SOUTH WEST
REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Way Ahead:
Breaking down the barriers to sustainable development

March 2006
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1 Introduction

1.1 Baker Associates has been commissioned by the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) to undertake a study on the barriers to implementing more sustainable development. This is in order to determine how advice on implementing sustainable development can be better targeted to developers and local authorities to help in the delivery of sustainable development. The findings of this study will feed into ‘The Way Ahead’ project in helping to create sustainable communities in the South West.

1.2 The overall aim is to ensure that the approach taken to implementing ‘The Way Ahead’ is as efficient and effective as possible in its pursuit of sustainable development. This can best be achieved by building on the existing advice, and avoiding creating unnecessary and extraneous guidance on sustainable development.

1.3 The approach taken in this study has been to investigate with developers and local planning authorities their current understanding of sustainable development and how this is currently being delivered. A vital part of this has been discussing with these organisations what the barriers are to implementing more sustainable development, what the current motivations are for proceeding with more sustainable development, and how to ensure barriers are overcome and sustainable development becomes more mainstream.

1.4 These discussions lead in this report to recommendations as to how the South West Region can proceed providing advice on sustainable development, in order to best implement The Way Ahead project and help the development of more sustainable communities.

1.5 The following section of the report sets out some background to ‘The Way Ahead’ projects, as it is understood for this project. Section 3 considers this issue of creating more sustainable communities and sustainable development, and considers what the parameters of this exceedingly broad topic should be for this study. The methodology that was followed in undertaking the telephone interviews is covered in section 4, and this includes the formulation of the questions that were put to the local authorities and representatives of the development industry. Sections 5 and 6 look at the response from the local authorities and the development industry respectively, in identifying what the key barriers are to implementing more sustainable development and how they may be overcome. Finally section 7 considers draws together the responses, identifying common themes from both, as well as the particular experience of the public and private sectors, and includes recommendations for the way forward.

2 The Way Ahead

2.1 ‘The Way Ahead’ plan for delivering sustainable communities in the South West region, sets out an ambitious framework for the development of the

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1 NOTE: interviews and reporting for this project were undertaken prior to the close of consultation on the ODPM (December 2005), ‘Proposals for introducing a Code for Sustainable Homes’, and associated statement from the ODPM 9 March 2006
region into the future. Central to this is the aim to deliver sustainable development, taking into account not only matters relating to sustainable construction and design, but also embedding the principles of sustainable development into all new development. Guidance on achieving sustainable development must therefore be designed in such a way as to make it understandable and applicable to those making decisions on how development proceeds, and this includes developers and local planning authorities.

2.2 ‘The Way Ahead’ is a document submitted to the Government by the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA), South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and Government Office for the South West (GOSW) in 2005, and in response to the Government’s ‘Sustainable Communities Plan’ to profile the ways in which the South West can and is responding to the challenge of delivering growth.

2.3 The intention of ‘The Way Ahead’ is for the public and private sectors to use their expertise to work together in driving forward ideas on sustainable communities put forward in the document. Central to this is an Advisory Group created to champion and take forward ‘The Way Ahead’ and to explore how development in the South West can be better delivered by overcoming barriers to the delivery of successful and sustainable communities.

2.4 A number of streams of work have been identified through the Advisory Group. As part of ‘The Way Ahead’ work and the development of RSS, the SWRA is keen to explore how sustainable development can be better delivered.

2.5 An additional part to this research on delivering more sustainable development is being undertaken by the Regional Assembly, exploring ‘what’s out there’ in terms of policy tools and guidance which are aimed at assisting the delivery of sustainable development. Preliminary findings show that there is a plethora of sustainable development guidance and advice already in existence at the national, regional and local levels.

3 Defining the aspects of sustainable development

3.1 The concept of sustainable development is extremely broad, even when related only to land use and development planning. It could cover many aspects of any one development, under the main headings of protection of the environment, social wellbeing and economic performance. The Government’s most recent definition of sustainable development as contained in the 2005 UK strategy for sustainable development, ‘Securing the Future’, is even broader. It sets out the guiding principles for sustainable development as:

- living with environmental limits
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- achieving a sustainable economy
- promoting good governance
- using sound science responsibly.

3.2 However, using a definition this broad for the study would be unmanageable, and it would be very difficult to draw conclusions on how successful current
practice is in achieving this wide remit of aims. For this study therefore, it has been important to more closely define the aspects of sustainable development for use as the basis for this study.

3.3 The elements of sustainable development that have been selected for this study relate primarily to sustainable construction and the resource efficient design of individual buildings, and therefore are predominantly related to environmental sustainability and the protection of natural resources. These matters have been chosen as they currently may not be as well incorporated into policy as some other aspects of sustainability development and the creation of new communities, for example, the reuse of previously developed land, provision of affordable homes, mixed use development and reducing the need to travel. These issues are better covered by Government Guidance, such as ODPM Planning Policy Statements (PPS), are well incorporated into development plans, are becoming better addressed by developers.

3.4 Therefore the discussions were focused more limited aspects of sustainable development, and these are:

- energy efficiency (conservation of fuel and power)
- water efficiency (use of potable water)
- surface water management
- site waste management (during construction)
- household waste management (during occupation)
- use of materials and local/sustainable procurement

3.5 There are additional elements, which could also be considered in the interviews where the respondents had a particular knowledge or interest, and will also be discussed with developers although in less detail:

- lifetime homes
- security and soundproofing
- private external space
- daylighting
- home user guide
- layout of new developments, mix of uses and supporting services
- on-site renewable energy

3.6 The majority of these aspects are taken from the Government’s emerging ‘Code for Sustainable Homes’, consultation paper December 2005, which was also discussed in the interviews. However, the consideration of these matters has not been limited to new homes, and where there was practice of sustainability in other types of building this was also discussed with interviewees.

3.7 In addition during the interviews the respondents were welcome to highlight other key areas of the sustainable development agenda where they believe they have examples of interesting practice. This includes consideration of delivering ‘sustainable communities’ in a wider sense, and may be particularly

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relevant in large scale development of urban extensions and the creation of new communities.

3.8 Where we have referred to ‘sustainable development’ and ‘sustainable construction’ in this report, this should be taken to be in keeping with the aspects set out in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5.

4 Study approach

General approach

4.1 The method of research for this study was to discuss directly with representatives of the development industry and the local authorities what their experience was of the implementation of sustainable development, and in particular within the aspects set out in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5. The intended outcome was to identify how these barriers could be overcome, for example by changes in the way guidance is presented. The intention is also to consider where in the process these barriers arise, and not to limit the study simply to the construction phase of new development, but to widen it to the whole timeframe from concept of a project to implementation and occupation.

4.2 This study is just one part of the strategy to achieve the efficient, effective and consistent delivery of sustainable development in the South West region. Discussing the first hand experience of sustainable development implementation with representatives of the development industry is a vital component of understanding the problems and issues faced by these organisations, as well as their motivation for undertaking development in the way they do. This is useful in order to discuss their view on existing guidance and advice on sustainable development, and whether this is the most effective means of getting development to proceed in a more sustainable way. It is also important to speak with developers who have little knowledge of sustainability development advice and the reasons why, and how this can be overcome.

4.3 As well as speaking with developers it has also been important to speak with officers from a sample of local authorities, including officers in planning policy and development control. This has provided an insight into how planning authorities disseminate advice and guidance to developers on these matters, and how well equipped they feel to deliver this advice and make requirements for more sustainable development from developers. This assists the objectives of ‘The Way Ahead’ project by allowing the local authority role in achieving more sustainable development to be better understood, and by helping with the identification of what guidance and resources they may need to further promote sustainable development considerations in development and construction.

Interviews

4.4 The most appropriate and effective mechanism for assessing the views and opinions of these organisations is by discussing their experiences with them directly, through telephone interviews. The proposed approach in these interviews was to set out a separate standard set of questions for both the local authorities and the representatives of the development industry. This is discussed further in paragraphs 4.8 to 4.11.
4.5 It has been vital to ensure that the right individual were identified for the interviews was vital to allow meaningful discussion of issues. The selected individuals has a sufficiently strategic view of how decision are made on development within the organisation, both in the private and public sector. Within the local authorities this meant speaking to senior member of the planning policy with knowledge of sustainable development issues. In the development control teams senior managers were contacted. Representatives have been sought, in particular, from the key areas identified in The Way Ahead as the focus for growth. These are Cornwall, Bristol and the West of England, Exeter, Swindon and Plymouth, although additional authorities were also contacted.

4.6 Development industry representatives were identified to include those that may have a good understanding and implementation track record on sustainable development, and also those that have yet to adopt a more sustainable approach. A range of organisations were contacted in the development industry, including Registered Social Landlords and Housing Associations, architects, housebuilders and developers. A range of scale of organisation were also contacted, ranging from local to national and with similar range in the scale of development they are involved in. An overview of the industry was sought from representatives of the regional and national offices of the House Builders Federation.

4.7 Interviews were carried out in pre-arranged telephone interviews, with the questionnaire sent in advance. In addition each respondent was sent an email attachment giving brief details of ‘The Way Ahead’ project, as well as the aspects of sustainable development on which the study is based. Interviews were carried out from 2 to 14 February 2006.

