

6 June 2008

Ref: HD/Scrutiny/Jun 08
Contact: Hilary Dineen
Telephone: 01462 474353
Email: hilary.dineen@north-herts.gov.uk

To: The Members of the Scrutiny Committee of the North Hertfordshire District Council

(Councillors L.W. Oliver (Chairman); R.L. Shakespeare-Smith (Vice-Chairman); David Billing, John Bishop, S. Bloxham, P.C.W. Burt, Paul Clark, Sal Jarvis, Lorna Kercher, H.M. Marshall, Alan Millard, M.R.M. Muir, Elliot Needham and Michael Paterson).

[Substitutes: Councillors Judi Billing, John Booth, Lee Downie, S.K. Jarvis, David Kearns and Paul Marment]

You are invited to attend a

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

to be held in

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY

on

TUESDAY, 17 June 2008

at

7.30 p.m.

[Note: A Pre-Meeting For Members Of The Committee Will Take Place At 7.00pm In Committee Room 3]

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

AGENDA
PART I

ITEM	PAGE
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2. MINUTES To take as read and approve as a true record the Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 1 April 2008.	-
3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of the business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chairman will decide whether the item(s) raised will be considered.	-
4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive petitions, comments and questions from members of the public. At the time of printing the agenda, no requests to speak had been received. Public participation requests received within the agreed time will be notified to Members as soon as practicable.	-
5. URGENT/GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS The Chairman to report on any urgent or general exception items which required his agreement. At the time of printing the agenda, the Chairman had not agreed any urgent or general exception items.	-
6. CALLED-IN ITEMS To consider any matters referred to the Committee for a decision in relation to a call-in of a decision. At the time of printing the agenda, no items of business had been called-in.	-
7. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item.	-
8. QUESTIONS To receive and respond to any questions either set out in the agenda or tabled at the meeting.	1

ITEM	PAGE
<p>9. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL – THE DRAFT FORWARD PLAN: 1 JULY 2008 – 31 OCTOBER 2008 <i>To note items on the Council's Forward Plan and to give consideration to any items set out in the Plan prior to a decision being made.</i></p>	3
<p>10. QUESTIONS TO LEADER OF THE COUNCIL <i>Councillor F.J. Smith, Leader of the Council, to answer any questions raised by Members of the Scrutiny Committee.</i></p>	9
<p>11. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2008/2009 REPORT OF THE LEAD SCRUTINY DIRECTOR <i>To consider the issues that the Scrutiny Committee plans to review at future meetings and the activities of its sub-groups.</i></p>	11
<p>12. SHELTERED HOUSING TASK & FINISH GROUP – FINAL REPORT REPORT OF THE LEAD SCRUTINY DIRECTOR <i>To consider the final report of the Sheltered Housing Task and Finish Group.</i></p>	17
<p>13. ADOPTION OF A LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY FOR 2008 - 2013 REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH <i>To consider a report on the the adoption of a Local Housing Strategy for 2008 - 2013, prior to its submission to Cabinet on 24 June 2008.</i> [NOTE: The Appendices to this report form part of an appendix booklet despatched to Members of the Committee only under separate cover. They are available for viewing on the Council's Website]</p>	31
<p>14. ADOPTION OF A NEW HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY FOR 2008 - 2013 REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH <i>To consider a report on the new Homelessness Strategy, prior to its submission to Cabinet on 24 June 2008.</i> [NOTE: The Appendix to this report forms part of an appendix booklet despatched to Members of the Committee only under separate cover. It is available for viewing on the Council's Website]</p>	39

The Scrutiny Committee Meetings for the Civic Year 2008 – 2009 will be as follows:

Tuesday, 2 September 2008

Tuesday, 14 October 2008

Tuesday, 9 December 2008

Tuesday, 20 January 2009

Tuesday, 24 March 2009

THIS PAGE IS BLANK

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 June 2008

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

8

TITLE OF REPORT: QUESTIONS

To consider any questions submitted by Members.

THIS PAGE IS BLANK

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No.
----------------------------------	------------------------

9

TITLE OF REPORT: NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL – THE DRAFT FORWARD PLAN: 1 JULY 2008 – 31 OCTOBER 2008

To note items listed on the Council's Forward Plan and to give consideration to any items set out in the Plan prior to a decision being made.

The Forward Plan is attached, together with the list of Pending Items.

- THIS PAGE IS BLANK -

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT Forward Plan of Key Decisions – 1 July 2008

The Forward Plan contains brief details of Key Decisions that the Council is likely to take over the next four month period. You will also find details of contacts who can provide further information and hear your views. **Please note that the dates of some of the decisions may change from month to month, please check with Committee Services on 01462 474403 before deciding to attend a meeting.**

Decision required and date first appearing on Plan	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Main Consultees	Method of Consultation	Relevant Documents	Costs or Savings	Portfolio Holder and Contact Officer
1 st Quarter Revenue Budget 2008/09 Spend Profile 05/08	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	Sep 2008	Budget Holders; CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£17.7M net estimated annual budget 2008/09	Cllr Terry Hone barrie.jones@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474243
1 st Quarter Capital Budget 2008/09 Spend Profile 05/08	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	Sep 2008	Budget Holders; CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£10.8M estimated programme 2008/09	Cllr Terry Hone barrie.jones@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474243
Review of Discretionary Rate Relief Awards 05/08		Cabinet	Sep 2008	Voluntary and Community Groups	Written comments	Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme	TBA	Cllr Terry Hone howard.crompton@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474247
New Customer Service Strategy and updated Customer Care standards 05/08	PARC	Council (via Cabinet)	Sep 2008	Customers Staff CMT	Via the Citizens Panel, Staff Survey and meetings	Previous Customer Care Strategy and Standards	Contained within existing budgets	Cllr Bernard Lovewell lynn.saville@north-herts.gov.uk
Adoption of a Common Housing Allocation Policy 05/08		Cabinet	Sep 2008	Portfolio Holder Members Community groups RSL's Housing Applicants	Meetings and draft policy sent to all current housing applicants for feedback	The Allocations of Accommodation Code of Guidance, Nov 2002 (ODPM)	None	Cllr Bernard Lovewell martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474250

