

East Herts Council

Housing Strategy

2008 – 2011

Consultation Draft

3.7.08

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Foreword from Councillor Bob Parker, Executive Member for Housing and Health

I am pleased to introduce this new Housing Strategy for East Herts which provides a plan of action over the next three years. It sets out how we will all work towards improving existing housing and build new additional homes.

The Council recognises that having good housing is at the heart of keeping our communities vibrant and sustainable. This strategy sets out how we will respond to the challenges we face in meeting housing need over the next three years. We are proud that the Audit Commission rated our Strategic Housing Services as 'Good with promising prospects for improvement' and this strategy shows how we are working to continue to make that a reality.

This housing strategy can only be delivered in partnership with others and many different partners have a role to play in making this happen. I look forward to the next few years as the plans within this strategy are put into place.

Executive Summary

East Herts' Housing Strategy provides the overall framework for housing activity and investment by the Council and its partner organisations. It sets out the long-term vision for housing in East Herts up to 2011 and beyond. It is concerned with housing in all tenures and is the overarching strategy for a number of plans, strategies and policies developed by the Council including empty homes, affordable warmth and affordable homes. The strategy also develops links from national, regional, sub-regional priorities to local priorities for East Herts.

This Strategy statement is in three parts:

- The first part sets out the strategic priorities for housing at a National, Regional, Sub-Regional and Local level. It includes the strategic context within which East Herts addresses local housing needs and shows how housing links to many other wider agendas.
- The second part of the Strategy sets out a summary of data and information we and our partners hold on housing need, demand and stock condition and also present and future supply of housing in East Herts. It identifies the interrelated factors that affect the availability and affordability of housing and the quality of life for all the residents living in East Herts.
- The third and most important part details what we have done and what we intend to do, working with a range of partner agencies, to meet local housing issues and the resources available to carry them out. These activities are grouped under three strategic objectives which have been developed with our London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Partners and will be embedded in the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy which is currently under review:
 1. Maximise the delivery of a range of new affordable homes to meet diverse needs
 2. Improve the condition of the housing stock both public and private
 3. Build sustainable and thriving neighbourhoods and communities and ensure that vulnerable people are supported in the community

This section contains a detailed action plan which illustrates how we intend to deliver these objectives. It clearly sets out the actions the Council and its partners will undertake along with target outputs and dates.

The Housing Strategy is inevitably broad in its scope and its implementation will depend on strong partnership working with a wide range of organisations. The priority actions are set out in an Action Plan (Appendix 1). The Council's performance in delivery between 2007 and 2008 is also set out (Appendix 2).

The pace of change in national, regional and local policy frameworks means that specific content in the Strategy will be updated periodically so as to reduce the time lag between policy change and East Herts' local response. Updated versions of the Housing Strategy will always be available on the Council's web site.

1.0 Introduction

The Housing Strategy is a plan for housing for everyone in East Herts. The housing strategy is an overarching strategy which sets out the Council's priorities to meet local housing needs and aspirations thereby contributing to the overall long-term aim to improve the quality of life for all the residents of East Herts. These priorities are translated into a series of Strategic Objectives and actions.

East Herts Council no longer owns any Council housing having transferred the homes to two housing associations, Riversmead and Stort Valley (now South Anglia) in 2002. However the Council has the responsibility to be the strategic leader of housing in the district. As a strategic housing authority our role is to:

- Understand housing markets and aspirations
- Identify potential failures in the market and unmet need
- Take a lead in identifying appropriate solutions
- Assist in the putting together of resources to deliver those solutions

This strategy and those of our 14 sub-regional partners will be used to inform and develop the London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Housing Strategy which will be published in early 2009. The London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Housing Strategy will establish key areas where joint working across local authority boundaries can deliver economic, effective solutions to common identified issues. Local concerns will be dealt with independently in this our local Housing Strategy.

1.1 Economic Climate

The Council is aware that this strategy has been written during an unpredictable time in the housing market. Figures from the Nationwide Building Society¹ show that house prices fell by 2.5% during May 2008, the largest recorded monthly fall in the history of the Nationwide monthly index. At seven months, it was also the longest consecutive period of monthly falls since 1992. Prices have fallen 4.4% since this time last year, the biggest annual fall in house prices since December 1992. The decline in prices is caused by the difficulties created for potential house purchasers by the rapid rise in house prices in the last few years, a squeeze on spending power and the reduction in credit availability.

The Council of Mortgage lenders² in their Housing and Mortgage Market forecasts: 2008 May 2008 bulletin, forecast a rise in the number of loans in arrears of more than three months from 129,800 at the end of 2007 to 170,000 at the end of this year and the number of possessions taken by first-charge mortgage lenders to rise from 27,100 last year (2007) to 45,000 this year (2008).

Statistics from NHBC³ reveal that the number of applications from builders to start new homes fell by more than a quarter year-on-year during the three-month period from February to April 2008, as the effect of the credit crunch forces more builders to slow down activity on site.

¹ Nationwide Building Society House price press release May 2008

² Council of Mortgage lenders , Housing and mortgage forecasts 2008

³ National House Building Council news release 6 June 2008

NHBC statistics show that there were 37,762 applications to start new homes in the UK in the three months from February to April 2008 - a 27 percent decrease on the same three month period a year ago (51,465). Of that total, 28,492 related to private sector activity (i.e. excluding housing associations), showing a 32 per cent decrease on the same three month period in 2007 (41,736).

Housing association figures fell less sharply in the three months to the end of April, with applications totaling 9,270, a decrease of five per cent on the same period a year ago (9,729).

This could all have a significant impact on the amount of social housing built in the District from private developments that are through planning obligations.

1.2 East Herts

East Herts is the largest of the ten district Councils within Hertfordshire, representing approximately one third of the county. The District remains a predominately rural area and includes five historic market towns with over 100 smaller villages and hamlets.

Of the 354 Districts in England, East Herts is ranked as the 7th most affluent/successful, although there are some areas within it that are less affluent. There is a predominance of employment in managerial, professional and technical occupations among the District's residents. Unemployment is low with a claimant count rate of 0.5%.

East Herts benefits from main line rail links into London and is close to the A1(M), M11 and M25 Motorways with Stansted Airport lying directly to the east in neighbouring Uttlesford District.

The District has seen a significant growth in its population over recent years. The increase between 1991 and 2007 has been 14.5%, which amounts to more than 16,000 people, the highest growth in Hertfordshire. Today East Herts is home to a population of 132,600, constituting approximately 54,000 households. The population is estimated to increase to 144,000 by 2021 with significant increases in the 60-79 and 80+ age groups.

The attractiveness of East Herts as a place to live has led to high house prices with the District witnessing an 18% increase since 2005. This has resulted in a growing number of households, who would not otherwise require subsidised affordable housing but, due to inflated house prices, are financially restricted from entering the private housing market.

1.3 The London Commuter Belt Sub-Region

The sub-region comprises fifteen district Councils, all ten district Council areas of Hertfordshire (Broxbourne, Dacorum, East Herts, Hertsmere, North Herts, St. Albans, Stevenage, Three Rivers, Watford and Welwyn and Hatfield) and five district Councils in Essex (Brentwood, Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford), two county Councils, and approximately thirty social housing providers. The overall population for these fifteen districts is just over one and a half million based upon the most recent census information.

Across such a large sub-region there is clearly a range of diverse settlements varying from small rural villages to urban towns. London has an impact upon the housing requirements for the districts within the sub-region but there are also other areas to the north, east and west of the sub-region's boundaries that also create a source of both inward and outward migration. The large geographical scope of the London Commuter Belt brings with it a greater potential for joint working, for example between those districts that are based around the M25 arc, such as Brentwood, Broxbourne, Epping Forest and Three Rivers, or between the urban and new town settlements of Harlow, Stevenage, Welwyn and Hatfield and Watford or the rural districts of Epping, Uttlesford and East Herts.

This variety is reflected in the sub-region's housing markets. The average cost of a one-bedroom flat in the sub-region is about £130,000 but prices vary from one district to another, the lowest being below £110,000 the highest nearly £150,000 (source Hometrack). Levels of homelessness as recorded by each local authority also vary significantly, between approximately 70 to over 700 cases of people seeking advice and assistance and from 50 to over 200 cases of families being statutorily homeless (2006/07 figures).

Since the last sub-regional housing strategy the extent of joint working between the local authorities across the sub-region has increased significantly. A sub-regional approach has been adopted in tackling homelessness, bringing empty homes back into use, developing more affordable homes, identifying and promoting good practice and achieving savings by way of joint procurement where the opportunities arise. All of the districts are now involved in identifying and understanding local housing markets with the knowledge that as issues vary across the sub-region so too will the levels and type of responses required from each district and its partners.

1.4 Consultation and Partnerships

The Housing Strategy has been developed through a network of partnerships and consultations, ranging from annual housing and rural conferences and district wide multi-agency partnerships such as the Homeless Strategy Group and the Private Sector Landlords Forum. The Council is committed to this approach.

1.1.4 Consultation

i) Annual Housing Conference

The Council has held Housing Conferences in 2003, 2005, and late 2006. The Conference in November 2006 was attended by over 80 people representing all housing interest groups, including: private landlords and lettings agents, CABx, Shelter, residents and community groups, tenants groups, house builders and developers, parish, town, district and County Councillors, six registered social landlords, the two NHS primary care trust, Children Schools and Families, Adult Care Services and Police.

The conference had five workshops based on the following themes:

- Respect Agenda
- Neighbourhoods Matter
- Choice Based Lettings

- Empty Homes
- Local Plans/Development Framework

ii) Other Consultations

- Housing associations that have a local presence in East Herts
- The Council's website
- At each of the Annual Rural Parish Conferences held since 2005 affordable housing has been raised as an important issue.
- Local Town and Parish Councils
- As part of the Local Development Framework consultation on future planning and development policies.
- Private Sector Landlords Forum in March 2008.

1.4.2 Partnerships

i) The Local Strategic Partnership

A local strategic partnership (LSP) has been established in East Herts to develop strategic working with key partners from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors within the district. The Community Strategy 2003 sets out a long term vision for East Herts 'to ensure our rich and diverse natural environment and to improve the quality of every resident's life' and has been developed through the shared priorities of the individual organisations that make up the LSP.

The 2007/08 Action Plan for the Local Strategic partnership agreed six local priorities:

- Neighbourhood and Environmental Management
- Economic Development and Learning
- Leisure and Cultural Development
- Services for Vulnerable People
- Healthier Lifestyles
- Community Safety

A new East Herts Sustainable Communities Strategy is being developed and will be consulted on in early 2009 and finalised and published later in 2009.



For more information on the East Herts Sustainable Communities Strategy and Action Plan or the LSP please contact: Will O'Neill, Head of Community and Cultural services on 01279 655261 will.oneill@eastherts.gov.uk

ii) Homelessness Strategy Group

The multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Group was created as a result of the need to respond to the requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002 to develop a Homelessness Strategy. The Group is very broad ranging in its membership and has developed a second five year Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy that runs from 2008-2013.



For a copy of the Homelessness and Homeless Prevention Strategy and action plan please contact: Claire Bennett, Housing Strategy and Policy Manager on 01279 655261 or claire.bennett@eastherts.gov.uk

iii) Private Sector Landlords Forum

Locally and nationally some of the worst housing is in the private rented sector, and the Council recognises the need to work proactively with landlords and letting agents to achieve improvements. The Council organises two private sector landlord forums each year. Topics have included the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation, tenancy deposit protection schemes, the Local Housing Allowance and fire safety. The forums have also contributed to the review of the Council's private sector housing enforcement policy, amenity standards, and housing strategies.

2.0 Strategic Aims and Policy Context

The strategy identifies linkages to national, regional, sub-regional and local priorities. Whilst East Herts is part of the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region, the influence of other sub-regions and the Eastern Region as a whole is recognised, as is the influence of the London – Stansted – Cambridge - Peterborough growth corridor.

2.1 National Policy

It is recognised at a national level that everyone should have the opportunity to live in a decent home at a price they can afford and in a community where they feel safe and want to live and work. Policy guidance and legislative changes developed at a national level have set the framework for action at a local level.

In December 2000 the Government published its first housing green paper - *Quality and Choice: A decent home for all*- in which it set out a wide range of policy proposals. This was followed up in 2003 with the publication of *Sustainable Communities: building for the future* (commonly referred to as the 'Communities Plan'), which put forward proposals for tackling the fundamental problems of affordable housing supply, homelessness, housing conditions and for creating sustainable communities. It was followed in 2005 by the publication of two related documents—*Sustainable Communities: Homes for all* and *Sustainable Communities: People places and prosperity*. The former placed an emphasis on increasing social rented supply and expanding choice based lettings, improving the quality of private rented accommodation and of housing for vulnerable people generally in the private sector, and further assisting people to own their own home. It also commits the government to reducing the numbers of long term empty properties by 25,000 by 2010, and to raise the average energy efficiency of all dwellings by a fifth compared to 2000 by 2010.

In 2006 the Communities and Local Government department published *Delivering Affordable Housing*, setting out proposals for providing high quality homes for those in need within mixed sustainable communities, further widening home ownership opportunities and offering greater choice and flexibility for those who

rent. That year also saw the publication of *Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing)* aimed at improving the supply of housing including affordable housing through the planning system and reinforcing the drive to create sustainable and prosperous communities.

In October 2006 the Local Government White Paper, *Strong and prosperous communities* was published, setting out the Government's aim of giving local communities more power and influence. It further reinforced the local authority role as strategic leader and 'place shaper', operating through Local Area Agreements, and promoted the importance of community cohesion to address the challenges of an increasingly diverse society. Going beyond achieving purely housing outcomes Housing is also seen as making an important contribution to both social and environmental objectives such as health inequalities.

The White Paper was followed by the publication, in January 2007, of the Hills Report into the future role of social housing in England. The report generally endorsed the current approach to social housing provision but flagged up a number of issues that needed to be addressed - notably low resident satisfaction, poor estate environments, lack of tenant mobility, high levels of worklessness within the sector and increasing social polarisation. The Government responded to this by acknowledging the need to continue to build social rented homes and to maintain tenants' levels of security but also by making a commitment to improve social mobility and employment prospects, increase housing options for households in need, give tenants more powers to tackle poor management services and improve the links between housing, training and employment services.

June 2007 saw the publication of the outcome of the review, carried out by Professor Martin Cave, of the regulation of the social housing sector –*Every Tenant Matters*. In addition to establishing a new regulatory body for registered social landlords, its proposals include new responsibilities for local housing authorities as place shapers, working with other social housing providers to better meet the needs and aspirations of tenants.