Developing the interview questionnaires

4.8 Two questionnaires were produced, one for representatives of the development industry, and the other for the local authority officers (the same questionnaire was used both for development control and planning policy officers). These were finalised with input from the steering group. Copies of these standard questionnaires can be found as Appendices 1 and 2.

4.9 The questionnaires provided a structure to guide discussion on sustainable development. The intention was to ensure these questions were sufficiently open to allow a flexible approach to the interview, rather than be overly prescriptive. In order to allow the exploration of individual experiences in more detail.

4.10 The questionnaires were developed to ensure that the key areas of the research study were covered. In the questionnaire directed to the development industry the aim was to consider how they were contributing to sustainability in new development, the barriers to delivering this, and what may already be, or could in the future, motivate them to more sustainable development. The role of the local planning authority in this process was also considered. The full questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1.

4.11 In the local authority questionnaire questions included their role as providers of advice on sustainable development, and their role in determining planning applications based on sustainability. In addition to their role as providers of advice and guidance on sustainable development matters. The local
authorities were asked consider what, in their experience, may be the barriers to developers in implementing more sustainable development, and how to overcome these. Questions were also asked about the internal working of the local planning authority, including the level of expertise and sharing of knowledge on sustainability development within the authority. The full questionnaire is shown as Appendix 2.

5 Existing Practice - Key Findings from the Development Industry

5.1 We have spoken with eleven different development industry organisations for this study. Ten of these organisations were interviewed and one more gave brief comments 'off the record'. These organisations operate at national, regional and local levels, and are set out in the table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RSL</th>
<th>Housebuilder</th>
<th>Developer</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local/Regional</td>
<td>• South Somerset Homes&lt;br&gt;• Devon &amp; Cornwall HA&lt;br&gt;• Knightstone HA</td>
<td>• Sunnybanks Homes&lt;br&gt;one 'off-the-record'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>• Bovis Homes</td>
<td>• Urban Splash&lt;br&gt;• Crest Nicholson&lt;br&gt;• Recently retired developer</td>
<td>• Stride Treglown</td>
<td>• House Builders Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Our interviews have provided views and opinions in relation to three key questions:

• what motivates developers to build sustainably?

• what kinds of barriers exist preventing more sustainable forms of development and construction?

• what kinds of things would enable a shift in practice within the development industry?

5.3 The ten organisations that were formally interviewed varied widely in terms of their experiences. Three felt that sustainable development was at the heart of what they were trying to achieve on all their sites. These organisations tended to take a holistic view of the sustainable development agenda, and expressly linked the environmental agenda with their wider responsibilities and interests in settlements; this group included a housebuilder, a RSL and a developer. Two more organisations, a developer and a RSL, had recently completed or were in the process of building new developments that embraced sustainable concepts. They too had taken a more holistic view and gone beyond purely environmental issues. Three respondents; one house builder, a retiree from a large development company, and a RSL; had all ‘dabbled’ with making developments more sustainable, either by introducing
certain features on selected sites (eg SUDS), or by completing individual buildings or schemes as a ‘one off’ in the past. The final two organisations we spoke to were the HBF, and an architect, who have been aiming to increase this element of their work. These provided a valuable additional perspective on the situation within the development industry more generally.

Motivators

5.3 Interviewees were asked what the existing motivation was for making development more sustainable. Table 5.2 provides an overview of the responses.

Table 5.2 Reasons why companies build sustainably

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>RSL</th>
<th>House-builder</th>
<th>Developer</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company ethos / social conscience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR &amp; marketing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation / legislation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit / economic reasons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client request</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing / experimentation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impresses the LPA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPA request</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPA initiative / support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain a market advantage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ be in the forefront</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 **Company ethos:** The most popular motivator for the organisations concerned, was that the company had taken a conscious decision to explore and take on board sustainable methods because they felt that it was the right thing to do. There was a strong element of social conscience within this ethos, for example the commitment to invest in local communities through a holistic approach to development, including the procurement of local labour for the complete build rather than importing off-site pre-fabricated modular parts manufactured abroad. In addition to the aforementioned, this group also included private sector developers and house builders, one of which was a public limited company. For these companies, whilst profit was obviously the main driver, there was a view that social / environmental responsibility was also an important consideration.

5.5 **PR and publicity:** Others commented on the PR and publicity value in pursuing more sustainable options. Developers are very practical, and the decisions they take are often driven primarily by cost, particularly for the private sector, but also increasingly for RSLs who must also take account of economic considerations in their developments. Investing in sustainable features across the whole development allows some developers to gain a particular credibility arising from the perception that they provide high quality, sustainable buildings and homes. Whilst what they can achieve on each individual site has to be balanced against profit margins, the fact that they have a certain reputation has implications for sales, and also for profit. For the volume house builders, PR was considered to be a potential motivator, but was not felt to have had much impact to date, due to a general lack of
awareness about the benefits to the customer of ‘sustainable’ buildings, and wariness about the reliability of technology. Others felt that there had been a visible increase in awareness in recent years. The HBF felt that there was some marketing potential at present, but this was limited and depended on the specific market sector being targeted. The doubt expressed in this area was linked to the general lack of information specifying the benefits to the purchaser in financial terms of certain features – what developers need here are short, punchy ‘messages’ that will appeal to the customer.

5.6 **Regulation and legislation:** This was identified as the ultimate motivator by several interviewees. More rigorous requirements from building regulations have required developers to improve their performance in recent years. This is particularly true for the larger companies; there is a view that ‘we will do what we have to do but we don’t do anything beyond this’. Funding bodies also sometimes make high environmental standards a condition when awarding monies.

5.7 **Client request:** This was cited as a motivator by two interviewees, in both these cases, the client was from the public sector. In these cases the higher sustainability specifications of the client meant that development was required to be completed to these standards.

5.8 **Local authority influence:** Others commented that they had been asked to include certain features by the local planning authority, or that the authority had been ‘impressed’ by the idea of more sustainable homes. With two companies were involved in building ‘exemplar’ sustainable developments as an experiment working alongside the local planning authority, to test the process and identify what specifications worked, what the cost implications were, and what lessons could be taken forward into other developments. One of these companies (Devon and Cornwall Housing) had been approached by the local authority to build a new affordable housing scheme at South Molton, and this had been the catalyst to a new approach which they had been considering for some time. The local authority had set up a support team comprising of a planner, building control officer, housing officer and local architect, and this team assisted in researching and advising on options. The other company (Crest Nicholson) had support and advice from the Sustainable Cities team at Bristol City Council on their ‘harbour side’ development, as well as support from other organisations promoting more sustainable development such as ‘Future Foundations’. These organisations provided assistance in project management. Finally, one additional company had similar motivation for creating more sustainable development in that they wished to be at the forefront of a way of working that they felt would be required from everyone in the future.

**5.9 Barriers**

A number of ‘barriers’ were identified in relation to the utilisation of more sustainable approaches and features in new development. Table 5.3 provides an overview of the types of issues that were felt to be important.

5.10 **Cost:** It is clear from the table that all those interviewed considered cost to be the biggest barrier in preventing sustainable solutions and more sustainable developments. The added cost of new specifications is a particular issue for the volume house builders. The cumulative costs of a number of measures across a number of homes are identified as significant. There is a view that if
one company were to incorporate more expensive specifications voluntarily it would put them at a disadvantage compared to other developers – volume house builders do not believe that they can pass the cost on to the consumer because this would make their product less competitive. In the longer term this cost will be subtracted from the price of the land, but this makes the builder less competitive in the bidding process. Thus the lack of a particular stimulus or requirement at national level is also a barrier. If mandatory changes were introduced, house builders could pursue sustainable options without fear of losing out to their competitors. Moreover, one interviewee commented that the lack of incentives in the form of grants and tax breaks was also a barrier. Significantly, this means that sustainable features are more likely to be incorporated in high value locations, where the profit margins are squeezed less.

Table 5.3. Barriers: Reasons why companies do not build sustainably

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>RSL</th>
<th>House-builder</th>
<th>Developer</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of cost</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of utilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of customer / tenant awareness or hostility</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Cottage industry’ approach to manufacture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sympathy within development industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of stimulus / requirement at national level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreliable technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of technical expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much guidance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive attitude of highway and water authorities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of incentives (funding)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locational disincentive in rural areas, means BREEAM based scores will always be low</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.11 For RSLs there can also be cost implications – one interviewee told us that there is tension between the Housing Corporation funding systems and taking forward innovative technology: , as RSLs now have to buy land on the open market, and more cheaply. This deters the use of more expensive new technologies as it becomes more expensive to deliver the homes. Government also fixes the rent they can charge in a given location, so there is no way of making back the money. One RSL said that at present they are subsidising each property at about £25,000. They already use the rental from existing properties to subsidise new build and this amount would go up if they were to use more expensive specifications.

5.12 Cost perceptions: Several interviewees commented that, whilst there is a cost element, it can be perceived to be worse than it is – and some just do not
even explore the idea of more sustainable specifications because they believe that costs to be higher than they really are. One developer was of the view that, if you took a 'holistic' approach across a number of issues, you would save money in other areas and offset the costs of new specifications. It seems that measures that are low cost but with high benefit are more likely to be implemented. The architect that we spoke to emphasised that about half of the credits for the BREEAM rating 'very good' can be gained at no further expense, provided that the issues are considered early on in the development process. This difference in opinion, in regard to cost, is perhaps linked to the view expressed by some that there is a basic lack of sympathy with the objective of greater sustainability within some parts of the development industry. It does not recognise the view that there is an increasing value and prestige in developing sustainably and that positive customer perception and interest is growing.