Decision required and date first appearing on Plan	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Main Consultees	Method of Consultation	Relevant Documents	Costs or Savings	Portfolio Holder and Contact Officer
Report on progress with the Rural Strategy Action Plan 08/07	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Sep 2008	Portfolio Holder, Parish & Town Councils	Parish & Town Council Annual Conference	Rural Strategy 2005 - 10	TBA	Cllr Tricia Gibbs jim.brown@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474835
Adoption of Green Space Strategy 10/07	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Sep 2008	Portfolio Holders – Leisure & E-Government and Waste & Recycling	Meetings	NHDC Green Space Strategy	Capital - £100K p.a. Revenue - £50K p.a.	Cllr Ian Knighton Cllr Lynda Needham steve.geach@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474553
2 nd Quarter Revenue Budget 2008/09 Spend Profile 06/08	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	Oct 2008	Budget Holders; CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£17.7M net estimated annual budget 2008/09	Cllr Terry Hone barrie.jones@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474243
2 nd Quarter Capital Budget 2008/09 Spend Profile 06/08	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	Oct 2008	Budget Holders; CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£10.8M estimated programme 2008/09	Cllr Terry Hone barrie.jones@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474243
Corporate Business Planning 2009/10 Efficiencies & Investments 06/08	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	Oct 2008	Budget Holders; CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£17.7M net estimated annual budget 2008/09	Cllr Terry Hone Norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474297
Strategic Approach to Car Parking 06/08	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Oct 2008	CMT; Portfolio Holders	Meetings	Draft Report	TBA	Cllr Richard Thake louise.symes@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474359

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PENDING ITEMS

Decision required and date first appearing on Plan	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Main Consultees	Method of Consultation	Relevant Documents	Costs or Savings	Portfolio Holder and Contact Officer
Setting of Council Tax Base for 2009/2010 03/08		Cabinet	Dec 2008	Portfolio Holder		Tax Base Calculation	None	Cllr Terry Hone howard.crompton@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474247
Climate Change Strategy 11/07	Scrutiny Committee	Council (via Cabinet)	Dec 2008	Community groups; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members; Partners	Meetings and consultation events; Draft report to April Cabinet	Draft Climate Change Bill 2007; Nottingham Declaration	TBA	Cllr Claire Strong jim.brown@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474835
Submission Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) 05/08		Council (via Cabinet)	Jan 2009	Community Groups; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members	Online consultation; Written comments; Press Release	Submission DPD	TBA	Cllr Richard Thake andy.beavan@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474317
Submission Development Policies DPD 05/08		Council (via Cabinet)	Jan 2009	Community Groups; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members	Online consultation; Written comments; Press Release	Submission DPD	TBA	Cllr Richard Thake andy.beavan@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474317
Preferred Options Land Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) 02/08		Cabinet	Mar 2009	Community Groups; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members	Online consultation; Written comments; Press Release	Preferred Options DPD	TBA	Cllr Richard Thake andy.beavan@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474317
Baldock Air Quality Management Area 01/08		Cabinet	TBA	Portfolio Holder				Cllr Bernard Lovewell andy.godman@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474293
Comprehensive Equality Policy 07/07	Scrutiny Committee	Council (via Cabinet)	TBA	Community groups; Residents; LSP Members; Partners	Meetings and consultation events	Race, Disability & Gender Equality Schemes	TBA	Cllr John Smith liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474230

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR F.J. SMITH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

[Note: The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee consider that it would be appropriate to ask the Leader of the Council some questions regarding his co-ordinating role as Chairman of Cabinet, as well as some questions relating to some of the cross-portfolio issues facing the Council, such as the Office Accommodation Strategy, Local Area Agreements, etc. Members of the Committee are therefore invited to give some thought in advance to the type of questions they would like to ask the Leader of the Council.]

- THIS PAGE IS BLANK -

TITLE OF REPORT: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

REPORT OF THE LEAD SCRUTINY DIRECTOR

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the policies and topics that the Scrutiny Committee plans to scrutinise. The report also updates members on the work of the scrutiny sub groups.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

17 June 08	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sheltered Housing Task & Finish Group – Final Report▪ Adoption of New Housing Strategy▪ Adoption of a New Homelessness Strategy▪ Cllr F. John Smith, Leader of the Council
02 Sept 08	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Report of progress with the Rural Strategy Action Plan▪ Local Economic Development Task & Finish Group – Final Report▪ Adoption of Green Space Strategy▪ Submission Development Policies DPD - (TBC)▪ Cllr Ian Knighton, Leisure & E-Government Portfolio Holder
14 Oct 08	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cllr Richard Thake, Planning & Transport Portfolio Holder (TBC)▪ Strategic Approach to Car Parking
09 Dec 08	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Climate Change Strategy – (TBC)▪ Preferred Options Land Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) - (TBC)▪ Comprehensive Equality Policy – (TBC)▪ Cllr Claire Strong, Policy & Green Issues Portfolio Holder (TBC)
20 Jan 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cllr Tricia Gibbs, Community Engagement & Rural Affairs Portfolio Holder▪ Review of Scrutiny Task & Finish Group outcomes
24 Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cllr Lynda Needham, Waste & Environment Portfolio Holder

4. SUB GROUPS

4.1 Local Economic Development Task & Finish Group

The first meeting of the group was held on 12th March 2008. The scope was agreed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1st April 2008. The group met on 8th April and spoke to the following witnesses: Paul Taylor (Baldock Town Partnership), Tony Nickels (Chair of Baldock Town Partnership), Martin Fletcher (Letchworth Town Centre Manager), Keith Hoskins (Hitchin Town Centre Manager), Geraint Burnell (Royston Town Centre Manager), Louise Symes (Planning Projects Manager, NHDC) and Andy Beavan (Local Development Framework Manager, NHDC).