In July 2007 the Government published its Housing Green Paper -*Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable*- in which it set out proposals for tackling housing supply. The paper proposed a significant increase in new homes, with an additional three million units by 2020 (240,000 p.a.), and 70,000 more affordable homes p.a. up to 2010/11 of which 45,000 will be social rented units. The Green Paper also introduced a new housing and planning delivery grant to encourage Councils to identify land for housing development and increase supply in their areas, and set a requirement for all new homes to be carbon neutral by 2016.

In February 2008, the government published *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods –A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society*, with an aspiration for all new housing to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards by 2013, and emphasising the importance of disabled facilities grants to provide adaptations to allow continued independence at home.

Energy efficiency targets began with the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 requirement to report on progress in improving energy efficiency of residential properties, and since 2000, on plans to reduce fuel poverty. The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy in 2001 sought to end fuel poverty for vulnerable households as a priority, followed by tackling fuel poverty in other households.

A key goal of the Energy White Paper in 2003 was to 'ensure that every home is adequately and affordably heated', with energy efficiency an important element to achieve this.

The main priorities, from these documents, which are relevant to East Herts and need to be understood and actioned locally, are:

- Providing greater choice and opportunity for people wanting to enter the housing market or move to a home that meets their changing needs through the introduction of new home ownership schemes such as intermediate rent.
- Ensuring that social housing meets the decent home standard by 2010, and contributing to the national target to increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable groups to at least 70%.
- Preventing homelessness and reducing the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation
- Building new homes to balance housing supply and demand
- Helping vulnerable people to improve their quality of life through the supporting people and adaptations programmes
- Improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.

The Council is aware that the Communities and Housing Agency is due to replace both the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships and will be launched April 09 along with a new regulatory agency Tenant Services Authority which will regulate RSLs and is now looking to regulate Local authorities.

2.2 Regional Context

The Communities Plan introduced Regional Housing Boards in 2003 and the first East of England Regional Strategy 2003-2006 was published in June 2003. The second Regional Housing Strategy for the East of England 2005-2010 sets out the strategic direction for the delivery of housing in the East of England. It aims to meet the challenges of growth and regeneration in the Region, and inform the recommendations for public investment in affordable housing in the region. The Eastern Regional Housing Forum have steered the development of the Regional Housing Strategy, with the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) Housing and Sustainable Communities Panel agreeing and endorsing the final Strategy in May 2005.

The Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2010 is based on a vision of the region where "everyone can live in a decent home which meets their needs, at a price they can afford and in locations that are sustainable".

The Regional Housing Strategy recommends investment themes for public money allocated from the Single Regional Housing Pot to the region and how the money should be distributed across the themes and also to the sub-regions. The themes are;

- Growth:
- Local Needs/homelessness:
- Regeneration:
- Rural:

- Key workers:
- Supported Housing:
- Existing stock:
- Black and Minority Ethnic.

These themes are key to the delivery of both the sub regional and local housing strategies.

2.3 Sub-Regional Context

East Herts sits within the London Commuter Belt sub-region and the 2005-2008 Strategy identifies five priorities:

- Maximising the delivery of affordable housing
- Developing the intermediate market
- Improving stock condition
- Meeting the needs of vulnerable groups
- Achieving social inclusion

All the sub-regional partners are currently in the process of developing a Sub-Regional Housing Strategy for 2009 and onwards.

The Government is encouraging local authorities to undertake joint working on LDFs. East Herts is currently working jointly with five other authorities in the M11/East LCB sub-region to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) technical study to inform housing policies in the partners' LDFs. In line with Government guidance, the SHMA will look at both housing need and demand across the study area.

2.4 Hertfordshire County Council Context

Local Area Agreements (LAA) are three year agreements between central government, local authorities, local strategic partnerships and other key partners. They set out targets to deliver national outcomes in a way that reflects local priorities. The local government white paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, established the principle that LAAs should effectively be the delivery plan for local authorities' Sustainable Community Strategies. They require that County and District or Borough Councils and local partners prepare a LAA and deliver against the priorities it contains. Hertfordshire County Council is our lead agency for developing and monitoring the LAAs that East Herts contributes to. The Hertfordshire LAA 2006-2009 sets out around 40 targets within four blocks:

- Children and young people
- Safer, stronger and sustainable communities
- Healthier communities and older people
- Economic development.

The LAA contains both mandatory outcomes and indicators set by central government and local outcomes and indicators agreed by local partners.

The new LAA2 for Hertfordshire for 2009 onwards contains 30 improvement targets selected from the National Indicator set of 198, and 16 statutory targets as

well as other local improvement targets agreed by Hertfordshire Forward. The 46 LAA indicators are grouped into nine themes:

- Jobs, Prosperity and Skills
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Children and Young people
- An Ageing Population
- Health and Well Being
- Transport and Access
- Promoting Sustainable Development
- Affordable Housing and Quality neighbourhoods
- Sustaining Hertfordshire's Unique Character and Quality of Life.

The draft Hertfordshire Community Strategy, Hertfordshire 2021: a brighter future, sets out the long-term vision for Hertfordshire and has short-term and long-term actions based around these themes. East Herts is the lead Agency for the Housing and Quality Neighbourhoods theme.

2.5 East Hertfordshire District Context

a) Corporate

This Housing Strategy reflects the Councils corporate vision:

To improve the quality of people's lives and preserve all that is best in East Herts.

The Council's Corporate Strategic Plan 2008-2011 is a steering document for the ambitions and aspirations of the Council. The Council has developed 6 corporate priorities that guide everything that it does. The priority most relevant to this strategy is:

Promoting prosperity and wellbeing: providing access and opportunities.

Priority: Enhance the quality of life, health and well being of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.

Service Plans are produced every year by heads of Service and set out what key actions need to be undertaken to deliver the Council's corporate priorities and key objectives contained in the Corporate Strategic Plan. These actions are linked to key performance indicators, so achievement can be measured and tracked. The Corporate plan and Service plans also feed into a four year budget planning model, which the Council uses to plan its expenditure and make sure that financial resources are available to fund actions in priority areas.

Appendix 5 shows how East Herts performance framework works showing the cascade from the Council's vision through to an individual officer's Performance Development Review.

b) Planning

In 2004 the Government introduced a new planning system in England. It replaced the old Structure Plans and Local Plans system with new style Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) such as the East of England Plan and Local Development Frameworks.

The RSS for the East of England, published by the Government in May 2008, sets out a strategy to guide planning and development in the East of England to the

year 2021. It covers economic development, housing, the environment, transport, waste management, culture, sport and recreation, mineral extraction and implementation. It seeks to address issues such as social exclusion, the need for regeneration and the impact of climate change. Importantly the Regional Spatial Strategy sets out how many houses must be built in East Herts over the period of the plan. The District wide figure for East Herts is 12,000 new homes over the period of the plan 2001-2021. This excludes any development which may take place north of Harlow, in East Herts, as part of the housing provision figures for Harlow, which anticipate urban extensions in Epping Forest and East Herts Districts.

In accordance with Regional Policy H2: Affordable Housing, local authorities should set appropriate targets for affordable housing in their planning policies. At the regional level the RSS indicates a target of some 35% of all homes should be affordable.

The Local Development Framework will shape the future of East Herts to 2021. It is being created by East Herts Council under the requirements of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It will eventually replace the existing East Herts Local Plan, and will be the basis for making important decisions about the direction of growth and development in East Herts. It looks at issues such as the provision of new housing, jobs and community facilities. The framework will also ensure that due regard is made to the protection of the environment in decision making.

To ensure that the planning policies of the LDF are based upon comprehensive and robust evidence the Council is currently working jointly with other districts in the sub-region in carrying out a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). SHMAs provide local authorities with robust evidence to develop a strategic approach to housing through consideration of housing need and demand in all housing sectors – owner occupied, private rented and affordable – and assessment of the key drivers and relationships within the housing market.

c) Partnerships and Cross Boundary working

There are numerous examples of partnership working and cross boundary working throughout this strategy. Additional examples include the following:

- The Council meets regularly with the Occupational Therapists of Hertfordshire County Council, and with the Home Improvement Agency run by the Papworth Trust for East Herts' residents, to discuss cases and joint working arrangements. Officers also attend regular meetings with the County Council and the Home Improvement Agencies and Local Authorities throughout Herts to discuss issues of joint concern in relation to adaptations.
- Environmental Health staff have long established partnerships with Herts and Beds Local authorities, at Head of Service level, and operationally through topic groups, including the private sector housing group. The work plan for this group included joint working to prepare for house in multiple occupation (HMO) licensing, training for and achieving consistency with the new Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) for assessing housing conditions, and procedures for implementing the new enforcement powers under the Housing Act 2004.

- Opportunities for partnership working with and beyond these authorities have arisen, and proven successful, particularly with London Commuter Belt Sub-Region, and its associated task groups, on proposed joint initiatives to tackle non-decent homes, fuel poverty, Section 106 Agreements, Choice Based Lettings and benchmarking services. East Herts' officers are playing key roles in these partnerships.
- Stansted Area Housing Partnership (SAHP) was developed as a partnership between Uttlesford, East Herts, Harlow and Braintree Councils following the granting of planning permission by Uttlesford to BAA to increase passenger through put to 25 million. BAA Stansted put £2.2m towards the funding of affordable housing within a ten mile radius of the airport. A key feature of the SAHP is the development of inter local authority nomination agreement, giving the opportunity for residents of the four Councils to move across local authority boundaries.
- The Council's officers are also key players County Council's Supporting people programme and as well as attendance at the Commissioning Body and Programme Development Group are significant players in a number of current significant projects including The Young persons Accommodation project, The Move on Project and the Review of Older Persons Accommodation.
- RSL Preferred partners, delivering the affordable housing programme– the Council works with 8 preferred partners which were selected several years ago following a rigorous selection process that considered their performance in financial terms, management terms, location and development capabilities and standards. The Council received 24 applications which were assessed in partnership with the Housing Corporation at the time.
- There is a close working relationship between officers and members of Parish Councils who seek to provide affordable housing for their parishes. Officers work with individual members of Parishes to ensure the housing need survey is carried out to their specification and that the affordable housing required is delivered to meet the need of the families whilst enhancing the street scene of the recipient village.

3.0 East Herts

3.1.1 A Profile of the District

i) Population

In 2007 the District had a population of 132,600, constituting approximately 54,000 households⁴. The increase between 1991 and 2007 has been 14.5% the highest growth in Hertfordshire. The population of East Herts is forecasted to increase to 144,000 by 2021⁵. There is a forecasted growth of population in the over 65 age

⁴ 2006 mid year population estimate , ONS

⁵ Revised 2004 based Subnational population projections ONS

group such that this population is estimated to increase to 26,500 by 2021⁶. This is a 51% increase on the 2001 census count of 17,601. The number of residents over the age of 75 on the 2001 census was 7,985 and is forecasted to increase to 13,000 by 2021⁷. This is an increase of 63%. Given the resource demands often associated with very elderly people these are significant figures. In addition the latter group are likely to have care and support needs, which will need to be met by new and existing housing provision.

According to the 2001 Census the Black & Minority Ethnic population accounts for less than three percent of the population of East Herts and is made up of a mix of primarily Chinese and Indian. Since the Census the Council is aware that there has been an increase in the Polish and Portuguese communities in East Herts but there are currently no official population estimates.

ii) Employment and Salary

The average full-time wage for people in employment who live in the District is £31,146 per person per annum. However the average full-time wage for people who work in the District (and may not necessarily live here) is £25,142 per person per annum.⁸ This difference is largely attributable to the 17% of East Herts' working population who commute to London. Unemployment is low in the District with a claimant rate of 0.5%.⁹

iii) The Housing market

The Council's Council Tax Service has a total of 56,252 dwellings registered in East Herts at 1 April 2007. The Office for National Statistics records 86% of these properties as being owner occupied or privately rented compared to 81% for England. The social rented sector accounts for 14% of the housing stock compared to 18.4% for England. The Council does not own any stock having transferred ownership of its homes to Stort Valley, now South Anglia, and Riversmead Housing Associations in March 2002.

The attractiveness of East Herts as a place to live has led to high house prices with the District witnessing an 18% increase overall since 2005¹⁰. This has resulted in a growing number of households, who would not otherwise require subsidised affordable housing but, due to inflated house prices, are financially restricted from entering the private housing market.

Property Type	Average Price All Quarters 2005	Average Price First Quarter 2007	% Change
Flats & Maisonettes	170,225	187,700	10.3%
Detached	434,525	548,200	26.2%
Semi-detached	261,125	293,900	12.6%
Terraced	214,875	246,300	14.6%
All Properties	270,188	319,025	18.1%
County All properties	217,889	225,900	3.7%

⁶ Revised 2004 based Subnational population projections ONS

⁷ Revised 2004 based Subnational population projections ONS

⁸ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2006 ONS

⁹ Claimant Count rate, July 2007, NOMIS. This is the proportion of the working age population claiming job seekers allowance.

¹⁰ Herts Observatory July 2007

Information from the Hertfordshire Observatory shows that in 2007 the ratio of the average house price in East Herts to the average income was 10:1 i.e. the average cost of a home was 10 times the average income. This was the third highest ratio in Hertfordshire.

The following table shows some comparison figures for renting a home in the private sector with a registered social landlord in January 2008¹¹.

	Average Private rent per week	Average rent of Registered Social Landlord per week
1 bed Flat	£125.00	£65.00
3 bed house	£200.00	£95.00

iv) The condition of the housing

The Council commissioned a Housing Stock Condition Survey in 2004, which comprised a housing needs interview of households and a physical survey of 1,235 dwellings. This assessed properties in East Herts against the then fitness standard, the Decent Homes standard, the then proposed Housing Health and Safety Rating System, as well as focusing on levels of disrepair and energy efficiency.

Some key findings were that of the then estimated 55,576 dwellings in the District, 940 were empty. The private rented sector showed the highest urgent repair costs (i.e., needing to be done within the next year) as did vacant and older dwellings. The main problem areas (in terms of the amount needing to be spent) were walls, fences, paved areas and outbuildings, external doors and windows, and roofs.

The dwellings were assessed for the most common hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which is now the prescribed methodology for assessing housing condition. At the time of the survey, the 'unfitness' standard was the prescribed method, so the stock was also assessed against this standard. It was estimated that around 7.4% of dwellings required a mandatory response under HHSRS, which was above the estimated level of unfitness of 3%. The main hazards related to excessive cold and falls on stairs. Private rented and older dwellings appeared particularly likely to be 'hazardous'.

Despite the relatively high percentage (46.4%) of the stock being built after 1964, and with post 1980 detached houses being the most numerous dwelling type (10.5% of the stock), the average energy efficiency Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating was estimated to be 51. This is comparable with the national average and that for the East of England. Older (pre-1919) and detached houses showed the lowest mean SAP ratings.

Some 2964 households (5.4% of total households) were found to be in fuel poverty, i.e., needing to spend more than 10% of their income on fuel in order to keep warm.