5.13 **Lack of knowledge:** The issue of cost is combined with a general lack of knowledge and information about the wider financial implications, particularly in relation to the use of new technology, and a number of the other barriers identified were linked to financial considerations in some way. Several people commented that there has been very little investment in developing the technology – large companies have failed to take the technology on board and develop it for a mass market. Most features are experimental and it has been left to small producers to take forward on a ‘cottage industry’ scale. It can be hard to find out about products and compare their effectiveness, there are no economies of scale in production, and companies are small and vulnerable.

5.14 **Unreliable technologies:** Linked to a general lack of knowledge, there is a perception that some new technologies are unreliable, that they do not always operate effectively, or that maintenance issues have yet to be resolved. One RSL who built an innovative development in the late 1990’s did not pursue the technology because some of the features did not work properly and the tenants were not knowledgeable on what was necessary for suitable upkeep. For both volume house builders and RSLs there was considered to be a general lack of awareness, even hostility, to new technologies.

5.15 **The attitude of public bodies / utilities** has been frequently commented upon. In particular water authorities and highways agency/authorities were said to have a very reluctant / negative attitude to adopting sustainable drainage schemes, because they are suspicious of the maintenance implications. These agencies were generally felt to be very reactive.

5.16 Other barriers mentioned included a lack of technical expertise, particularly among smaller companies who may not have the resources available to look at all the information available or to research alternatives and their costs and benefits. The Eco-Homes locational criteria which make it difficult to achieve a ‘very good’ rating in rural communities were also cited as a barrier. Finally, one developer commented that public authorities need to consider more than simply sale value in doing their calculations about the value to be gained from selling to different developers, with wider sustainability criteria also needing to be considered.
Where do barriers arise?

5.17 In terms of the overall process, developers were asked whether they felt these barriers were greatest at the stage of inception, site selection, site design and master planning, gaining planning permission, building regulations, or implementation. The points where most barriers seemed to occur were during the inception, planning application and implementation stages. In terms of **inception**, it was emphasised that developers need to know what all the costs will be at this early stage, otherwise the financial appraisal will not balance. If these calculations are done without incorporating sustainability measures it will be more difficult to integrate them later. Problems in relation to **implementation** included getting bodies such as highway and water authorities to embrace or take responsibility for new measures such as sustainable drainage, and implementing new building regulations standards when the mechanisms and facilities for testing had not been put in place in time by the Government.

5.18 Only three interviewees felt that gaining **planning permission** was a particular barrier in terms of the stages of the process. However, when asked about the role of the local authority in facilitating the process, other barriers emerged. Most felt that local planning authorities were not suitably equipped to provide advice on sustainable development. Some said that they did their own research and would not ask local authorities for advice. Part of the problem is that most planners have not been involved in building or in developing sites themselves, and do not know what is involved.

Table 5.5 Difficulties experienced when seeking planning permission from local planning authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RSL</th>
<th>House-builder</th>
<th>Developer</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Councillors – unpredictability / lack of understanding</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of what they are asking for</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consistency between local authorities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consistency within the same authority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s106 obligations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.19 Several specific difficulties were identified in negotiation with the Local Planning Authority. These are summarised in table 5.5. The lack of knowledge generally appeared to be a particular problem when it came to elected members. Design issues were cited several times. This included a tension between certain objectives related to urban design, such as building orientation and conservation related issues, and the requirements of buildings with environmentally sustainable specifications. Several commented that they experienced resistance to innovations (e.g. solar panels) and that the lack of knowledge was felt to be linked to understaffing. There were also situations where different and conflicting advice was given first by policy and later by development control officers.
Overcoming Barriers

5.20 Developers were asked what changes they felt would bring about a shift in practice towards more environmentally sustainable forms of development. The responses are summarised in table 5.6 below.

5.21 Regulation: according to HBF, there is a split in the house building industry in terms of whether a ‘carrot’ or ‘stick’ would be preferable in shifting practice. However, there was a common perception among those we spoke with, regardless of the type of developer, that the thing which would make the most difference was regulation or tougher mandatory standards for all buildings.

5.22 Consistent standards: several of the RSLs commented on the need for more consistency in standards between homes built by themselves and affordable homes built by the private sector. For private sector developers, it was felt that this would mean that companies would not be at a financial disadvantage when bidding for land, if they pursued sustainability objectives. Three of the organisations who called for more regulation, also called for more incentives in the form of grants and tax breaks to encourage the use of more sustainable technology.

Table 5.6 What would bring about a shift in practice?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RSL</th>
<th>House-builder</th>
<th>Developer</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulation / mandatory standards</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand / public awareness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More ‘carrots’</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better information on costs &amp; benefits</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Local Authorities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proven cost savings in construction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in perception by developers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology – critical mass</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change to eco-homes to support rural communities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.23 Public awareness: an increase in public awareness was also felt by some to be important in stimulating a shift in practice. Volume housebuilders say there are very few requests from the public at present. On the other hand, one housing association commented that people were asking to buy their new environmentally sustainable homes on the open market. Whatever the reality of the situation, higher demand would undoubtedly mean more impetus for developers. Increased awareness and demand would help the industry to reach a point of ‘critical mass’ where demand for products would support higher levels of product production. When a certain point is reached, a ‘snowball’ effect takes over, and demand will gather momentum of its own accord. There is no doubt that awareness is increasing, but it has not yet reached any significant level. The presence of improved and marketable
information on costs and benefits, as discussed above, would help in this regard.

5.24 **Local authority support:** several organisations commented on the need for more proactive support from local authorities, not just for experimental projects, or in isolated authorities. Several authorities had really benefited from the support of the local authority, not just in terms of advice, but in terms of the criteria used in land sales decisions, and felt that these types of benefits should be more widely available. Similarly greater support and a more positive attitude from utilities companies would make the process of innovation more attractive to developers.

5.25 **Evidence of costs associated with more sustainable construction:** two interviewees, including one RSL and one volume housebuilder, both commented that they would need to see proven cost savings in construction before implementing new and more sustainable developments. Neither of these organisations were pursuing environmentally sustainable options. In addition, one developer who was taking forward a new approach commented that what was needed was a change in perception among developers regarding the costs of new solutions.

**Guidance and advice on sustainable development**

5.26 **Sources of advice:** Developers were asked which kinds of guidance and advice they found most useful. There was a general consensus that the internet was the most useful source. Some people used web-based guidance, whilst others went direct to the sites of producers to source information. Bulletins such as those circulated by the Housing Corporation, were also considered helpful, however, several people commented that they preferred to get advice in person, rather than use web sites or manuals; this included the use of consultants to advise on specifications. Those who were experimenting and testing out new ideas used organisations such as ‘Forum for the Future’ as a source of advice, and have direct assistance in terms of project management and procurement. For these two companies, the local authority had also been very supportive.

5.27 **Local authority role:** Several interviewees said that they would not consider going to the local authority for advice, either because of lack of knowledge, or because they were considered too partial, or because they were not seen as relevant. Several said that the local planning authority identifies the problems, whilst the developer has to find a way to overcome them. Others felt that the local planning authority should seek to provide advice. Suggestions for improvement included the idea of training for planners and urban designers in local authorities, and the need to have someone who understands the technical issues (perhaps a building control officer) who can advise and negotiate on the basis of policy requirements for environmental sustainability. Alternatively there could be better linkages to the building regulations process.

5.28 There were a variety of suggestions for improving or adding to the range of guidance and advice that already exists. These included:

- A practical workshop on ‘what to do to achieve the eco-homes ‘very good’ standard’ would be very useful. Currently there are very few workshops in
the south west.

- Presenting and signposting guidance in an easy way would be very helpful – ‘a one-stop shop’.

- Guidance on costs and payback and how much money you save by using a particular product over a given period of time – this is never clear.

- Case studies and learning from others in terms of project management would be useful. It is still early days for a lot of people – for example, whenever Crest begin a new building on harbour side they hold a ‘sustainability workshop’ where the entire team (including the supply chain) contribute towards putting together an action plan for that particular project – it works well and there is a compelling case to roll this out across the company.

- There is a need to find a way through the maze of producers. A guide to project management, for example a client’s guide to procurement with sourcing of products and costing and comparisons to normal spend would be useful and help in getting the right products and employing the right contractors.

- Sustainability accreditation for contractors.

- Several considered that the greatest need for advice is in the area of surface water management – this is what creates most problems.

- Others felt that dealing with site waste was less understood.

**The Code for Sustainable Homes**

5.29 Almost all the interviewees had seen the emerging Code for Sustainable Homes. Table 5.7 summarises respondent’s views on the code and how it should be used. A number of people felt that this needed to be mandatory to have any effect, including several interviewees who were not currently seeking to improve their performance in sustainability terms. Two interviewees, both of whom had some experience in working with Eco-Homes and BREEAM, could see no need for the code, when these schemes already existed.