The group also met on 12th June 2008 and spoke to the following witnesses: Paul Pullin, (Economic Development Officer, East Herts Council), Adam Wood, (Partnership Director, Herts Prosperity) and Tom Hennessey, (Team Leader for Economic Development & Regeneration, Herts County Council).

The next meeting will be held on 3rd July 2008.

4.2 Finance Scrutiny Sub Group

Nominations have been received for the membership of this sub group as follows:

Conservative: Cllrs; Michael Muir, Howard Marshall, Tom Brindley & John Booth
Lib Dem: Cllrs Steve Jarvis & Sal Jarvis
Labour: Cllrs; Lorna Kercher & Martin Stears

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Terry Hone

The Finance Sub-Group will be meeting on Monday 23rd June 2008. Therefore, it is suggested that, with the Committee's approval, any recommendations made will be reported directly to Cabinet on Tuesday 24th June 2008.

5. CHOOSING TOPICS TO REVIEW - 2008/09

5.1 On Monday 25th February 2008 twelve Members attended the annual scrutiny workshop. The workshop included a presentation on the likely implications for Members in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Police & Justice Act 2006 and the Councillor Call for Action. Members were also briefed about the Council's corporate objectives for 2008/09.

5.2 Members were split into two groups to discuss the topics they would like to be looked at in the new civic year. The following are the topics that were chosen by both groups:

- (a) Revisit major policy changes to monitor how effective they have been and look at any progress made (e.g. waste collection, fly tipping, Customer Service Centre)
- (b) Joint Scrutiny with a topic group at Hertfordshire County Council
- (c) Parking in residential areas
- (d) Green issues and the Council's carbon footprint (CO² emissions)
- (e) Does the provision of sports facilities meet the needs of communities (eg. youth, low income families, rural/urban areas)
- (f) Can the Council support / help to retain local community events
- (g) Effectiveness of the CCTV strategy (joint topic group with partners)
- (h) Increasing public involvement in the work of Scrutiny
- (i) Commercial waste and recycling (task & finish group **or** FSR)
- (j) Services for 50+ and reviewing the existing strategy.

- 5.3 At the Review of Task and Finish Groups meeting held on 14th January 2008, it was agreed that a list of criteria would be followed before a task and finish group is established by the completion of a form attached as Appendix A. In addition, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) would discuss any potential reviews in order to assess whether or not the review can be resourced adequately.
- 5.4 On 18 March 2008 CMT considered the resourcing implications of each topic and found that the two topics that would be able to be resourced this civic year are:
- Increasing public involvement in the work of Scrutiny, and;
 - Services for 50+ and reviewing the existing strategy.
- 5.5 A County scrutiny topic group is currently scrutinising services for the over 50's, which is scheduled to end by the Autumn. Therefore it will be important that any work that a task and finish group undertakes complements this work.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Scrutiny Committee are asked to agree on the two topics to include in their work programme for 2008/09, whilst leaving space for a "hot topic" during the year.
- 6.2 Members are asked to agree that the Finance Scrutiny Sub Group present any referrals or recommendations made at their meeting on 23rd June 2008 direct to Cabinet on 24th June 2008.
- 6.3 Members are asked to note the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2008/09.

7. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To enable the Scrutiny Committee to plan and carry out its workload efficiently and effectively.

8. CONTACT OFFICERS

8.1 Norma Atlay
Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services
Scrutiny Lead Director
01462 474297
norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk

8.2 Grace Crawford
Scrutiny Officer
North Hertfordshire District Council
01462 474612
grace.crawford@north-herts.gov.uk

THIS PAGE IS BLANK

Criteria used by the Scrutiny Committee before agreeing a task & finish group

Suggested Topic for Task & Finish Group Review:

Reason for suggesting the topic:

- Why should there be a review?
- How is it linked to one or more of the Council's Strategic Priorities and/or is it an issue of public concern?
- How can scrutiny add value or influence change / improvement / efficiencies?

Supporting Evidence:

- Is there adequate support & additional resources available for this review?
- Can this review be undertaken between 3-6 months?
- Are there any other existing mechanisms that could look at this issue (eg. audit, partnership groups)?

Desired Outcome:

- What do you intend to achieve?

Name and contact details:

THIS PAGE IS BLANK

TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF SHELTERED HOUSING

REPORT OF THE LEAD SCRUTINY DIRECTOR

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report introduces the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group's final report that reviewed Sheltered Housing in North Herts. The report, attached as Appendix A, includes the recommendations that the Task and Finish Group would like the Scrutiny Committee to refer the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Committee approved this cross-party task and finish group in August 2007. The purpose of the group was to look at North Herts Homes' review of Sheltered Housing in North Herts, with a particular focus on how North Herts Homes arrived at their decision to decommission Probyn House, Wheatsheaf Meadow and St Andrews; and how the consultation process was undertaken.
- 3.2 The task and finish group began their review in September 2007 and finished in May 2008.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The group consulted the Chief Executive of North Herts Homes, the Housing Corporation Regulation Manager and the Director of Housing at Broxbourne Housing Association.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Task and Finish Group was established by the Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.2 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee confirm that it is able to question Members, Officers and any other person in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects and about service performance in comparison with service plans and targets.
- 5.3 The Task and Finish Group has not made any decisions therefore it does not have a constitutional basis beyond this. The Task and Finish Group has undertaken an investigatory fact-finding exercise.
- 5.4 Having concluded this fact-finding exercise and its consideration of the issues, the Task and Finish Group has prepared a series of proposals for presentation to the Scrutiny Committee. Under the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee they have the power to submit recommendations to Cabinet or appropriate Committees or Council.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial or risk implications for NHDC arising from the recommendations of the group.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct Human Resources implications arising from the report or final recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Scrutiny Committee approves the contents of the report and agrees the proposed recommendations for referral to the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health and Cabinet.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To enable the Scrutiny Committee to carry out its work efficiently and effectively.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix A – Review of Sheltered Housing – Final report of the Task & Finish Group

11. CONTACT OFFICER

- 11.1 Grace Crawford
Scrutiny Officer
01462 474612
grace.crawford@north-herts.gov.uk

