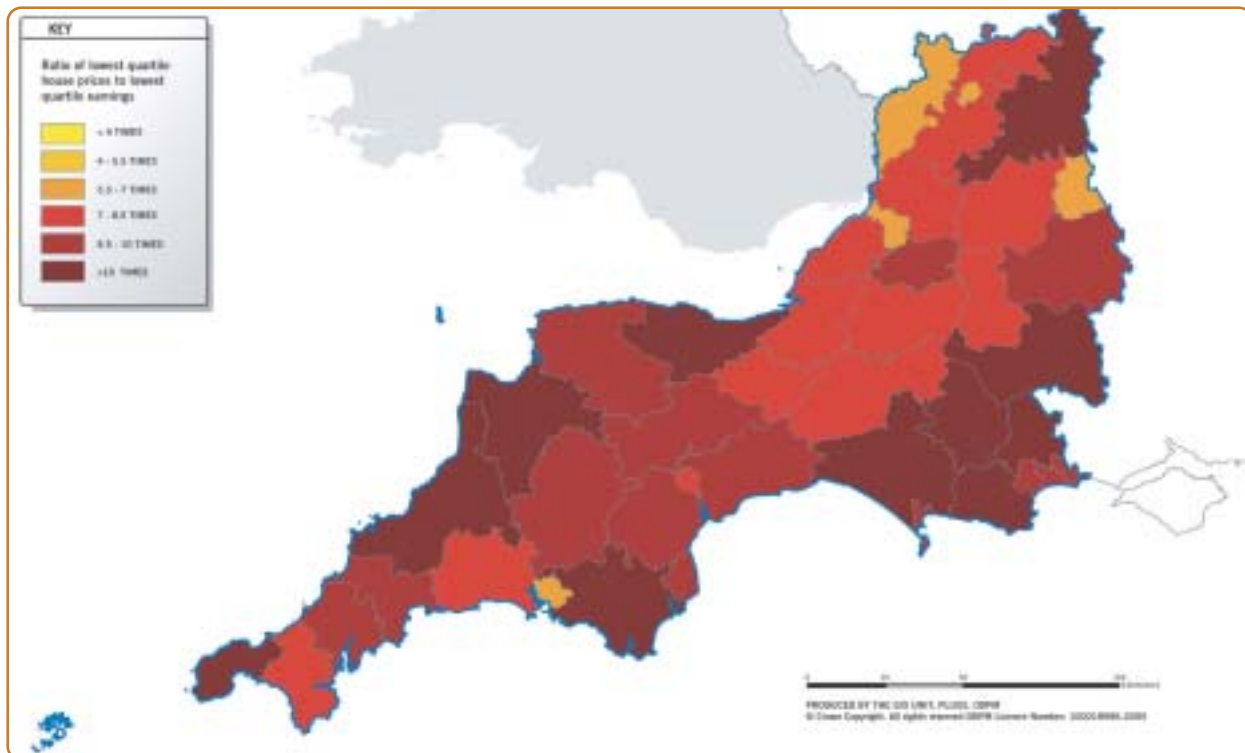
It recognises the importance of those facilities for communities, and the knock-on effects on the health of individuals, particularly as a result of large-scale changes to local neighbourhoods.

6.1 Providing a Plentiful and Affordable Housing Supply

The Scale of Provision

6.1.1 The analysis outlined in Section 2 has established that the region's population is set to grow. This together with increasing household formation and acute affordability problems across the region, worsened in some places by high second home ownership, will increase demand for housing beyond the 20,000 dwellings per year being delivered. Regional housing stock stands at about 2.4 million dwellings and technical forecasts predict that around 25,000 new dwellings a year will be needed to keep pace with estimated demand. As set out in section 4.5, the strategy makes provision for about 23,000 dwellings per year, based largely on the outcomes of JSA studies and the advice of the Strategic Planning Authorities, taking account of their assessment of environmental and infrastructure limitations on development. The Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) is central to the development of housing policy and delivery of housing across the region. Its main aims are to improve the balance of housing markets, achieve good quality homes, and support sustainable communities. Map 6.1 shows average house prices as a multiple of average household earnings for Districts in the South West.