**Table 5.7 Views on the Sustainable buildings code**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View</th>
<th>RSL</th>
<th>House-builder</th>
<th>Developer</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must be mandatory</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary approach is useful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stars are helpful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stars are un-helpful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be 10 stars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No need for the code – Have eco-homes &amp; BREEAM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

5.30 The current **motivation** to implementing more sustainable development, as identified by developers during the survey are:

- **Company ethos** and the commitment of the organisation to more sustainable development

- **PR and publicity** gaining a reputation for developing more sustainably may help to promote sales and provide a market advantage, although some interviewees felt that this has had little impact yet due to the lack of market demand

- **Regulation and legislation** developers identified that they are building more sustainable developments because they are required to do so, for example changes in the Building Regulations

- **Local authority influence** the local authority requesting or supporting more sustainable development helps motivate developers in order to gain planning permission

- **Client request** it was identified that where the client required more sustainable development the developer delivered this, this includes the local authority as client.

5.31 The current **barriers** to implementing more sustainable development, as identified during the survey are:

- **Cost** was a key constraint, particularly where increased cost of development through including sustainability features would put the developer at a financial disadvantage to other developers, and make their product less competitive

- **Cost perceptions** linked to the overall issue of cost is that some developers may not be proceeding with more sustainable developments as they believe the costs would be prohibitive

- **Lack of knowledge** this is a dual issue, and can be linked to the lack of understanding of cost, as well as a lack of technical knowledge and information on sustainable technologies which may be a particular issue with smaller organisations

- **Unreliable technologies** linked to the lack of information on new technologies there is a concern, perceived or otherwise, that new sustainable technologies are unreliable and are difficult to maintain

- **Other barriers** other barriers mentioned included that highway and water authorities were often unsupportive of schemes to include sustainable drainage systems in development, and problems with the Eco-Home criteria meaning that is not worth pursuing a high scoring sustainable development under this method if the development is not is a sustainable location.
The interviewees were also consulted on their opinion on where the barriers to implementing sustainable development may arise in the process from inception to completion. The responses included:

- **problems at inception** related to the need to know the costs of implementing sustainable development measures at this stage in order to carry out financial appraisal of the development.

- **at implementation** the problems relate to the need to get water and highway authorities to agree to sustainable drainage schemes.

- Working with the **local planning authority** raises several issues, including the belief from most interviewees that the LPA often are not equipped to provide advice on these matters including lack of knowledge and low staffing levels; also there may be a lack of understanding from elected members; and conflict of LPA design requirements and sustainable design requirements when seeking permission, occasionally resistance of innovation (e.g., solar panels).

The interviewees were asked to consider how to overcome the barriers to delivering more sustainable development. This included:

- **Regulation** all respondents stated that tougher mandatory standards would make the most impact in improving the sustainability of new development, this is linked to the need for **greater consistency** between developers of all types and a ‘level playing field’.

- **Improving public awareness** was felt to be necessary in order to help fuel the demand for more sustainable buildings, and in particular homes, and this should include information for buyers on cost savings of more efficient homes.

- **Support from local authorities** on creating more sustainable developments, this support needs to be across the board for all development, not just isolated example sites, and should include improvements to their role as a source of advice.

- **Cost evidence** developers felt it would be useful to have more information on how sustainability features could be incorporated into development at no, or low, cost.

Interviewees from the development industry were asked what sources of advice or guidance they found most useful. They identified:

- The **internet** was a key source of guidance, including generic web-based guidance, business sites of suppliers, and advice bulletins including those produced by the Housing Corporation.

- The **local authority** was not a useful source of advice according to several respondents, for reasons including lack of knowledge, or potential impartiality of advice. It was suggested that the local authority could have better embedded expertise on sustainable development, and particularly technical matters.
• A variety of other suggestions for new guidance or advice, including workshops, an overarching sign-posting guidance, information on costs, case studies, and a guide to suppliers, products and suitably qualified contractors.

6 Existing Practice – Key Findings from the Local Planning Authorities

The Respondents

6.1 In total ten representatives of local planning authorities were interviewed about their experience of implementing more sustainable development, particularly relating to the aspects of sustainable development set out in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5. These interviewees included planning officers working within both the planning policy and development control sections of the planning authority.

6.2 The planning policy interviewees were senior officers from:

- Poole Borough Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Bristol City Council
- Gloucester City Council
- Carrick District Council

6.3 Development control interviews were senior officers from:

- Plymouth City Council
- Bristol City Council
- East Devon District Council
- Swindon Borough Council

6.4 An urban designer working on the Cranbrook New Community in East Devon was also interviewed for the study, although this was in specific terms relating to the implementation of the new community.

6.5 The questionnaire and discussion with the local authorities divided into two main subject areas in relation to implementing more sustainable development. These are the internal experiences of the local authority, and what they can do to promote more sustainable development, and what the barriers are internally to carrying this out. The other area is the perception of the local authority on what it believes to be the key barriers to the development industry in undertaking a greater level of sustainable development.

Local Authority Working

6.6 This section considers how the local authority helps to implement sustainable development, particularly in terms of the aspects of sustainable development given for this study (paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5).
Local Authority Barriers

6.7 The representatives of the local authorities were asked to consider what they believe are the main barriers to ensuring that developers achieve more sustainable developments, in terms of the working practices and their ability to drive forward sustainable development implementation.

6.8 **Expertise:** One of the barriers local authorities identify relates to the expertise within the planning department. This is because without sufficient expertise on sustainability matters, and particularly those technical matters that relate to the efficiency of new buildings, it can be difficult for officers within development control to argue the case for inclusion of these features in new developments. At present in many authorities there are officers who are knowledgeable on aspects of sustainability, but often this is due more to their personal interest, rather than as part of their job descriptions and the corporate aims of the authority.

6.9 The lack of expertise in development control sections may sometimes mean that issues of sustainability, and particular those within the aspects for this study, are not being consistently highlighted as issues of importance to developers.

6.10 Knowledge is vital when dealing with representatives of the development proposed, in order to ensure that they take on board sustainability considerations, even where there may be resistance.

6.11 **Effective policy:** The policies on efficient design, and sustainable construction that were included in Local Plans of various authorities, have often been difficult to uphold in practice. This may again relate to the knowledge and understanding in the planning department and their ability to enforce these. However there may also be an issue of whether the Planning Inspectors uphold these policies at appeal. Local authorities state that no matter how much guidance or policy requirements are produced within the authority, unless they have the ‘teeth’ to implement these, in terms of expertise and support from the Inspectorate, they can never be effective.

6.12 The Planning Inspectorate can also have an impact on the policies that appear in the Local Plan, that support more sustainable development. This may be in terms of understanding of issues, but also the approach they take is governed by existing planning legislation and guidance. Therefore lack of suitable guidance and legislation may mean that certain, more forward thinking, policies have not been upheld at Public Inquiry in the past.

6.13 **Performance targets:** Process related targets may also be a barrier to negotiating more sustainable development considerations in developments. Particularly the eight week turnaround period for the majority of applications is too limited to allow time for negotiation on sustainability matters, and therefore these may be more likely to be incorporated into larger applications where time pressures are not so great and time for negotiation may be greater.

Overcoming barriers – local authority internal working

6.14 **Expertise:** As it was suggested that one of the key barriers to implementing sustainable development may be lack of relevant expertise, there is a need for embedded expertise on sustainable development matters within the
planning department. This can be a single individual, or a team, depending on the size of the authority. These specialists would need to be suitably qualified to answer questions on sustainable development, including technical knowledge on issues such as sustainable drainage and energy efficiency were necessary. There is also the need for these specialists to be available for development control as well as strategic planning policy work. This issue was identified by several authorities as important, and could envisage a role for these individuals similar to that of archaeology, countryside and other specialists in the planning department. An example of where embedded expertise was useful was in Bristol, where having a technical expert in sustainable drainage within the ‘Sustainable Cities’ team ensured a sustainable drainage scheme could be included in a development, where an engineer employed by the developer stated it was not feasible.

6.15 Alternatively, it was suggested that knowledge barriers could be overcome through external experts at a regional level. These experts could be identified and made available to work with local authorities to answer technical questions on sustainable development and construction and support the position of the local authority to the developer, or provide expertise should an appeal arise.

6.16 **Internal working:** It is also apparent, in a few instances, that although there is expertise in sustainability issues at the policy level of the local authority, this is not necessarily transferred through to development control and the decisions being made here. This may be due to the pressures on development control officers to have knowledge on a wide range of issues and ensure that a wide variety of conditions are fulfilled by developers. Therefore issues relating to the sustainability matters relevant to this study may come lower on a list of competing priorities. Better internal working between planning policy and development control may help to ensure that the importance of these issues is frequently raised to development control officers, so when dealing with developers and determining applications they have appropriate understanding and support to implement development plan policy.

6.17 In addition, local authorities also recognised there may be a need for closer working between Building Control and Development Control. This will be especially pertinent if Building Regulations begin to set higher standards or cover more issues that may have a greater effect on the layout and appearance of development. The majority of local authorities identified that at present there was very little common working between the two departments, with the two processes running in parallel. The only time there is contact may be when new Building Regulations are bought in (such as new Part L) in order to discuss what the changes mean for planning. In the future it may be appropriate to have more protocols on working together, dovetailing work to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. However, many large developers have Building Regulations signed off privately, without the involvement of the local authority’s team, and therefore this approach to joint working may become less viable in the future.

