



Chapter 6:

Conclusions

Each chapter of AMR2009 has demonstrated its key findings and progress in achieving relevant RSS targets. The aim of this Chapter is to draw out the headline conclusions and inform priorities for the spatial planning board in supporting the delivery of the current regional strategy. There is also some commentary on monitoring techniques and specific challenges regarding monitoring processes.

Headline Conclusions

The headline conclusions are summarised below.

In general the impacts of the recession have been felt throughout the region this monitoring year with delivery of housing suffering a steep fall. However, there are some forms of development, such as affordable housing that have proved more resilient and some major developments that have helped prop up the delivery of employment opportunities.

Overall the region's population continues to grow and to become more diverse, with Leeds and York continuing to record the biggest percentage population increases of all the regional and sub-regional cities and towns.

The spatial pattern of development emerging from information collected for AMR2009 reflects the testing economic circumstances of the monitoring year 2008-09. The overall housing completions were the lowest since 2003-04 and represented just over 50% of the RSS target - just as AMR2008 predicted.

The future delivery of housing remains hard to predict. Most local authorities could only provide data for the next five years and, while good progress has been made on AMR2008, not all local authorities have completed their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments. However, from the information that is available, it would appear that the region will continue to see a deficit in housing output against its targets over the short and medium term.

The region's economy suffered during 2008/09 and the prospects are for a slow but uneven recovery. The region is vulnerable because it relies on the manufacturing sector much more than any other region in England and this is a sector that remains

vulnerable. The region may also be vulnerable as it has relatively high public sector employment levels that may be hit by public spending cuts over the short term. Locally South Yorkshire has been hit badly in terms of job losses and new vacancies being created.

Specifically on the use of land for employment, there was an increase this year in the amount of floor space created for B2 (storage and distribution) uses. Looking ahead there seems to be a decrease in the amount of land designated for B2 uses so this trend should slow down and the employment land portfolio should broaden.

However, there is no clear overall picture of land supply for wider employment uses and the work being carried out through Local Economic Assessments and by Yorkshire Forward and LGYH in the analysis of Employment Land Reviews will be important in determining this.

In rural areas the numbers of farm diversification schemes rose significantly, likely stimulated by the impacts of the recession on the agricultural sector.

Despite low overall housing completions, the proportion of affordable housing delivered increased throughout the region. This is a welcome quickening of a slow to increase trend and some of the biggest gains were in North Yorkshire where the income to house price ratios are at their highest.

There was a slight, but still minor, increase in the provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers, but it is considered too early to see the impacts on the ground of the sub-regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments that have all be completed.

The information available on transport and accessibility in the region shows a slight decrease in overall traffic volume and kilometres travelled. However, there is no progress in achieving 'modal shift' from private car to public transport, with 75% of journeys being made by private car. However, the region has seen a decrease in the amount of long stay parking in towns and cities which is a sign that alternatives to the private car may be found for travel to work purposes and it will be important

to monitor whether this is borne out in 'modal shift' data for AMR 2010.

Measuring accessibility of new developments was once again difficult because there was so little data available at a local level.

The region is continuing in the right direction regarding recycling where 33% of all municipal waste was recycled. There have also been large gains in the amount of renewable energy capacity thanks to significant co-firing developments on the region's existing power stations within the North Yorkshire sub-region. However, there are still some parts of the region that have yet to show a real contribution towards Yorkshire and the Humber's installed capacity and the pressure for renewable energy generation will continue to rise.

Carbon emissions continue to decrease but progress is slow and the rate of decrease is worryingly short of long term targets. The condition of SSSIs is improving and the quality of bathing water is the highest since 2003/04.

The Region continued to make excellent progress in reusing land - 69% of new employment floor space was on previously developed land and 88% of all new (and converted and change of use) dwellings were built on previously developed land with West Yorkshire achieving the highest proportions.

Implementation Priorities

Given these conclusions it is no surprise that many of the priorities from last year remain highly relevant. These are:

- increasing and improving infrastructure provision,
- focusing development on the settlement network,
- matching housing types to housing needs,
- improving understanding of changing economic circumstances and
- proactive flood risk management.

Other activities remain important and are detailed on LGYH's Implementation Action Plan web pages. These include:

- continuing to work towards the current house completion targets in the RSS despite the testing economic circumstances.
- continuing to help ensure that accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller communities is provided.
- achieving modal shift including improving accessibility of new developments by non-car modes.
- increasing the number of local authorities that measure accessibility of new developments.
- increasing Renewable Energy installed capacity through the Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Capacity Study and its associated delivery activities and approach to better monitoring.
- improving recycling rates across the whole Region.

Evidence base and monitoring techniques

The policy changes referred to in the introduction mean that data gathering and monitoring is in a state of flux. Local authorities, sub regions and regional bodies are starting to develop integrated strategies and monitoring frameworks. The core indicators provided by Government are subject to frequent changes. These changes make it very hard to obtain data that is wholly consistent across all local authorities and reporting in the AMR can often only be at the sub regional level.

The development of the Yorkshire and Humber Strategy has provided an excellent opportunity to streamline this activity and there already been good progress on developing an Integrated Monitoring Framework that builds on the complementary nature of this years AMR and Progress in the Region.

Specific challenges remain:

- The degree of spatial specificity currently possible in monitoring location of development; whilst monitoring at settlement network level is improving there are still issues with information related to housing, employment, retail and leisure completions at different spatial scales
- The number of concurrent studies and reviews. There is much data in the Region e.g. Strategic Housing Land Availability Studies, Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Employment Land Reviews. These studies are key elements of the region's evidence base and tools for effective spatial planning at a local and sub-regional level. Therefore there is a need to ensure that these are consistent and well integrated. Recent experiences reveal that some studies for example Employment Land Reviews and Strategic Flood Risk Assessments are rarely carried out to the same methodology in more than one local authority.
- The availability of transport statistics (at national and regional level), the use of Accession modelling, monitoring the implementation of transport priorities and freight movement are still problematic and focused on process indicators. More work needs to be done on developing quantitative measures of transport priorities.