

Topic Paper 5: Population and Social Inclusion

Policy Context

Overall aim or purpose of document	Objectives / targets
<p>A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal – National Strategy Action Plan (Cabinet Office, 2001)</p> <p>This action plan addresses neighbourhood decline, its causes and how to overcome the current problems, providing examples of good practice. The strategy aims to take a long-term, integrated approach to tackling neighbourhood renewal. The overarching vision of the strategy is to ensure that no one is living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood within the next 10-20 years. This vision will be achieved by addressing these three areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating new policies, funding and targets; • Better local co-ordination and community empowerment; • National and regional support. 	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all the poorest neighbourhoods, to have common goals of lower worklessness and crime, and better health, skills, housing and physical environment • To narrow the gap on these measures between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country <p>Targets (Government Commitments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce burglary by 25 % and ensure no district has a burglary rate more than three times the national average most deprived local authority areas; • To give Local Strategic Partnerships a role beyond neighbourhood renewal; this must be taken forward by LAs working closely with other local partners. LSPs' key task in the context of neighbourhood renewal is to prepare a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy • Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) to lead on tackling anti-social behaviour • Baseline assessment of the number of dwellings/wards affected and at risk from low demand and unpopular housing • Monitor low demand and abandonment with the aim of achieving a turn round in declining demand
<p>Sustainable Communities in the South West – Building for the Future (ODPM, 2003)</p> <p>This regional plan sets out proposals for implementing Sustainable communities: Building for the future in the South West. It does not attempt to cover all the issues of importance to communities. It highlights actions to address housing, planning and neighbourhood renewal issues. The Government Office for the South West will be working with regional and local partners over the coming months to build on these proposals, to link them with relevant programmes, and to turn policies into action.</p>	<p>Objectives</p> <p>The document does not contain any 'objectives' for the Region, but contains an 'Action Plan' which includes actions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To plan in the main towns and cities for growth, and transport infrastructure and services which reduce the need for travel and support sustainable development as with the Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study • To use the planning system and other strategies to ensure that communities develop in a way which reduces the need to travel, particularly by private car • To develop in rural areas an increasing range of transport opportunities that reduce dependence on the private car, supporting initiatives such as the Cornwall Centre of Excellence in rural transport and innovative schemes such as the Wiltshire Wiggly Bus and On Call buses in Plymouth and Caradon. <p>Targets</p> <p>No specific targets.</p>
<p>Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3): Housing (ODPM, 2006)</p> <p>Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing underpins the delivery of the Government's strategic housing policy objectives and the goal to ensure that everyone has the</p>	<p>The objectives of housing policy which the LDF needs to support are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of major generators of travel in existing centres, where access by a choice of means of

<p>opportunity to live in a decent home, which they can afford in a community where they want to live.</p>	<p>transport not just the car is easy and convenient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable town, district and local centres to meet the needs of residents of their area • Safeguard and strengthen existing centres in both urban and rural areas which offer a range of everyday community, shopping and employment opportunities • Maintain and improve choice for people to walk, cycle or catch public transport, and • Ensure an appropriate supply of attractive, convenient and safe parking for shopping and leisure trips
<p>South West Regional Housing Strategy 2005 – 2016 (South West Housing Body, 2005)</p>	
<p>This document addresses the issues of housing in the south west. It deals with topics relating to housing provision, homelessness, social and health inequalities, and the contribution that housing can make to economic prosperity. It provides a strategic framework for regional investment in affordable housing.</p> <p>This document is closely linked with other regional strategies; particularly the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework.</p>	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the balance of housing markets; • Achieving good quality homes; • Supporting sustainable communities; • At a local level the RHS should act as a framework within which plans and delivery programmes of local housing authorities are prepared and implemented. <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve housing delivery levels in RSS in all areas of the region by 2007 and eradicate existing backlogs by 2011 • 50% reduction in the use of Temporary Accommodation across the region by 2010; • Achieve a downward trend in affordability ratios from current levels by 2016 • 50% of new development will meet the requirements of the Code for Sustainable Buildings by 2016 • All social stock will meet the Decent Homes standard by 2010 • Increase the proportion of Lifetime Homes being built in the region by 2010 • Measures of community cohesion will have improved across the region by 2010 • Increase provision for Gypsy and traveller sites by 2016
<p>West Somerset Housing Strategy (2005)</p>	
<p>The document has four key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist in the provision of more affordable housing, whether to rent or buy • To improve private sector housing conditions where possible • To prevent homelessness occurring wherever possible and to reduce the use of B&B as temporary accommodation • To address the need for support alongside housing especially via Somerset Supporting People Partnership by ensuring effective use of funding in various services to help vulnerable people. 	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist the provision of more affordable housing, whether to rent/buy; • To improve public sector housing conditions where possible; • To prevent homelessness occurring, and reduce the use of B&Bs as temporary accommodation; and • To address the need for support alongside housing. <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Housing: 100 affordable homes to buy and 80 affordable homes to rent; • Private sector housing: 75 interventions to enable householders to find/remain in decent homes in the private sector; • Homelessness: reduce homelessness by 15%; reduce use of temporary accommodation by 30%; and • Support alongside housing: to work with partners

	to increase the provision of “move-on” accommodation by 30 units.
West Somerset Council Corporate Plan 2009-2012	
The corporate plan sets out the vision, business principles and core values that will drive the authority until 2012.	The document has the following key performance indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of people living in low income households • Increase the number of affordable homes delivered. • Decrease the number of unfit homes. • Decrease the number of accepted homeless households.
West Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010	
The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out what the key priorities are for the people of West Somerset and sets out an action plan of how to achieve those aspirations.	Targets include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the number of community transport schemes supported by the District Council. • Housing that is unfit per thousand dwellings. • Number of affordable dwellings completed / acquired. • Number of households in temporary accomodaton.

Baseline Review

This section will look at the baseline data for population and information relating to social inclusion for West Somerset.

Population

Between 1997 and 2007 the population of West Somerset grew by 6%, compared with an increase of 7.3% for the South West region as a whole. The rate of population growth in West Somerset has slowed in recent years and previous to 1997 West Somerset showed a faster rate of population growth than the South West as a whole. In the South West there is a clear positive relationship between the ‘rurality’ of an area and the population growth, with large urban areas growing by considerably less over the last 20 years compared to most rural areas (www.swo.org.uk State of the South West Report 2009).

The South West has grown the fastest of all the UK regions in the last 20 years. However, the region’s growth in the last 10 years has been almost entirely the result of migration, as the region has experienced more deaths than births in most years.