6.18 **Standard conditions:** A further barrier local authorities identified was that in order for developers to better understand what would be expected of them in terms of sustainable development, each authority should be internally more consistent in the requirements they set for developers, including using standard conditions. For example in Swindon a document of standard legal
agreements is being prepared, including the various contributions that will be required from developers, with the intention of removing the ability of the developer to negotiate contributions.

The local authority as provider of guidance and policy, and as a role model in promoting more sustainable development

6.19 A particularly pertinent point made by one respondent is that the main way local authorities can influence the implementation of greater sustainability is in the granting (or refusal) of planning permission and the negotiation of conditions. Therefore, as the planning system is plan led, it is critical that these plans contain appropriate polices and supporting requirements to promote and secure sustainable development.

6.20 The majority of local authorities feel they are well placed to deal with sustainability matters, and to promote these issues to developers. They feel it is their role to continually challenge developers to instigate more sustainable development, although some think that developers would prefer to receive advice from a third party.

6.21 Guidance documents and compliance requirements: Despite many existing local plans containing policies on sustainable development, often the local authorities interviewed found that these have proved ineffective in securing more sustainable development, and are often not upheld at appeal. This is especially common with the policies of older plans. The local authorities have faith that future Local Development Framework policies will be more strongly worded and better implemented in their requirements for the delivery of sustainable developments. Local authorities reported that the LDFs currently under production would contain policies relevant to the sustainable development matters covered in this study, with the intention that these would be stronger and stand up to scrutiny better than existing policy.

6.22 Local authorities also have other sources of guidance on sustainable development, for example Bristol had a ‘Sustainable Development Guide for Construction’ Supplementary Planning Guide (SPG). Bristol officers felt that this document was potentially too wide ranging in its coverage of sustainable issues to ever be very effective. This is being replaced by a new Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), that is a more practical and focussed document that should be useful for developers. In Bristol, developers are required to complete a ‘sustainability profile’ of their proposal, to ensure they have considered sustainability in design and layout, and fulfilling this requirement is necessary for logging an application. However, failure to ensure more sustainable development is not necessarily a reason for refusing permission, and the profile serves as tool for developers in considering options, and as a basis for negotiation for the authority.

6.23 The supporting text to a policy in the Poole Local Plan also contains a requirement for a Sustainable Design Statement for developments over a given threshold size. This focussed on how they will deliver energy efficiency through the design and layout of a development.

6.24 Compliance requirements were also used in the Southern Extension to Swindon, where an independently audited benchmarking scheme was used to assess whether the sustainability strategy for this development compared
favourably to nationally identified sustainable schemes, such as BedZED in Beddington, Sutton.

6.25 **Leading by example:** In addition to providing guidance and policy to guide development, the local authority may also have a role in ensuring that its own developments are built to high sustainability standards in order to serve as examples to developers. This is not always straightforward, as in an example of a new school where the local authority pushed for it to be built to a high BREEAM for Schools standard, the education department was not keen to spend the extra money on sustainability considerations and would rather spend the money on the overriding purpose of the school which is education.

6.26 This could also include the local authority selling its own land at a subsidised cost to pay for sustainable development conditions that will be made mandatory on the site. An example of this approach occurred in central Poole, where a site owned by the local authority was sold to a Housing Association at a subsidised price to enable development as 100% affordable housing, at Eco-Homes ‘very good’ standard, as well as other sustainability considerations including home-zones and limited parking.

**Key sources of external guidance or checklists to achieving sustainable development as given in the aspects of sustainable development**

6.27 Many respondents did not directly refer developers to any specific sources of external guidance. Five respondents stated that the Eco-Homes approach was a good, independent and well respected methodology, that they would recommend where necessary. The was prepared by the Buildings Research Establishment under their wider Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). This was also recommend by authorities, as were the building-specific BREAAM tools such as ‘BREEAM for Schools’. Although one respondent had reservations on relying on this method too strongly as it allows the trade-off of sustainability criteria, that may not be suitable in all circumstances.

6.28 Other relevant sources of information that were mentioned by respondents include the Government funded information on incorporating energy efficiency into development from Action Energy and the Carbon Trust. As well as the Government funded WRAP initiative (Waste and Recycling Action Programme) on markets for recycled materials, including procurement for construction. Benchmarking schemes are also useful, such as the BedZED profile, as a comparator for assessing what can be achieved in new development. The South West Renewable Energy Strategy was also mentioned as useful on renewable energy matters.

**Local authority perceptions of the development industry**

**Key Barriers for developers implementing more sustainable development**

6.29 This section of the report considers the key barriers to the development industry in achieving a greater level of sustainable development, as perceived from the local authorities’ point of view. During the survey, the local authority officers were asked to name what they thought were the key barriers.
Table 6.1. Local authorities view on the key barriers preventing developers implement more sustainable development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Awareness and understanding</th>
<th>Lack of regulations and requirements</th>
<th>Inertia and resistance to change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poole – PP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol - PP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth – PP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrick – PP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester – PP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol – DC</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth – DC</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Dev – DC</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Swindon – DC</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Dev – UD</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.30 Table 6.1 shows a basic analysis of these results and the four key barriers. The table allows a simple overview of the key issues, and clearly shows that cost was almost consistently highlighted as a barrier by planning officers. However, the table is only indented as a quick visual reference as many of the matters are interrelated and more complex than the table alone can indicate.

6.31 **Cost:** The perceived or actual costs of implementing more sustainable development was identified by the majority of officers as a key barrier to delivering more sustainable development. However, this one heading covers a range of ways in which costs may be a barrier.

6.32 Cost is a limiting factor as the development industry is predominantly one that is driven by profit, and maximising these profit margins is often the key goal of any development. Therefore the developers need to know the costs of development from the outset in order to be able to factor these into the initial price they will pay for land. If the costs can be offset against the value of the land then a developer may be more willing to include them in their scheme, or if they can pass these costs onto clients/buyers and sell at a premium. Although related to the lack of regulations and requirements for the sustainability issues covered by this study, developers rarely know what the expectations are from the outset on these matters so they can not be incorporated in land values.

6.33 Many local authorities identified that developers were already asked to make a large amount of financial contribution in new development through planning obligations. This is particularly the case in large scale development of new communities, where contributions could include costs for provision of affordable homes, schools, community centres, leisure facilities, public transport and highways (both on and off-site). In the Swindon Southern Extension, these were estimated at around £14,000 per 3/4 bedroom dwelling without including any additional costs for sustainable features in the new homes. Furthermore, in the majority of cases these costs will need to be paid for up-front before the developer realises any return from the development, and this front-loading of costs may be a barrier to developers wanting to take on any more expense in the construction of a development. Therefore developers may be resistant to negotiations on sustainable development matters beyond these contributions.
6.34 In addition, where a local authority is actively trying to attract development due to existing low demand, it can be very difficult to negotiate large contributions from the developer as the developer may simply choose to locate elsewhere.

6.35 The issue of cost also relates to the perceptions of costs, as many developers will not have a clear understanding of how much they will have to pay to incorporate sustainable considerations into a development. Developers may often assume that costs will be prohibitive without clear evidence or attempt to calculate actual costs and economies of scale of carrying this out in a large project, and thereby dismissing the possibility out of hand, (see paragraph 6.47 for an example).

6.36 Costs also relate to perceptions of the market, because if costs cannot be deducted from land value they will need to be passed on to the buyers/clients. Developers may be adverse to this without proof that people are willing to pay a premium for these homes and there is a market for them.

6.37 **Understanding:** Awareness and understanding of those elements of sustainability given for this study is also raised by local authority officers as a key barrier to developers in implementation. This lack of understanding does vary in different aspects of sustainable development. For example, the matters that are covered in national and local policy to a greater extent have become more established and are better understood by developers, and they expect to be required to consider them. Examples include affordable housing, mix of uses and use of previously developed land – however, this does not necessarily mean these issues are well implemented.

6.38 In terms of the aspects of sustainable development for this study, there is general consensus that there is a lack of understanding, and in particular relating to building materials, sustainable procurement, water efficiency and energy efficiency. Sustainable drainage may be becoming better understood, especially where implementation is driven by the Environment Agency, although some development professionals who prefer a traditional approach to development still lack understanding and the acceptance of the approach may vary from authority to authority. This issue is returned to in commenting on inertia and willingness to change in paragraphs 6.44 to 6.47.

6.39 The lack of understanding even extends to regulatory issues, such as compliance with current Part L of the Building Regulations on energy efficiency. This issue may be further compounded with the new Part L which is more ambitious in the targets that should be met.

6.40 Understanding may also be varied depending on the size of the developer, as larger organisations may have a better understanding than small and medium sized developers. As smaller developers may not have the internal resources to employ or train staff with this specialist knowledge. There may also be a gradual increase in acceptance of sustainability issues, and awareness that these issues may become a required part of the specification for some developments.

6.41 As well as lack of understanding there may also be misunderstanding of issues by developers. An example would be the perception that the
implementation of some design features in a building will have substantial benefit in terms of sustainability, where in fact any benefits are negligible.