12. CONTRIBUTORS

- 12.1 Barrie Jones
Head of Financial Services
01462 474243
barrie.jones@north-herts.gov.uk
- 12.2 Kerry Shorrocks
Head of Human Resources
01462 474224
kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk
- 12.3 Katie White
Senior Lawyer
01462 474315
katie.white@north-herts.gov.uk



NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Review of Sheltered Housing

Report of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

May 2008

CONTENTS

Membership	3
Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
Findings	6
Conclusion	8
Recommendation	9
Background papers	10
Appendix A – Scope of the task and finish group	11

Membership

Councillor John Bishop (Chairman)

Member for Kimpton

Councillor Lorna Kercher

Member for Letchworth East

Councillor Jane Gray

Member for Knebworth

Councillor Clare Body

Member for Hitchin Highbury

Co-opted Member

Councillor David Reavell

Chairman of Kimpton Parish Council (until 20 September 2007)

Acknowledgements

The task and finish group would like to thank, from North Hertfordshire District Council; Andy Godman, Head of Housing & Environmental Health and Norma Atlay, Lead Scrutiny Officer and Strategic Director of Financial & Regulatory Services, who gave up their time to meet with the group and provide the group with advice and guidance.

The task and finish group are also grateful to Mr Kevin Thompson, Chief Executive of North Hertfordshire Homes who also gave up his time to act as a witness and provided the group with information.

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 North Hertfordshire Homes (NHH) is the largest Registered Social Landlord in Hertfordshire. They took over the housing stock from North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) in April 2003 and manage 19 sheltered housing schemes.
- 1.2 On 28 August 2007, NHDC's Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a sub group to look into the concerns raised by a Parish member and a member of the Scrutiny Committee about the review of Sheltered Housing provision in North Herts, undertaken by NHH and the consultation process that followed.
- 1.3 The Sheltered Housing task & finish group was quickly established and the group met for the first time on 12 September 2007. The group met four times and held their last meeting on 13 May 2008.
- 1.4 The terms of reference within the scope were; to look at North Herts Homes' review of sheltered housing in North Herts, with a particular focus on how North Herts Homes arrived at their decision to decommission Probyn House, Wheatsheaf Meadow and St Andrews; and how the consultation process was undertaken. To determine whether the correct consultation process was followed; to identify areas of improvement and to agree next steps.
- 1.5 The full scope can be found at Appendix A.
- 1.6 The methodology used in this investigation included an interview with a key witness, written evidence from additional key witnesses, discussions and guidance from council officers and a programme of desk research. A series of publications, papers and documents were collected by the Scrutiny Officer. A full list of these background papers can be found on page 9.

2.0 FINDINGS

- 2.1 One of the first tasks for the group was to find out if NHH had any legal obligations to NHDC as part of the transfer agreement when undertaking reviews and carrying out consultations. The group also needed to gather evidence about how the consultation process was undertaken and whether there was a right and wrong way to do this.
- 2.2 To find out about how the review and consultation process was undertaken, the group met and interviewed Mr Kevin Thompson, Chief Executive of North Hertfordshire Homes on 19 September 2007. At this meeting, the group were informed about how NHH reached their decision to close three sheltered housing schemes and were given an explanation of the consultation process that took place.
- 2.3 Mr Thompson explained that NHH undertook its consultation in two parts. The first part focussed on asking residents, plus friends and relatives of residents, in the form of a survey and in meetings, how they felt about where they lived, the condition of their homes and what they felt to be important about sheltered housing. The second part took place after the decision was made to decommission three schemes and replace a fourth, and took place as a meeting with residents of the affected schemes, followed by individual meetings. At the individual meetings, residents were given the opportunity to express their choice of the kind of alternative accommodation they wanted and where that should be, either at that meeting or at a later stage once they had time to think about it. Relatives and friends had been invited to these meetings providing the tenant wanted them there.
- 2.4 There was concern amongst the group that residents were not given the opportunity to contribute to the decision making process. The residents of the schemes that were identified for closures were not consulted on the specific issues of their prospective closure prior to the announcement of the closures. This was raised as a question during the interview and the group were told that until the conclusion of the review it was not known for certain whether any schemes would need to close or, if so, which ones these might be. To consult on the possibility of closure would therefore have required all 800 residents of sheltered housing schemes being informed that this was a possibility and asking them for their views. This would not have produced quality information for the review and may have raised anxiety levels unnecessarily. The group were also told that the schemes that will close were those which are not capable of being brought up to the appropriate standard. The decision was taken and then managed following best practice guidance which did not state that consultation on the decision was necessary.
- 2.5 The group were told that NHH had used good practice guidance published by ERoSH (Emerging Role of Social Housing) on decommissioning sheltered housing schemes and the group decided to obtain a copy of this guidance.
- 2.6 Two further key witnesses were identified. The group were informed that the Housing Corporation Regulation Manager had been aware of this review and the Director of Housing at Broxbourne Housing Association had undertaken an external validation of the review. The group wanted to hear from them about how they felt about the review and the consultation process. Written evidence

was received from both witnesses who confirmed their satisfaction with the review and the consultation process.

