



OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Sustainable communities in the East Midlands

Building for the future



Foreword

We are transforming our communities and reversing the legacy of decades of under-investment.

We have achieved a great deal, but we need to do more. In some parts of the country there are still areas of acute deprivation where demand for housing has collapsed. In others, demand for housing continues to outstrip supply, leading to rising house prices and shortages of affordable housing. We need a step change in our approach to tackle these problems. We need to work together to build sustainable communities in which people want to live. Central government must play its part, which is why we are changing our approach to housing, regeneration and planning: investing some £22bn England-wide over the next three years. But delivery depends on a change of approach at the local, regional and national levels. That is why we want to move away from the old, top-down policies of the past where decisions were taken for local communities rather than by them.

Our focus is on building partnerships for change, providing the regions with the tools and resources to make a difference, and making sure we link what we build and how we build with plans for public services, transport, and jobs.

We have already strengthened regional policy and devolved decision-making for economic development and planning. Now, for the first time, we will decentralise housing policy and give the regions a real say in how we invest in our communities.

This Regional Action Plan – together with our national document – sets out the policies, resources and partnerships we will put in place for successful, thriving communities in every part of the country.

Our aim is to carry this action plan forward with regional partners and local government to ensure that together we can build sustainable communities that we can be proud of and that will stand the test of time.



John Prescott, MP
Deputy Prime Minister

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Prescott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Introduction

Sustainable communities: Building for the future marks a step change in our approach to sustainable communities. We need to do more to maintain and enhance the quality of life in towns and cities that are already thriving. In addition we need to turn round the fortunes of those communities where increasing numbers of people no longer wish to live.

This East Midlands Regional Action Plan provides the tools to build successful, thriving and inclusive communities – communities in which people want to live and which:

- ◆ *are economically prosperous;*
- ◆ *have decent homes at a price people can afford;*
- ◆ *safeguard the countryside;*
- ◆ *enjoy a well-designed, accessible and pleasant living and working environment;*
- ◆ *are effectively and fairly governed with a strong sense of community.*

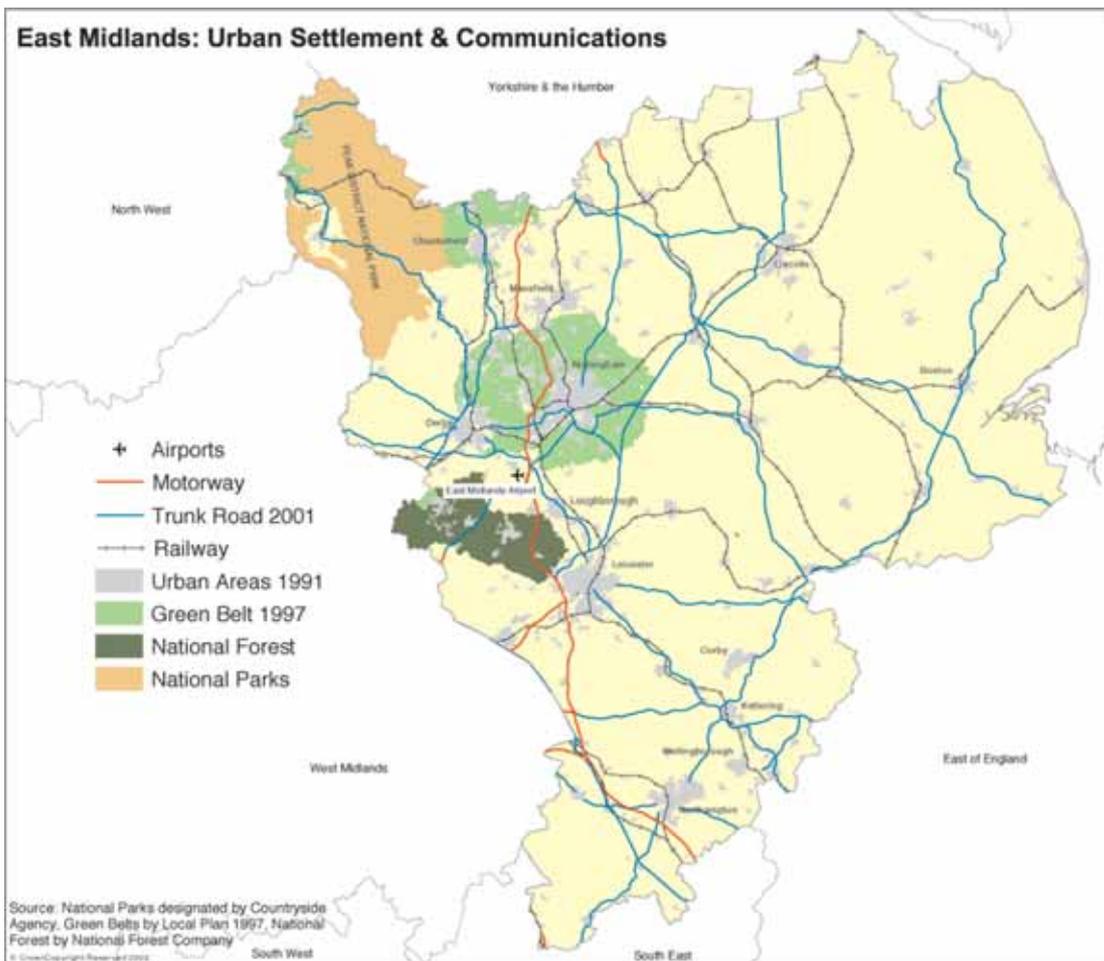
The Regions' White Paper, *Your Region, Your Choice*, set out the Government's plans to decentralise power and strengthen regional policy. It provided for directly elected assemblies to go ahead in regions where people want them, and for strengthened arrangements in all regions to improve strategic planning and delivery. *Sustainable communities: Building for the future* is a further step in this direction, with a substantial shift in responsibilities for the use of housing resources. In future, decisions on how the available resources can best be used to meet the needs of the East Midlands will be made in the East Midlands, a substantial further devolution of responsibilities. We need to make the most of this opportunity.