Population growth can be good for the local economy; however, it can put increased pressure on the local environment through increases in waste generation and energy consumption, coupled with increased traffic volumes. The high levels of migration into the South West have also had a negative impact on local housing markets and house prices, contributing to a lack of affordable housing.

The population density of West Somerset in 2007 averaged 0.5 people per hectare, compared with an average of 2 for the region and 4 people per square kilometre for England overall (UK National Statistics). Therefore, West Somerset has a low level of population density compared to regional and national figures. Low population density may

have financial implications for government bodies because it is often more expensive to service dispersed populations rather than concentrated populations.

The only settlement defined as a town in West Somerset is Minehead which accommodates approximately 12,000 or one third of the district's population. All other settlements in the district have a population of less than 4,000

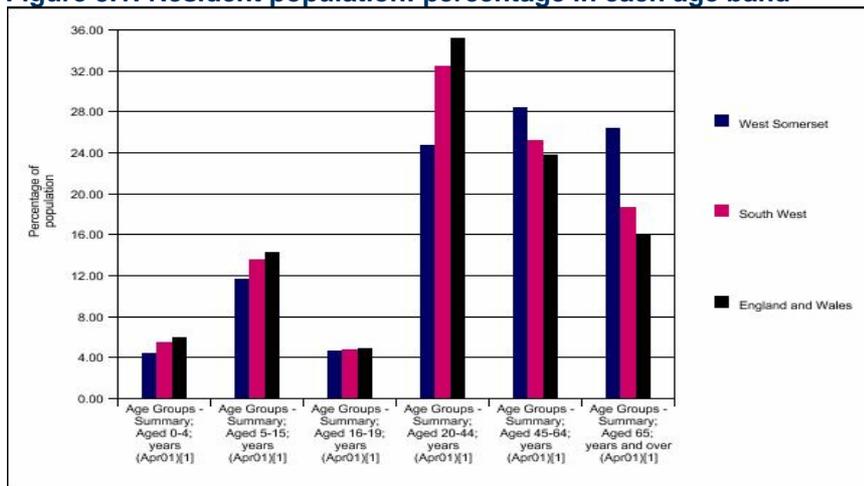
Population Age Structure

The population of Somerset is ageing and there are now more people aged 65 and older in Somerset than there are aged 18 and under and the population structure will continue to age over the next 20 years (Somerset NHS Annual Public Health Report, 2008/2009).

At the time of the 2001 census the average age of the population in West Somerset was 45.8 years. This is compared with an average of 38.7 years for England and Wales.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the percentage of the resident population in each age band. It shows West Somerset has a high percentage of residents over the age of 65 when compared to the national and regional figures.

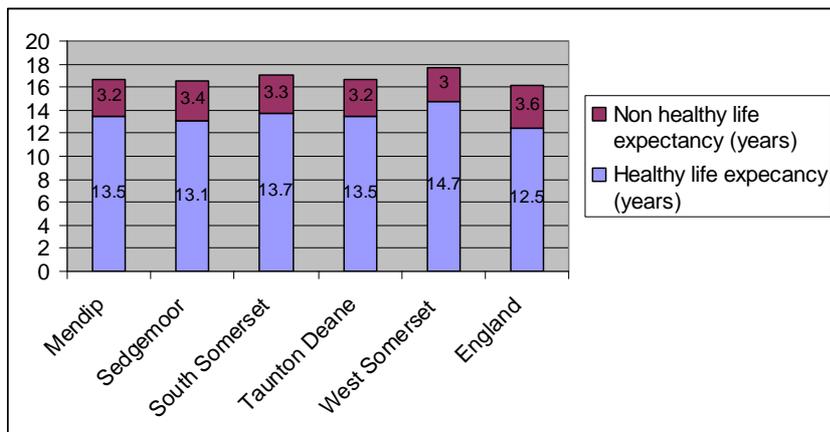
Figure 5.1: Resident population: percentage in each age band



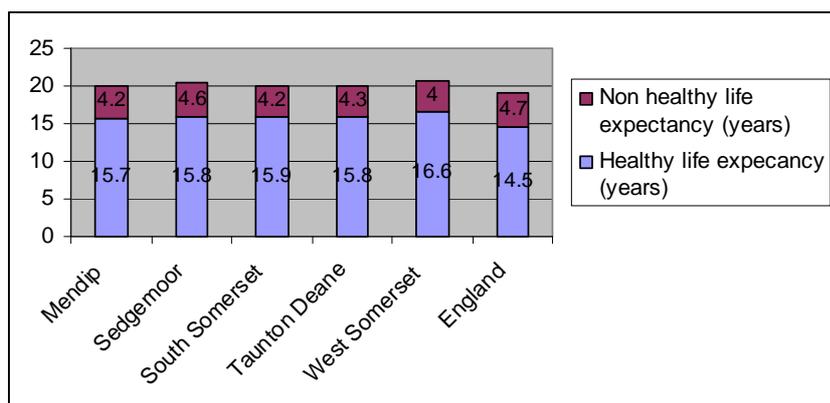
(Source: 2001 census)

In terms of future population change ONS estimates suggest that there will be a 14% rise in the total population of Somerset by 2025. The population aged 65 and over is set to grow by 55% over the same period and the over 85s by 73% (Somerset NHS Annual Public Health Report, 2008/2009).

In terms of years of healthy life expectancy West Somerset residents can expect to have more years of healthy life expectancy compared to other districts in Somerset and England as a whole. This is shown in Figures 5.2 and 5.3.

Figure 5.2: Life Expectancy at aged 65 (males)

(Source: Somerset NHS Annual Public Health Report, 2008/2009)

Figure 5.3: Life Expectancy at aged 65 (females)

(Source: Somerset NHS Annual Public Health Report, 2008/2009)