6.42 **Regulation:** As covered in the section on costs, paragraph 6.58, the lack of standard regulations and requirements, as all levels, may be holding back a move towards creating more sustainable development. Many local authority officers believe that when developers have certainty over what is expected of them in creating more sustainable developments, they will be able to budget for costs fully, and build these into the overall price they pay for land. Without regulations, and defined requirements, the majority of gains in this area must come through negotiation. This is not proving effective due to the long list of contributions developers already have to make, many of which are covered by regulation and therefore take precedence.

6.43 Therefore consistency, and the setting of clearer expectations are necessary in overcoming this barrier.

6.44 **Inertia:** It was identified that getting developers to change their ‘business-as-usual’ approach to development is a key barrier. Many developers, particularly housebuilders, will have many aspects of the business set-up that are standardised, such as supply chains, standard design and contractors and altering these to implement more sustainable development would require an investment of time and money. Therefore, inertia and lack of understanding may go hand in hand as it may be poor understanding of the costs, together with a lack of regulations detailing what the requirements are, that make developers unwilling to change their business practices to adopt more sustainable development.

6.45 Local authority representatives noted that developers may be inherently opposed to taking risk, and therefore may not want to proceed with more sustainable features in a building if they do not think there is a proven market for this type of home. This could either be a market where buyers are willing to pay a premium for sustainability features, or where the homes contain features that may require long-term maintenance, or may be more unattractive to buyers such as ‘grey water’ systems, that may dissuade buyers irrespective of cost.

6.46 The inertia may not only be in business practice, but also in the traditionalism of some people working in the development industry, including developers, architects and engineers. In particular local authorities have encountered site engineers who are very resistant to sustainable drainage, simply because it requires new technology and a shift in the way things are done. There may also be some unwillingness to change in engineers from local highways authorities. These matters may be based on personality rather than standard business practice. Other similar barriers have arisen in trying to implement sustainable drainage systems as the water utility companies are not willing to adopt surface water storage created as part of these schemes. This was identified at Plymstock Quarry in Plymouth where sustainable drainage systems could not be implemented for this reason. In other situations, although, it does appear that the relevant council has agreed to adopt these water bodies instead.

6.47 An example of developer inertia was identified in Bristol where the Sustainable Cities team calculated in one development that the Eco-Homes standard of all the properties could be raised for an additional £500 per
dwelling, based on economies of scale. However the developer was resistant
to implementing this and chose not to proceed.

Motivation for implementing more sustainable development

6.48 The local authorities were asked what may already be motivating developers
to incorporate greater levels of sustainability into their developments.

6.49 National requirements: Developers also undertake more sustainable
development where they are required to, for example achieving Eco-Homes
‘very good’ standard is required for homes funded by a housing corporation,
as well as housing development on English Partnership sites. In addition
DfES funding for new schools requires BREEAM for Schools compliance.

6.50 Local authority requirements: The local authority often identified that its
own working sometimes was effective in pushing for more sustainability in
developments. This is particularly the case on larger developments, such as
urban extensions and in the creation of new communities, where master
plans, design briefs and sustainability checklists are produced to guide
development. There are several examples of this, including the Cranbrook
new community in East Devon, where the intention is to create a sustainable
community of 2900 dwellings, including a village centre and neighbourhood
centre, schools, sport and recreation facilities, and a country park (dictated by
floodplain), railway station, and new bus route with links to the station and
Exeter. In addition it is the intention of attaining Eco-Homes ‘very good’
standard on all new homes. However, the sustainability and efficiency of the
new buildings may already being compromised in these early stages of
development, as it was originally the intention to have all new homes built at
Eco-Homes ‘excellent’.

6.51 Where the local authority is the land owner it is also possible for them to
demand more sustainable development, and aid this by selling at a
subsidised cost, such as the Poole example in 6.26.

6.52 Client driven: Where the client is actively pursuing a more sustainable
building this is a key motivator, although this may represent more one-off
examples rather than yet becoming part of established business practice.

6.53 Company ethos: There are also some developers that show a commitment
to creating more sustainable development, however again due to costs this
may be at the expense of other sustainability considerations such as the
provision of affordable homes.

6.54 Long-term cost savings: Where the developer will be responsible for the
lifetime running costs of the building they may be more likely to incorporate
efficiency measures, particular in terms of energy, as this will help reduce
costs in the future. Examples include PFI funded schemes such as schools
and hospitals. This is clearly not the case for housing development on private
market homes, as the developer has no direct financial interest in making
these properties cheaper to run.

6.55 To gain planning permission: Development control officers have noted that
where a site is quite marginal in terms of suitability for development, such as
greenfield land or where the developer is seeking lower density housing, they
may submit applications for developments that may achieve a higher level of
sustainability, such as energy and water efficiency features. The reason for
this is to try and achieve permissions for development that may otherwise be
refused out-of-hand for the less sustainable location or densities.

Overcoming the barriers

6.56 The local authorities were asked to consider what they saw as the future
changes that could be made to overcome the barriers that had been
identified.

6.57 Regulation and requirements: Central to this was the need to have more
regulatory strength requiring compliance with sustainability matters.
Therefore regulatory standards, or minimum compliance requirements, need
to be set through policies at all levels. However, there is a clear view that
these may need to come from a national level to ensure they have the
appropriate weight and importance behind them. Some issues could also be
dealt with through the policies of the Regional Spatial Strategy. Key to this is
to have certainty and transparency for developers of what will be required of
them from the outset of development, in order for these matters not to be won
solely through negotiation.

6.58 At a national level, regulations and requirements could come from planning
policies and guidance, such as a new Planning Policy Statement. New and
more stringent Building Regulations may also be suitable and these could
cover more topics including water efficiency. At a local level there needs to
be clearer planning policies that are better implemented through improved
knowledge and understanding in the local planning authority. In addition
there needs to be evidence to show that non-compliance with these policies
will be upheld at appeal and development refused. The use of standard
conditions at a local level was also raised, such as those being developed in
Swindon (paragraph 6.18).

6.59 It was suggested that the BREEAM and Eco-Home methods could become a
requirement in new buildings, with minimum targets set, or making the
emerging Code for Sustainable Homes mandatory rather than voluntary as is
proposed at present.

6.60 The market for sustainable homes: Key to furthering the implementation of
sustainable development in homes is to have demonstrable evidence for
developers that there is a current and growing market for them, and
particularly whether these houses can sell at a premium. Various local
authorities cited a study (possibly prepared by Nottingham University) where
homebuyers were asked if they would pay a premium for a more sustainable
homes, and the majority stated they would. However there is no evidence
available based on actual sales.

6.61 This issue is coupled with a likely need to improve demand for these types of
homes from the public. Key to improving the market are not only increasing
peoples’ understanding of and empathy with environmental sustainability, but
also the cost savings that can be made in the long term from living in a more
resource-efficient home and particularly one that has direct energy savings.
Presenting potential buyers with information on exactly how much money
could be saved, on average, through living in a home that is more energy
efficient or uses renewable energy sources, was suggested by local
authorities as a key way of improving the market. This type of information,
and information on the general sustainability credentials of a home, could be included in Home Information Packs that will be required for home sales from 2007.

6.62 **Sharing of practice:** It was suggested that it may be appropriate for more information to be made available on case study schemes where sustainable development features have been incorporated into developments. This may even be possible internally in national house builders. It was noted by one authority that the southwest branch of a housebuilder was not aware of the work in sustainable development that the same housebuilder was undertaking in a different region.

6.63 **Training and information provision:** It may be valuable to have targeted training for developers and the construction industry could help ensure practice in sustainable development is shared, and help encourage a change in business practice. This could be at a national or regional level. And may be a useful tool in helping overcome current perceptions in the development industry that sustainable construction is a fringe issue and move it into the mainstream, demonstrating to developers how it can be affordable to incorporate sustainability features in a new development, including actual cost breakdowns.

6.64 Providing information to developers covering issues such as sustainable construction materials and suppliers, could help guide developers to sources of more sustainable material, sustainable construction methods and other hardware for sustainable homes.

6.65 **Tax relief, grants or other financial incentives:** It was suggested that it may aid developers if there were more fiscal incentives to developers to create more sustainable homes. This could include tax relief for development of more sustainable homes. There also needs to be better long term funding from Government for sustainability infrastructure, for example an extended grant aid scheme for Photo Voltaic panels. Several local authority officers felt that as the creation of more sustainable homes was an issue of national and global importance, Government should be better at enabling this, including financially.

**Where in the process do barriers occur?**

6.66 The local authorities were asked where in their opinion the key barriers to implementing more sustainable development occurred, from the inception to the implementation of a project.

6.67 **Inception:** The majority of the interviewees identified this as the key stage in incorporating sustainability features into a development. If these matters are not thought about from the outset they are difficult to integrate into the process at a later time. This is particularly important so budgets can be drawn up and the likely costs incorporated into land prices. The local authority has a role in ensuring these matters are taken up where there are pre-applications discussions on developments.

6.68 **Site planning:** This is another key stage, as simple matters such as orientation of buildings and layout can be a key determinant in energy efficiency of homes, as can be making land available for sustainable
drainage.

6.69 **Planning permission**: This is rarely a barrier in local authorities but an opportunity to negotiate sustainable considerations into the process. Opportunities for sustainability may be lost at this stage if the issues are not high in the minds of development control officers, and other matters take precedence. Any skills gap in the local planning authority may become apparent at this stage.