The Council will shortly be commissioning a new stock condition survey which is due to be completed in 2010.

¹¹ Local Papers and Housing Options Service

3.1.2 Housing Need and Demand

Housing need and demand can be measured and assessed from a variety of sources including formal studies and from our knowledge of groups that live within the district.

i) Housing Needs Study

The East Herts Housing Needs Survey (HNS) 2004, carried out by David Coultie Associates (DCA), was completed in September 2004 and an update was carried out in 2005. The original research involved a postal survey of a sample of the residents in East Herts District and a total of 11,460 questionnaires were sent out, with a response rate of 28.4%.

The key findings of the HNS 2005 Update are summarised below.

- The HNS Update 2005 indicated that a household income of at least £34,800 would be required to purchase the cheapest 1-bed flat in the District, rising to £61,700 for a 2-bed terrace property in a more expensive area. Access to private rent requires a household income of at least £20,600 for the cheapest 1-bed flat, rising to £33,600 for a 2-bed terrace in a more expensive area.
- The HNS Update 2005 identified that the average price for all dwellings in the District was around £265,700. Flats/ maisonettes had an average price of £168,857; terraced houses averaged £212,532; and semi-detached houses averaged £259,008. The price of flats and terraced houses, which are the usual entry level properties, have risen by 18% and 5.5% respectively over the year since the last Housing Needs Survey in 2004.
- The HNS Update 2005 identifies a total affordable housing need for 787 units per year. The net annual outstanding need is for 484 units, after allowing for existing stock re-let supply. This figure can be compared to the total annual housing requirement for East Herts of 555 dwellings contained in the Adopted Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1998.
- The HNS 2004 found that 6% of households in the District contained a 'concealed' household. The HNS Update 2005 showed that within this group 91% did not have an adequate income to be able to buy and 64% were unable to afford to rent privately (based on the smallest 1-bed flat).
- The HNS 2004 identified that the principal need of concealed households (61%) is for flats, with 14% requiring terraced property and 17% semi-detached. The figures for concealed households also showed a requirement for one and two bed dwellings at 55% and 40% respectively. However, there is an ongoing need for 3 bedroom units, which tend to free up the smaller units.

Following publication of PPS3 – Housing by the Government in November 2006, Strategic Housing market Assessments (SHMAs) will replace Housing Needs Surveys (HNS) in forming part of the evidence base to underpin Council's Housing Strategy and planning policies. SHMA have a wider remit than HNS in that they look at how housing market areas operate in terms of both housing need and

demand. East Herts is currently working jointly with five other authorities (Brentwood, Broxbourne, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford) in the M11/East LCB sub-region to undertake a sub-regional SHMA. The results of the SHMA should be available in late autumn.

ii) Housing Register

As of 1 April 2008 there were 2,150 households on the Council's Housing Register of which three quarters were in a 'reasonable preference' category for housing for example their current home exacerbated a medical condition or had inadequate facilities.

In 2006 the Council developed and launched a Common Housing Register for the district with the majority of its partner Housing Associations working in the district. The Council and its partners believe that the development of a Common Housing Register has offered significant benefits to the Council, its partner housing associations and to applicants on the housing register. The benefits include:

- Provides a more robust estimate of housing need as both first-time applicants and tenants seeking to transfer rather than multiple lists where the level of duplication is unknown
- A Common Housing Register has significant benefits for strategic planning within the housing market area
- Improved use of the social housing stock with a single pool of applicants and vacancies giving greater scope for successful 'matches'.
- The register can improve mobility within and between landlords with greater choice of housing and social landlords.

Also in 2006 the Council agreed that a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme should be developed for East Herts. The government has set a target that all housing authorities should be operating a CBL scheme for allocating social housing by 2010. The government considers that CBL schemes can enhance mobility between areas and tenures and provide a balance between the needs of prospective tenants and choice and so may contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods. The Council joined a Consortia of five other Local Housing Authorities (Broxbourne, Epping Forest, Chelmsford, Uttlesford and Brentwood), and 25 registered social landlords and successfully bid for government funding to assist with the development and initial set-up of a CBL scheme. The CBL scheme went live in March 2008 and is a great success. The Council has developed the CBL scheme within its CHR framework so further enhancing choice and mobility for both new home seekers and existing tenants.

iii Homelessness

From 1 April 2005, the Council has operated an in house Housing Options Service that merged and re-configured the previous outsourced housing advice, housing register and homelessness services. The main objective of the service is to provide a comprehensive options service for people with housing needs. The ethos is that the specialist homelessness element of the service is very much a last resort - with the front line customer contact being first and foremost about prevention.

The levels of homelessness in East Herts have in the last two years, reduced compared to previous years. This reduction is the direct result of the implementation of the homeless prevention and housing options measures. The table below shows the number of approaches to the Council's Homeless Service and the number of households that, after investigation, have been accepted as homeless¹².

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Homeless applications	254	215	117	106
Homeless Acceptances	142	120	56	64
Percentage of acceptances against applications	56%	56%	48%	60%

The following table gives a comparison of the three main reasons recorded for homelessness in 2007/08 and account for 81% of the total homeless acceptances¹³.

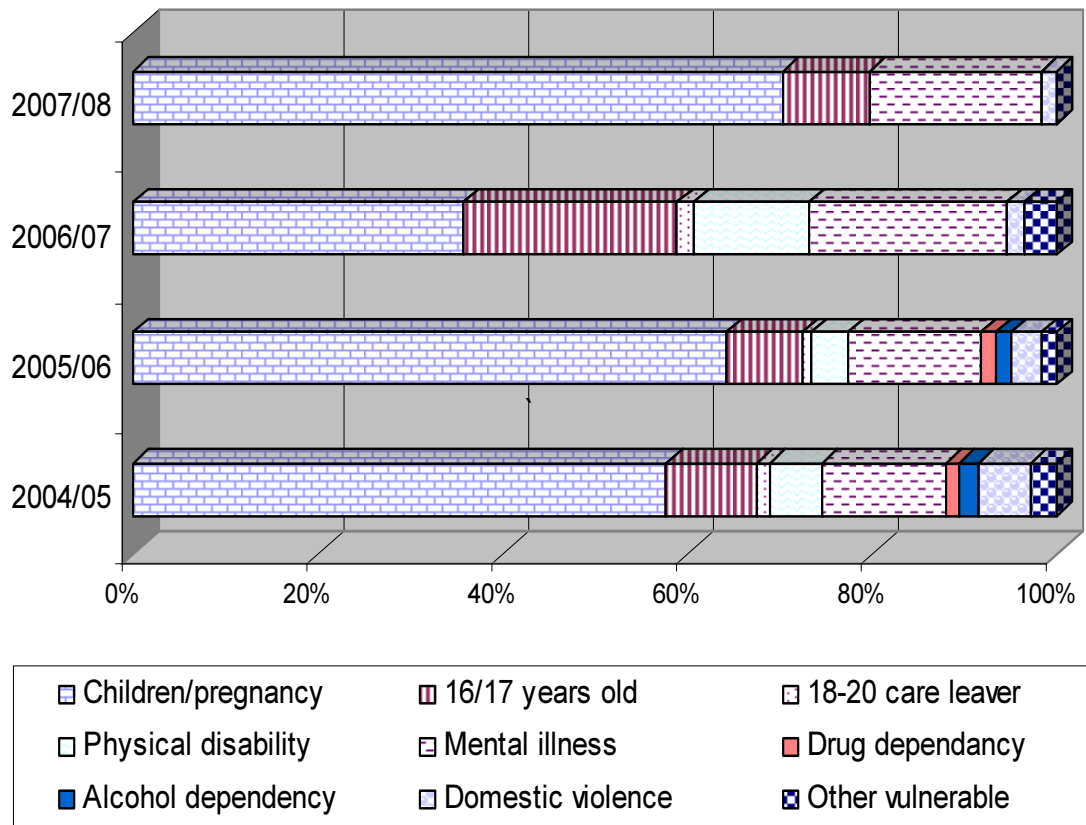
	East Herts
Parent, relatives, friends exclusions	45%
Relationship breakdown - violence	13%
End of assured short-hold tenancy	23%

The graph below shows a comparison for the last three years of the reasons why households were considered to be in a priority need category when they were accepted as statutorily homeless.

¹² Housing Options Service statistics

¹³ Housing Options Service statistics

Proportion of households accepted by priority need category 2004 - 2008



The Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy 2008-2013 gives more details on homelessness and the Council's priorities for preventing homelessness in East Herts.

iv) Housing Advice

In 2006/07 the Council gave out over 895 pieces of housing advice primarily by phone or personal interview. In 2007/08 this has increased to over 1,000. Of these households the Council prevented homelessness for 168 households in 2006/07 and 142 households in 2007/08.

v) Key workers and Intermediate Income Households

The Council fully recognises the need to provide housing for an increasing group of people earning moderate or intermediate incomes in the private and public sectors who cannot afford to access private sector housing. The Council recognises the need to provide for these groups in order to maintain economically and socially sustainable communities. All shared ownership and mid-market vacancies are marketed to key workers first.

The Council have agreed a definition of Key Workers as people providing services to residents of East Herts. First priority is Fire Fighters, Police, Teachers, and Health Service and social care workers and key East Herts Council and Herts County Council employees. Second Priority is other Public Sector or Private Sector workers on key workers incomes comparable with those of the first priority.

The Council works in partnership with Lea Valley Homes to assist key worker and intermediate income households to access the housing market through shared ownership schemes. Between 2003 and 2007 the Council enabled 115 new shared ownership units on developments across the district.

vi) Vulnerable Households and Households requiring Housing with Support. Supported Housing provides a range of services to people who cannot, either in the short-term or long-term, sustain entirely independent living. Support can be provided to people in specifically designated or purpose-designed accommodation or in general housing. However, many people who require support will have complex needs which cross the boundaries between client groups.

The provision of housing related support services is, for the most part, determined by the availability of Supporting People funding. The primary purpose of the Supporting People programme implemented from April 2003 as defined by central government is to:

‘offer vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment which enables greater independence’

The Hertfordshire Supporting People Programme is administered and managed by Hertfordshire County Council but there are strong local links between the County Council and the ten Local Authorities to both monitor and profile demand and provide appropriate accommodation at a local level. The Supporting People Strategy 2007 – 2012 sets out a programme to review current provision and ensure that resources are targeted and used effectively. By remodelling existing services, it is envisaged that substantial savings can be made to commission alternative services that better meet the current needs of vulnerable people. The Council has adopted the Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy and works closely with the Supporting People Commissioning Body and support providers to improve the fit between the provision and demand for housing support.

The Hertfordshire Supporting People Programme has recently launched a new Countywide Floating Support Service following an award of a three year contract to SPH Housing to help vulnerable people who need help with housing issues. The support it provides is available to social and private tenants as well as owner occupiers. SPH Housing provide a clear single access route to generic and also specialist housing support and will work with a wide range of agencies including probation service, social workers and housing associations to help those people requiring housing support.

There are considerable opportunities for working across local authority boundaries on the provision of housing with support. The Council will continue to work in partnership with sub-regional, county and local agencies to ensure that people in the district have access to appropriate housing and support.

a) Young People

Preventing homelessness can have a huge influence on a young person's life chances. Good housing and support means that they are more likely to enter training, get a job, have a better standard of health and be able to take advantage of opportunities that they are offered.

In the Homeless Act 2002 the government strengthened the statutory duty for young people. All 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers aged between 18 and 20 have a priority need for housing if they become homeless through no fault of their own.

Services and accommodation available include:

- Bishops Stortford YMCA which provides 28 units of self contained bed-sit accommodation which provides a medium level of support. In addition, the YMCA leased a property from a local landlord in Hertford which provides five units of shared facilities accommodation that the Housing Options Team can nominate to with a low level of off site support being provided.
- All ten local authorities in Hertfordshire, the County Council's Children's Schools and Families and Herts Young Homeless Group have developed and all signed up to a joint working protocol. The protocol is aimed at the 16 to 25 age group and explicitly defines the roles and responsibilities for each agency when a young person is either threatened with homelessness or is homeless.
- Herts Young Homeless Group and the Aldwyck Housing Group, funded by the Hertfordshire Supporting People Services, provide each Local Authority in Hertfordshire with an integrated Housing Advice Service which includes a Crash Pad and Mediation service for 16 to 25 year olds.
- The Housing Options team currently funds the YMCA in Bishop's Stortford to provide at any one time two 6 month placements for homeless 16 and 17 year olds. The placements provide not only supported accommodation but intensive support in life skills such as budgeting, and encouragement and support to continue education or find training. At the end of six months, if the young person successfully engages in the placement, they are offered accommodation at the YMCA.
- The Council has a housing protocol which provides annually five units of general needs accommodation for young people who are coming to the end of their successful stay at the YMCA.

In addition we are supporting the County Council's project to provide the revenue support for the provision of a new supported hostel for young people in East Herts, in the Hertford or Ware area and by supporting other agencies such as the County Council for the provision of supported lodgings and other initiatives.

It is important that young people most at risk of becoming homeless have increased knowledge and awareness of the impact that homelessness can have on their life chances. East Herts will shortly be commissioning, along with five other local authorities in Hertfordshire and the County Council, Herts Young Homeless Group to develop and implement a homeless prevention model for use in schools and targeted youth settings. The project aim is to raise awareness and an understanding of the causes and symptoms of becoming homeless and will draw on the experiences of young people who have actually been homeless. The target group is 14 and 15 year olds who are most at risk of homelessness. This includes those:

- At risk of exclusion
- Not fully engaged in education or training
- At risk or involved with drugs, anti-social and/or criminal behaviour.

Initially the project is a one year one but an 'off the shelf' homeless prevention pack aimed at young people will be developed which can be used by teachers and other agencies.

b) Older People

As discussed earlier the population of East Herts is ageing with the numbers of people aged 65+ set to rise by 40 % between 2001 and 2021. Demographic trends suggest that in future older people will be living alone and that less support will be available from family carers. These factors alongside increasing numbers of older people and increasing life expectancy will increase the demands on existing services.

The Government's strategy *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods –A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society* has five themes or priorities for change which are:

- A new national housing advice and information service with strengthened local housing information services
- More widespread rapid repair and adaptation services including the provision of Handyperson schemes and Home Improvement Agencies
- Modernisation of the Disabled Facilities Grant process
- All homes to be built to Lifetimes Homes standard by 2011 in the public sector and 2013 in the private sector.
- Strengthened relationships between housing, health and care services.

The Council recognises that housing has a key role to play in maintaining independent living for older people for as long as is feasible and in helping to prevent unnecessary admission to residential care or hospital. For individuals, living at home is usually the preferred choice. The Council can assist with a range of measures from low level interventions such the provision of a community alarm, or fall detectors, through to Disabled Facilities Grant, or assistance with minor or major repairs, to high level interventions such as a transfer to more suitable independent housing or assistance in a sheltered or frail elderly scheme. There are a number of projects that the Council is either leading on or is a major partner to improve the available services and housing options for elderly people in East Herts.