This regional plan sets out proposals for implementing *Sustainable communities: Building for the future* in the East Midlands. It does not attempt to cover all the issues of importance to communities. It highlights actions to address housing, planning and neighbourhood renewal issues. We, and our East Midlands partners, are already progressing a wide range of initiatives around the region. We are seeking to tackle a complex set of related issues and an effective integration of the solutions will be key to our success. To facilitate this, an Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) has been drawn up under the auspices of the East Midlands Regional Assembly. The IRS provides a framework to achieve compatibility between the various strategies and programmes operating in the region and it also serves as the region's sustainable development framework.

We have already taken soundings from key regional partners in preparing this Action Plan and we will consult further on the design and implementation of specific proposals. We will seek to do this, where appropriate, through existing mechanisms provided by the IRS.

Communities in the East Midlands

- ◆ Geographically the East Midlands is the fourth largest English region (15,627 sq km).
- ◆ Much of the region's 4.2m population is concentrated in the core area around the three cities of Leicester, Derby and Nottingham, but elsewhere much of the region is rural and some parts are remote (see map below).
- ◆ The region's economy is diverse with a high proportion of manufacturing (23% of jobs compared to the national average of 15%), but many traditional industries, such as textiles, are in a state of decline.
- ◆ Costs of living, including house prices, tend to be low and the quality of life is considered to be high, but house prices have increased at a faster rate than any other region over the last year.