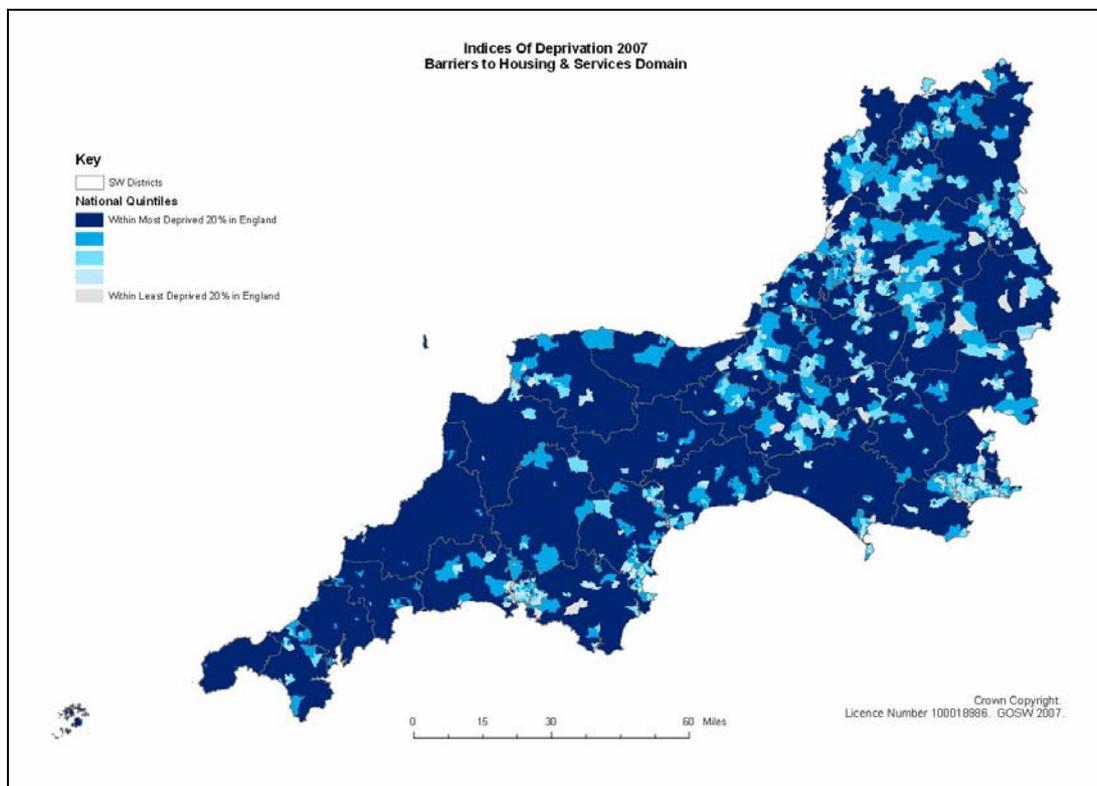
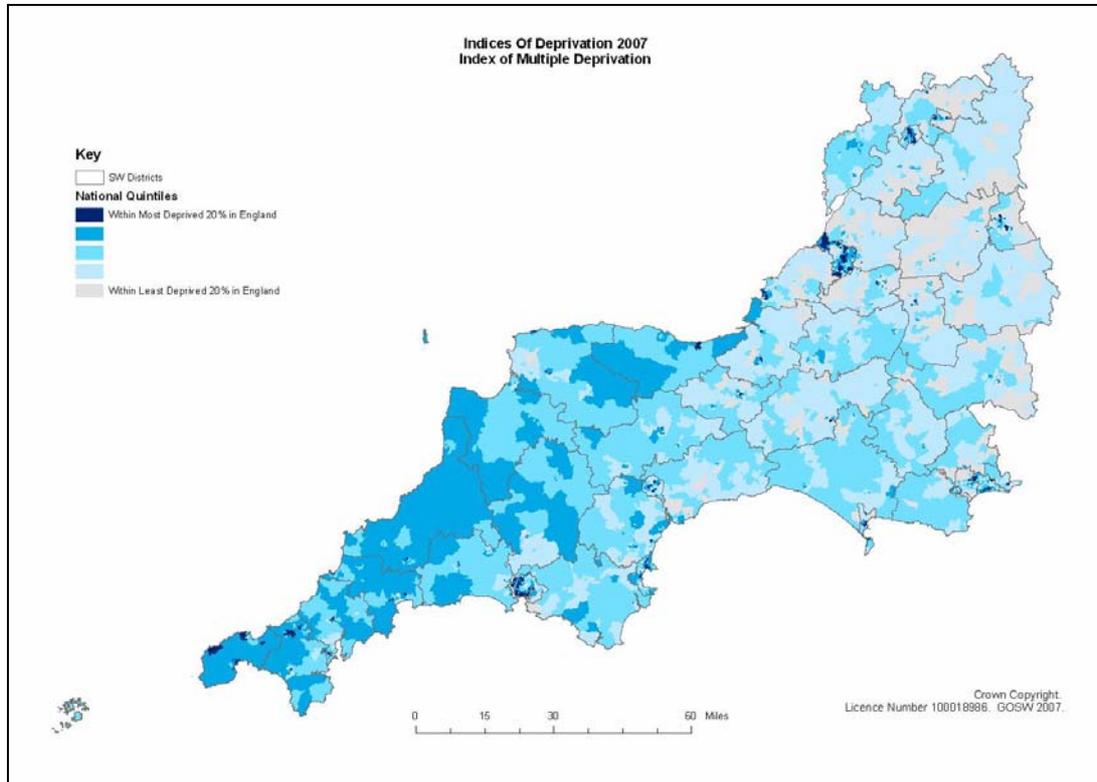
Social Inclusion