A review underway in 2008 into the Council's dispersed alarms service has led to close working with the county Council to ensure a service will continue to be available to those who need it, and which fits well with developments to the telephone network and with telecare, which is new technology to help care for those at highest risk.

There is a continuing need to examine, with Registered Social Landlord partners, the possibilities of refurbishment, remodelling or re-provision of existing sheltered schemes where they no longer satisfy modern standards or customer expectations. The overall objective for this client group is to update the housing provision to modern standards from the older style bedsits for which there is low or non-existent local demand to more modern and flexible accommodation including extra care. Uses by alternative client groups may also need to be considered if this is not viable.

The County Council's Supporting People Service is leading on a major project across the County regarding the future provision of accommodation for older people. They have set up four Older People Accommodation Project Boards with local partners to lead and manage the process.

Projects that have been completed or are currently underway in the District include:

- Riversmead is to regenerate the scheme at Bircherley Court in Hertford to provide modern accommodation with additional services and community provision which will enhance the quality of life of the residents. The scheme will provide extra care in partnership with Supporting People.
- Circle Anglia have also carried out a similar asset management assessment and will be bringing forward three or four projects in the next three years that require regeneration to bring the older persons accommodation up to the required standard for extra care service provision.
- Stansted Area Housing Partnership has been successful in attracting funding from the Growth Area Funding 3 to provide a 70 unit mixed tenure older persons scheme. East Herts residents will benefit from this through the cross boundary nomination rights which lie at the heart of SAHP projects.
- The private sector is developing new accommodation for older people, for sale on the open market, on a number of sites throughout the district.

c) People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities

The 2001 Census reported that 24.6% of households in East Herts contained somebody with a long term limiting illness or disability, which equates to 12,827 households. The main implication for housing is the need to promote independent living, mobility, choice and control by people with disabilities and to secure access to mainstream housing provision. There is a need to work with affordable housing providers to deliver specialist housing schemes, lifetime homes and ensure the best use of adapted properties.

In order to meet demand for adaptations to enable disabled residents to remain safely in their own home the Council funds an adaptation programme in excess of the government funding limits. However the nature of a person's disability and their personal circumstances may mean that they require rehousing. During 2005/6 the Council and the Papworth Trust established a Disabled Persons Housing Register. This has helped East Herts Housing Options Team and the County Council's Occupational Therapists to identify people with disabilities for properties that are already adapted. Any works carried out to a property are recorded in a register showing details of which properties have been adapted and in what way.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in April 2007, most planning applications are considered by a dedicated occupational therapist based at Papworth Housing Trust, funded by Herts County Council, to assess the validity of the lifetime home provision. The Local Plan Policy HSG 6 expects that 15% of residential provision should be to lifetime home standard. The Council's Affordable Housing and

Lifetimes Homes Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – January 2008, at Section 9 refers to Lifetime Homes and Sustainability and the Lifetimes Homes Standards are set out in Appendix D to the SPD.

d) People with Learning disabilities

There are important housing needs to address for this client group. A key priority is therefore to commission an appropriate range of services to accommodate, support and care for East Herts residents and reduce the dependency for more intensive forms of service provision. The main contribution that the housing enabling role can make is in facilitating appropriate supported living opportunities. In Bishops Stortford a general needs project of 31 units for rent was developed by Paradigm Housing Group Ltd. Eleven of the units have housed 13 residents with learning disabilities who receive support from their social workers as and when required. This scheme has generated increased independence for the residents as well as freeing up the higher support accommodation they occupied previously.

Similar projects will be considered on other sites which come through the planning system.

e) Mental Health

In the context of the Housing Strategy the important aspect is ensuring that all service users are not placed in more restrictive environments than their needs or risk assessment indicate. The development of additional housing related support services, such as floating support, can enable more individuals to move into independent living thereby freeing up resources.

Current provision in East Herts includes supported short-term and long term accommodation, primarily in the Hertford area, and access to the County Council's floating support service in general needs accommodation.

Herts County Council is currently developing a Mental Health Strategy. The Strategy will map the current provision of accommodation and services based on the level of support provided and is likely to recommend the rationalisation of provision across the County and the increase of provision where there are gaps. A presentation was recently made to the Council's LSP and the Council is committed to working with specialists to meet the needs of this client group. It is likely that the Strategy will identify and short fall in accommodation, particularly in the East and North of the District, and a need to develop a move on protocol from current accommodation based services that to general needs accommodation with off site support.

f) Rough Sleepers

There is no evidence of significant levels of rough sleeping. A more prevalent occurrence is that of 'sofa surfing' where people move from one friend or relatives sofa to another.

Although the number of rough sleepers is small, the Council recognises that they are an extremely vulnerable group. It is essential that those who may wish to access housing and other services are provided with appropriate information, and

that a wide range of organisations that come into contact with them can 'signpost' them to appropriate services.

More generally, the issue of rough sleeping emphasises the importance of improving access to general needs affordable accommodation and there being sufficient floating support to help people make a success of their tenancies.

g) Drug and Alcohol Misuse

Vale House Stabilisation Services continues to provide rehabilitation services for people in this client group. The Council has a re-housing protocol with Vale House to provide up to three units of general needs accommodation per annum for clients that have successfully completed their program. There is also a specialised floating support service available.

h) Victims of Domestic Violence

The crime of domestic violence is one that crosses all social, geographical and cultural groups. Domestic violence is a significant cause of homelessness within East Herts. The East Herts and Broxbourne Domestic Violence Forum (a registered charity) was formed in 2005 to drive multi-agency work in the two local authorities to tackle domestic violence effectively.

There have been some significant developments of housing services to help tackle domestic violence, provided either by the Council or its partners:

- domestic violence is now a specific ground for repossession in the two stock transfer housing associations tenancy agreements
- a 'Sanctuary' scheme began in 2006 following a pilot period
- a floating support service shared with Broxbourne Council
- the 'Home Improvement Agency' scheme has been expanded to enable victims to receive improved help with home security through the Hertfordshire Home Safety and Security Scheme. The service provides home security checks and fitting of home security measures, free of charge, to actual or potential home burglary victims, and residents referred by the police service or victim support, as well as those aged over sixty, single parents, and vulnerable or housebound residents

The Council has a valued relationship with Broxbourne Women's Aid and will continue to develop housing initiatives and services with them to meet the housing needs of domestic violence victims.

i) Offenders and people at risk of offending

The Council is a key partner on the Multi-Agency Protection Panel (MAPPA) whose membership includes local RSLs, the Probation Service Local Authorities and the Police. In addition the Probation Service is a valued member on the Council's Homelessness Strategy Group.

The County Council's Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP) have panel meeting where young people aged 8-16, who have been identified as at risk, by agencies such as schools or the Police, can appoint a YISP Worker to the young person

and recommend a package of support for the family such as Parenting Classes and activities for the young person.

The County Council leading an Offenders Project Group that aims review both the services and available accommodation across the County. The Council recognises the scarcity of accommodation for this group across the County and supports the initiative.

j) Gypsies and Travellers

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) has estimated that the region needs 1,220 more caravan pitches for Gypsies and Travellers by 2011. This shortage of sites contributes to the problem of unauthorised encampments and developments. Moreover, research has confirmed that a lack of good quality sites is linked to Gypsies and Travellers experiencing poorer health and educational outcomes than any other disadvantaged group.

To ascertain if there is a need for increased provision for pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in the district, an Accommodation Needs Assessment was commissioned in 2006 jointly with four neighbouring authorities and the County Council. The study ascertained a need for a total of an additional 35 pitches across the five authorities by 2011.

These, and findings from other studies across the region, were used by consultants appointed by EERA to establish how many pitches must be provided by individual local authorities. Under current EERA proposals, East Herts will be required to provide 15 pitches by 2011 on sustainable sites within the district. This proposal is subject to public examination in late 2008 and finalisation in 2009 and may be amended.

A Site Scoping Report carried out by Scott Wilson Associates in 2007 identified a number of potential areas for locating sites. The report will be used to inform future planning policy.

vii) Rural communities

East Herts is a predominately rural district with over a hundred villages and hamlets. Approximately 30% (2001 Census) of the population live outside of the five main towns. Such a large and dispersed rural population has significant impacts on the provision of housing services.

In order to address these issues the Local Plan Second Review 2007 includes a Village Development strategy that apportions limited growth to the larger and more sustainable settlements, in tandem with lower thresholds for affordable housing provision. Rural Exceptions Affordable Housing for 100% affordable schemes may also be permitted.

Parish Housing Needs Surveys are also carried out to supplement and give further detail to the Housing Needs Survey 2004.

Parish	Date of completed report	Author
Cottered	May 03	Countryside Development

		Agency
Buckland	May 03	CDA
Anstey	May 03	CDA
Westmill	May 03	CDA
Wyddial	May 03	CDA
Aspenden	May 03	CDA
Little Hadham	May 07	East Herts Council
Aston	March 07	EHC
Furneux Pelham	March 06	EHC
Bengeo Rural South	Oct 01	EHC
Hormead	March 06	EHC
Benington	Jan 03	EHC
Albury	Jan 07	EHC (second – a follow up)

In the period 2003-2007 Registered Social Landlords built 14 new affordable homes in rural villages in East Herts.

Affordable housing has been provided at Walkern and other sites in the pipeline include a scheme at Albury, Tewin, Braughing and Hertford Heath. For the most part, they have come forward following the adoption of the Local Plan Second Review April 2007 which significantly altered the thresholds within the villages whereby affordable housing could be sought.

viii) Black & Minority Ethnic Groups

The Black & Minority Ethnic population accounts for less than three percent of the population of East Herts. The Homeless figures that we report to the government confirm that applications and acceptances are in line with the East Herts BME profile. The percentage and ethnic group of households on the housing register also reflect this profile as so does the nominations to social housing.

However the Council recognises that the information it holds on needs and demand for this group is not complete and the SHMA should help fill the gap on our knowledge.

ix) Economic Migrants from EU Accession States

Since the Census in 2001 there is evidence of a growth in the East Herts population of migrants from Eastern European Countries. Hertford and Bishop's Stortford have a significant Polish Community since the expansion of the European Union to include A8* countries May 2004. There is also an established Portuguese population in Bishop's Stortford. Currently our housing recording systems do not identify these households separately on the housing register but groups them as European other. In addition there is very limited official government information on the number of migrants in the Country to base comparisons on.

It is felt that many will choose or indeed only be able to access the private rented sector, and in particular houses in multiple occupation. A leaflet has been provided, and translated into Polish, to advise tenants on seeking repairs to rented accommodation, and a housing workshop has been run for the Polish community. In addition the Council has available one day a week a Polish speaking officer who is based in our Bishop's Stortford offices.

4.0 Strategic Objectives

The Council has consulted and identified, with its partners, specifically the LCBSR, further developments it wants and needs to make to meet the housing need and aspirations of the existing and future residents of East Herts. As the national, regional and local drivers change, which they are bound to over the three year life of this Strategy, the Council will continue to adapt and take opportunities as they arise.

In collaboration with the London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Housing Group we have identified three strategic objectives that are relevant to all the partners. The actions that contribute to the objectives are both agreed sub-regional ones and also local actions that are relevant to East Herts. The Action Plan is at Appendix 1 and contains both the Sub-Regional and the local actions. The Housing Strategies produced by the 14 partners in the LCB, all follow a similar format and will be amalgamated into a Housing Strategy for the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region in 2009. The Action Plan is a working document and may need to be adapted or amended as further instances of best practice emerge, or when the results of the SHMA and stock condition survey are known or if external drivers, such as significant changes in the national economy emerge.

4.1 Strategic Objective One

Maximise the delivery of a range of new affordable homes to meet diverse needs

There is a growing affordability problem in the District. This is a result of many factors but predominantly due to high prices in comparison to income levels. This in turn is placing greater pressure on the existing affordable housing in the District. There is simply not enough affordable housing to meet the increasing need of the District's residents.

Ensuring a supply of new affordable housing is very difficult in the District due to the limited availability of suitable land at a price that will enable the development of affordable housing. The Council and its partners must continually seek to secure opportunities for the development of new affordable housing, to maximise access to existing affordable housing through nomination agreements with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and to make effective use of existing affordable rented homes through management of the housing register.

4.1.1 What is already being done . . .

a) Developing new housing

The East of England Plan Policy H1 – Regional Housing provision 2001-2021, sets out a minimum dwelling provision for East Herts of 12,000 new homes (excluding any development that may occur north of Harlow in East Herts). The

Regional Plan identifies at April 2006 that a minimum of 9,860 dwellings (660 per annum) are still to be built.

Under the new planning system, introduced in 2004, each local authority is at a different stage in preparing its Local Development Framework (LDF). East Herts Council began preliminary work on its LDF Core Strategy in late 2007 and anticipates adoption of this key strategy document in 2010/11. The Core Document will then be followed by more detailed Development Plan Documents, which will allocate land for different uses, including housing. In the interim period up to 2010, the East Herts Local Plan Second Review, adopted in April 2007, sets out the strategy for development across the District, including that for housing provision.

In terms of developing new affordable housing the Council's role is that of an 'enabler' which consists of identifying housing need and bringing together key partners to generate new opportunities for affordable housing development. The Council has 8 preferred partner RSLs that it works with on the delivery of affordable housing in the district. The objective is to provide homes of the right size, type and tenure that meet housing need and that are high quality, energy efficient and promote sustainable, balanced, mixed communities.

The Housing Needs Survey identified a total affordable housing need of 484 units per annum. However, as this figure is close to East Herts total annual housing requirement of 555 it was agreed, in 2002, to set a more realistic target of 200 units per annum on average over a rolling five year period. In order to achieve this target, Policy HSG3 of the Local Plan Second Review 2007 set lower affordable housing thresholds for new development.

As well as increasing the number of new affordable homes provided, the Council and its RSL partners are driving to push up the environmental quality of the new homes. All new affordable housing must meet level 3 of a new code for sustainable homes that national Government released in April 2007.

The Council's 2007 Adopted Local Plan policy HSG3 – Affordable Housing stipulates that on residential developments of 15 dwellings or more or on sites over 0.5 hectares in any of our six main settlements up to 40% affordable homes should be included. In our designated Category 1 and 2 Villages, Policy HSG3 requires up to 40% affordable homes to be built on sites proposing three or more dwellings or sites over 0.09 hectares.

The Council also adopted in January 2008 an Affordable Housing and Lifetime Homes Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The document sets out what type and tenure of affordable housing private developers must provide on their sites and what cost they can sell the houses to an RSL for. This ensures that the Council gets the right type of affordable housing in the right location at a price that ensures the home is affordable. Lifetime homes provision is included and Local Plan Policy HSG 6 expects that 15% of all new homes constructed be to Lifetime Homes standards.