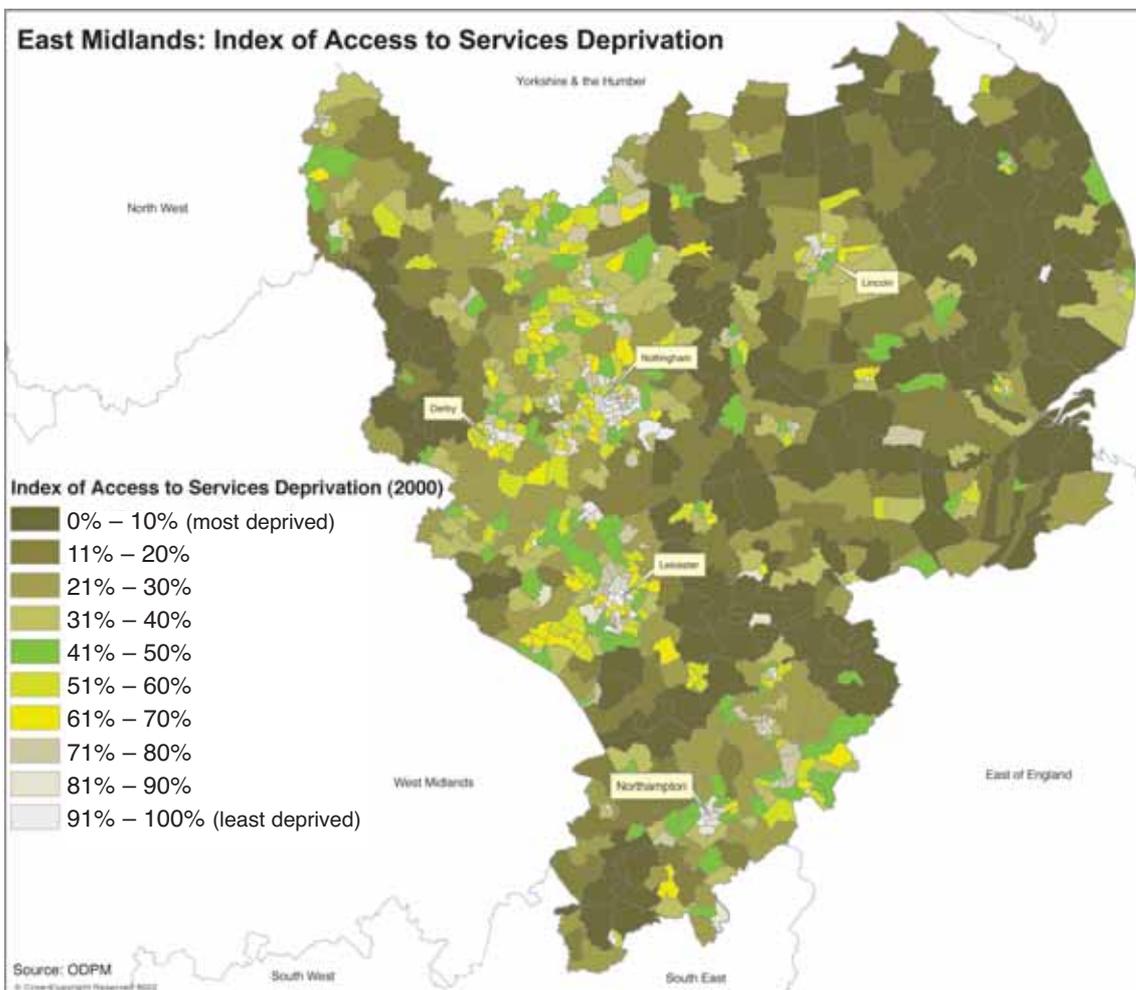
Strategic challenges for the region

Planning

The challenge

- ◆ *The need to accommodate the strong development pressures in and around the main cities and towns and in the more prosperous southern parts of the region, including the major growth identified in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Study, while at the same time ensuring minimum impact on valuable countryside.*
- ◆ *In disadvantaged areas, such as the former Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfield, there is a need to stem population outflow, to encourage new investment in the economy and protect jobs, while delivering environmental improvements.*
- ◆ *In rural counties, such as Lincolnshire, the need is to maintain access to services (see map on page 6) and to increase the range of opportunities for employment.*
- ◆ *The need to make better use of brownfield sites; in the period 1997-2000 only 40% of the region's new dwellings were on previously used land.*
- ◆ *The need to improve the performance of local planning authorities in handling planning applications.*

Major Growth in Northamptonshire: The recently published Milton Keynes and South Midlands Study (MKSM) has examined the potential for growth over the period 2001 to 2031 in an area which has been identified by government as one of four main growth areas within or close to the South East. The Study has identified Northampton, Kettering, Wellingborough and Corby as potential areas for growth. Following consultation more detailed work is being undertaken to ensure that infrastructure, services and jobs as well as housing, can be planned for and accommodated in a sustainable way. An example of this is the planned expansion at Wellingborough East where the Borough Council plans to provide 3,000 new homes and 110 hectares of employment land east of the town in conjunction with shops and community facilities, phased and constructed in a sustainable way. The aim is to create liveable communities based around streets with mixed uses, good public transport, and the use of high quality, and where possible, locally sourced and sustainable materials.



The action plan

- ◆ We will ensure that Regional Planning Guidance (RPG8) is monitored and kept up to date and that development plans include adequate provision for housing and employment related needs. An alteration to RPG8 will also be made in response to consultation on proposals for the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area.
- ◆ We will ensure that where possible major investment proposals are steered towards disadvantaged areas.
- ◆ We will encourage local authorities in the major cities and towns to promote urban renaissance in partnership with other public agencies and the private sector.
- ◆ In rural areas we will encourage partners to make efforts to improve access to services such as rural post offices and village shops. In addition we will ensure through planning policies that employment opportunities can be broadened.

- ◆ *We have set a target in RPG8 for 60% of all new housing, including conversions, to be provided on brownfield sites.*
- ◆ *We want local assessments of urban housing capacity to be undertaken across the region so that fewer greenfield sites need to be allocated in local plans as, for example, in Lincoln and its surrounding area.*
- ◆ *We see a continuing role for Green Belts and green wedges, where they have been designated in development plans.*
- ◆ *We will monitor local planning authorities to ensure that they achieve targets for dealing with all planning applications and preparing development plans. The East Midlands share of the new £350m Planning Delivery Grant will provide resources to local planning authorities to do this as well as offering further rewards for high performing authorities.*
- ◆ *An East Midlands Planning Charter has also been drawn up which will improve the handling of planning applications, particularly those for commercial developments.*