6.70 **Implementation**: Poor ‘value engineering’ at this stage may mean that sometimes sustainable elements are taken out of development at construction, unless it is a fixed legal agreement. This can include non-compliance with Building Regulations, for example fixing regular boilers in place of more efficient condensing boilers.

6.71 An example is at RAF Quedgeley (Kingsway) outside Gloucester, where although conditions were in place for sustainability considerations to be included, when it came to implementation the more conservative working of a consulting engineer stated that sustainable drainage could not be included in the scheme. Despite the local authority officers pushing hard for this to be re-instated it was not. The reason was that off-site road improvements were reliant on funding from the development of this site, therefore stalling the process to negotiate sustainable drainage meant that these were held up. This gave the developer leverage to going directly to the Chief Executive of the council to object that the planning department were delaying development proceeding, and off-site benefits being realised, and so the need for sustainable drainage was dismissed. Therefore even if conditions are put on development it does not mean that it will be implemented. Many of the schemes used as case studies for this work had not reached a very advanced stage yet, and therefore the outcome is not always clear.

6.72 In the new community at Cranbrook it is the intention to create a largely self contained sustainable community. An issue that is being considered for the implementation stage is the importance of ensuring that community facilities, such as a shop, community centre and possibly a school, are in place at the same time as the first houses. As this is essential in order to start building the core of a community with its own unique identity that is inward, rather than outward, looking for essential shops and services.

6.73 **Enforcement**: Enforcing these issues, especially where internal to a building, or where not visible in the finished structure (such as insulation), can be particularly difficult. The authority need to have the resources to ensure these matters are seen through to completion. For example in the Cranbrook new community, the need for a full time development control officer to monitor work on site is being considered, in order to ensure conditions are complied with.

**Further guidance**

6.74 The local authorities were asked to consider what guidance would be most useful for themselves and developers, to help them better implement sustainable development.

6.75 **The Regional Spatial Strategy**: The local authorities, in the main, do see the RSS as a useful tool in getting a higher level of sustainability into projects.
This would be particularly through policy requirements, in a similar way as the renewable energy targets are being incorporated into RSS policy and the Southwest Renewable Energy 2010 project.

6.76 **Dedicated website:** A website that was promoted as the definitive source of information on these matters in the South West was identified as useful approach. This could be directed at local authorities and the development industry. This website could simply be a location that signposted existing guidance, information on suppliers, case study examples, or it could include newly created tools and guidance. For example one authority stated it may be useful to have a questionnaire or flowchart on the site for developers to follow to identify how they could incorporate sustainability features into their development, including case studies and technical details on how this can be achieved. This may be particularly important for medium sized and smaller developers who may lack the in-house resources to research these matters independently. This website need not be new as the information could be incorporated into existing websites on sustainability in the southwest, such as [www.creatingexcellence.org.uk](http://www.creatingexcellence.org.uk).

6.77 **Information sheets:** One development control officer also noted that in getting smaller and medium sized developers to better understand the issues, the most suitable approach is to provide them with simple information sheets. These could each cover single topics, such as energy efficiency, sustainable drainage, be quite basic and user friendly, and be distributed at the pre-application stage. The development control officer suggested that this may be the best way of reaching these organisations, who then can be directed towards other sources as appropriate.

6.78 **Practical information on sourcing:** Information that may be particularly useful to present on this website, or elsewhere, would be a practical guide to developers on sources of sustainable construction material and suppliers. Contact details of contractors and builders with experience of sustainable construction techniques and installing sustainable infrastructure should be included. This approach could involve an accreditation scheme that enabled the identification of these contractors.

6.79 **Simplification and clarification of existing guidance:** A project that brought all the existing sources of guidance on sustainable development together may be useful. This is in order to provide clearer policy guidance, as at present there are too many objectives, policies, and guidelines, that need to be simplified and clarified. A local authority suggested that a document similar to ‘Just Connect’ could be produced for sustainability guidance in the region and nationally. However the production of entirely new guidance was not felt to be necessary by the majority of respondents, as there was already sufficient guidance in existence.

6.80 **Working groups and seminars:** Working groups could be created with representatives from the sub-regions, these could cover topic based issues on sustainable development, such as on energy efficiency. There could also be joint working groups or seminars with the private and public sectors on these issues in order to get a better common understanding.

6.81 **Standard conditions:** A regionally produced guide on good practice conditions that can be negotiated from developers in ensuring more sustainable developments could be useful for development control officers.
This could set out what can be required from developers at negotiation, with a robust evidence and policy basis for negotiation, with examples of where conditions have been upheld at appeal (case law) to allow consistency across the region.

**Summary**

6.82 Interviewees from the local authorities were asked about their own experiences of delivering more sustainable development. Initially they were asked what the **barriers** to delivering sustainable development were. Responses included:

- **Internal expertise**, the lack of knowledge, and particularly on technical issues in local authorities means that it can be difficult for development control officers to put forward, negotiate, and support a case for more sustainable development.

- **Effective policy** upholding local plan policies can be difficult in practice when making development control decisions, and often can fail if tested at an appeal.

- **Internal performance targets** development control officers can find it hard to enter negotiation with developers on sustainable development matters in new development within the eight week decisions periods for applications, in addition to the other negotiation that must occur at this time.

6.83 Suggestions on how these **barriers can be overcome** within the authority were:

- **Expertise** as a barrier is lack of knowledge embedded expertise within the planning department, covering policy and development control, is necessary. It will be particularly important to have access to technical expertise. It may also be appropriate to have external experts based at a regional level.

- **Internal working** there needs to be better interaction and sharing of knowledge on sustainable development issues between the policy team and the development control teams. There may also need to be better links between development control and building control, particularly given that many sustainability measures in new buildings will be delivered through the Building Regulations.

- **Standard conditions** in order to create a level playing field for developers the local authority needs to be internally consistent in the requirements they set for developers.

6.84 Respondents were asked to state what the most **useful sources of guidance** were in delivering more sustainable development. The majority of respondents gave those produced under the BREEAM initiative as the most useful, including Eco-Homes. A respondent also raised the importance of benchmarking schemes such as BedZED.
6.85 The local authorities were asked for their views on the development industry, and what they perceive may be the main barriers for them in delivering sustainable development. In this case the local authorities were asked to the main three. Findings were:

- **Costs** almost all respondents stated that cost was a key issue, but whether this is actual or perceived costs is not clear. The local authorities would like to see more evidence on actual costs, and cost savings, that can be made in developing more sustainable buildings. It was identified that no developer wants to be at a financial disadvantage by including sustainability features, and therefore to create a level playing field more certainty is required at the outset of the process through standard conditions and regulations.

- **Understanding** was also a key issue, and this may also be linked an understanding of costs. There is also a lack of understanding on some aspects of more sustainable development, such as ‘grey water’ recycling, sustainable procurement and choice of materials. Understanding may vary according the size of the developer, with smaller developers less able to commit resources to improve knowledge.

- **Regulation** lack of a level playing field in terms of regulatory requirements may be preventing developers being the first to innovate and risk new approaches.

- **Inertia** there may be some unwillingness of the development industry to adopt new methods, and many may prefer to continue to use existing tried and tested approaches to development, as adopting a new way of working may be financially risky and time consuming.

6.86 Local authorities were also asked what, they believe, may be motivating developers who are currently delivering more sustainable development. Responses were:

- **National requirements** such as required sustainability standards from English Partnerships and Eco-Homes.

- **Local authority requirements** particularly local development plan policy, and development control requirements.

- **Client driven**

- **Company ethos**

- **Long-term cost savings** where the developer will also be responsible for the lifetime running costs of a building they are more likely to include efficiency measures for water and energy use.

- **To gain planning permission** more sustainable construction methods are often proposed by developer on sites that may be less suitable for housing, such as greenfield land or developments at lower densities.
6.87 Local authorities were also asked what how developers could be helped to overcome barriers on delivering more sustainable development. Responses were:

- **Regulations and requirements** better regulation and minimum compliance standards should be established at all policy levels, in order for developers to know what will be required of them from the outset of development.

- **A stronger market for sustainable homes** once it can be shown that there is a growing market for more sustainable homes developers may be more keen to build sustainable homes, particularly where they can be sold at a premium. One of the ways that this could be achieved is through more evidence being made available to potential buyers on the cost savings of a more efficient home.

- **Sharing of good practice** with more information available on case study schemes and detail on technical aspects.

- **Training and information provision** targeted at developers and the construction industry, and information on sustainable materials and suppliers and contractors.

- **Tax relief, grants and other financial incentives** for example tax relief on more sustainable homes, better long term funding schemes from Government.

6.88 The local authorities were asked for their opinions on where in the process barriers to sustainable development occur, key stages were at:

- **Inception** it is difficult to secure sustainability features in development unless they are integrated into plans and budgets from the outset, particularly in the land costs.

- **Site planning** and layout is key to achieving many of the lower cost and fundamental energy efficiency measures in a development, such as building orientation, as well as issues such as providing space for sustainable drainage schemes.

- **Planning permission** rarely is a barrier, although development control officers must be aware of what they can be demand in terms of sustainability features for negotiations at this stage.

- **Implementation** sometimes, despite conditions and including in application plans, sustainability features of development are not implemented at construction stage, for various reasons including technical matters to cost cutting.