A summary of the policy is in the Council's New Affordable Homes Commissioning Brief at Appendix 4

In its enabling capacity the Council subsidises new affordable housing and has allocated £1.5m capital for this purpose for 2008/09 and a further £750,000 in 09/10 and 10/11. The grant will be allocated in accordance with the adopted Schedule of Rates for social housing grant which have remained the same since 2003 delivering increasing value for money over the period.

The current affordable housing programme is estimating that 128 new affordable homes will be completed in 2008/09 and 109 in 2009/10. In 2007/08 126 new affordable homes were completed. The Housing Corporation held a bid round in November 2007 for its National Affordable Housing Programme for 2008-2011. This is the main source of funding for new affordable housing for the next three years. The East of England has an allocation of £825m over the period 2008/11 to deliver 237,000 affordable housing units across the piece. East Herts is yet to seek funding from this source as many current housing projects have not achieved the required planning permission to attract the grant.

As a result of the Local Plan Second Review April 2007, there are a number of rural schemes where the affordable housing will be delivered without recourse to public subsidy.

b) Making better use of existing affordable housing

In addition to the provision of new affordable homes the Council wishes to make better use of existing affordable housing to ensure we are effectively using what is already available.

i) Empty Homes

Long term empty homes in the private sector present a potential resource to the District. The District is fortunate that it has a relatively low number of long term empty homes. The table below compares 2007 levels for East Herts with the total for England, and for the Eastern region.

	Total empties	Percent of stock	Private empty for more than 6 months
England	672,924	3.02%	279,281
East of England	61,028	2.5%	26,244
East Herts	1,207	2.15%	637

Nevertheless homes that have been empty for a long time are often in very poor condition and an eyesore blighting the local area. Whilst it is the responsibility of homeowners to maintain their own property, the Council has general legal powers to provide assistance to residents and landlords in order to repair, improve or adapt their homes. In 2007 the Council adopted its revised Empty Homes Strategy. A staged approach to tackling empty homes, from identification through to prioritisation, encouragement with support and a range of incentives, through to enforcement where appropriate supports a target of bringing 12 empty homes back into use each year as a result of our action.

Private Lease Agreements Converting Empties (PLACE) is a scheme targeted at helping the owners of long term empty homes return their properties to use, to support homeless prevention. East Herts is working in partnership with Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford Councils and Pathmeads and

Swan Housing Associations. The scheme offers high level grant funding to repair properties and in return the relevant Council will lease the property for three years to a household in housing need.

A partnership for Empty Dwelling Management Orders and private sector leasing has also been negotiated by our Empty Homes Officer for East Herts and other neighbouring authorities.

ii) Overcrowding and Underoccupation:

In December 2007 the government published a paper called Tackling Overcrowding in England: An Action Plan. In the paper they say that they want 'a new focus on overcrowding alongside homelessness to help improve homes for all'.

The government want to see a substantial reduction in the number of households who are living in overcrowded conditions. They believe that this will provide better circumstances for individual households to achieve their ambitions and improve their life chances. The government want local authorities to do this by a variety of means including:

- Making better use of the allocations framework to give greater priority to under-occupiers wishing to move
- Provision of targeted support for under occupiers
- Cash incentives for under occupiers
- Giving priority to severely overcrowded households
- Rent deposits to support adult children of overcrowded households to move.

The Council currently has approximately 2,500 households on its register of which approximately 15% lack one or more bedrooms. The Council does not consider overcrowding to be a significant issue in East Herts in its social housing stock. The Council's Common Housing Register has been developed to ensure that transfer tenants in need are able to successfully bid for properties.

The Council are aware, based on surveys carried out, that there is significant under-occupation in social housing stock owned by its housing association partners. While tackling under-occupation may not increase the overall supply of housing it can have the effect of improving the match of the supply of homes available to those most in need. Demographic indications are that the number of under-occupying elderly people is set to increase so putting further strain on the ability of the housing stock to meet the needs of young households. Under-occupation is usually the result of a change in a family's circumstances such as children leaving home. Some levels of under-occupation maybe desirable in order to ensure mixed balanced communities especially on larger high density developments. However, for some, moving to a smaller property can help reduce the burden of managing their home, enhance their quality of life and prolong their ability to live as independently as possible. Others may have care needs that cannot be met at home and need to move to appropriate supported housing.

The provision of appropriate incentives to under-occupying households in family sized properties which encourage them to move to smaller properties, which better meet their needs, can enable more families to access suitable housing.

The Council will continue to press its partner housing associations to encourage their under-occupying tenants to join the Common Housing Register. Some of the housing associations do offer cash incentives to assist with moving costs but research has shown that the provision of money alone does not persuade people to move.

The Council also recognises its allocations policy as a method to give priority to those existing tenants wishing to move to smaller accommodation. The Councils Allocation Policy gives twenty points for every bedroom an existing transferring tenant is willing to give up to move to smaller accommodation. This is the same number of points as those that are given to applicants on the register that are lacking a bedroom for their household.

iii) Nominations to existing social housing

Nominations to existing affordable housing are how the greatest number of people in housing need are assisted. The Council has legal agreements with all the RSLs owning affordable homes in the District. The agreement states how many homes the Council can nominate households from the housing register to in each of the RSLs different housing schemes. Standard practice is that the Council will nominate to 100% of all new properties the first time they are let and then to 75% of all subsequent vacancies occurring in a scheme. The RSLs are required to return information on all lettings in the District to the Council every three months.

The Council operates a Common Housing Register allowing existing Registered Social tenants needing to transfer to alternative accommodation access to our Housing register and therefore a wider pool of vacant social housing. Therefore by working closely with the RSLs, the Council can help households move between the different RSLs to make use of all available properties for households on the housing register.

4.1.2 Proposed priorities for tackling affordability and meeting housing need

- Increase supply of affordable housing including affordable rented housing and shared ownership
- Maximise relet nominations from Registered Social Landlord (RSLs) partners
- Encourage RSLs to contribute to the database of local affordable rented housing in the District to include details of any adaptations made
- Monitor the impact of the Council's Local Plan Policies on the delivery of new affordable housing and take action as appropriate
- Continue to negotiate on site provision of affordable housing by private developers as directed by planning policy
- Continue to secure funding that provides the optimum mix of affordable housing in terms of type and tenure, in the right location

4.2 Strategic Objective Two

Improve the condition of the housing stock both public and private

The Government Green Paper *Quality and Choice: a Decent Home for All* (2000) recognises that the condition of people's homes has wide implications;

Our homes influence our well-being, our sense of worth, and our ties to our families, communities and work. If we live in decent housing we are more likely to benefit from good health, higher educational attainment and better-paid work.

And that;

People who are decently housed have a stronger sense of security and place. Decent housing strengthens communities and provides a better setting in which to raise families. It improves health and educational achievement and provides a long-term asset that can be passed on to future generations.

In 2000 the Government set a target that by 2010 all social housing should meet a minimum standard of decency. The target was extended in 2002 to vulnerable households in the private sector with a trajectory of 65% decent by 2006/07, 70% by 2010 and 75% by 2020. The target for decent homes in the private sector has recently been abandoned by the government. Nevertheless, improving the condition of people's homes and ensuring that current stock is maintained for future generations is a priority for housing in the district.

4.2.1 What we know is happening.

a) The private sector

There are over 45,000 homes in the private sector. The condition of properties in the private sector is primarily the responsibility of its owners but the Council recognizes limitations on some owners' ability to maintain, heat and improve their homes. The demographic trends in the district are particularly important for housing in the private sector as an ageing population maybe less able to afford to maintain their homes and require greater assistance to do so.

The government's standard for 'Decent Homes' is that housing should

- a) meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing i.e. at that time, not unfit, but now to be free from significant hazards
- b) be in a reasonable state of repair
- c) have reasonably modern facilities and services
- d) provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

The results of the Council 2004 Stock Condition Survey suggest that 22.8% of dwelling failed the standard under one or more of these headings. This compares with a national estimate of 33.1%. The main reason for failure was thermal comfort; 82.5% of non-decent homes failed under this heading. This is also the main reason nationally. Groups with high levels of 'non-decency' included private rented, pre-1919 dwellings, single pensioner and vulnerable households.

It was estimated that 72.8% of vulnerable households lived in decent dwellings; much higher than the overall level of 57% of 2001, exceeding the 70% target for 2010, and approaching the 75% target for 2020. Nevertheless, East Herts is

expected to contribute to the improvements in national targets, and with the high cost of repairs necessary to make homes in the district decent (£1,618 for the average non decent home, at a total district- wide cost of £20.5million), intervention to tackle significant hazards, and assistance would be essential.

The survey concluded that the costs of making the necessary improvements to dwelling condition and the suggested improvements to energy efficiency were quite prohibitive, and the Council's assistance policy was reviewed in the light of the findings in order to provide a package of measures to achieve considerable improvements to the stock, and to prevent further deterioration.

i) Decent Home Grants.

The house condition surveys in 1997 and 2004 identified the high cost and main issues for repairing private sector homes in East Herts. Advantage was taken of the flexibility offered by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to introduce a package of discretionary assistance. This included means tested Decent Homes grants to bring homes up to that standard, discretionary disabled facilities grants, and energy efficiency grants.

Repayment conditions apply to Decent Home and discretionary disabled facilities grants if the property is sold within ten years. The Decent Home standard is not enforceable, and enforcement is often not appropriate, so these grants provide an effective incentive to homeowners to achieve this standard, and to target expenditure to the most necessary works.

ii) Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth

The Council's Home Energy Efficiency Officer works closely with Papworth, the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre for this area, and other professionals, in particular the Home Energy Efficiency Officers Network for the Eastern Region, to provide advice and develop joint measures for tackling fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency. Several promotions have taken place in East Herts, including articles in the Council magazine to every home, targeted leaflet campaigns, advice sessions at flu clinics in doctors' surgeries, and in schools to promote insulation and other energy efficiency measures.

Excess cold is the main hazard requiring action in people's homes under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System, and the Council's Decent Home Grants can include heating systems and insulation, and therefore can also reduce the burden of rising fuel prices.

Private sector residents not eligible for these means tested grants, can apply for a non-means tested energy grant. Consideration is currently being given to targeting these to vulnerable households not in receipt of benefit, but who are in fuel poverty, alongside new approaches to gather the data for the government's new performance indicator for fuel poverty.

Full details of the range of grants available are in the Council's Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy.

iii) Enforcement, HMOs, and Licensing

House prices are high in East Herts, so a well maintained and managed private rented sector including its houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), is essential to the wellbeing of those who cannot, or do not wish to, access the owner occupied

or social housing sectors. Buy to let mortgages and the expansion of Stansted airport are believed to have led to an increase in private rented dwellings and HMOs, particularly in areas of Bishop's Stortford.

The Housing Act 2004 introduced a new evidence based approach to assessing the suitability of housing for occupation, by replacing the fitness standard with the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The HHSRS methodology involves assessing the likelihood of harm arising from certain hazards. New duties and powers relating to private sector housing were also introduced, bringing significant changes for local authorities and private landlords. The Council's private sector housing enforcement policy sets out how these new powers and duties will be used in East Herts.

The Act also introduced mandatory licensing of HMOs with three or more storeys and five or more occupiers, with certain exemptions, such as buildings converted into flats. A licence is issued where the house is reasonably suitable for occupation as an HMO, the management arrangements are satisfactory, and the licensee and manager are fit and proper persons.

Publicity about HMO licensing has taken place by placing information on the Council's website, visits to letting agents, letters and visits to areas likely to contain licenseable HMOs, articles in the magazine delivered to every home, and presentations to the landlord forums.

Where a landlord has not applied for a licence, and is convicted for failure to have a licence, and the rent is paid as Housing Benefit, the Council will normally apply to the Residential Property Tribunal for a Rent Repayment Order and will advise tenants to do the same. The approach to HMO licensing is also contained in the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.

The amenity standards for HMOs were revised in conjunction with other local authorities in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. A guide to fire safety was published jointly by Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the local authorities in Hertfordshire, and joint working arrangements agreed. Fire safety training has also been provided at landlord forums to landlords and letting agents.

The risk of dying in a fire in an HMO is greater than for other housing, and the risk increases for larger HMOs unless adequate fire precautions are in place. Furthermore, the condition and management standards of the HMO sector is worse overall than for other forms of housing, so mandatory licensing directs resources to those larger HMOs. There is a requirement for an HHSRS assessment to be carried out within five years of a licence being issued. The Council aims to do so within three years of issuing a licence, or before issuing the licence where possible, although priority is given to licensing applications received.

iv) Empty Homes

The Council's empty homes strategy sets out the Council's staged approach to tackling empty homes. As well as making better use of existing dwellings, these activities contribute to targets for decent homes.

Priorities for Private Sector Housing

The HHSRS is a lengthier, more complex method of assessment than under the old fitness standard, and together with the mandatory HMO licensing regime and the increasing demand for disabled facilities grants, this has placed considerable additional demands on resources. Highest priority is given to mandatory disabled facilities grants, in recognition of both the mandatory nature of the grant, and the impact the service has on the lives of vulnerable households.

It is recognised that tenants will often not complain about their home for fear of retaliatory conviction. Where a complaint is received, this will be responded to in accordance with the Council's enforcement policy, as this sector contains some housing in relatively poorer condition. Hence, tackling poor conditions in the private rented sector will be the next priority, followed by mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation, and action to bring those HMOs up to the required standards.

In addition to the stock condition surveys, the Council maintains a database of known and potential HMOs, so that action may be taken proactively if necessary to bring those premises up to a minimum standard. Checks have been carried out to bring this data up to date. Licenseable HMOs receive greater priority for intervention under this programme.

As stated above, it is primarily the home owner's responsibility to make provision for maintaining their home. The Council has a Decent Homes Grant programme to help those who cannot afford to do so, and to incentivise landlords to bring their property up to higher standards, as well as providing an effective way to help meet national targets for decent homes in the private sector. Demand for these grants can draw attention away from the higher priorities of addressing the poorer housing conditions of those who have less control over their accommodation, i.e., tenants. Therefore, although we aim to process such applications quickly, it may be necessary to limit resources allocated to this area of work.

b) Public sector stock

The housing stock transfer in March 2002, to Riversmead and Stort Valley (now South Anglia) housing associations, enabled the necessary investment in former Council housing to take place, with a resultant overall improvement in property conditions. The two housing associations agreed undertakings to carry out repairs and improvements within certain timescales and have completed a detailed program of work since the stock was sold five years ago. Included in this program were works to modernise the homes and also to improve their energy efficiency. In addition the housing associations spent approximately £1 million during the five years on environmental and community improvements that were identified in consultation with tenants and the Local Strategic Partnership. Works included traffic calming, crime prevention, landscaping, lighting and other community facilities such as playgrounds.