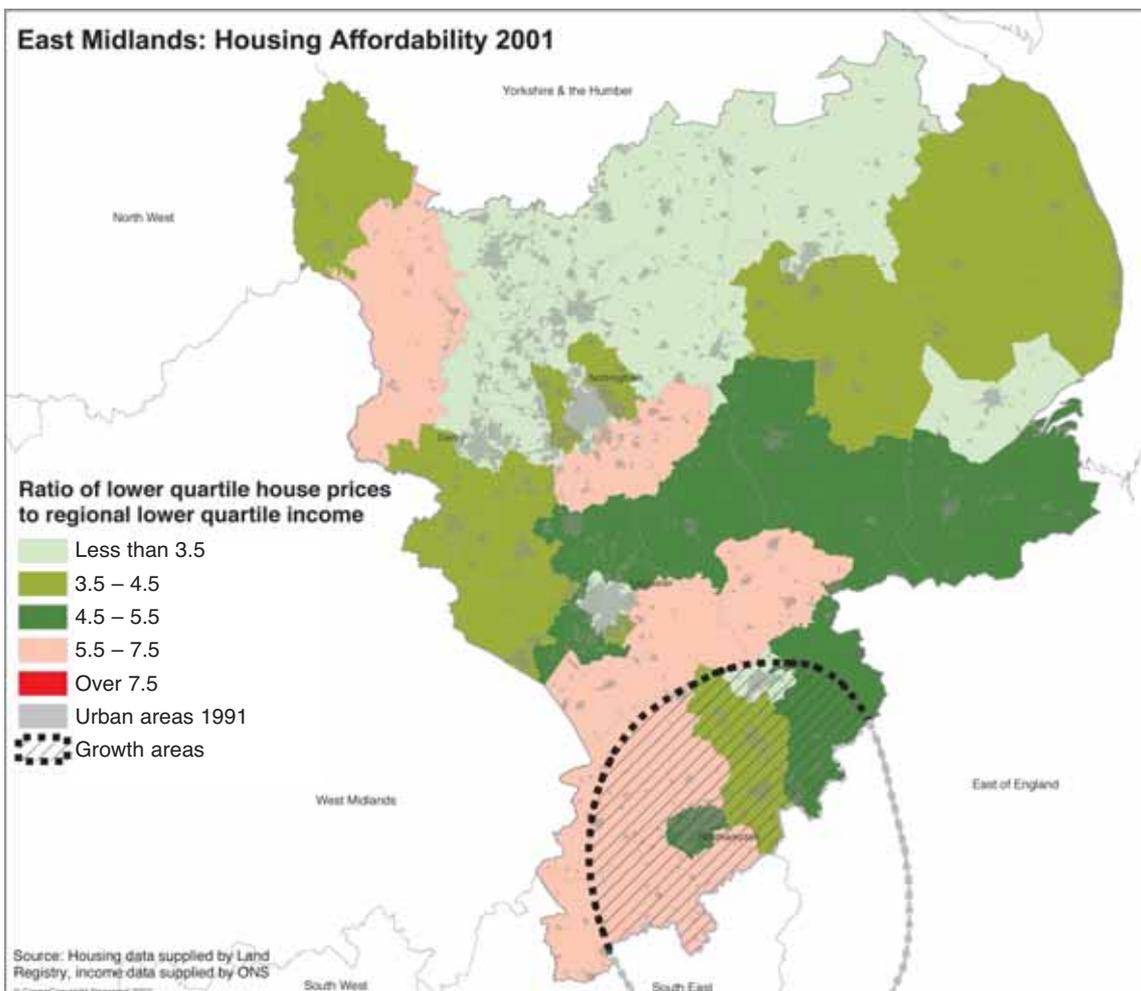
An example of what physical regeneration can achieve is the Newark Riverside Regeneration project, supported by an estimated £17m of public and private sector funding. This involved a comprehensive package of physical and social projects centred on the largely derelict riverside area which runs through the centre of Newark. Historic buildings have been restored, derelict sites brought back into use and a park has been created near Newark Castle. As a result the riverside area has been revitalised, property prices have doubled and social problems amongst local young people have been reduced. The project's success has recently been recognised by the British Urban Regeneration Association's top Best Practice award and by the 2002 English Partnerships Award.

Housing

The challenge

- ◆ *To meet the housing demands of a population which has grown by 3.3% between 1991 and 2001 and is projected to grow by another 8% by 2021.*
- ◆ *To address the issue of the additional growth recently proposed for Northamptonshire in the MKSM Study.*

- ◆ To meet the need for affordable housing, particularly in the south of the region, and in rural areas where mortgage costs as a percentage of household income are on average some 13% higher than in urban areas (see map below).
- ◆ To counter problems of low demand in areas such as the former coalfield of northern Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and in remoter rural areas.
- ◆ To ensure that the housing stock meets the decent housing standard in a region where, for example, only 56% of local authority stock is classified as decent.
- ◆ There are less homeless people in the East Midlands than in most other regions but homelessness is still a problem in some areas.



The action plan

- ◆ *A new Regional Housing Board (RHB) will provide a more strategic and coherent approach to housing issues. This is already operating in "shadow" form involving the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM), the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships (EP), the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) and the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA). Through the Board:*
 - *we will prepare a draft Regional Housing Strategy by summer 2003, building on the existing Regional Housing Statement. This will develop a stronger strategic framework for informing investment decisions;*
 - *we will also advise Ministers on how best to allocate Government funding for housing in the East Midlands. From 2004/05 onwards there will be a Single Housing Investment pot for the East Midlands, bringing together resources from the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme (ADP) and the Housing Investment Programme (HIP). Total figures for the pot assume that funding for affordable housing will increase at least in line with inflation.*
- ◆ *To inform these decisions the RHB is commissioning a detailed assessment of housing markets to provide a clear picture of affordability and low demand issues across the region and to analyse the linkages between housing, planning and economic activity.*
- ◆ *As part of its rural focus, the Housing Corporation is looking at two possible pilot initiatives to secure more affordable housing in the Peak District and rural Lincolnshire. Overall, ADP investment in 2002/03 will deliver 190 new homes in rural areas and grants have been approved for 2003/04 for a further 212 houses.*

Affordable Housing: East Lindsey District Council transferred its housing stock to a Housing Partnership (Linx Housing) in 1999 and since then it has been working with a Rural Housing Enabler to identify sites where the provision of affordable housing could enhance the infrastructure and amenities of villages. Since the stock transfer the Council has achieved its target of creating 400 new affordable homes in partnership with the Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords.