Map 6.1 House Price to Income Ratio





6.1.4 The key challenges in ensuring a plentiful and affordable supply are:

- Delivering an adequate choice and mix of housing types of all tenures at the most sustainable locations (as set out in the Spatial Strategy Development Policies A to C and Policy H1) to meet the preferences of the market and the ability of people to pay
- Ensuring that development values can be used effectively to ensure that sufficient numbers of affordable homes can be delivered to supplement those built largely through direct public subsidy

6.1.5 Authorities should pursue the use of exceptions sites in rural areas as a delivery mechanism. Site thresholds, above which affordable housing is a requirement, should be reduced to levels below those recommended by Government guidance where possible. These thresholds are likely to vary between 'urban' and 'rural' areas. Rural areas may require thresholds to be set at a lower level where the need is for a higher number of affordable houses relative to market houses on any given site. Local authorities, working

within Housing Market Areas (HMAs), should also co-ordinate policy and action on the levels of affordable housing sought across their boundaries. This should include, for example, consideration of joint nomination rights for neighbouring authorities where affordable housing in a town is intended in part to meet need from surrounding rural areas in another district.

6.1.6 Careful attention needs to be given to the housing affordability problem in rural areas. Experience has shown that, simply building higher levels of market housing often attracts more commuters, second home owners or retired people from outside the region. There is a need for more creative solutions to the problem in these places. In some parts of the region, for example in National Parks and possibly certain Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty where there is a high demand for second homes, there may be a particular need for local authorities to introduce measures such as permanent restrictions on the re-sale of new dwellings that help to secure a more sustainable balance in rural settlements between housing and locally

provided employment. The construction of dwellings purpose-built for second home ownership, with certain restrictions on occupation, is an increasing phenomenon. This affects locations of high environmental quality in the region in both coastal and inland locations, for example Cotswold Water Park. Dwellings of this type may affect Development Policy C, and further work by Local Planning Authorities is required to investigate the implications for levels of housing proposed in the strategy.

6.1.7 In parts of the region, some communities have developed in ways that, owing to historic or more recently emerging functions, may have resulted in particular population or social characteristics. Examples include some seaside towns which are characterised by a large elderly population and with low levels of economically active residents, or places that are dominated by a single function or one employer. Other examples include settlements dominated by large military establishments such as Tidworth in Wiltshire, where the population can fluctuate in the short term due to the impact of national overseas defence commitments or in the longer term due to the effect of defence reviews and where significant development, such as that arising from 'Project Allenby' is planned for the future. The national priority for promoting sustainable, mixed communities is at the heart of the Draft RSS, and within the broad spatial development priorities of this Draft RSS, particularly Development Policies B and C, local authorities are encouraged to make appropriate provision in their LDDs.

6.1.8 Good practice on the use of S106 mechanisms should be shared. Local authorities will need to liaise with neighbouring authorities, affordable housing providers and the development industry and be realistic in their expectations of affordable housing delivery through S106, recognising the danger of stifling overall housing growth through over-ambitious requirements. LDD policies should routinely require more than 30% of housing to be affordable¹⁹ leading to at least 7,500 affordable dwellings annually, with authorities specifying rates rising to 60% or higher in areas of greatest need, where this can be demonstrated to be deliverable over a sustained period. This is a significant step change in affordable housing provision over the plan period.

¹⁹ Defined in the Glossary.

Securing appropriate and realistic proportions of affordable housing by using planning obligations sometimes places pressure on local areas to increase build-rates of overall housing above that for 'local needs'. This route may not be appropriate in some rural locations where the proposed amount of development is 'out-of-step' with Development Policy C in Section 3. The RPB and RHB will work together with other key regional stakeholders to seek new ways of delivering affordable housing in areas outside of the named settlements without significantly increasing the overall numbers of housing proposed.

6.1.9 LDDs should include policies which reflect the outcome of joint working and

- Specify proportions of affordable housing
- Identify an appropriate division of affordable housing between housing for rent and intermediate tenures (including forms of shared ownership)
- Help to secure and maintain an appropriate supply of affordable housing in the wider context of maintaining an overall five year housing land supply
- Provide a policy framework which helps delivery of affordable housing
- Provide an indication of housing types and sizes required annually, reflecting the mix of households identified through the local housing market area assessment

H1 Affordable Housing

Within the 23,060 dwellings per annum required for the region, at least 7,500 affordable homes per annum will be provided in the period to 2026. Provision will be made for at least 30% of all housing development annually across each local authority area and Housing Market Area to be affordable, with authorities specifying rates up to 60% or higher in areas of greatest need.