Include % percentage at decent homes and when anticipate 100% from partner RSLs.

4.2.2 Proposed priorities for increasing decent homes

- Increase the overall level of properties made decent as a result of Council action which are occupied by vulnerable households.
- Maintain take up of grants through publicity, leaflets, landlord forums
- Continue to monitor Riversmead and South Anglia housing associations residual stock transfer promises
- Monitor RSLs delivery of decent homes
- Take action in accordance with the Council's enforcement policy to remedy category 1 hazards where appropriate
- Provide guidance and advice to tenants and landlords on their rights and responsibilities through a variety of media
- Implement the actions in the Affordable Warmth Strategy
- Carry out a house condition survey in 2009/10
- Inspect and initiate action to bring 10 HMOs up to standard and issue licences where appropriate.

4.3 Strategic Objective Three

Build sustainable and thriving neighbourhoods and communities

East Herts Council is committed to helping to create and maintain sustainable neighbourhoods and communities. This section of the Strategy sets out how the Council and its partner agencies will contribute to the development and maintenance of sustainable communities through housing-related activity. Achieving sustainable communities requires effective approaches both in terms of policies to promote inclusiveness, assist the vulnerable, increase safety and the perception of safety and in ensuring the built environment and public space people's needs and aspirations.

4.3.1 What we know is happening.....

a) Shaping Neighbourhoods

It is important that when the Council is making large investments in areas and developing homes that this includes improving the local environment. Good public spaces and facilities are key to creating sustainable communities. It is about creating quality spaces in which people want to live and can be proud - and which others will respect.

The East Herts Local Plan Second Review – April 2007 sets out planning policies to guide development in the District to 2010. The Local Plan is concerned with the delivery of sustainable development. The policies and proposals it contains have been written in the context of national, regional and Structure Plan guidance and provide the land use guidance for the Council and external strategies.

i) Growth

The Regional Plan sets the scale of housing development in the East of England and for each local authority. It reflects the Governments Sustainable Communities Plan 2003, which brought a step change in housing delivery and identified the

London-Stansfeld-Cambridge-Subsequently extended to Peterborough, Growth Area, which includes all of East Hertfordshire.

The Council will, through its strategies and policies and partnership working, seek to maintain the quality of life and East Herts residents and create sustainable communities where new development is provided, including the necessary provision of services and infrastructure such as transport, schools, health, leisure and recreation facilities.

ii) Economy

The Council have published an Economic Development Strategy that sets out the key economic development priority for East Herts to seek a well balanced local economy by the provision of employment land, and encouraging across all sectors economic opportunities, business support and workforce development.

b) Delivering Sustainable neighbourhoods

Achieving sustainable neighbourhoods and communities requires effective partnership working across a wide range of social, economic and environmental areas. There are a number of strategies and policies that have been developed by the Council to meet this aim.

- The East Herts Local Strategic Partnership is currently developing an overarching Sustainable Communities Strategy that will be agreed in January 2009.
- The East Herts Local Plan Second Review – April 2007 as a statutory Plan includes specific policies on housing, economic development, transport, retail and town centres, green belt and countryside and specific policies for the main towns and villages.

It is about creating quality spaces in which people want to live and can be proud - and which others will respect. A current example is the Bishops Stortford 20:20 Visioning Board set up by the Council to develop a long-term vision for Bishop's Stortford. Issues on the board's agenda include sport and leisure, transport, protecting the town's historical heritage and similar topics which all contribute to making a town a good place in which to be. The board plans to set up new groups of relevant citizens who will report on specific issues and then disband.

i) Sustainable Homes

Long-term we cannot afford to be building homes that have a negative impact on our climate and that are unable to adapt to changes in demographics and lifestyles. The Code for Sustainable Homes sets out the Government's targets for reducing carbon emissions. To comply with the Code, carbon emissions from new development are required to be reduced in stages until 2016 when all new build dwellings must be free of emissions of carbon dioxide from all energy use in the home. At present compliance with the Code is voluntary with the exception of developments of affordable housing that receive public subsidy where the schemes are expected to meet Code level 3 from April 2008 onwards. Current Building Regulations require lower levels of energy efficiency than those contained within the Code for Sustainable Homes; however, they will become increasingly stringent so that all new housing in the future will be of a sustainable construction type.

Ensuring that a minimum of 15% of residential dwellings are built to lifetime homes standard will enable us to develop homes that are suitable for residents now but can be adapted with ease and at minimum cost to meet the changing requirements of our community in the future. This will help to meet the needs of our future population by reducing the long-term cost of adaptations.

ii) Mobility and Choice

In March 2008, East Herts introduced a Choice Based Lettings Scheme called HomeOptions for people applying for social housing and for existing social tenants needing to transfer to another home. Applicants are required to register for accommodation and then bid for properties suitable to their needs. Properties are advertised bi-weekly in a free magazine. The main benefit for current and future social housing tenants is that the scheme enables them to register their interest for a home they want to live in rather than the Council choosing the property for them.

Through partnership working within our sub-region we will explore the possibility of developing CBL across our boundaries and also expanding it to other housing sectors such as private landlords.

iii) Safer Communities

East Herts has a relatively low crime rate and has no areas with severe or longstanding crime and disorder problems. Nevertheless, anti-social behaviour, crime and the fear of crime causes distress to individuals and is destructive to communities.

The Council as a member of the East Herts Community Safety Partnership identifies and implements effective initiatives. The partnership brings together key statutory and non-statutory agencies, including the police and social landlords, to identify and implement initiatives to improve the safety of the community. The East Herts Community Safety Plan sets out the priorities of the partnership and targets for reducing the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour in the district.

Current initiatives carried out between the Council and its partners include Visual Audits and Street Briefings, which are multi-agency and resident consultation on improving area and addressing concerns of residents in specific locations.

v) Migration

The Councils Community Development Team has done work with different organisations, for example Church groups and community groups, which represent or support these communities to provide information about rights and the services that are available. The Councils' Community Development team along with, Braintree and Epping Council have developed a project called 'Building Capacity East', funded by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA), to assist migrant workers across the three districts. The funding provides an Out-Reach Workers for each of the districts to give advice, and information on employment and housing etc and also assistance with the setting up of local support Networks.

vi) Empty Homes

Empty homes can be unsightly and lead to problems with vandalism etc. The Council has done some excellent work to encourage owners to repair and bring these properties back into use. Consultation has revealed support for the Council

to make greater use of enforcement powers for appropriate properties and to publicise that action, to encourage owners who are less willing to co-operate. Such actions will improve the sustainability of affected communities.

c) Thriving Communities and individual needs

Communities are made up of individuals and the Council, along with its partners, needs to develop policies and practices that are accessible and effective to make a house a home. This is especially so for the more vulnerable members of our communities. The County Council's Supporting People Programme and the LAA2 have a significant influence at this level and reference has been made to them earlier in the strategy. Other projects and policies include:

i) Community Alarms

East Herts Council's dispersed community alarm service will be included in the review of community alarms proposed by Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Service, with a view to tendering and awarding a single contract for all the dispersed community alarm services in the East Herts Council area. The service is particularly valued and used by the elderly, infirm or otherwise vulnerable people in the community.

The review will act as a pilot for developing service specifications and models of Community Alarm provision for the County, taking into account the following:

- To ensure that all people who need access to a community alarm are able to receive one.
- That all people who need financial assessment for support through public funds are able to access this.
- That a model be developed which can be duplicated across the county.
- That best use is made of public funds for the maximisation of independence and choice.

ii) Disabled Facilities Grants

These are mandatory grants to adapt homes of people with disabilities so that they may have safe access into and around their home and to use facilities within it, and are a priority within the private sector strategy.

With a relatively elderly demographic for the district, demand for assistance with adaptations is high, and the Council's budget goes beyond the level of government subsidy for this purpose in order to meet demand without needing to operate a waiting list, recognising the importance of this service to vulnerable residents.

In recent years, the demand for the service to grant aid adaptations in properties owned by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) has greatly increased, and this, together with the removal of the means test for adaptations for families with disabled children, has significantly affected workload.

In addition to mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), the Council also offers discretionary means tested DFGs for larger schemes costing in excess of the statutory maximum grant, for certain non-mandatory adaptations such as adaptations to allow a disabled person to work at home, and to cover the cost of moving home where this would provide a better solution.

iii) Home Improvement Agency

The Papworth Trust has operated a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) in East Herts since 2002. East Herts Council and Herts County Council's Adult Care Services and Supporting People are the main funders of the service, and are part of the agency's strategic development group. Residents benefit from a holistic range of services. In addition to traditional core HIA services of assisting applicants with disabled facilities grants and grants to repair their homes, the agency provides a handyperson and home security service, fire safety checks, and carries out important areas of work for the Council's dispersed alarms and home energy efficiency advice services, such as the fitting of reflective radiator panels for hard to treat homes.

iv) Affordable Warmth

The Council's affordable warmth strategy was revised in 2007, and includes a range of initiatives to help those households who struggle to keep their homes warm. Grants and assistance are available to all households, with additional schemes, including referrals to national schemes and funding such as Warm Front, targeted to those most at risk from being cold at home. Top up grants are available where the Warm Front scheme does not cover the full cost of necessary heating. The strategy thus aims to help elderly and vulnerable households, and can improve the health and well being of residents, with wide reaching impacts, such as for education, for example by enabling children to study more effectively at home.

v) Equalities

Working towards sustainable communities involves reviewing existing and proposed housing provision and policies and their impact on the community. The Council is developing a programme of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure its services are fair and accessible to all.

4.3.2 Proposed priorities for sustainable communities

- Promote community cohesion and support the local economy by providing housing that is affordable for local people
- Ensure that housing policies and practices promote equalities and diversity
- Encourage high quality of design and layout in new developments, including public health, crime prevention, community safety and energy efficiency maintaining the attractiveness of East Herts as a residential environment
- Contribute to partnership action on crime and anti-social behaviour as they relate to housing through the Community safety Plan 2008-2011
- Contribute to the improvement of public health and the reduction in health inequalities as they relate to housing through the East Herts Council Public Health Strategy 2008-2013.
- Review the implementation of Choice Based lettings and continue to review and develop the service as best practice emerges
- Maximise the opportunities to enhance and develop services to the vulnerable residents of East Herts
- Implement the actions in the Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy 2008-2013
- Work with health and care agencies to target vulnerable households in need of home improvements
-

5.0 Resources

This part of the strategy sets out annual resources available for capital and revenue investment in housing services. This includes new homes, private sector renovation, disabled facilities, homelessness and homeless prevention and grants to other organisations that assist the Council in carrying out its housing functions and enhancing the services it provides.

i) Capital

The Council prioritises its capital expenditure in accordance with agreed priorities. It also has a Medium Term Financial Plan which sets out the Council's overall financial plans for the next four years.

a) New Homes

The Council sold its housing stock of 6,000 homes to Riversmead and Stort Valley (now South Anglia) housing associations in March 2003 for a capital receipt of £74m. The Council has identified approximately £3.13 million as potentially available for the commissioning of new affordable homes over the next three years. In addition we will be seeking to attract substantial capital resource from the housing corporation and the region to fund its development programme. The vast majority of this programme is to be on section106 planning sites and is costed on the basis of the average Social Housing Grant required in accordance with the Council's established Schedule of Rates (Appendix 4). These rates have remained in place since 2003/04 and so represent increasing value for money.

Following the granting of planning permission by Uttlesford to BAA to increase passenger through put to 25 million, BAA Stansted put £2.2m towards the funding

of affordable housing within a ten mile radius of the airport. The Stansted Area Housing Partnership (SAHP) was developed as a partnership between Uttlesford, East Herts, Harlow and Braintree Councils to spend the money and develop affordable housing that has cross border nominations.

In addition a successful bid was made on behalf of Stansted Area Housing Partnership for Growth Area Funding 3 monies for the following projects:

- Sustainable housing developments for older person approximately 70 units in number
- Eco Homes Exemplar project Urban and Rural
- Self build scheme Housing project

b) Decent Homes

The Council currently has allocated total resources of £885,000 in 2008/09 for Private Sector Home Improvement Grants, of which £590,000 is for Disabled Facilities Grants and £295,000 for Decent Homes Grants. In addition £20,000 has been allocated for energy grants.

c) Capital contributions from other agencies

There is a significant amount of capital resource input into the housing development programme by the Registered Social Landlords, estimated at 50% of the total cost. Private developers also contribute to affordable housing through the s.106 route but it is hard to calculate how much this 'subsidy' is worth, however it is estimated that it amounts to approximately 25% of the total value of each affordable home.

d) Other capital assets

The Council retains ownership of two hostels for housing people who are homeless and the use of these assets is under review, as referenced in the Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy action plan.

ii) Council revenue

Spending on the day to day costs of implementing this housing strategy is called revenue expenditure and this is funded from the Council's General Fund. This account is funded from the Council Tax collected from all residents and from Government Grants.

	Budget 2008/09
CABx (estimated 25 % of advice are housing issues)	£229,000
Papworth Home Improvement Agency	£38,170
Handy Person Scheme	£15,600
Housing Grants – to agencies that support the work of the Housing Options Service	£36,000
CLG Homeless Directorate Homeless prevention fund	£30,000
Private Sector Tenancies grant	£10,000

Community Alarm - administration and management	£24,000
Choice Based letting administration	£41,600
Contribution to the LCB Sub-Regional Co-Coordinator	£3,300

iii) Partnerships resource

The Council works closely with a range of statutory and voluntary, private and public agencies. The linkages made produce a wealth of better practice that must be considered a resource in its own right. This is true for agendas such as community safety as well as for cross boundary working on support services particularly with Broxbourne Borough Council.

iv) In house human resources

In April 2007 the Council re-organised its services and Housing Options, Strategic Housing and Private Sector Housing services were brought under the direction of one Head of Service. A structure chart is available at Appendix 6.

6.0 Monitoring the Strategy and Performance Review

This chapter describes how the strategy will be monitored, reviewed and further developed through a range of corporate and partner agency forums.

The Strategy is a three year document with a review programmed after two years to co-incide with the development of the revision to the London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Strategy in 2011, and the Housing Corporations currently programmed next bid round. The strategy may also need to be updated, specifically the Action Plan, once the SHMA and Stock Condition surveys have been completed for East Herts.

Each Strategic Objective within this strategy has its own timetabled action plan that sets outcomes, target dates, the lead organisations, partners and resources spanning the five years of the Strategy. Performance information is collected across a range of indicators to help monitor performance, identify trends and assess implementation of the strategy. This information is also used to benchmark our services against other local authorities.