- ◆ *The Housing Corporation is also working with emda on a potential market town scheme, whereby emda will fund remodelling of retail properties at ground level, and the Corporation will fund new accommodation above.*
- ◆ *To widen choice and to counter low demand we will also encourage innovative approaches to lettings including widening eligibility criteria.*

Low Demand: The Meden Valley in north Derbyshire and north Nottinghamshire was severely hit by colliery closures in the 1980s and 1990s resulting in high unemployment and serious housing problems, including low demand, dereliction, high levels of voids, and a poor tenure mix. Following the Coalfield Task Force Report (1998), EP and emda joined with Bolsover and Mansfield District Councils and their partners in plans to transform the area. Funds will be channelled through a specially created company, or special purpose vehicle (SPV) with EP and emda providing up to £13m funding. Around 900 houses in 11 settlements are to be acquired by the SPV and a balanced programme of demolition, refurbishment, new build housing and environmental improvements will be undertaken. The result will be a range of desirable and affordable homes, available for sale or rent both for local people and newcomers.

The plan is complemented by other regeneration activities, including serviced land at the former Shirebrook Colliery for commercial, industrial or distribution uses with the potential to create over 2000 jobs.

- ◆ *We will work to improve the condition of public and private sector housing within the East Midlands. In particular we will agree action plans with local authorities and monitor progress.*
- ◆ *Nationally, the Government will be providing around £2.8bn over the next three years to help improve council housing.*
- ◆ *Sustainable communities: Building for the future announces the removal of unnecessary barriers to stock transfer, the launch of a third bidding round for Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMO) and plans to make it easier to refurbish council houses through Private Finance Initiative (PFI). All local authorities will be required to put in place strategies for their areas to achieve the decent homes target by 2010. Authorities that are not on target to meet the decent homes standard, and do not pursue stock transfer, ALMOs or the PFI, should not expect increased investment.*
- ◆ *Legislation will be introduced to allow local authorities to charge up to 90% of the full council tax on second homes and to end completely the discount for empty homes.*
- ◆ *We are in the process of removing the restrictions on the Cash Incentive Scheme so that councils will be free to assist tenants to buy their own homes wherever this is a good value for money way to free up a council home.*

- ◆ *We will consult on compulsory powers to enable local authorities to lease properties that have been empty for more than six months in order to bring them back into use.*
- ◆ *We will also seek to ensure that housing investment plans and strategies take into account the priority needs of homeless people when tackling problems of high housing demand and that they are integrated with other strategies for tackling social exclusion.*

Transport

The challenge

- ◆ *To improve transport infrastructure to relieve congestion in urban areas and on major trunk routes.*
- ◆ *To improve east-west links and improve the accessibility of rural areas, particularly eastern Lincolnshire and the former coalfield area.*
- ◆ *To reduce car use in urban areas and increase both the capacity and use of public transport, including in rural areas.*

The action plan

- ◆ *Since 1997 there has been a substantial increase in funding – from £55.8m to £129m per annum for the region – that is enabling local authorities to implement their Local Transport Plans.*
- ◆ *We have endorsed a multi-modal approach to problems associated with the M1 and have announced that we will be bringing forward proposals for widening the motorway, north of Leicester, at a cost of around £1.5bn.*
- ◆ *We have also endorsed an £89m upgrading of the A453 from Nottingham to the M1 and we are considering new Light Rail Transit (LRT) lines in Nottingham and Leicester.*
- ◆ *An ambitious new tram system is being built in Nottingham, the first part of which will become operational in late 2003.*
- ◆ *We are also providing both Rural and Urban Bus Challenge funding to provide and support transport services in some of the region's most deprived areas.*

Economic growth and skills

The challenge

- ◆ *The economy in southern parts of the region is relatively buoyant but other areas, mainly in the north, are still suffering from the closure of coal pits and other traditional industries. In 1999 GDP per head in the region was only 93% of the national average.*
- ◆ *Unemployment levels are below the national average but variations within the region are high.*
- ◆ *Educational attainment levels are below the national average with particularly poor performance in Nottingham and Leicester.*
- ◆ *Parts of the East Midlands have a relatively low skill, low wage economy and lack demand from employers for higher level skills.*
- ◆ *The challenge is to improve the competitiveness of the region's economy and to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are spread across the region, particularly to the former coalfield areas of north Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and to remoter rural areas where local jobs are scarce, public transport infrastructure is poor and access to public services is limited.*