### 7 Key findings and Recommendations

7.1 Overall the findings show that there is a general consensus between the views of the local authorities and those of the development industry on what the barriers are to sustainable development, and how these may be
overcome. In this concluding section the issues raised by developers and local authorities are drawn together, in order to show the links between issues, and the barriers and solutions, and finally recommendations for change.

Key findings

7.2 It is clear that cost is identified as the key barrier to implement sustainable development by developers and the local authorities, although this can be a perception of cost, rather than actual costs of implementation. Costs were agreed to be the biggest barrier by developers and local authorities in making a change to current practice. The need for a ‘level playing field’ when making land purchases is a particular concern of several of the larger developers. There is also the need for consistency and certainty of the costs that will be involved in creating more sustainable development. This issue was exacerbated by the perception of higher costs which meant that some developers would not even contemplate the idea of improving sustainability.

7.3 Underlying these issues of cost is an important issue about awareness and information on sustainability. This was raised by the development industry representatives, as well as the local authorities, and the need for more information to be made available which shows what are the costs and benefits of more sustainable development. This matter of improving information and understanding is important within the development industry itself, in the local authorities and also to the public and potential homebuyers in order to create demand for more efficient homes.

7.4 Helping improve the market for more sustainable homes was an issue raised by developers and local authorities. This would enable developers to sell homes on the basis of their environmental and in particular energy saving credentials, and this could be at a price premium. Linked to this is the issue of investment in new sustainable technologies. People need to be satisfied that it is feasible and durable, and as demand grows for this technology there should be a correlated decrease in costs through increased production and economy of scale.

7.5 One point noted in relation to cost in discussion with developers and local authorities was the divergence between actual costs and the perception of costs. Developers who were currently not pursuing environmentally sustainable options and had no intention of doing so, dismissed the approach primarily on cost grounds. However, those who were making changes appreciated the cost difficulties, but did not see this as an insurmountable problem to sustainable development implementation. This shows a need for more information and analysis on what the actual costs are achieving a higher level of sustainability in developments, whether costs are likely to be prohibitive as perceived by some developers.

7.6 Issues raised specific to the local planning authority working including the importance of having embedded expertise on sustainability matters within the authority, and especially within development control departments. This issue was raised by local authorities, as well as with developers who identified the general lack of knowledge, poor staffing levels, and a lack of enthusiasm to engage in pre-application discussions in local planning authorities. Elected members were said to be particularly inconsistent in their decision making, and lacked understanding of the design issues relating to
new technology. As the local authorities and developers identified, where advice and support was given, this could be extremely useful and appreciated in getting more sustainable outcomes.

7.7 The local planning authorities’ role in improving implementation of sustainable development is also dependent on the effectiveness of the policies and requirements that they set at a planning policy level. This includes development plan policy, supplementary planning guidance/documents, master plans, design briefs and sustainability reporting requirements. These are needed in order to supplement and support the negotiation process and setting of conditions at the development control stage.

7.8 The various BREEAM based approaches, including Eco-Homes, were identified by the local authorities and development industry as robust and well respected frameworks for guiding sustainable development in buildings. However, in practical terms it was agreed by the local authorities and developers that there may not be sufficient practical and technical information on implementation of sustainable features in buildings. There is a lack of knowledge in general, not about what needs to be done, but more about how to do it and what products to use. Local authorities identified that developers need to make large scale changes to their business practice in order to achieve more sustainable development.

7.9 In order to bring about more mainstream implementation of sustainable development, and the use of environmentally sustainable technologies, there was agreement amongst the local authorities and many of the developers on the need to take a mandatory approach to implementation. This could include the use of minimum regulatory requirements for development. Coupled with this is the issue of fairness and consistency in requirements, as a mandatory and minimum performance requirements approach will assist in the setting of a level playing field for developers. Although to support this there also needs to be associated awareness raising among the public, developers, and local authorities.

7.10 Some key findings that are particular to the development industry are that in terms of the motivation for building more sustainably, that any type of developer can be an innovator, not solely RSLs. The factor that is key in the current climate is an company ethos or approach stemming from the commitment of key individuals within the organisation, for example the partners or the chief executive. However this does have to be grounded in economic reality.

7.11 In addition, some developers are being motivated to carry out more sustainable developments and change their working practices because they see benefits from being at the forefront in these matters, and the benefits of having less ‘catching up’ to do later. The view tends to be ‘these changes are coming anyway so it would be better to be ahead’. In addition several companies felt that there were marketing and financial benefits to be gained.

7.12 The developers and local authorities recognised that the key barriers to implementing more sustainable development came at the inception stage of new developments. If these issues are not incorporated in plans from the start it may be very difficult to integrate them later, and this is linked to issues of land value and understanding. Implementation was also identified as another key stage where barriers may present themselves, and this may be
related to the lack of understanding in those involved in making decisions on-site, and a reluctance to implement new technologies or to spend money on incorporating these features.

7.13 Overall the study has shown that there is a commitment to making change in implementing more sustainable development from both the local authorities and the development industry.

Recommendations

7.14 This part of the report contains general recommendations on how it may be possible to overcome some of the barriers to implementing sustainable development as identified in this study. These recommendations are not presented in any priority for action, and their purpose is as a guide to ‘The Way Ahead’ and moving towards more sustainable development. The actions range from those that are relatively straightforward to implement, to those that may be more difficult to achieve and be part of a longer term programme.

7.15 **Regional Spatial Strategy:** in addition to lobbying for more regulation through national Government policy it may also be suitable for the RSS to contain more policy requirements for incorporating sustainable development into developments. This could be using a similar approach to that for site based renewable energy, and the continued support of BREEAM standards.

7.16 **Regional standardisation:** in order to ensure more consistent and fair requirements for developers across the region it may be suitable for some requirements for developers to be drawn up at the regional level. This could include a set of standard conditions for developers to contribute towards more sustainable development, so that these do not have to be negotiated on a separate basis by each local planning authority. These could be supported by policies in the RSS.

7.17 **Meetings and workshops:** regional or sub-regional based working groups and workshops may be useful to raise awareness of these issues. However there are already many such events held for those who have already expressed an interest in these matters. Therefore it is important that these events are targeted to a wider audience, including those who have yet to yet to realise the importance of these issues. For example within individual local authorities for planning officers from policy and development control, Council members and Building Control officers, other events could be specifically targeted at development industry or bringing the private and public sectors together.

7.18 **Web based resource:** much of this information could be presented on an internet based resource page, for use by both the private and public sectors. This web resource could include links to existing sources of guidance, as well as tools for helping small and medium sized developers identify how they can incorporate sustainability features into their schemes.

7.19 **Promoting existing guidance:** the BREEAM approach and particularly the Eco-Homes method should be promoted in the Region. Other regions have produced their own version of this methodology, although this is unlikely to be needed in the South West due to the support BREEAM already has from local planning authorities and developers.
7.20 **Lobbying Government:** it may be suitable for the regional bodies to lobby Government to encourage changes nationally to implementing more sustainable development, this could include:

- making new standards mandatory rather than voluntary, for example as proposed in the final draft of the Code for Sustainable Homes
- financial assistance to developers who are implementing more sustainable development techniques and technologies, for example tax relief or grant aid schemes
- new Building Regulations covering new topics such as water efficiency, and other new mandatory minimum performance requirements for the sustainability of new buildings

7.21 **Awareness raising:** The profile of incorporating sustainable development into new buildings need to be raised. This needs to be directed at:

- the development industry
- local planning authorities including development control officer, planning policy officers and elected members
- the public, in order to improve understanding of why homes need to be built more sustainability and the benefits of living in a more efficient home (and in particular cost savings)
- possibly other organisation such as RICS, RIBA, Building Control Officer.

7.22 **Information and understanding:** There may be a lack of information on certain topics of sustainable development that could help promote its importance and raise awareness in developers. Particular type of new information could include:

- information on actual costs of incorporating a variety of sustainability features into new buildings, in order to counter or support current cost perceptions
- information for potential homebuyers of actual average cost savings of living in a more efficient home
- examples of case study schemes where barriers were overcome and lesson learnt on implementing sustainable development – from inception to implementation of a project
- details on procurement of sustainable construction materials and technologies and suppliers in the region
- details may be useful on local contractors who are skilled in sustainable construction techniques. For these contractors it may be possible to set up a regional or national accreditation scheme so they can be easily identified by developers
• more detailed technical information for developers on how to incorporate sustainability features into homes, rather than just guidance on what should be done

• better information on the market for sustainable homes, in order to let developers know if there is an existing and growing market, information should be based on actual sales rather than a perceived willingness to pay

• signposting information to external specialists on sustainability issues for developers and for local planning authorities, in particular technical experts such as engineers and practitioners in sustainable construction and installation of sustainable technologies.

7.23 **Enhancing the role of the local planning authority:** the local planning authorities of the region have an important role to play in enhancing the implementation of sustainability development. Recommendations on how this can be improved include:

• encouraging local planning authorities to have embedded specialists on sustainable development issues relevant to this study, and in particular within development control teams

• general skills improvements within local authorities on these issues, particularly in negotiating conditions in development control departments

• the need for local authorities to improve the sharing of information internally on aspects of sustainability, including closer working between planning policy and development control teams, and potentially between development control and building control officers