Progress against the action plan and performance information will be reported as follows:

- Quarterly to the East Herts Corporate Housing Group
- Annually to the Council's Community Scrutiny Committee

- Annually to the LSP

7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1

Action /Implementation Plan

Separate attachment

Appendix 2

Local Performance Review

a) Performance Indicators

The Council has a structure for monitoring both its national and local performance indicators. These performance indicators are monitored monthly by the Council's Performance Division and are reported into the Council's performance management process. A table of previous housing related performance indicators is set out below.

	Actual 06/07	Target 07/08	Actual 07/08	Target 08/09
<u>BV 64</u> : Number of private sector dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority	14	12	12	Deleted
<u>BV 43b</u> : Number of HMOs inspected and action initiated to secure repair and improvement	12	10	12	Deleted
<u>BV 183b</u> : Average length of time in hostel accommodation for households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need that include dependent children or a pregnant woman	20 wks	14 wks	14 wks	Deleted

	Actual 06/07	Target 07/08	Actual 07/08	Target 08/09
<u>BVPI 213:</u> Number of homeless households for whom housing advice work resolved their situation per 1,000 households in the District	3 hseholds per 1,000 hseholds	3 hseholds per 1,000 hseholds	3 hseholds per 1,000 hseholds	Deleted
New affordable homes **	254	200	126	Deleted
New Indicators from April 2008				
NI 154 Number of net dwelling completions	NA	NA	NA	692
NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)**	NA	NA	NA	200
NI 156 Number of households living in temporary accommodation	NA	NA	NA	33
NI 187 Proportion of households on income related benefits living in homes with high or low energy efficiency	NA	NA	NA	Reduction in proportion of those households with SAP below 35, and increase in properties with SAP above 65

*** The programme is a five year one that is scheduled to produce 200 units on average per annum*

b) Delivery of the 2006/07 Action Plan

The 2003-2006 Fit for Purpose Housing Strategy and the one year 2006/07 Housing Strategy Review contained a number of detailed targets and plans for East Herts. Detailed below is a schedule of how the authority achieved on the actions set out in the 2006/07 Housing Strategy Review.

Action	Comments on Progress to Date
1.Commission 200 new affordable dwellings each year (on average over a five year programme)	66 homes completed 3/04; 102 completed 04/05; 167 completed 05/06. 254 completed 06/07 & 126 completed 07/08.

Action	Comments on Progress to Date
2. Commission all new affordable housing in accordance with tenure and unit size policy and allocations and key worker policies	New planning policy adopted 18th April 2007. Thresholds for affordable housing provision reduced to 15 units in towns and one in three in villages delivering a greater number of affordable housing units throughout the district.
3. Seek to identify potential site to commission supported housing for mentally ill people.	No land or revenue funding currently available. Supporting People published a new Supporting People Strategy and the document identifies people with mental health problems as being one of three first priority groups for service development in 2007/08.
4. Support the development of supported accommodation for young people in Hertford subject to capital and revenue funds being made available from the Crouchfield Trust.	The Crouchfield Trust has agreed to fund the revenue support element over 3 years. Need to find a suitable site. Housing Enabling Manager working with the County Council's Accommodation Services for Young People co-ordinator to identify a suitable site.
5. Explore and support the development of additional extra care homes.	Herts CC has commissioned research and strategy Accommodation for Frail elderly.
6. Contribute to an Older Persons Strategy through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).	A policy of decommissioning harder to let older style sheltered accommodation in favour of extra care homes now incorporated into County-wide Supporting People Strategy. Accommodation Services for Older People report
7. Consult new social tenants on the design and location of new homes to inform future new projects.	Post card surveys were being sent to new tenants but response rate was low. So RSLs to be approached for the feedback they receive from residents and discussed with planning colleagues
8. Consult users of the Council's homeless service.	Rolling surveys being undertaken of all users of the homeless service but response rate low: 20% 06/07. Not sufficient numbers volunteered to be part of a Focus Group. The Temporary Accommodation Floating Support Officer to carry out survey as part of support from moving out of temporary accommodation. Need to ensure all service users have access to the survey.

Action	Comments on Progress to Date
9. Explore new initiatives to enhance the affordable housing development in East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New build scheme at Mill Road, Hertford has been built for mid market AST for keyworkers with first priority to teachers - The Stansted Area Partnership has been established with the Housing Corporation, Braintree, Uttlesford, Harlow, Moat and Circle Anglia, with cross boundary nomination rights. - Jackson Square project has 60 units of accommodation with limited car parking in response to government policy to reduce gas emissions. 2 units are wheelchair accessible & 11 self-contained flats within the scheme have been allocated to people with learning difficulties.
10. A Herts and Essex Consortia has been set up to set up and operate a choice based lettings scheme.	Savill Consultants were appointed by the Consortia to project manage the implementation of CBL. Locata have been appointed to administer the scheme and the scheme went live in March 2008.
11. To develop a common housing register in partnership with the Council's Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners	Scheme launched June 06. All HAs working in the district were invited to join the scheme. Increased number of applicants on the register needing to transfer to an alternative social tenancy. Currently working well. Continuing to encourage all partner HAs to participate.
12. Improve the quality and services provided to home seekers placed in temporary accommodation by the Council. To be measured by surveys.	Implemented by Paradigm HA as part of the service provision. Monitored by the housing service at 6 weekly meetings. Very limited response rate. Continuing to discuss with Paradigm ways to improve the response rate.
13. To explore the possibility of joint working with other Local Authorities Housing Options services.	A pilot joint commissioning Consortia with 4 other local authorities was implemented through the Herts and Essex Choice Based Lettings Consortium.
14. Inspect 10 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and initiate action to secure repair and improvement	<p>Target of 10 achieved for 2004/05.</p> <p>Target of 10 for 05/06; achieved 12.</p> <p>Target of 10 for 06/07; achieved 12</p> <p>Target of 10 for 07/08; achieved 12</p>
15. To introduce Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing	Successfully introduced. Letting agents and known or likely HMO landlords contacted. Licensing promoted including through landlords forum and Council website.

Action	Comments on Progress to Date
16. To encourage good management and standards in privately rented dwellings by promoting through the Private Sector Landlords Forum the availability of grants assistance in suitable cases	Availability of landlord grants promoted to landlord forum members as part of East Herts Housing conference. Revision of Housing Assistance Policy included additional provisions to make grants more attractive to landlords e.g. increased maximum level and speed of financial assistance. In three of the Private Sector Landlord's forums which have taken place since Nov. 04 the availability of grants has been promoted.
17. To Introduce the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and new enforcement regime	Implemented. All relevant Officers have been trained and certified as competent. Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy fully revised for HHSRS and the new enforcement regime and consulted Landlord Forum during its development. Information on HHSRS and enforcement policy on Council website. Leaflet for private sector tenants produced.
18. To continue implementing the Empty Homes Strategy.	Number of empty homes brought back into use: 03/04: 8; 04/05: 6; 05/06: 25; 06/07: 14 07/08 : 12 Part of a successful bid, with other local authorities, for 1/5th of £1.75m for 2 years from the Department for Communities and Local Government. Strategy revised in light of Housing Act 2004 powers, and enforcement measures for Empty Homes included in revised Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.
19. Implement the Local Plan Second Review – village development strategy starting in 2007-08 in order to meet rural community needs, strengthen village life and encourage vital and viable rural communities	Local Plan Second Review adopted April 2007.
20. To work with rural Parish Councils to identify sites for affordable housing development .	More affordable housing provision is coming forward as a consequence of the Planning Policy change referred to above.
21. Monitor housing need. Commission at least two parish housing needs surveys a year	Parish Housing Need Surveys completed spring 2007 for Aston and Little Hadham.

Action	Comments on Progress to Date
22. Ensure that a minimum of 66% of new housing sites, up to 2011, are developed on previously developed land.	Houses completed on previously developed land: 02/03 - 82%; 03/04 - 90%; 04/05 – 75%; 05/06 – 84%; 06/07 – 96%
23. Produce Annual Monitoring Report containing information on housing land availability and supply as well as monitoring affordable housing provision.	The statutory East Herts Annual Monitoring Report now produced annually with publication in December each year.
24. Encourage sustainability in building design and construction	Luxury 4 bed house open from 03/7/07 to 09/7/07. The house showcases a very high level energy efficient design with no background heating. Solar thermal, solar PV & a wind turbine generate 2/3rds of the homes power requirements. Rainwater harvesting supplies all non-drinking water. High level of interest achieved from public, building professionals, self builders and developers. Strong media interest.
25. Further develop the existing home energy efficiency advice service.	Promotional information given to 10,075 households in 05/06. In 06/07 East Herts funded or initiated energy efficient measures in 393 dwellings in East Herts
26. Work with the Community Safety Partnership to promote crime prevention measures to reduce levels of car crime, robbery and burglary	Ongoing partnership work through community safety partnership and the Responsible Authorities Group promotes preventative actions. New crime audit published 2004 to establish effectiveness of initiatives over the three-year period of the Community Strategy. Joint Action Group (JAG) is now in existence. This is a multi-agency group that meets monthly to look at current issues/hotspots.
27. Develop quicker processes for delivering Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs).	Total ABCs issued to and currently in force: 23 Total ASBOs in force: 42. The majority of these have been obtained via post conviction route.

Action	Comments on Progress to Date
28. Develop set of actions to improve process for residents on 'State of the Estates' issues	<p>On going programme of targeted activities including: multi –agency visual audits in the district with more programmed. Officers from EHC, Police, housing associations, YOT, Herts Fire and Rescue and Town Council attend. Multi-agency day in Sele Farm held June 2007.</p> <p>The mobile Police station has also attended locations in the district with partners to listen to concerns e.g. Havers estate and Thorley.</p> <p>There are currently no Section 30 Dispersal Orders in place.</p>
29. Work with the Countywide drugs action team to divert young people away from involvement in drugs.	<p>Progress is ongoing through the Young people's Strategy Steering Group and partner agencies. A number of initiatives are being delivered, e.g. installation of all weather shelters and diversionary activities particularly during school holidays. The summer Diversionary Activities proposed programme is well embedded in the Council's programme of activities for young people.</p>
30. Consult each of the five area based community planning forums on Housing and Homelessness Strategies annually	<p>Carried out in January and February 2007.</p>
31. Identify local environmental and community housing related enhancement projects	<p>Havers Community centre completed September 04. Sele Community Centre completed February 07.</p> <p>Other smaller local projects also completed in the 5 years since the transfer of the housing stock.</p>
32. Support community planning forums as the local bodies monitoring the achievement of local area plans	<p>2007 Adopted Local Plan contains land use policies which seek to reflect the community priorities established in the Community Strategy and embed the Community Strategy Themes in the planning process. The Local Plan identifies the main policies of the Local Plan that can assist in the implementation of the Community Strategy Themes.</p>
33. To identify the needs of minority groups including those of the new Eastern European and Portuguese communities in Bishop's Stortford.	<p>This project has progressed successfully and is set to grow further in 2007/08 as a result of East of England support.</p>

Action	Comments on Progress to Date
34. Develop quicker responses by RSLs to member enquiries	This action has been a standard item on the South Anglia Housing EHC liaison meetings and has led to improved communications and will be an ongoing agenda item to ensure continual improvement.
35. To identify the local needs following the publication of the county wide Gypsy and Traveller needs assessment survey	Northern and Eastern Hertfordshire Gypsies and Travellers Accommodation Assessment Stage One Survey published June 2006. Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Northern and Eastern Hertfordshire, Stage Two: Identification of Potential Gypsy and Traveller Sites in the Study Area completed Autumn 2007.

Appendix 3

Strategic links with other documents

Key documents have been taken into account in the development of this Strategy to ensure consistency across the Council and with our partners in other agencies.

All the East Herts documents can be accessed from the Council's website at www.eastherts.gov.uk or by contacting the Housing Strategy and Policy Manager on 01279 655261.

Local Links

East Herts Local Plan Second Review – April 2007: This document sets out planning policies to guide development in the District to 2010. Policies cover housing, economic development, transport, retail and town centres, green belt and countryside and specific policies for the main towns and villages. For more information on the East Herts Local Plan please visit www.eastherts.gov.uk/localplan

East Herts Local Development Framework (LDF): It is anticipated that the new planning framework for East Herts will replace the Local Plan Second Review by 2010/2011. The most important document in the LDF is the Core Strategy which sets the long-term, overarching and strategic vision for the District to 2021. East Herts commenced preliminary work on the first stages of the Core Strategy in 2007. For more information on the East Herts LDF please visit www.eastherts.gov.uk/ldf.

East Herts District Community Strategy – East Herts Together: A local strategic partnership (LSP) has been established in East Herts to develop strategic working with key partners from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors within the district. The Community Strategy 2003 sets out a long term vision for East Herts

and has been developed through the shared priorities of the individual organisations that make up the LSP.

The 2007/08 Action Plan for the Local Strategic partnership agreed six priorities:

- Neighbourhood and Environmental Management
- Economic Development and Learning
- Leisure and Cultural Development
- Services for Vulnerable People
- Healthier Lifestyles
- Community Safety

A new Sustainable Communities Strategy is being developed and will be consulted on in 2008 and be published in 2009.

The East Herts Homeless and Homeless Prevention 2008-2013: The overall purpose of the Homeless and Prevention Strategy (Strategy) is to ensure that as a Council we address homelessness strategically by ensuring suitable accommodation, support and advice is available and accessible to all client groups and to encourage a multi-agency approach to preventing homelessness. The Homeless Strategy sits below the Housing strategy providing a more detailed work programme for homelessness and the prevention of homelessness.

Empty Homes Strategy: The Strategy explains East Herts Council's approach to bringing empty homes back into use. It contains details of the range of powers available to the Council to achieve this work and how the powers can be used.

Affordable Warmth Strategy for tackling fuel poverty in East Herts 2007-2012: Through this strategy the Council will endeavour to offer advice, guidance and if eligible assistance to all private sector residents on ways of achieving adequate and affordable warmth. In addition the strategy will aim to improve the health and quality of life of lower income households by assisting them in accessing affordable warmth.

East Herts Council Public Health Strategy 2008-2013: The Strategy has been developed to assist the Council by deciding what health priorities to focus on and giving opportunities for East Herts Council to work in partnership with other like-minded organisations. The Strategy helps all those whose work involves improving the health of individuals to understand their role and contribution.

East Herts Community Safety Partnership, Community Safety Plan 2008-2011: The Plan has been developed by the Community Safety Partnership which is a multi-agency partnership consisting of statutory, non-statutory and voluntary sector agencies. The Plan aims to bring agencies together to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and increase people's sense of community safety.

Affordable Housing Policy: This document sets out the framework for the Council' enabling activities feeding in to the Housing Strategy in relation to the provision of affordable housing.

Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy: This policy, adopted in February 2007, outlines the extent to which the Council will intervene to make use of the powers in the Housing Act 2004.