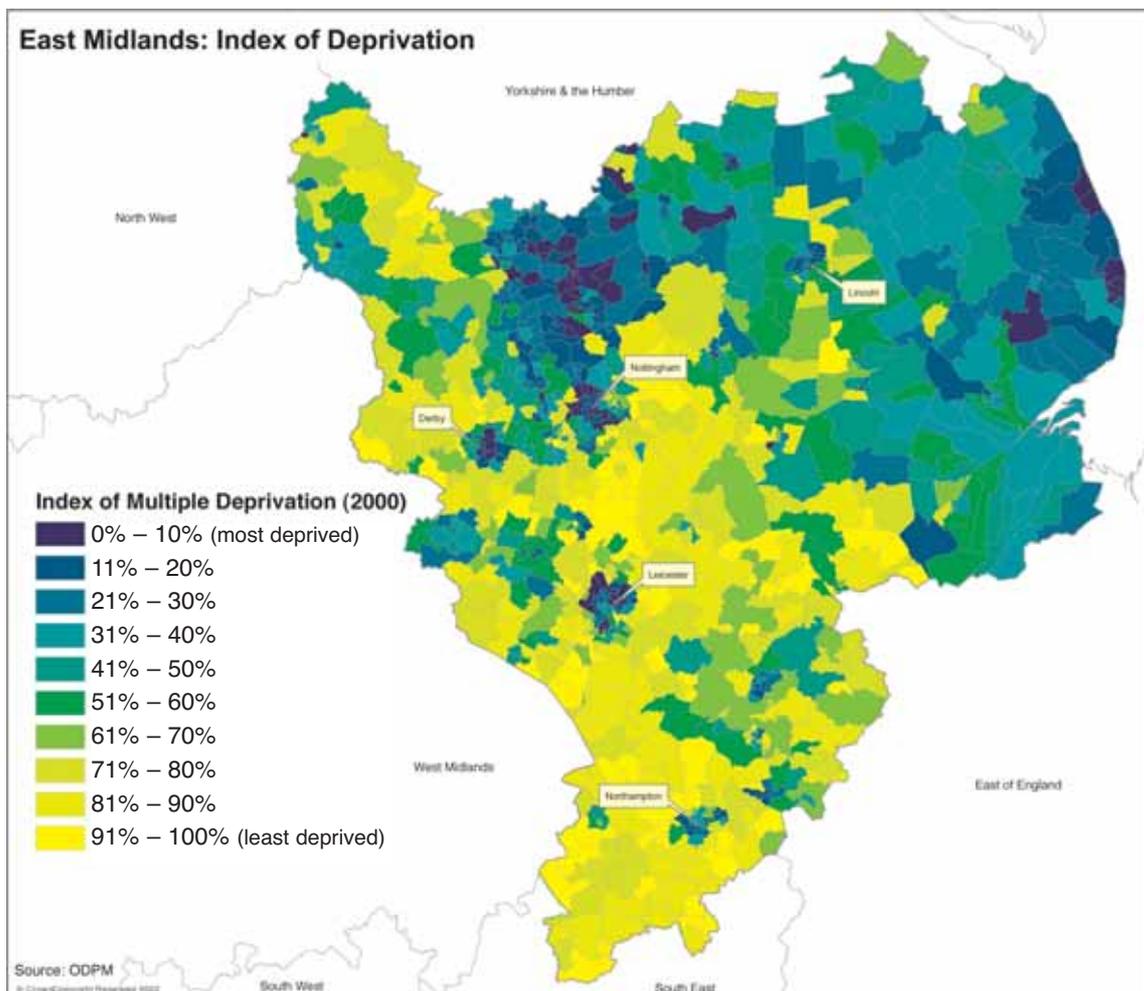
The action plan

- ◆ *In order to maintain the relatively high employment rates whilst increasing productivity, regional partners have recently launched a Framework for Employment and Skills Action (FRESA) setting out activities designed to improve skills and encourage graduate employment in the region.*
- ◆ *A revised Regional Economic Strategy has also recently been published setting out a range of measures aimed at boosting the regional economy.*
- ◆ *A "rapid response" group is also being formed to co-ordinate efforts to encourage inward investment and the expansion of existing companies, as well as dealing with the effects of redundancies in vulnerable areas.*

Tackling deprivation and renewing communities

The challenge

- ◆ Eleven East Midlands local authorities rank among the 100 most deprived in England and Nottingham (12th), Leicester (28th), Bolsover (30th) and Mansfield (37th) rank among the 50 worst.
- ◆ Four wards (Manvers and Strelley in Nottingham, North Braunstone in Leicester and Shirebrook North West in Bolsover) rank among England's 100 most deprived (see map below).
- ◆ The region accounts for 8.9% of crime in England and Wales and crime levels in the region are rising faster than nationally, up by 9.3% in the year ending April 2002.
- ◆ Within the region 36% of crime is recorded in Nottinghamshire and six of the region's 40 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, are categorised as "very high crime", i.e. Nottingham, Mansfield, Leicester, Derby, Bassetlaw and Corby.



- ◆ *The regional strategy 'Investment for Health' recently published by the Regional Assembly, has highlighted significant public health inequalities.*
- ◆ *The overall challenge therefore is to reduce deprivation, to improve educational attainment, to raise aspirations and reduce anti-social behaviour in all areas, but particularly in those suffering from multiple deprivation.*

The action plan

We will pursue a neighbourhood renewal programme in the East Midlands that includes:

- ◆ *Neighbourhood Renewal Funding: Nottingham, Leicester, Lincoln and Derby, plus three districts in the former coalfield – Bolsover, Ashfield and Mansfield, are receiving £58m over three years to act as a catalyst for regeneration by transforming key services like education and tackling problems like crime and poor housing.*
- ◆ *New Deal for Communities programmes in Nottingham (Radford and Hyson Green), Derby (Derwent – see below) and Leicester (Braunstone) are receiving £143m over 10 years in order to transform their communities.*

The community-led New Deal for Communities programme in Derby joins up the work of agencies, the private sector and the voluntary and community sectors in reducing crime and unemployment and improving health, education, and environment in the Derwent area of the City. In particular it works closely with local schools via its Headteachers' Group to raise educational standards in Derwent's main secondary school that at the outset was achieving only 12% A-C grades at GCSE.