- 2.7 There was much debate about the generality of the written guidance that the group had seen regarding consultations with residents and also about Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985. There was also a thorough debate about other authorities who had undertaken reviews of their sheltered housing provision and how they had undergone their consultation process.
- 2.8 When questioned about the process used to establish future demand, Mr Thompson explained the process as laid out in the Review Document and explained that there were no waiting lists for the three effected schemes. Members of the group had some concerns about whether the process of future demand forecasting had been sufficiently rigorous.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The group felt that the published regulatory and legislative guidance is non prescriptive in the domain of closure of a sheltered housing facility. Evidence was given to the group that showed that NHH consulted stakeholders but the group felt that NHH could have chosen to adopt a wider interpretation of the guidance, such as prior consultation with residents on the possibility of closure.
- 3.2 The group did not investigate the review process in depth, but received written evidence from the Director of Housing and Community Services at Broxbourne Housing Association who undertook an external validation of the review as well as the Housing Corporation Regulation Account Manager who was aware of the review.
- 3.3 The group did not find any evidence to suggest that NHH carried out their consultation process incorrectly, the group did agree that the published regulatory and legislative guidance is non prescriptive in the domain of closure of a sheltered housing facility and the guidance can be interpreted in more than one way.
- 3.4 The group were of the opinion that it was debatable whether tenant consultation after the NHH Board decision to close some schemes was the most effective course of action. The group felt that tenant consultation prior to the final board decision *may* have yielded relevant additional information that may have assisted the NHH Board with its deliberations on the scheme by scheme review; however, the group acknowledged the reasons given for not doing so. Due to the passage of time it was now not possible to determine whether this would have had a material bearing on the decision or not.
- 3.5 Initially, the group spoke about undertaking some site visits to the three affected sheltered housing schemes to talk to residents, however it was agreed that it would not be appropriate to visit the schemes as part of the work of this review, as this may risk causing unnecessary distress and raise expectations of the residents. Instead the group suggested that individual Ward Councillors should be encouraged to visit residents within their wards to offer support and ensure that residents are fully aware of the assistance that is available to them.
- 3.6 On 3rd November 2007 the Ward Councillor for Kimpton, along with a colleague, visited and spoke to some of the residents of Probyn House, Kimpton. The group felt that Probyn House represented a unique case based on the information gathered and observations made from this visit.
- 3.7 There was some confidential information that was brought to the attention of the group which was not a function for scrutiny group to investigate, nor was it within the remit of the scope. Therefore it was agreed that there was no further work that this group could undertake and the group agreed that their objectives within the scope had been achieved.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health be asked to review the arrangements for partnership working with Registered Social Landlords operating in the district.
- 4.2 The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health be asked, as part of this review, to ensure that the established Communication Protocols continue to be relevant, and that the Protocol clearly refers to the need to involve appropriate public bodies, especially where identified actions may not be consistent with the Council's Housing Strategy and/or an action that may arouse public concern.
- 4.3 The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health be requested to discuss with NHH the particular circumstances of Probyn House, with a view to considering all available options for an acceptable solution to the housing needs of the residents (including the review of the closure).
- 4.4 That ward Councillors be encouraged to visit the residents of the effected schemes to offer support to residents and ensure they are fully aware of the assistance available to them.

Background papers:

The Regulatory Code and Guidance, Housing Corporation August 2005

Housing Association Partnership Agreement – April 2003 to March 2006, NHDC

A Charter for Housing Association Applicants and Residents, Housing Corporation
April 2007

Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985

Decommissioning of Category 2 Sheltered Schemes Rodney House and Sancroft
Court, Derby City Council Cabinet 28 November 2006

An ERoSH Good Practice Guide to Decommissioning

Scheme by Scheme Review of Sheltered Housing, Presentation to North
Hertfordshire District Council 11 July 2007, North Hertfordshire Homes

Recommendations from the Scheme by Scheme Review of Sheltered Housing, North
Hertfordshire Homes

Discussion Areas for Tenants and Relatives consultation meetings: Probyn House
meeting 6 September 2006

Appendix A.

SCOPE

Terms of reference:

To look at North Herts Homes' review of sheltered housing in North Herts, with a particular focus on how North Herts Homes arrived at their decision to decommission Probyn House, Wheatsheaf Meadow and St Andrews; and how the consultation process was undertaken.

Expected Outcome:

To determine whether an appropriate consultation process was followed; to identify areas of improvement and to agree next steps.

Timeframe:

The Group will commence their review in September 2007 and will aim to produce a report for the Scrutiny Committee in October 2007.

Link with Council Priority:

Working with partners and communities is part of the overall mission for the Council. The effectiveness of this has a significant impact on the residents of our rural areas, as well as our towns.

Potential witnesses:

- CE of North Herts Homes
- Residents of affected sheltered housing scheme review

Potential visits:

- Probyn House, Kimpton
- St Andrews, Hitchin
- Wheatsheaf Meadow, Barkway

Membership:

Cllrs: John Bishop, Jane Gray, Lorna Kercher, Clare Body & David Reavell (Chairman of Kimpton Parish Council)

Lead Officer:

Andy Godman (Head of Housing & Environmental Health)

Support Officer:

Grace Crawford (Scrutiny Officer)

Key Tasks:

Areas to cover:	Date
Agree scope/objectives	12.09.07
Meet with CE of North Herts Homes <i>The group will need to decide what information they require, what specific questions they wish to ask, whether they want a presentation on any specific details within NHH's review. (Scrutiny Officer will prepare questions from the group and other affected ward members, in advance)</i>	19.09.07
Meet to discuss further work to be undertaken	03.10.07
Site visit to Probyn House & speak to residents (TBC) <i>It is hoped that the meeting with the CE of NHH will determine what site visits will add value to the gathering of evidence.</i>	N/A
Site visit to St Andrews & speak to residents (TBC) <i>As above</i>	N/A
Site visit to Wheatsheaf Meadow & speak to residents (TBC) <i>As above</i>	N/A
Develop recommendations & look at draft report	13.05.08
Present report to Scrutiny Committee	17.06.08

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No.
----------------------------------	------------------------

13

TITLE OF REPORT: ADOPTION OF NEW HOUSING STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Attached is the report that will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 24 June 2008.

[Note: Due to their bulk, the appendices to the report are attached under separate cover for Members of the Scrutiny Committee only. They are available in hard copy on request, or can be viewed on the Council's website.]

The Scrutiny Committee has asked to comment on the report before it is considered by Cabinet. Members' views are invited.