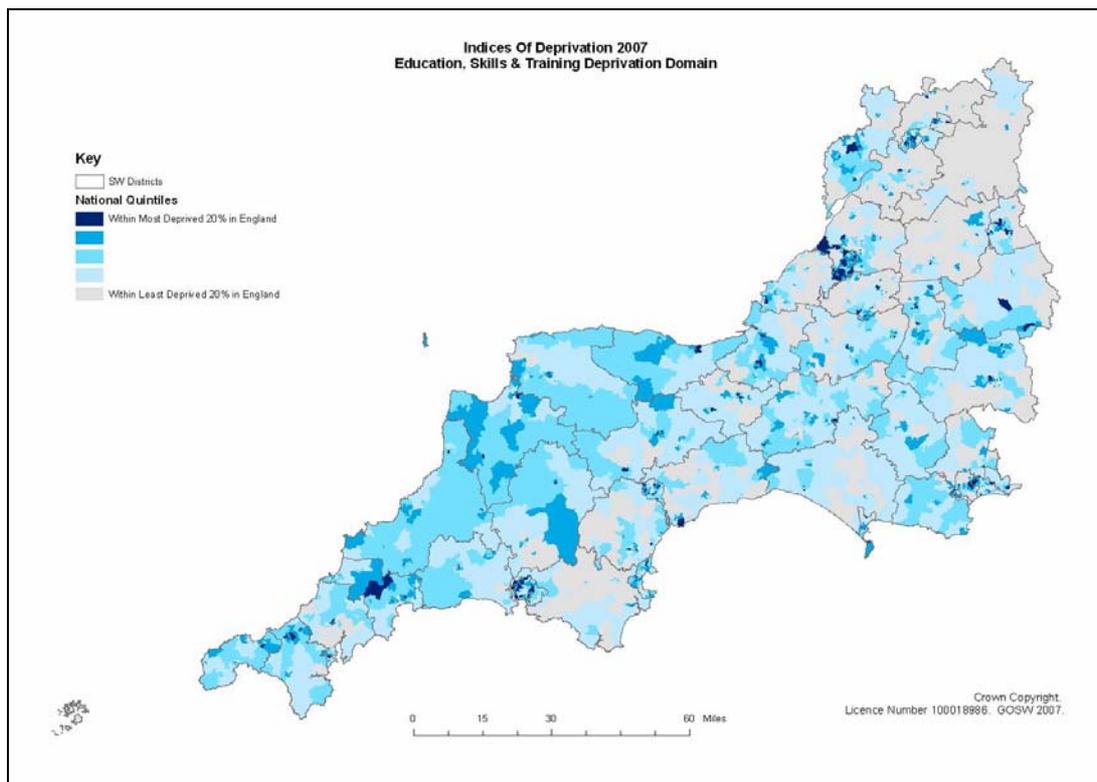
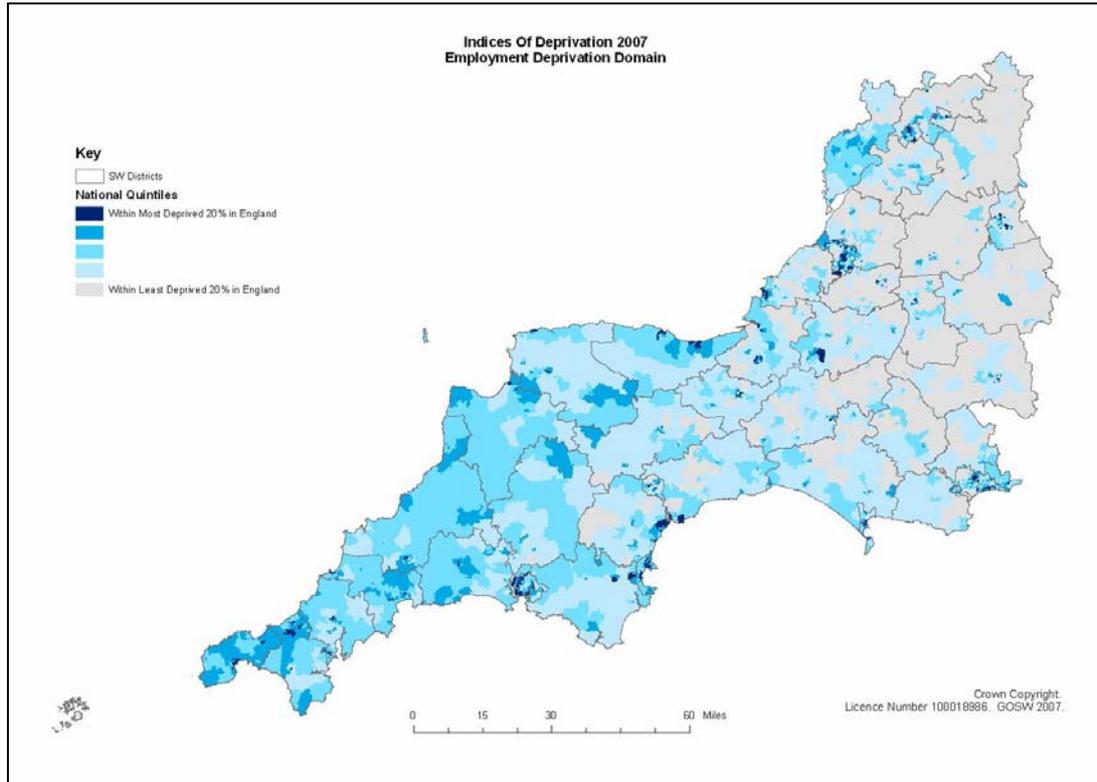
Social inclusion is concerned with reducing inequalities between the less advantaged groups and the rest of society, by closing the opportunity gap, and ensuring support reaches those who need it most. The government uses a deprivation scoring system to measure deprivation in local authorities across England. Information is collected for seven indices: income, employment, health deprivation and disability, education, skills and training, barriers to housing and services, crime and disorder, and living environment. In the 2007 Indices of Deprivation, West Somerset was ranked 106 out of 354 English local authorities (1 being the most deprived and 354 the least deprived).