- ◆ *European funds also provide an important stimulus to regeneration and up to 2006 some £228m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will be available for a broad range of activities aimed at improving economic infrastructure and promoting greater social inclusion for the most disadvantaged 1.1 million people in urban, rural and declining industrial areas of the region.*
- ◆ *A further £174m European Social Fund (ESF) funding is available to help the disadvantaged in the region, particularly the long-term unemployed.*

- ◆ *Urban Regeneration Companies in Leicester (see the LRC Case Study below) and Corby are also preparing action plans aimed at revitalising their communities and improving the sense of place in their central areas.*

Leicester Regeneration Company (LRC):

The LRC has recently launched an ambitious plan to revitalise the commercial heart of Leicester, to meet the needs of the city's deprived neighbourhoods and to contribute towards the growth of the regional economy. Central to the overall strategy is the development of a new urban village linking the city's commercial core with surrounding residential areas. Work is underway to incorporate this strategy into the emerging land-use and transport planning framework and develop a clear programme of land assembly and infrastructure investment.

- ◆ *Through the Government Office we will also provide support to Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships using the Safer Communities Initiative, the Communities Against Drugs Programme and the Partnership Development Fund.*
- ◆ *In addition the Home Office funded Project Jupiter will continue to provide partnerships with the ability to share and analyse multi-agency data in problem solving efforts.*
- ◆ *We are also promoting a number of health initiatives related to making communities sustainable, including Healthy Living Centres, Health Action Zone projects, and 'health' activity as part of Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) action plans.*

Project Jupiter in Lincolnshire has set up a project with the Drug Action Team to build up a picture of the heroin market in Lincoln. Jupiter will facilitate the systematic collection of locational data related to recorded crime, which will enable an analysis of the links between recorded crime and drug abuse using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and an entirely new and rigorous methodology.