THIS PAGE IS BLANK

TITLE OF REPORT: ADOPTION OF A LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY FOR 2008 - 2013

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: CLLR. B. LOVEWELL

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek agreement for the adoption of a North Hertfordshire Housing Strategy for the period 2008 to 2013.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report contains a key recommendation that was first notified to the public via the Forward Plan in November 2007.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There is a statutory duty for the Council to have a Local Housing Strategy by virtue of Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003. The purpose of such a strategy is to provide an over-arching document that covers all aspects of housing within a defined geographical area and to provide a long term vision via the identification of strategic priorities for housing over the medium term (i.e. over the next five years). Local Housing Strategies were examined as regards their overall suitability by the appropriate Government Office (GO) via the Fit For Purpose (FFP) assessment framework – North Hertfordshire District Council's first Housing Strategy, see below, was amongst the first in the region to accredited under such arrangements.
- 3.2 The Council's previous adopted Housing Strategy was for the period 2004 to 2007 – this has now expired and therefore a new strategy is necessary.
- 3.3 It was agreed by Cabinet in March 2007 to postpone the development of a new Housing Strategy until the future requirements of local housing strategies had been clarified by the Government and to enable better integration with the forthcoming Sustainable Community Strategy. However, as an interim measure an updated Action Plan (an appendix to the original strategy) was approved for the 2007/8 financial year. Regrettably, Government guidance has not been forthcoming and recent communication with GO-East indicates that it is now unknown if guidance will be provided in the foreseeable future. The Housing Quality Network (HQN) has advised that, in these circumstances, it is prudent that local authorities are able to determine the format of the Housing Strategy locally.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 Communities and Local Government (GLG) wishes to see all Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) to embrace sub-regional working and the development and adoption of sub-regional strategies. This follows the recommendations contained within Local Government White Paper published in November 2006. Following consultation with Go-East, the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region (LCBSR) proposes that all local authorities within the sub-region produce up-to-date Housing Strategies which will be used to inform the development of a sub-regional housing strategy. The LCBSR has agreed a Housing Strategy and Action Plan template for each member local authority (that is to say all the local authorities in Hertfordshire and 5 in Essex) to follow. The proposed Housing Strategy and Action Plan as contained with Appendices A and B respectively adhere to these agreed templates.

- 4.2 The lack of guidance around the replacement of FFP strategies has been a major obstacle to the production of new local and sub-regional strategies. Current understanding is that, once a local authority has achieved a FFP Housing Strategy (such as this Council), consequent strategies will not be required to be tested against this assessment standard.
- 4.3 As stated in 3.1, above, this Council was the first local authority in the LCBSR to publish such a document. Informal advice received from Go-East is that Housing Strategies should be shorter than the expired FFP strategy as many of the broader issues associated with housing demand and supply will be covered by a new sub-regional strategy. However, in order to provide a robust framework for the local delivery of work streams an appropriately detailed Action Plan has been encouraged. Again, the Action Plan suggested in Appendix B follows this recommended format.
- 4.4 It is currently unclear as to how any LCBSR Housing Strategy will be formally adopted as the London Commuter Belt is a collective assembly of 15 Local Housing Authorities but does not have any direct oversight arrangements. However, once an adoption or ratification processes has been agreed Members of this Council will be briefed.
- 4.5 Housing has a significant impact on the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the district. There are important challenges for housing in the North Hertfordshire, including the following:
- An annual unmet need of 634 affordable housing units per annum in the years up to 2011 (source: Housing Needs Survey up-date, 2007);
 - A 125% rise in the number of households on the Council's housing register between 2005 and 2007;
 - A growing and aging population;
 - Encouraging social inclusion;
 - Minimising the impact of housing on the environment; and
 - The impact of changes in the housing market.
- 4.6 The proposed Housing Strategy 2008 – 2013 takes account of the current issues for housing in the district and sets out six priorities:
- To work towards balancing local housing markets;
 - To create inclusive sustainable communities;
 - To improve access to, and choice in, housing;
 - To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community;
 - To maintain and improve the quality of the current stock; and
 - To protect the environment.
- 4.7 The 2002 – 2007 vision for housing: '*To meet the community's needs for decent, high quality, affordable homes*', remains unchanged as it succinctly represents the ultimate goal of the Council's ongoing priorities for housing locally.
- 4.8 The appended Housing Strategy supports the proposed Sustainable Communities Strategy priority of, '*promoting sustainable development of the district to ensure we deliver adequate affordable housing, to protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic towns and rural settlements*'. It reflects and contributes to the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and is linked to other local and sub-regional strategies and plans, including:

- The NHDC Corporate Plan 2005 - 2015
- The Stevenage and North Herts Homelessness Strategy;
- The Private Sector Renewals Policy;
- The Contaminated Land Strategy
- The North Herts Community Safety Strategy;
- The Local Area Agreement;
- The LCB sub-region Housing Strategy 2005-08
- The Supporting People Strategy; and
- The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England.

4.9 The Housing Strategy incorporates an Action Plan that sets out the activities and outcomes for housing between 2008 and 2013 in the district. It is proposed that the Action Plan be reviewed on a six monthly basis by the Housing Strategy Monitoring Group, see 4.10 below. Notwithstanding this, it will be up-dated in 2009 and 2011 to bring it in line with changes in circumstances; these include the publication of a new sub-regional housing strategy (expected early 2009), new national policies and initiatives and changes in the local housing market.

4.10 The Housing Strategy Monitoring Group will consist of the following officers:

- Head of Housing and Environmental Health
- Housing Strategy and Renewals Manager
- Housing Needs Manager
- Local Development Framework Manager
- Policy Manager
- Housing Policy Officers

4.11 The Housing Strategy Monitoring Group will respond to any issues of programme slippage and assist with the development of strategically relevant services.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Opinion awaited

Suggested contents:

- **Reference to Local Government Act 2003 obligation**
- **Adoption process: 'The Housing Strategy' is part of the Policy Framework of the Council and therefore formal adoption is solely a matter for Council (it is scheduled for discussion @ 26th June)**
- **NHDC is a Local Housing Authority (LHA)**

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 **Financial implications:** The proposed Housing Strategy illustrates that Council expenditure targeted towards housing is significant in the period 2008 to 2013:

- Revenue - £2.1 million per annum
- Capital - £4 million per annum

Although most actions as listed in the Action Plan to meet the Council's proposed strategy can be absorbed from existing resources, the plan highlights some elements

that may require additional revenue funding. Any required budget increase will be considered as part of the Council's corporate business planning process.