Development Densities

6.1.10 The principles of increasing densities for housing development is rooted in the need for more sustainable use of land, set out in Development Policy H in Section 3. Less than 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) is considered to be inefficient use of land and makes provision of sustainable transport more difficult. Between 30 and 50 dph net represents a more sustainable density. Much higher densities than this should be possible at various places in the region, particularly in the SSCTs where major development and redevelopment within existing urban areas is proposed, often as mixed-use schemes. Also where urban extensions are proposed, authorities should seek to include innovative and high density urban forms to ensure that the overall density of the extension does not fall below 50 dph (Development Policy F in Section 3). Good quality design, green infrastructure and the careful planning of essential services and infrastructure will ensure the higher densities proposed result in good quality living environments. Local authorities will need to regularly monitor factors relating to the size, mix and quality of housing such as indicators of habitable rooms per hectare.

H2 Housing Densities

Housing developments should exceed 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) in all parts of the region and averages across housing market areas will be in excess of 40 dph over the plan period. Density of development of housing at the SSCTs should be at least 50 dph and considerably higher in well-planned mixed-use developments within the existing urban area. Planned urban extensions of SSCTs and adjacent new communities should achieve 50 dph or more overall. Individual LDDs will reflect this target with appropriate variations reflecting local conditions and will outline measures to ensure regular monitoring of delivery.

Making Better Use of Existing and Future Housing Stock

6.1.11 The RHS in encouraging local authorities and Registered Social Landlords to make efficient use of existing housing stock. This is done by reducing the number of unfit, vacant and unsatisfactory dwellings, using a number of mechanisms available including use of a number of empty homes initiatives and other tools to tackle under-occupation. Given the ageing of the population of the South West, it is very important that individual authorities, working within HMAs, are clear about the implications of these demographic trends on the housing stock of their area in line with Policy SI2 in Section 10. There is a need for new development in particular to be in tune with the needs of more elderly occupants and LDDs should identify a proportion of new homes across their area that will reflect the Lifetime Homes standard.

Provision for Gypsies and Travellers: Transitional Arrangements

6.1.12 Under the provisions in the Housing Act 2004, local authorities are required to consult with, and consider, the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in their Local Housing Needs Assessment process and outline in their housing strategies how any identified need will be met.

6.1.13 Circular 01/2006 *'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites'* (February 2006) requires Local Planning Authorities to establish criteria for the location of Gypsy and Traveller sites in their core strategies as a guide to the specific allocation of sites in the relevant Development Plan Document. The circular requires local authorities to assess Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs as part of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) process. When completed, this process will inform the Draft RSS in terms of an overall assessment of need. At the time of publication of the Draft RSS, the RPB was of the view that there was not sufficiently robust information on which to establish district-level pitch numbers. As such, in line with the circular, it is necessary to set out transitional arrangements that are appropriate to the regional context before setting in train a single-issue early review of the Draft RSS to fully implement the Government's requirements.

6.1.14 For the South West, this regional context can be summarised as follows:

- The extent of existing provision in the region is approximately 550 pitches²⁰
- The following parts of the region have relatively high numbers of unauthorised sites²¹: South Gloucestershire, City of Bristol and North Somerset Unitary Authority areas, and parts of Devon, Gloucestershire and Dorset counties
- An interim estimate of the additional pitch requirements at regional level is about 1,100 pitches²² which will be used to monitor delivery in LDDs

6.1.15 Regarding pitch requirements, the indicative regional figure set out above will serve as a monitoring basis until local authorities have completed their needs assessments and are able to provide a more comprehensive position for site requirements. It is anticipated that all local authorities in the region will have completed their GTAAs in 2007, and it is hoped a single issue review of the Draft RSS can be completed in step with this.

GT1 Assessment of Need for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Requirements

Local authorities should work together to carry out detailed assessments of need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation requirements. This should include consultation with Gypsies and Travellers, both housed and travelling. Working with the RPB and RHB, local authorities will provide for about 1,100 additional pitches for gypsies and travellers and identify need for residential pitches, park homes and transit pitches for inclusion in their DPDs, and identify realistically deliverable sites to meet the need.

6.2 Providing Essential Services and Community Facilities

6.2.1 The region will continue to grow and in doing so development must cater for the needs of all groups, taking into account age, gender, faith, sexuality, ethnicity and ability. This principle applies to all forms of service provision but especially critical services such as health (including healthcare delivery, locations for healthcare facilities, and health enhancement), education, community and cultural facilities including places of worship and cemeteries, and public transport services to meet unified needs. It is particularly important to ensure the provision of these services relates to the future patterns of housing provision arising as a result of the Draft RSS.