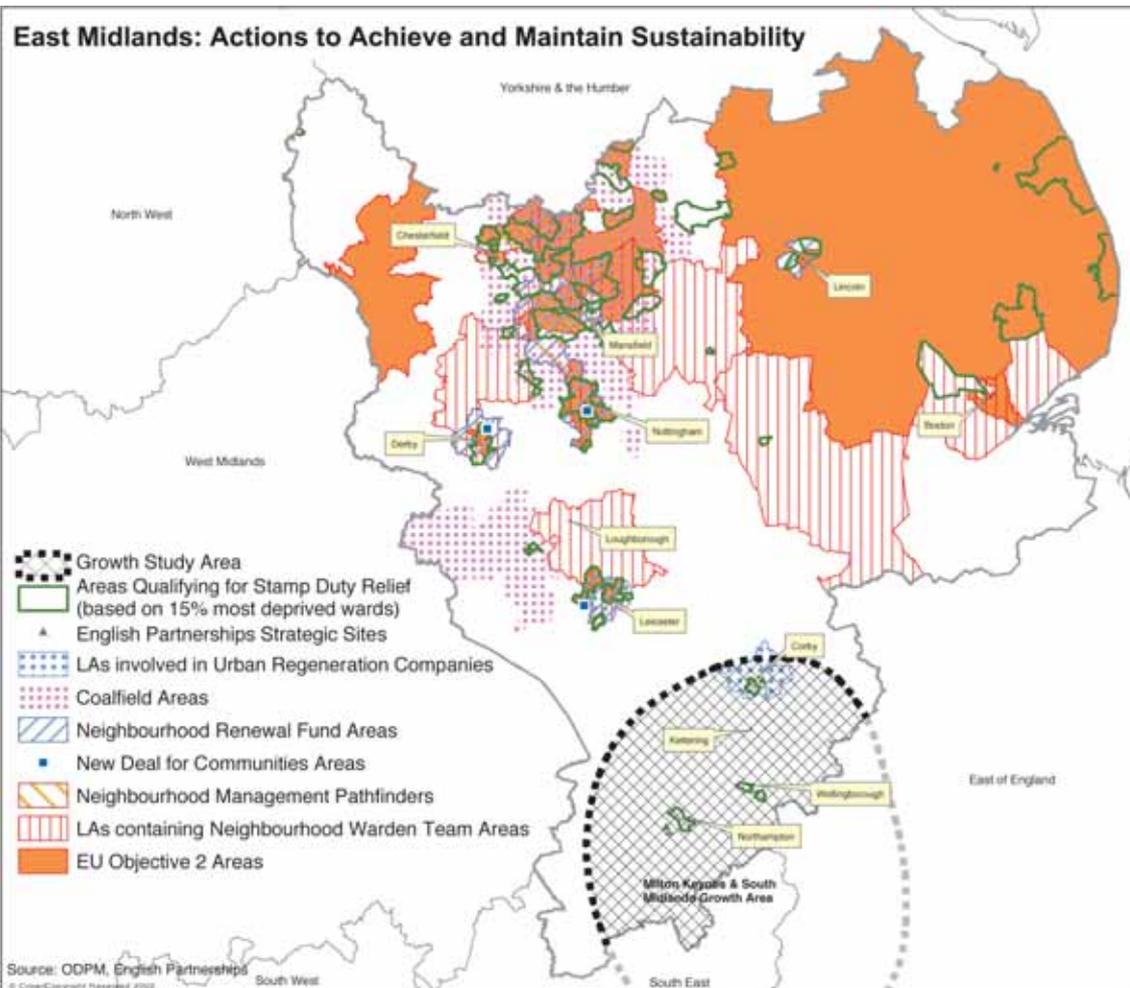
Liveability

The challenge

- ◆ *The recent Urban Parks Survey identified 2,807 parks in the region but 39% of all parks and open spaces are in a state of decline.*
- ◆ *The 'Viewpoints on the Historic Environment of the East Midlands' report records that in the region there are 30,000 sites afforded statutory protection and although the number of conservation areas increased by 46% between 1989 and 2000 many buildings are at risk.*
- ◆ *Community forests and the National Forest have started to make a difference in creating new identities in areas such as the former coalfields that still suffer from multiple deprivation. However more needs to be done.*

The action plan

- ◆ *The Government will be providing £201m over the next three years for schemes to improve liveability throughout the country.*
- ◆ *We will also improve public parks and green spaces through the New Opportunities Fund Green Spaces scheme and Heritage Lottery funding of which £33.5m is currently allocated for projects in the region, such as the restoration of the arboretums in Derby, Lincoln and Nottingham. In addition there will shortly be a full regional assessment of playing field needs, which will inform and complement development proposals.*
- ◆ *English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund now have regional offices in the East Midlands and with a proposed Architecture East Midlands organisation will be involved in developing creative solutions to improve the built and community environment.*
- ◆ *The revitalisation of market towns through emda's Market Towns Initiative will be pursued. This is a key part of the region's drive to create more sustainable communities and is fundamental to the prosperity and vitality of surrounding rural areas. emda is also providing funding for a number of urban areas to undertake master planning through their Smaller Urban Areas initiative. This will focus on town centre improvements, investment, infrastructure, skills and community development.*
- ◆ *We will also establish regional Centres of Excellence to promote best practice in design and management of public space.*



Market Towns Initiative: Belper, Derbyshire, was at the heart of the textile industry, which left unique architecture recently recognised as being of World Heritage Status. However the town declined as major employers have either closed or relocated. To help stem the decline, the Countryside Agency has funded a comprehensive 'health check' for the town, the first for any English town. This has identified a range of projects, which will be taken forward with the community. These are split into immediate, medium term (three-to-four years) and longer term (10 years) projects such as the provision of a Belper relief road, a Townscape Heritage Initiative and the regeneration of the Belper Meadows areas.

Summary of key Government programmes in the East Midlands

European Structural Funds

European funding used to stimulate economic development in the EU's least prosperous regions. Amounts include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

£228m for 2000-2006 from ERDF and £174m for 2000-2006 from the ESF

East Midlands Development Agency (emda)

emda co-ordinates economic development and regeneration to improve the relative competitiveness of the region.

£86m spent in 2001/02, £113m projected for 2002/03

Approved Development Programme (ADP)

Housing Corporation administered annual housing capital fund allocated to housing associations.

£34m for 2001/02, £40m for 2002/03 and £48m for 2003/04

Housing Investment Programme (HIP)

Programme to provide housing capital funding for local authority housing. Amounts include Annual Capital Guidelines and Private Sector Renewal Grant.

£60m for 2001/02, £62m for 2002/03 and £52m for 2003/04

Major Repairs Allowance

Resources to meet the ongoing capital costs of maintaining the current condition of local authority housing stock.

£131m for 2001/02, £132m for 2002/03 and £123m for 2003/04

Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Funding

£14.4m for 2002/03

Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

Resources to enable the 88 most deprived authorities, in collaboration with their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), to improve services, narrowing the gap between deprived areas and the rest of England.

£58.5m for 2001-2004

New Deal for Communities (NDC)

A community led partnership based around renewal in communities including pioneering approaches to neighbourhood management.

£143m over 7 or 10 year periods

Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders

Initiatives set up to test new ideas and approaches to neighbourhood management.

£1.2m for 2001-2004

Transport Funding (for local authorities)

£129m for 2002/3

Urban and Rural Bus Challenges

£3.5m for 2002/3

Heritage Lottery Fund

£33.5m*

New Opportunities Fund (Green Spaces)

£2.2m for 2001/2

* Approved to be spent on various projects with differing timescales.

Next steps

This summary sets out some initial ideas about what the action plan put forward in *Sustainable communities: Building for the future* will mean for the East Midlands.

Partners in the region now need to develop specific proposals around this broad agenda. The Government Office will play a full role in facilitating this, but if we are to achieve the aim of creating sustainable communities throughout the East Midlands, we must plan for what is best for the region, and not adopt a single solution handed down by central government.

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