6.1.1 The reports on the Council's capital programme and capital strategy tabled before Cabinet this evening deal with issues regarding the programme's funding deficit and the recurring annual underspend on the 'affordable grant assistance' programme. Those reports and their recommendations should be read in conjunction with this report.

6.2 The risks associated with not having an adopted housing strategy are:

- The Council will have no direction in terms of housing provision; and
- The Council will breach a statutory duty.

6.2.1 The risks associated with the implementation of the proposed Housing Strategy are:

- A downturn in the housing market;
- Increased demand for affordable housing as a result of migration; and
- Changes in the priorities for housing at regional and national level.

These risks are logged on the NHDC Risk Register (i.e. Risk No. 403).

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment of the Housing Strategy Appendix C indicates that it is likely to have positive implications for equalities.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

8.1 A wide range of stake holders have been consulted in the production of the Housing Strategy. The feedback from public consultation events that involved housing issues has also been taken into consideration when constructing the strategy. This includes the Local Development Framework consultation events in October 2005, June 2006 and September 2007 and the Community Conference held in September 2007.

A copy of the draft Housing Strategy was sent for consultation to:

- All Registered Social Landlords operating in the district;
- All Members;
- Parish Councils;
- Representative of minority ethnic communities;
- The North Herts and Stevenage Primary Care Trust;
- All Local Housing Authorities in the London Commuter Belt Sub- Region;
- The Hertfordshire Supporting People Team;
- The Community Development Agency;
- Go East;
- The Housing Corporation;
- Community Associations; and
- Statutory and voluntary advice and support agencies.

The draft was also made available for consultation on the Council's website.

8.2 Responses from the consultation on the draft Housing Strategy are presented in Appendix D.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Cabinet considers the recommended Housing Strategy for the period 2008 to 2013 and recommends to Council that it be adopted.

9.2 That the Housing Strategy Action Group monitor progress on the adopted objectives and report on any progress/slippage against the Action Plan on a six monthly basis to the Housing and Environmental Health Portfolio Holder.

9.3 That the Housing Strategy and Action Plan be reviewed in April 2009 and 2011 to bring it in line with new national initiatives and any consequences from changes in the housing market.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

10.1 It is a current legal requirement under section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 for Local Housing Authorities to have a housing strategy. There have been indications that this requirement may be abandoned; however, there has been no official statement on this as yet.

10.2 The Housing Strategy contributes towards meeting the Council's vision and priorities, most notably, as regards Sustainable Communities.

10.3 The Strategy identifies key local housing issues and establishes a means of targeting the available resources effectively.

10.4 The adoption of the Housing Strategy will provide a means of ensuring that the housing issues identified in it are taken into consideration in the preparation of the LCBSR sub-regional housing strategy.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11.1 The Council could approach the issue of housing without any adopted housing strategy document. However, this was rejected on the grounds cited in 6.2, above

11.2 The Council could adopt a significantly different housing strategy than the one proposed in **Appendix X**. This would, however, not be in keeping with this Authority's recent approach to housing matters and would not necessarily reflect the views of the Council's partners as expressed in **Appendix X**.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A: Housing Strategy

12.2 Appendix B: Action Plan

12.3 Appendix C: Equality Impact Assessment

12.4 Appendix D: Consultation responses and Comments

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 13.1 Sharon Forde (report author)
Housing Policy Officer
Tel: 01462 474 841
Email: Sharon.forde@north-herts.gov.uk
- 13.2 Alan Davey
Housing Strategy and Renewals Manager
Tel: 01462 474 519
Email: alan.davey@north-herts.gov.uk
- 13.2 Andy Godman
Head of Housing and Environmental Health
Tel: 01462 474 293
Email: andy.godman@north-herts.gov.uk
- 13.3 Liz Green
Head of Policy, Partnerships & Performance
Tel: 01462 474 230
Email: liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk
- 13.4 Kim Sawyer
Senior Lawyer (Legal and Democratic Services)
Tel: 01462 474 561
Email: kim.sawyer@north-herts.gov.uk
- 13.5 Tim Neill
Accountancy Manager
Tel: 01462 474 470
Email: tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk
- 13.6 Kerry Shorrocks
Head of Human Resources
Tel: 01462 474 224
Email: kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 The North Hertfordshire Housing Strategy 2004 – 2007
- 14.2 The LCB sub-region Housing Strategy 2005-08
- 14.3 The Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (2006)
- 14.4 The Council's Private Sector Housing Renewals Policy
- 14.5 Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy
- 14.6 The Local Government White Paper 2006



APPENDIX A

North Herts Housing Strategy 2008 – 2013

May 2008

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	1
About North Hertfordshire	
The London Commuter Belt Sub-Region	
Consultation	
Partnerships	
2. The Vision and Priorities for Housing	3
3. The Challenge for Housing in North Herts	5
4. The Local Housing Market	5
Population Trends	
Affordability	
5. Sustainable Communities	7
New Build	
Current Housing Stock	
The Physical Environment	
Community Safety	
Community Involvement	
6. New Housing	10
Supply	
New Homes in North Herts on the border with Stevenage	
New homes in the rest of North Herts	
Affordable Housing Thresholds	
Delivering New Affordable Housing	
Rural Housing	
Lifetime Homes	

7. Greener, Healthier Homes	15
New Housing	
Carbon Emissions	
Water Consumption	
Household Waste Recycling	
Contaminated Land	
Current Housing Stock	
8. Making Best Use of Current Stock	17
Decent Homes	
Empty Homes	
Under-Occupation	
Overcrowding	
Houses in Multiple Occupation	
9. Housing for Diversity	22
Housing with Support	
Disabled Facilities Grants	
Black and Minority Ethnic Communities	
Gypsies and Travellers	
Economic Migrants from EU Accession States	
Key worker and Intermediate Income Households	
10. Homelessness	27
11. Delivering the strategy	28