Comprehensive and Co-ordinated Provision of Community Infrastructure and Services

6.2.2 People in the South West live in a variety of communities, some of which are relatively isolated from population centres and places where services are found. Increasing concentration of service provision has been a trend of the last 20 to 30 years with many villages losing essential public and private services. The re-introduction of these lost services in many communities is not a real possibility and as Section 5 shows, for many people accessibility is a growing problem. This is a particular issue in the remoter parts of the peninsula but is common to all rural areas, and can even affect people in some suburban locations. Development Policies B and C set out proposals which should support the retention of services at key local service and transport hubs and allow their future development in many other settlements in the region.

6.2.3 The perception of the quality of health and education services in an area is becoming one of the most important determinants of where people wish to live. The Draft RSS, in response to large-scale population increases is aiming to achieve a growth in population of the cities and towns of the region. To be successful, this will require a positive attitude to urban living by residents, which in part will reflect the quality of public services on offer in these places. In some cases these services are currently not performing well when measured against

²⁰ Based on ODPM Caravan Count data as at January 2005 for existing Local Authority site provision.

²¹ Based on the average number of unauthorised encampments per Strategic Planning Authority (between 2003 and 2005).

²² Based on First Detailed Proposals (draft Needs Assessments) from Dorset, Bournemouth, Poole and Somerset; First Detailed Proposals (using Caravan Count data) from Devon, Gloucestershire, Plymouth, Swindon and Wiltshire; and Caravan Count Data (January 2005) for Strategic Planning Authorities who did not submit First Detailed Proposals.

national standards or against the performance of other parts of the South West. Where significant development is proposed to happen as a result of this Draft RSS, particularly the large-scale development proposed at or adjacent to some of the larger cities and towns, it is imperative that the full range of public services, including those for health, education, sport, leisure and culture as well as public transport is included as part of the master planning approach set out in Development Policy F. The mixed-use of community facilities should be encouraged to achieve economies of scale and improved accessibility.

6.2.4 Community Strategies, together with local transport and economic strategies, will all play a vital role at the local level in integrating development and other initiatives in ensuring the economic, environmental and social success of the Spatial Strategy. LDDs should be closely integrated with Community Strategies.

CS1 Provision of Community Services

Local authorities should work with their Local Strategic Partnerships and other relevant organisations to provide up-to-date assessments of need for a full range of community facilities and infrastructure suitable for all sections of the community. LDDs should ensure that timely and sufficient provision is planned in parallel with housing and other development. Service providers need to ensure that all provision meets uniformly high standards to minimise the number of users who would wish to choose any other than the closest provider.

Health

6.2.5 As outlined in Section 1, many of the factors affecting the health of the population are outside the scope of the NHS, but can be profoundly affected by the housing, environment and community within which people live. The Draft RSS therefore has the capacity to influence the health of the population considerably.

6.2.6 The South West contains areas with some of the highest life expectancy levels in the UK, reflecting the region's generally healthy living environment. Yet there are places where the incidence of chronic illness is high and life expectancy is well below the national average. These are often areas that show many other forms of relative deprivation, including areas with poor local environmental quality together with economic and social deprivation. The planning system can help address health issues by planning developments which make it easier for people to lead healthy lives and make lifestyle choices which lead to a beneficial impact on health. The most important factors are:

- High quality housing with high standards of ventilation and fuel efficiency
- Access to open spaces and sports facilities to encourage people to exercise and which do not require a car for access
- Access to high quality public transport to reduce car use and increase walking and cycling
- Access to shops where healthy food, such as fruit and vegetables, can be easily bought, even by those who do not drive a car
- Access to food produced locally, to reduce food and goods miles and improve the quality of the environment
- Access to employment within a short walk, or public transport journey
- Communal facilities, such as a village hall, to enable community groups to meet regularly (there is good quality, scientific, evidence to show that those who are members of such groups are healthier, and recover more quickly from illnesses such as heart attack)
- Easy access to medical facilities (conforming to 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say'²³ standards) for those without access to a car

²³ 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say: a New Direction for Community Services' Department for Health (2005).