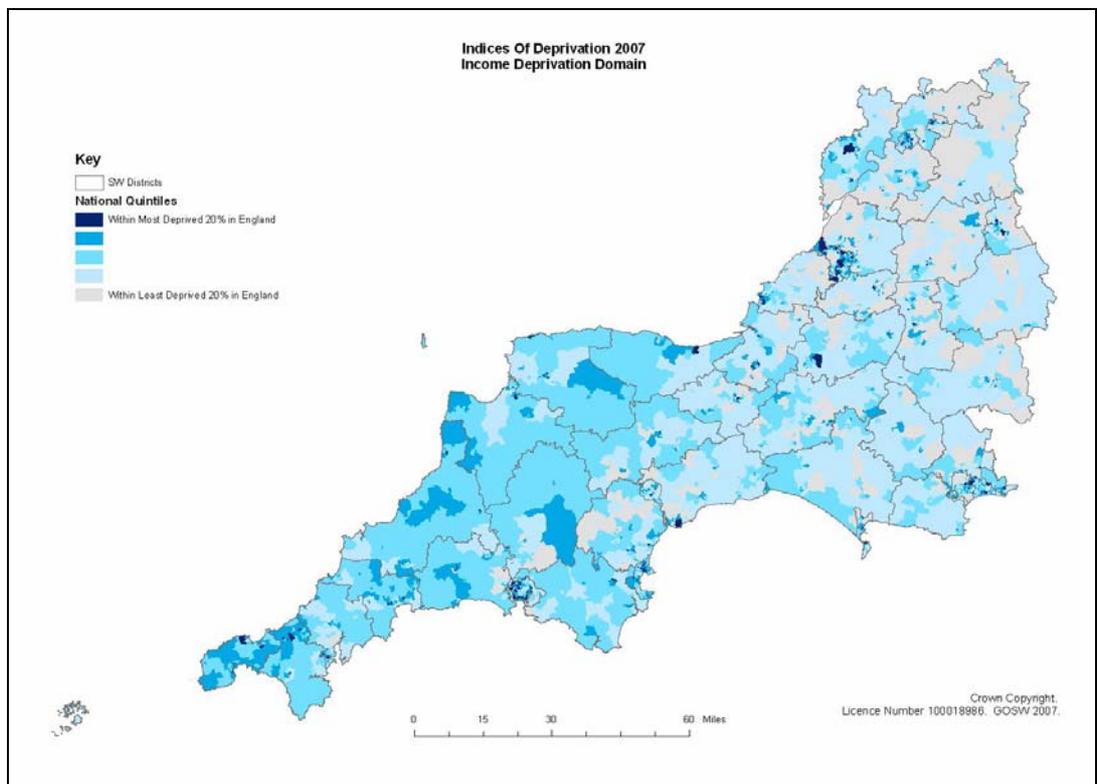
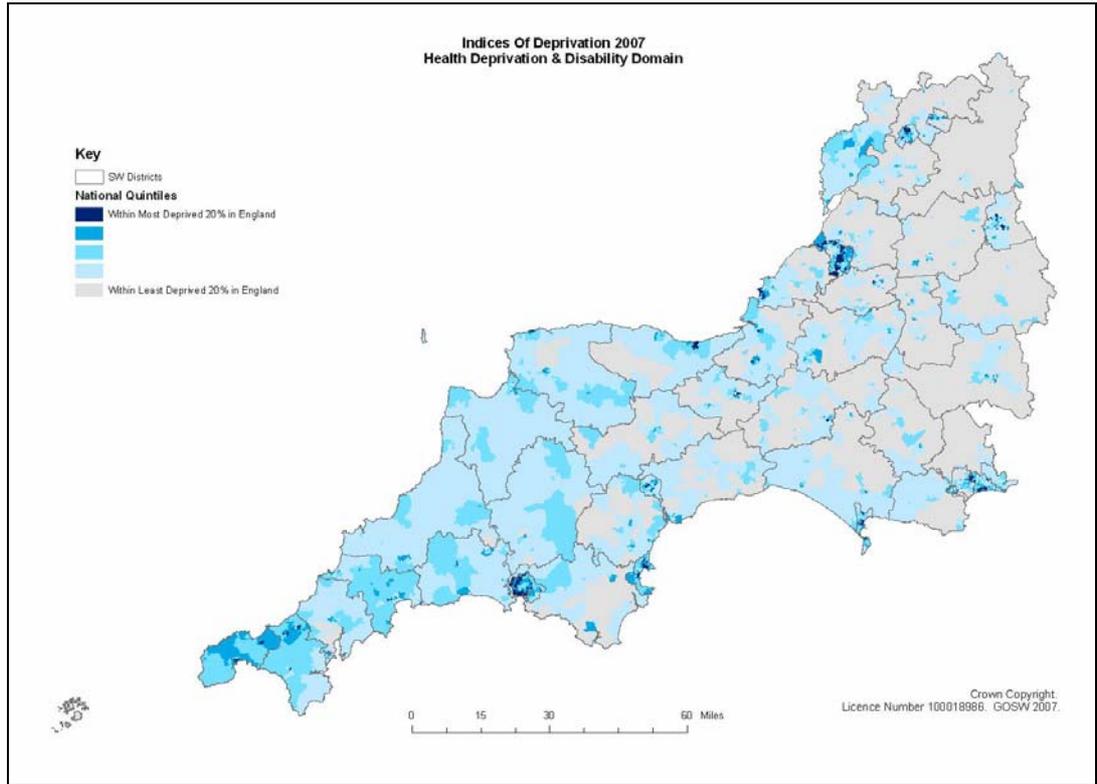
Figure 5.4 below show each of these indices for the South West, including a map (the first map shown below) which combines all the information to create an overall Index of Multiple Deprivation. The dark colours indicate the wards which are most deprived, whilst the lighter

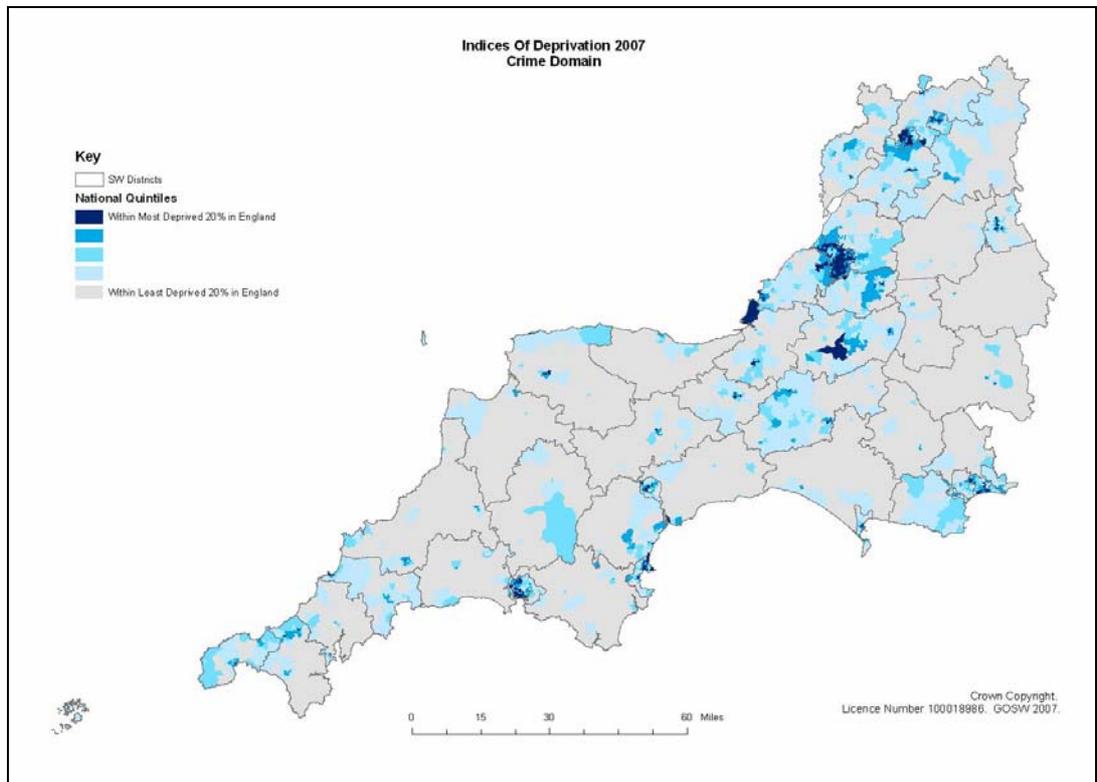
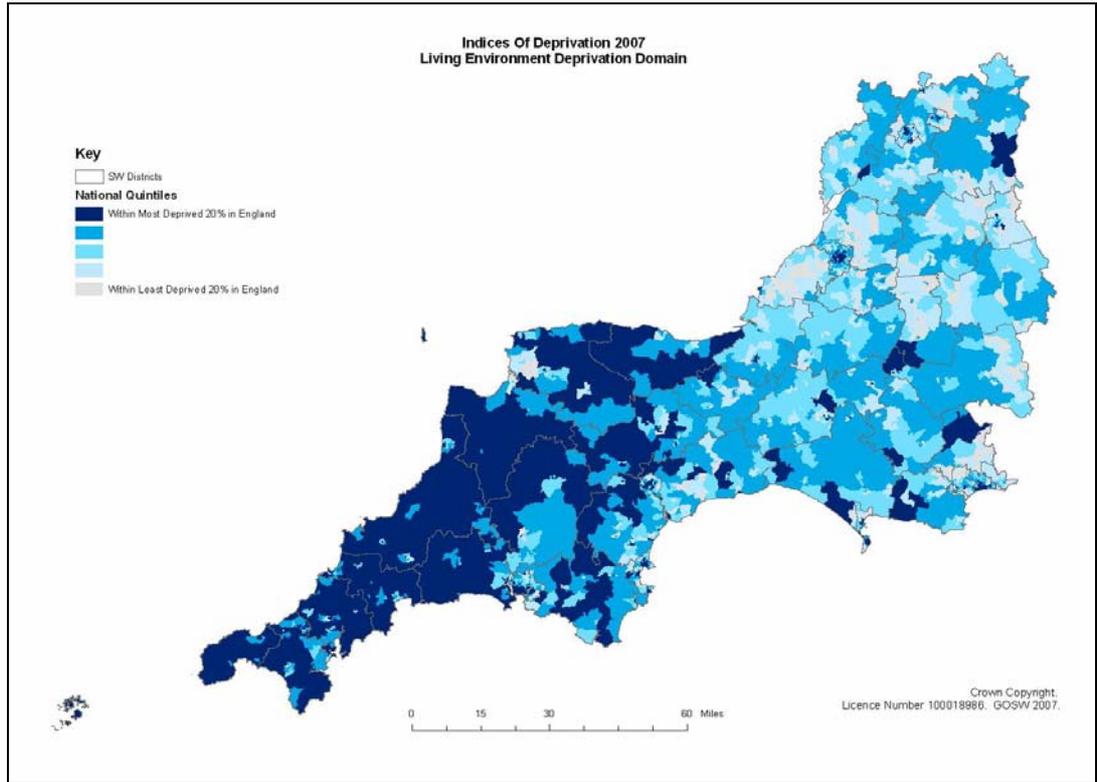
colours indicate the wards which are least deprived. All the maps have been sourced from the report Indices of Deprivation 2007 – Deprivation in the South West by GOSW Regional Intelligence Team January 2008.