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy: The policy explains the way in which the Council provides financial and other assistance to owners and occupiers of private sector housing within the district.

East Herts Economic Development Strategy 2006-2011 – sets out the key economic development priorities for East Herts.

Hertfordshire County Links

Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy 2007-2012: The primary purpose of supporting people as defined by central government is to:

‘offer vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment which enables greater independence’

The Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy has a number of key actions that have a significant bearing on this strategy such as the remodelling of the floating support services to improve access and consistency of provision across the County. The progress of these actions is monitored by the Hertfordshire Commissioning Body. The strategy can be accessed on the Councils website.

Local Area Agreements (LAA): Local Area Agreements are three year agreements between central government, local authorities, local strategic partnerships and other key partners. They set out targets to deliver national outcomes in a way that reflects local priorities. Hertfordshire County Council is our lead agency for developing and monitoring the LAAs that East Herts contributes to. The Hertfordshire LAA 2006-2009 sets out around 40 targets within four blocks:

- Children and young people
- Safer, stronger and sustainable communities
- Healthier communities and older people
- Economic development.

The LAA has clear links to homelessness and homeless prevention, especially around sustaining tenancies for young people and the targets can be accessed via the following website link:

The new LAA2 for 2009 onwards is currently being developed by Hertfordshire County Council.

Further information can be obtained from Hertfordshire County Council’s website



New Affordable Homes Commissioning Brief - July 2008

This brief sets out East Herts Council's requirements for the affordable housing element on new development in East Herts District.

It accompanies the Council's Affordable Housing & Lifetime Homes Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the Council's Housing Strategy and is underpinned by the Council's Housing Needs Survey 2004 (updated in 2005).

The New Affordable Homes Commissioning Brief provides easy reference for both public and private sector developers. The brief can also be reviewed on a more regular basis and amended as appropriate to ensure that it remains up-to-date.

However, this brief should be read in conjunction with the Council's Affordable Housing & Lifetime Homes SPD.

Affordable Housing Requirement

In order to go some way to meeting the identified need for affordable housing in East Herts, the Council requires up to 40% of the new properties built being affordable.

In accordance with Policy HSG3 of the Local Plan Second Review, the 40% requirement applies:

- On sites proposing 15 or more dwellings, or over 0.5 hectares in the six main settlements of:
 - Bishop's Stortford
 - Buntingford
 - Hertford
 - Sawbridgeworth
 - Stanstead Abbots & St Margaret's
 - Ware

- On sites proposing 3 or more dwellings or over 0.09 hectares in the Category 1 villages of:
 - Braughing
 - Hertford Heath
 - High Cross
 - Hunsdon
 - Much Hadham

- Puckeridge
 - Tewin
 - Walkern
 - Watton-at-Stone
- On sites proposing 3 or more dwellings or over 0.09 hectares in the Category 2 villages of:
 - Aston (excluding Aston End)
 - Bayford
 - Benington
 - Brickendon
 - Dane End
 - Datchworth
 - Furneux Pelham
 - Great Amwell
 - Hadham Ford
 - High Wych
 - Little Hadham
 - Standon
 - Stapleford
 - Thundridge
 - Wadesmill
 - Widford

Tenure Structure

The Housing Needs Survey 2004 identified the tenure structure which will best meet the need for affordable housing. Therefore, of the 40% affordable housing the Council requires:

- 75% of the properties to be rented;
- 25% of the properties to be intermediate housing that being:
 - properties at flexible levels allowing for subsequent 100% ownership;
 - properties to be fixed equity, marketed at 60% open market value;
 - properties for intermediate rent that being a rent level 30% below market rent level.
- The percentage required will be determined by the Council taking into consideration the current market and planning requirements

Size Standards

Of all the affordable housing the Council requires the following proportions of each size of property:

- 1/3 1 bedroom 2 person
- 1/3 2 bedroom 3 and 4 person (ideally 2 bed room houses)
- 1/3 3 bedroom 4 and 5 person (ideally houses or ground floor flats)

Social Housing Grant

The Council will no longer support the provision of Social Housing Grant or other public subsidy for affordable housing on any site subject to a planning agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, unless it can be proved the scheme becomes unviable.

Schemes that are brought forward which are not subject to a s106 agreement will be considered for public subsidy, including the Housing Corporation funding, in accordance with the Council's Schedule of Rates as set out below.

- Fixed Equity – Nil Grant
- Shared Ownership – £24,500
- Intermediate Rent - £28,000
- Rented 1 bed - £31,000
- Rented 2 bed - £35,000
- Rented 3 bed - £41,000

Uplifts will be available for rehabilitation and conversion schemes.

Design & Quality Standards

The accommodation must meet Housing Corporation Design and Quality standard to attract public subsidy especially the Housing Corporation's Social Housing Grant.

Space Standards

East Herts Council expects all general purpose accommodation to be built in accordance with the Housing Corporation standards applicable at the time. As of July 2008 these were.

- 1 bed 2 person units - 45 to 50 square metres
- 2 bed 3 person units - 57 to 67 square metres
- 2 bed 4 person units - 67 to 75 square metres
- 3 bed 5 person units - 75 to 85 square metres

Special Needs Requirements

In accordance with our Housing Strategy and Herts County Council Supporting People Strategy it may be necessary to seek specific affordable housing provision for those with a special need. This may be wheelchair standard accommodation or supported housing for a specific needs group.

Provision will vary from site to site and additional grant may be made available to assist in the cost of provision, subject to evidence that such a subsidy is required.

If you have any queries about East Herts Council's New Affordable Homes Commissioning Brief please contact the Council's Housing Development Manager on 01279 655261.

Appendix 5

East Herts Performance Framework

COMMUNITY STRATEGY



COUNCIL VISION

‘To improve the quality of people’s lives and preserve all that is best in East Herts’

CORPORATE PRIORITIES



<p>Promoting prosperity and well being; providing access and opportunities</p> <p>Enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</p>	<p>Fit for purpose, services fit for you</p> <p>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation</p>	<p>Pride in East Herts</p> <p>Improve standards of the neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages</p>	<p>Caring about what’s built (and) where</p> <p>Care for and improve our natural and built environment</p>	<p>Shaping now, shaping the future</p> <p>Safeguard and enhance our unique mix of rural and urban communities, ensuring sustainable, economic and social opportunities through effective development control</p>	<p>Leading the way, working together</p> <p>Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public</p>
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CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

This is the plan for the whole Council and contains the key objectives for each priority and the Council’s activity for the next three years.

SERVICE PLANS

These are the plans for each specific service and are produced by the relevant service head. These set out how each service will deliver the key objectives in the Corporate Strategic Plan for the current year.



PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

The Service Plan allocates responsibility for actions to officers and this is monitored through the PDRs.

Appendix 6

Structure Chart to be appended

Appendix 7

LAA 2 Targets – to be appended

Appendix 8

Glossary

A8 European Countries- A8 states of Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Estonia and the Czech Republic. Workers from the A8 states can access the UK labour market, subject to certain conditions. However people who come to the UK and do not work or support themselves are not able to access benefits or social housing.

Affordable housing – Housing that is available to meet the needs of people who cannot afford to buy or rent housing generally available on the open housing market. Affordable housing can mean social rented (Council or housing association), low cost home ownership, and some private rented and shared ownership.

Assured shorthold tenancies (AST) - A tenancy agreement with a private landlord for a period of 6 months that can be renewed.

Audit Commission - A body appointed by the Government to be responsible for (amongst other things) the appointment of local authority's external auditors and best value inspectors (Including the Housing Inspectorate), and promoting the best use of public money in local government.

Bed and Breakfast accommodation – Bed and breakfast hotels used a temporary accommodation for homeless people

Benchmarking – To measure the quality of something by comparing it with something else of an accepted standard.

BVPI's - Best Value performance Indicators. These are national targets set by Government for local authorities to measure themselves against. From April 2008 these will be replaced with National Indicators.

Capital Expenditure - Broadly, this is expenditure, which will have a value over more than one year, and is therefore for the purposes of investing in a Council's

assets. In the Housing context, this will mean expenditure in the acquisition or construction of housing, and in substantial repairs and improvements.

Choice Based Lettings (CBL) - A new method for Council's allocating homes, which requires people on the Housing Register to select and express an interest for available social housing rather than waiting for the Council to offer them a home. The scheme gives applicants more choice in where they live.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) – An organisation that can give free advice and information to local people in person or by telephone.

Common Housing Register – This involves a single form for all applicants in a particular area complete and a single pool of applicants from which new or existing social tenants requiring a transfer to alternative social housing can be allocated vacant social housing.

Communities and Local Government - Government department, with a remit to promote community cohesion and equality and responsibility for housing, urban regeneration, planning and local government.

Connexions – National Organisation providing support for young people. Includes employment, education and training and links into social care and housing.

Decent Home - To be categorised as decent a home must:

- Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing (property does not have a category 1 hazard as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System);
- Be in a reasonable state of repair;
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services: and
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

The criteria provide a means of assessing housing conditions on their potential effect on health and well-being as well as the physical condition of the property.

Floating Support – support services provided by Supporting people Services to enable vulnerable people to obtain or sustain a tenancy for example assistance with attaining life skills such as budgeting. Support is provided in a persons own accommodation, by visiting workers, for a specific period or for as long as the individual requires it and then transfers to another household.

General Fund - The Local Authority account that records the revenue income and expenditure for all of its functions, except the landlord function as owner of housing stock. The duty to the homeless, the 'enabling' role in promoting Housing Association activity in the area, and grants for private sector housing are General Fund activities.

HB - Housing Benefit – this is a type of benefit to assist residents in paying rent for their home.

HMO – House in Multiple Occupation- defined more fully in the Housing Act 2004, but simply, a dwelling occupied by more than one household, where there is some sharing of amenities.

Homeless Presentation - People applying for housing to the local authority under the Housing Act 2002

Housing Association – See RSL

Housing Corporation - The main government agency for supporting Registered Social landlords in England. It makes grants available to RSLs and supervises and regulates their work.

Housing Register - The Council's register of households who have applied for housing.

Housing Strategy - A Housing Strategy is an over-arching document that reviews housing-related issues in a local authority's area, sets out its housing objectives, establishes priorities for action both by the local authority and by other service providers and stakeholders, and sets out a clear Action Plan in agreement with the Council's local partners.

Insecure Accommodation – Accommodation that is insecure includes; tenants or owner occupiers likely to be evicted (lawfully or unlawfully); person with no legal rights or permission to remain such as squatters or young people asked to leave the family home; persons with only a short term permission to stay, such as those moving around friends' and relatives' houses with no stable base.

Lifetime Homes – these are ordinary family homes that cater for people at different stages of their life and provide more choice to people with disabilities. It is not special needs housing nor is it necessarily a home where people will stay for life. It is a home that anyone can move into without the need for major adaptation.

Local Development Framework (LDF) – A portfolio of Local Development Documents which will provide the policies and proposals for delivering the spatial planning strategy for an area.

Local Plan - A detailed land use plan prepared and adopted by local district or borough planning authorities which should be in general conformity with the policies of a structure plan.

LSP - Local Strategic Partnership, a single body comprising representatives from public, private and voluntary sectors for the planning of local services.

PCT – Primary Care Trust – NHS bodies with responsibility for delivering better health care and health improvements in a local area.

Private Sector leasing – An arrangement through which a local authority or a housing association leases accommodation from the owner of a private property, guarantees the rent for the period of the lease and sublets the accommodation to a family in need. In East Herts the leasing is undertaken by Frays Housing Association.

RSL - Registered Social Landlord or housing association - A not for profit social housing organisation that is registered with the Housing Corporation. They are organizations that provide housing for rent and low cost home ownership. The commonest form of registered social landlord in England is a housing association.

Sanctuary Scheme: A multi-agency approach to enable those at risk of domestic violence the option to remain safely at home.

Stock Transfer - The transfer of a Local Authority's entire Housing Stock to one or more RSLs.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) - should estimate housing need and demand in terms of affordable and market housing and determine how this distribution varies across the plan area. A SHMA should also consider future demographic trends and identify the accommodation requirements of specific groups such as, homeless households, disable people, key workers, older people and first time buyers.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) - should assess the availability of land whether, greenfield or previously-developed, that have development potential for housing, including within mixed use developments, and assess the potential level of housing that can be provided on the identified land. A SHLAA should also identify sustainability issues and physical constraints that might make a site unsuitable for development.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) - These provide guidance on how policies in the saved Local Plan will be implemented.

Supporting People - The Supporting People programme provides housing related support services. In East Herts it is administered and managed by Hertfordshire County Council.

Tenure – There are four tenure categories. These are:

1. Owner occupied which includes accommodation that is owner out right or brought with a mortgage
2. Rented privately which is all non-owner occupied property other than that rented from local authorities and plus that rented from private or public organisations by virtue of employment.
3. Rented from Registered Social Landlords
4. Rented from Local Authorities

If you would like a translation of this document in another language, large print, Braille or an electronic format please contact Communications at East Herts on 01279 655261 or email communications:@eastherts.gov.uk

Jeżeli ma Pan/Pani problemy z ich przeczytaniem lub zrozumieniem, prosimy o skontaktowanie się z działem Communications Urzędu Rady Miejskiej East Herts pod numerem: 01279 655261 lub wysłanie maila do: communications@eastherts.gov.uk

Se tiver dificuldade na sua leitura ou compreensão, deve contactar a *Communications*, no Município de East Herts, através do número 01279 655261, ou envie um e-mail para communications@eastherts.gov.uk

Equality and Diversity in East Herts.

The Council is committed to equality of access to its services and has adopted a 'Diversity and Equality Policy'. This policy will be followed by officers when carrying out their duties. The policy statement reads as follows:

'East Herts Council is firmly committed to providing and promoting equality for all its employees and the wider community. The Council has adopted this policy to ensure equality influences the way we provide services and the employment of staff. To achieve this we will endeavour to create an environment in which there is respect for every individual and recognition that no member of the public, employee, potential employee, service user or Councillor will be discriminated against irrespective of their gender, race, ethnicity, colour, marital status, disability, age, sexuality, family responsibilities, religion, trade union involvement or political beliefs. Neither shall they be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable for health and safety or legal reasons. This is not an exhaustive list and the Council recognises that there are other groups who may face unlawful discrimination. In respect of race equality the Council has adopted the McPherson's definition of a racist incident 'a racial incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person'.

The Council follows the Codes of Practice of the Commission for Racial Equality and Equal Opportunity Commission, and it is committed to achieving the Equality Standard for local government.

We believe in the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity in all that we do. We recognise the rich diversity of East Hertfordshire's population as a strength and we aim to treat all people with dignity and respect whilst recognising the value of each individual and the positive contribution they make to the diverse community and workforce.'

The Strategy will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