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- 6.2.7** LDDs should seek to achieve this, and they should take into account Health Impact Assessments and advice on public health in order to maximise the opportunities for tackling the root causes of ill health through well-planned development. Local authorities should seek to ensure that development promotes opportunities for health enhancement and should conduct local needs assessments to ensure that plans for service and facility provision meet the needs of the people. In those wards of the South West performing least well in relation to measures of health inequality, local authorities should have particular regard to ensuring positive health outcomes from development.
- 6.2.8** LDFs should support proposals for the provision of additional healthcare facilities where clear need exists. Local authorities should work with the NHS to ensure that a health needs assessment for the prospective population has been undertaken. This is currently the responsibility of the Strategic Health Authorities, but this will change following the consultation 'A Patient-led NHS'. Working with healthcare

providers, local authorities should seek to ensure that all healthcare is provided in locations which are accessible to all users by public transport, on foot and by bike, and that it is of the highest design quality. Healthcare requirements arising from large-scale development and redevelopment should be assessed and adequate provision of facilities included in the master plans and design briefs required under Development Policy F, particularly for new strategic urban extensions where new populations could put undue strain on existing facilities.

- 6.2.9** Planning for future healthcare provision must consider the longer-term population and demographic implications of the scale of change this Draft RSS is addressing. An extra 750,000 people or more will be resident in the South West over the next 20 years, many of them elderly people with complex healthcare needs. The total population aged 60 and over is projected to increase by more than half a million by 2026 and more than a quarter of a million of this growth will be amongst those

aged 75 years and over. Local authorities should work closely with healthcare providers (Strategic Health Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and NHS Trusts) to ensure that plans for the growth and reorganisation of healthcare within their area and that of adjacent authorities are fully complementary with plans for development and change in the long term. Early dialogue between healthcare providers and local authorities in the planning of healthcare is essential.

HE1 Planning for Healthcare

Plans for the provision or re-organisation of healthcare within local authority areas and that of adjacent authorities shall be fully complementary with plans for development and change in the long term. At an early stage in preparing Local Development Frameworks, and in determining planning applications, local authorities should work closely with healthcare providers (Strategic Health Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and NHS Trusts) to ensure that timely provision is made.

HE2 Provision of Additional Healthcare Facilities

Healthcare will be provided in locations which are accessible to all people by public transport, on foot and by cycle. Working with healthcare providers, local authorities through their LDDs should ensure that all healthcare requirements arising from large-scale development and redevelopment are assessed, and adequate provision of facilities of the highest design quality are included in Local Development Documents and design briefs. Local Development Frameworks should support proposals for the provision of additional healthcare facilities, recognising that the structure of provision is changing.

HE3 Health Impact Assessments

All the major development proposals such as mixed-use areas and urban extensions should be subject to a Health Impact Assessment, so that the potential impacts of development on health are identified and addressed at an early stage in the planning process.

Quality of Education Provision

6.2.10 A population that is growing substantially due to inward migration, but is also seeing a substantial increase in average age, presents particular challenges for the provision of education services. Projections suggest that the population aged between five and 19 years old may actually decline by about 2% over the next 20 years. Even some settlements that experience significant growth may see a decline in the numbers of children and young adults in primary and secondary education. Other places, particularly the larger urban areas, will on the other hand experience continued overall growth in these age groups. This situation will provide opportunities to rationalise and improve total education investment and LDDs, working with the education providers, will need to take these demographic changes into account.

6.2.11 One of the issues of concern in parts of the South West is the quality of education and educational performance in some of the larger urban areas and its relationship with other indicators of deprivation (see paragraph 9.2.2).

6.2.12 In developing or renewing education facilities, including schools, Further Education Colleges and Universities, locations should be chosen which take account of the future development needs of the economy and the community sector, including the provision of new facilities and potential for expansion of existing provision. Facilities should be safely accessible to all and the development of community facilities alongside mainstream education facilities should be encouraged. LDDs should include policies that ensure sufficient and accessible premises are available to suit skills training and other vocational education purposes identified through the Regional Economic Strategy, the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA) and those drawn up by Learning and Skills Councils and Lifelong Learning Partnerships and related organisations. In particular, LDDs should take a positive and supportive approach to the expansion of higher and further education institutions.

SK1 Facilitating Access to Skills Training

LDDs and LTPs will take a supportive and pro-active approach to provision of facilities and public transport links to facilities that provide skills training.