Figure 5.4: IMD Indices









It is apparent from the above maps that West Somerset has pockets of deprivation within its wards. Deprivation as a whole is prevalent around the Quantock Vale, Minehead, Williton, Quarme and Dulverton wards. The map also shows that West Somerset has the highest level of deprivation compared to the rest of Somerset.

Overall, the district scores quite well in relation to most of the indices. However, the district scores poorly in the living environment and the barriers to housing and services domains with the majority of wards being closer to the “most deprived” end of the scale. The living environment result seems surprising. However, this domain does cover indoor environment issues such as social and private housing in poor condition.

Research conducted for the Somerset Local Transport Plan found accessibility to basic services arose as a key issue for people living in West Somerset; in particular access to post 16 education, hospitals and employment opportunities all needed to be improved (Somerset County Council). The County Council considers these three issues should be given a high priority in the development of the plan. Williton and Watchet have been identified as places where long-term unemployed residents have difficulty accessing employment opportunities (Somerset County Council).

Separate topic papers cover specific issues relating to employment, crime and health in more detail.

Housing

There is no council housing in the West Somerset Council area. In 1998 West Somerset Council transferred its housing stock to Magna West Somerset Housing Association. Housing associations in West Somerset, own approximately 2300 properties (www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/ - accessed in April 2009).

West Somerset is covered by two strategic housing market assessment processes, one of the Northern Peninsula area and one for the Taunton and South Somerset area. Most of the data here is taken from survey reports of those processes.

West Somerset has also commissioned a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The primary role of the SHLAA is to identify suitable sites with potential for housing, assess their housing potential and assess when they are likely to be developed. This process is at the very early stages and will be reported on as part of the LDF SA Report.

Table 5.1 shows an estimate of the current tenure split in the District. The data shows that around 73% of households are owner occupiers with 14% in the social rented sector and the remaining 13% in the private rented sector.

Table 5.1: Household Tenure

Tenure	Total No Households	% of households
Owner occupied (no mortgage)	7,674	46.8%
Owner occupied (mortgage)	4,324	26.4%
Social rented	2,254	13.7%
Private rented	2,148	13.1%
TOTAL	16,400	100%

Table 5.2 shows price levels in West Somerset compared to the South West and England and Wales (drawn from Land Registry data for all quarters of 2007). The data shows that price levels in West Somerset are slightly higher than both the national and regional averages. Prices in West Somerset are also slightly higher than the surrounding authority areas.

Table 5.2: House Prices (Land Registry average prices in 2007)

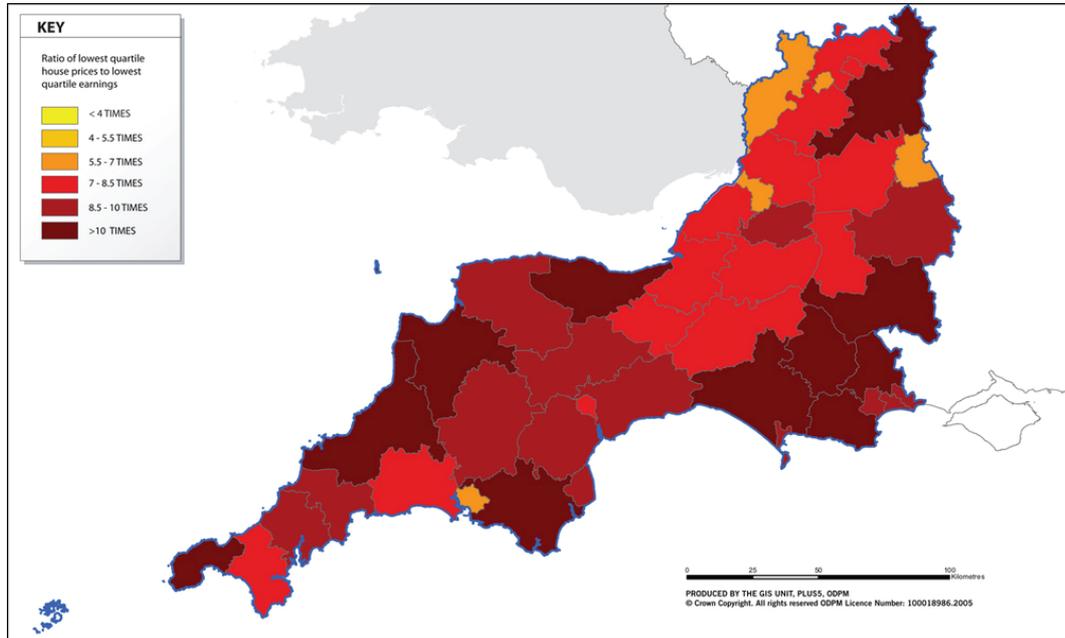
Area	Average price	As % of England and Wales
West Somerset	£239,157	108.8%
South West	£228,809	104.1%
England and Wales	£219,819	100%

Table 5.3 shows the entry level prices (lower quartile) for different sizes of dwellings in the main settlements of the District.

Table 5.3: Entry Level Purchase Prices

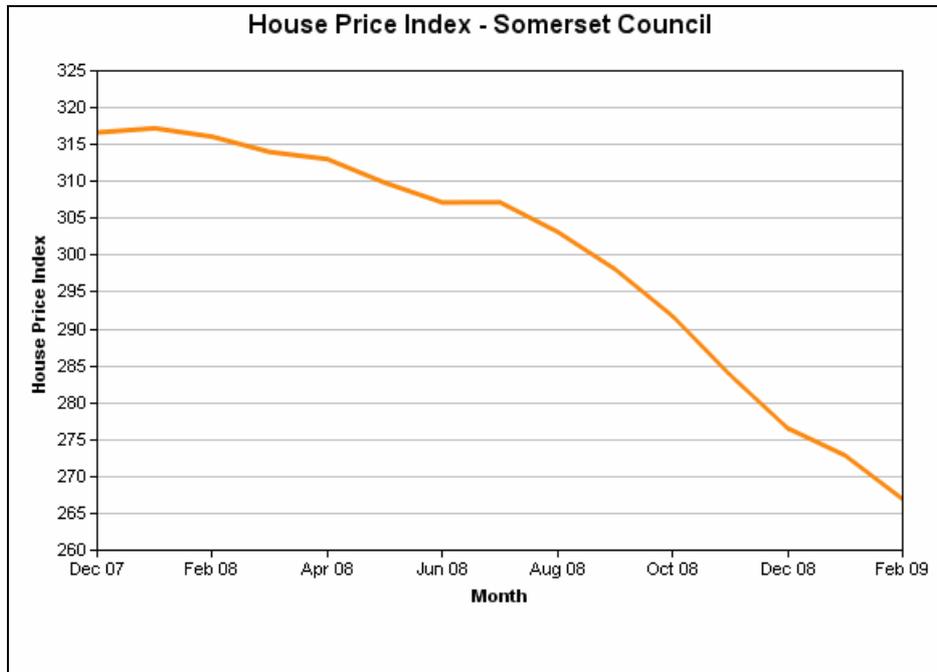
Bedrooms	Minehead	Watchet and Williton	District Average
1 bedroom	£85,560	£79,515	£84,427
2 bedrooms	£138,570	£134,850	£137,914
3 bedrooms	£179,025	£139,454	£172,484
4 bedrooms	£232,454	£159,960	£215,284

House prices in Somerset have one of the highest house price to income ratio's in the region (see Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: House prices in Somerset 2007 – 2009

(Source: South West Regional Spatial Strategy Proposed Changes)

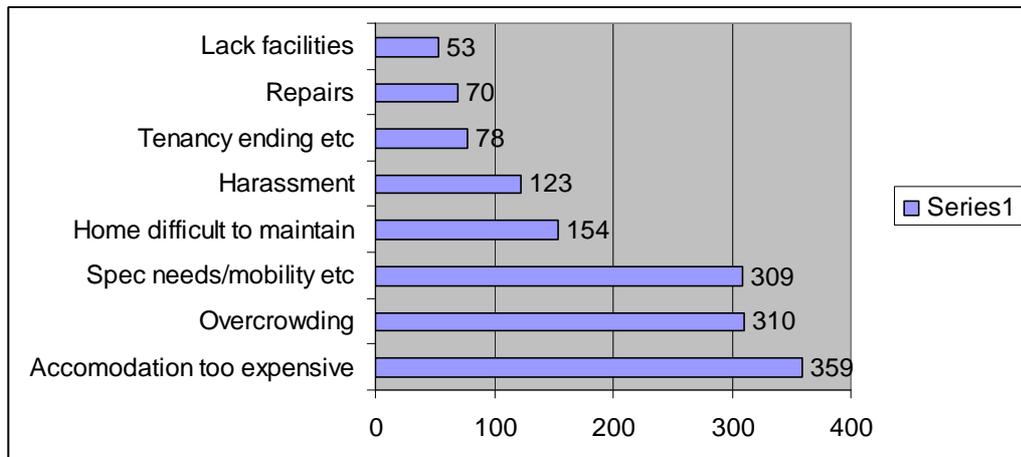
House prices since 2007 have been falling nationwide and this is shown (for Somerset as a whole) in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6: House prices in Somerset 2007 – 2009

(Source: Land Registry)

The number of affordable houses developed in West Somerset in the period 2007/2008 was 25, a drop on the numbers in 2006/2007. The low level of provision of affordable housing in recent years is a cause of continuing concern for the council. Further information on actions being taken to rectify this issue are likely to be included in the LDF 2008/2009 Annual Monitoring Report.

In terms of housing need, survey data suggests that around 1,117 households in West Somerset are currently living in unsuitable housing. The reasons for housing being unsuitable are shown in Figure 5.6. It was estimated that 773 of these households would need to move home to find a solution to the unsuitability. Of these households, it is estimated that around two-thirds cannot afford a suitable solution in the housing market without some form of subsidy and are hence considered to be in housing need (521 households). Households in the private rented sector were most likely to be in housing need, followed by households in the social rented sector. Taking into account homeless households who would not have been picked up by the household-based survey (4 additional households) makes for a total backlog need of 525 households. It is estimated that at the time of the survey (2008) there was a current stock of affordable housing of around 219 units which could be used to meet this need (including dwellings becoming available as households in the affordable housing sector move to different dwellings). Taking the backlog need and supply figures together suggest that in West Somerset there is a net backlog of need for affordable housing of 306 units.