Local Cultural and Leisure Facilities

- 6.2.13** Cultural provision at the local community level (such as libraries, museums, village halls, places of worship, playing fields and community sports centres) plays a vital role in supporting sustainable communities, for example through promoting health and well-being. There is good quality, scientific evidence that regular participation in cultural activities enhances health and speeds recovery from serious illness. Cultural facilities should therefore be seen as an essential prerequisite for a healthy population, rather than an additional, but non-essential, component of life. Cultural activities can provide participation opportunities for groups excluded from, or less able to access, mainstream services, such as younger or older people and those without access to a car. Local activities can promote social inclusion, bringing together existing and new communities, particularly in areas of growth, and good quality, accessible local cultural facilities are key to creating communities where people will continue to want to live and work.
- 6.2.14** In order to increase participation in cultural activity and meet future community needs for cultural facilities, local authorities and their partners should give consideration to providing neighbourhood and local facilities that combine space or resources for a range of cultural, commercial and community activities in one place. This is especially important in the South West, particularly in rural areas, where settlements and communities are more dispersed than in some other regions. It is important, for example, that local authorities carry out thorough and rigorous assessments of need for open space and sport and recreation facilities in line with PPG17 to reflect local distinctiveness. Efforts must be made to ensure that young people and other hard to reach groups are engaged in discussions about the use of space and community design. Opportunities for the provision of combined cultural activity spaces should be explored.
- 6.2.15** Local Development Frameworks should reflect the *'South West Cultural Infrastructure Development Strategy'*²⁴ (once completed) and related sub-regional cultural strategies. Where new cultural provision will have cross-boundary impact, local authorities should work together to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

LCF1 Local Cultural Facilities

Locally important cultural facilities will be protected and enhanced, with provision for new or improved facilities made to ensure the health and well-being of the population. Major new developments, such as mixed-use areas and urban extensions, will include plans for Local Cultural Facilities to ensure the population have the capacity to reap the health and social benefits which accrue from participation in regular cultural activities.

Green Infrastructure

- 6.2.16** Careful management will be required to ensure that development contributes to, rather than detracts from the quality of life in urban areas. Green Infrastructure (GI) is an important component of ensuring development provides positive benefits for the region. GI consists of strategic networks of accessible, multifunctional sites (including parks, woodland, informal open spaces, nature reserves and historic sites) as well as linkages (such as river corridors and floodplains, wildlife corridors and greenways). These contribute to people's well-being, and together comprise a coherent managed resource responsive to evolving conditions.
- 6.2.17** In order to achieve a distinctive approach for the South West, it will be important to plan GI around existing environmental and cultural characteristics. GI networks should consist of a series of features (both existing and new), appropriate at various spatial scales, preferably with links connecting smaller, more local sites with larger, more strategic ones. Networks can provide links between town and country, between different parts of an urban area, and between existing and new development. Linear GI (greenways and 'blue infrastructure' such as rivers, streams, canals etc) is integral in securing connectivity for wildlife and accessibility for people (though it may not always be appropriate to combine these two roles).
- 6.2.18** Continual improvement of GI must be based on a sound understanding of existing assets (including location, size, functions, accessibility, user groups and intensity of use). PPG17 requires adequate provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities to be provided and maintained.

²⁴ Culture South West commissioned study into cultural infrastructure requirements.



6.2.19 Identification of ‘areas of opportunity’ or ‘GI demand’ will be necessary in order to provide clear objectives and priorities. These should then be mapped and disseminated such that they can be proactively incorporated within spatial strategies and development proposals at the earliest possible stage. Considerable work has already been undertaken in the identification of areas of opportunity and targets (for example South West Regional Nature-Map and Rebuilding Biodiversity Initiative, Biodiversity Action Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans, and Forest Plans) and should be built upon.

GI1 Green Infrastructure

Development of networks of Green Infrastructure (GI) will be required to enhance quality of life in the region and support the successful accommodation of change. GI networks will comprise multifunctional, accessible, connected assets, planned around existing environmental characteristics. This may take the form of protection, enhancement or extension of existing resources or the provision of new or replacement facilities.

When planning the proposed distribution of development, GI is required as an integral part of development, with provision for a network of GI incorporated in the Spatial Strategy. Local authorities and partners will:

- **Build upon existing expertise and initiatives to identify priorities and partnerships for GI**
- **Incorporate GI policies setting out broad locations for GI appropriate to the extent and distribution of development proposed, co-ordinated across administrative boundaries as appropriate**
- **Develop a GI Plan with a delivery programme to support GI policies**