Figure 5.7: Reasons for unsuitable accommodation

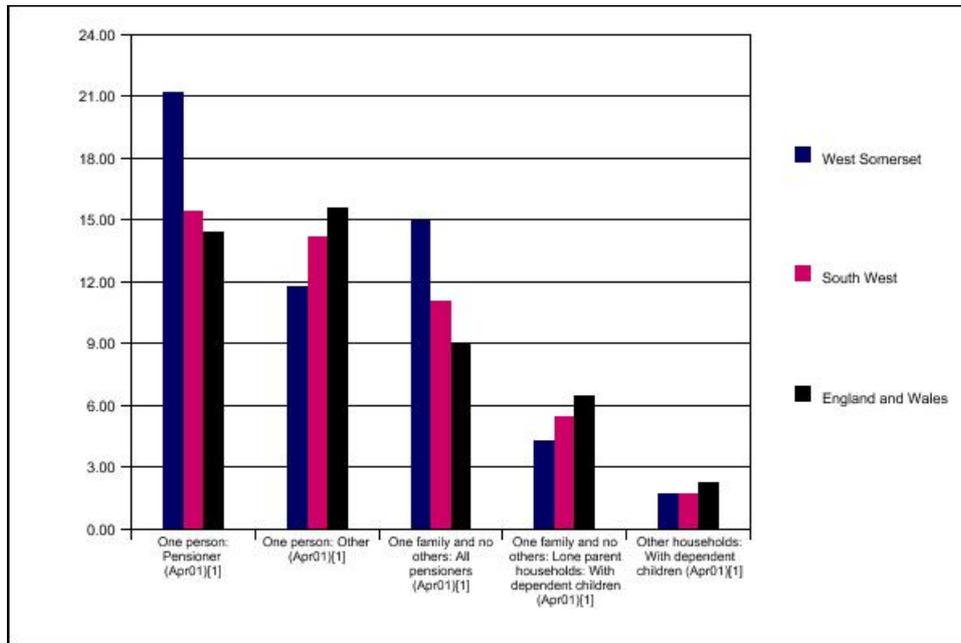
Some of the other findings of the survey work are:

- In total more than two-thirds of households live in detached or semi-detached houses or bungalows. 13% live in flats, significantly lower than the national average (17%).
- The level of overcrowding recorded in West Somerset (at 1.9%) is lower than the national average (2.5%) although higher than the regional average of 1.7%.
- Households in the private rented sector and those buying with a mortgage have the highest housing costs, households in the social rented sector the lowest.

The Council is attempting to deal with homelessness & housing advice on a more proactive basis in line with the Homelessness Act 2002. This includes working with housing providers to secure alternative accommodation to bed & breakfast; improving multi-agency liaison, and providing support services. The 2003 Homelessness Strategy states that there was a dramatic increase in the statutorily homeless from 34 in 1997 to 135 in 2002. During 2002/03 there were 130 statutory cases. It is also important to note that homelessness in West Somerset occurs in the smaller rural areas as well as Minehead, Watchet and Williton. The latest information from the Council's P1(E) Homeless returns shows that in the fourth quarter of 2007 there were 35 cases (this would equate to 140 per year).

According to the 2001 Census, the average size of households in West Somerset was 2.2 people compared with an average of 2.4 people for England and Wales. Figure 5.8 shows that West Somerset has a large proportion of pensioner households compared to both the regional and national levels. The 2001 Census also found that 19% households in West Somerset did not have a car or van, compared to 27% in England and Wales as a whole. Therefore, a larger proportion of West Somerset residents have greater access to private transport when compared to the rest of England.

Figure 5.8: Type of Household: percentage of each type, April 2001



(Source: Neighbourhood Statistics

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/AreaProfile2.do?tab=7>)

Sources of Data

- Taunton and South Somerset Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Northern Peninsula Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- Indices of Deprivation 2007 – Deprivation in the South West by GOSW Regional Intelligence Team January 2008.
- 2001 Census, Office of National Statistics: www.statistics.gov.uk
- Somerset NHS Annual Public Health Report, 2008/2009.
- Neighbourhood Statistics: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>
- West Somerset Council: <http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/>
- West Somerset Homelessness Strategy (2003).

Data Gaps

None identified

Trends

- Between 1997 and 2007 population growth in West Somerset was slightly lower than the South West as a whole. However, previous to 1997 growth was faster in the district than the region.
- By 2025 there will be a 14% rise in the total population of Somerset.
- Population growth is largely due to inward migration, and not as a result of natural change as death rates are higher than birth rates.
- The population of the district is ageing and there are now more people aged 65 and over in Somerset than there are aged 18 and under.

Population and social inclusion issues identified

- West Somerset has the lowest population density in the region, which could have implications for providing services to a dispersed population.
- Inward migration is the main cause of population growth, which is putting pressure on the local housing market, particularly as the district has a large proportion of second home owners.
- The area also has a high percentage of people within the older age bands (65 years and over), which could have put pressure on health care services and affect the available local workforce for employers.
- West Somerset has pockets of deprivation. The 2007 IMD scores found the worst affected wards were: Quantock Vale, Minehead, Williton, Quarne and Dulverton wards. Data also shows that West Somerset has the highest level of deprivation compared to the rest of Somerset.
- Lack of affordable housing is a key issue in the district. Average house prices are some of the highest in the county. The low level of provision of affordable housing in recent years is a cause of continuing concern for the council.

Implications for the plan and the SA

- West Somerset is experiencing high levels of population growth due to inward migration. This is putting pressure on the housing market, leading to increases in house prices, beyond the reach of local residents, particularly those newly forming households. Therefore, the plan needs to make provision to meet the local housing need; the greatest demand being for the smaller housing units.
- The district has a low population density, and above national average levels of car ownership. Therefore, the plan should consider how it can provide housing and services without further increasing the need for private transport.
- West Somerset has a higher proportion of people within older age bands. Therefore, the plan should ensure that adequate provision has been made for health care facilities and retirement/sheltered accommodation.

- Overall, West Somerset has fairly high levels of deprivation; it contains some of the worst affected wards in the county. Therefore, the plan should look to target those areas worst affected.

Suggested SA Objectives and Indicators

SA objectives	SA indicators / appraisal questions. Will the plan lead to...?
To develop and maintain a balanced and sustainable population structure which good access to services, facilities and homes for all sectors of the society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development and maintenance of a balanced and sustainable population structure within the District • Meeting the need for affordable housing across the District and particularly in the areas where the need is greatest? • Flexibility in the use of homes, e.g. by the use of lifetimes homes standard etc? • Reduced deprivation across the district?