Appendixes

Appendix A: Consultation	27
Appendix B: Priorities	28
Appendix C: Tables	30
Appendix D: Lifetime Homes Criteria	39
Appendix E: Measures of Overcrowding	40
Appendix F: Risk Assessment	
Appendix G: Equality Impact assessment	

1. Introduction

The North Hertfordshire Housing Strategy sets out the strategic priorities for housing in the district over the period 2008 to 2013. Its objective is to identify key local housing issues and establish a plan for tackling them. This strategy and those of our sub-regional partners will be used to inform and shape the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region (LCBSR) Housing Strategy which will be delivered in the autumn of 2008. By pooling resources in this way it will be possible to gather more coherent evidence and achieve a high quality of analysis and strategic thinking at sub-regional level. The LCBSR housing strategy will establish the key areas where joint working across administrative boundaries can deliver economic, effective solutions to commonly identified issues. Local concerns will be dealt with independently.

About North Hertfordshire

The district of North Hertfordshire encompasses both urban and rural environments. There are four urban areas - Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston and 33 rural parishes. In total the district covers over 375 square kilometres and has boundaries with nine other local authority areas.

There are about 121,000 people living in 52,000 households within the district. The population is becoming more ethnically diverse. The most recent estimate (2005) is that 12.85% of the population of the district belong to a minority ethnic group, rising from 8.1% in 2001.

The population of the district is both growing and ageing. It is estimated that the number of people residing in North Herts will rise by 14,300 between 2006 and 2021. Of this growth, 40% will be over 65 years of age and only 11% below the age of 30.

North Herts is a prosperous area and is ranked among the top 20% of least deprived areas in England. There are, however, pockets of deprivation in the district where communities are at risk of social and economic exclusion.

The London Commuter Belt Sub-Region

The sub-region comprises fifteen district councils, all ten district council areas of Hertfordshire (Bromsbourne, 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 1.5 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.

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.

Paul Gayler

Chair of LCB Development Group
LCB Executive Group member

Consultation

A number of consultation events have been held where members of the community and representatives from key statutory and non-statutory agencies were able to give their views on housing and other issues. These events included Local Development Framework consultation events in October 2005, June 2006 and September 2007, a community conference in September 2007 and six area consultation events held between November and December 2007 (See Appendix A). The views of those attending these events have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this strategy.

Partnerships

Delivering on the commitments made in the Housing Strategy relies on corporate and partnership working. The Housing Strategy and Development team will take the role of sustaining current partnerships and developing new ones to enable a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the action plan.

Key agents in the delivery of the strategy include:

- Elected Members
- The NHDC Housing and Environmental Health Service Team;
- The NHDC Planning Policy Team;
- The NHDC Housing Development Group;
- The NHDC Community Development Team;
- The NHDC Policy Partnership and Performance Team;
- The NHDC Legal Service;
- The London Commuter Belt Sub-Region Partnership;
- Town and Parish Councils;
- Community and Residents Groups;

- The Housing Corporation¹;
- The East of England Development Agency;
- Go-East;
- The North Hertfordshire Local Strategic Partnership;
- The Hertfordshire Supporting People Team;
- Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) active in the district;
- Developers;
- Private landlords and letting agents;
- The Community Development Agency;
- The Hertfordshire Supporting People Team;
- Statutory and non-statutory support and advice services; and
- ad hoc single issue groups

2. The Vision and Priorities for Housing

The Council's vision for housing is:

To meet the community's needs for decent, high quality, affordable homes

National, regional and sub-regional priorities for housing (See Appendix B) have been taken into account in the development of this strategy. These have been assessed against local housing circumstances and six strategic priorities for housing in North Herts have been identified:

- 1. To work towards balancing local housing markets;**
- 2. To create inclusive sustainable communities;**
- 3. To improve access to and choice in housing;**
- 4. To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community;**
- 5. To maintain and improve the quality of current stock; and**
- 6. To protect the environment.**

The six strategic priorities will be delivered through the Housing Strategy Action Plan.

To ensure that the Housing Strategy is fully linked to the Council's corporate objectives (see Appendix B), it has been developed and implemented in consultation with a range of services including housing, planning, community development, finance and policy, partnerships and performance. This strategy is also linked to a range of local strategies and plans including:

- The (draft) NHDC Sustainable Community Strategy;
- The Local Area Agreement;
- The Corporate Plan;
- The Local Development Framework;
- The (draft) Homelessness Strategy;
- The Supporting People Strategy;
- The Hertfordshire Community Strategy;
- The HiMP;
- The Spatial Strategy for the East of England; and
- The Capital Asset Strategy.

¹ The functions of the Housing Corporation and English Partnership will amalgamate in April 2009 in the formation of a new agency, The Homes and Communities Agency.

The Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement

The Housing Strategy reflects and contributes to the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) which is the long-term vision for the district. The SCS states how the North Hertfordshire Partnership² will meet its objective of creating a sustainable community by addressing economic, social and environmental needs. The key tasks of the Partnership are to:

- Advance the environment, social and economic well-being of North Hertfordshire;
- Implement the Sustainable Community Strategy;
- Bring together local plans, partnerships and initiatives to provide a forum through which providers of local services can work together to meet local needs and priorities effectively;
- Develop and deliver a local neighbourhood renewal strategy;
- Promote citizenship and democratic engagement.

Some of the measures identified in the SCS will be delivered through the Local Area Agreement (LAA). This is a county wide agreement between the local area and central government that lasts three years. It sets out the core priorities for the area to be delivered through a partnership approach that avoids duplicating or conflicting targets.

The Local Development Framework

Many issues relating to housing (both public and private) will be considered through the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF)³. This will include such matters as the broad distribution of new housing and the necessary supporting infrastructure for them. It will also set policies relating to mix of dwelling types and standards of design. Within the LDF the Council also intends to produce a Supplementary Planning Document on Affordable Housing in 2009/10.

² The North Hertfordshire Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership for the District.

³ www.north-herts.gov.uk

3. The Challenge for Housing in North Herts

Demand for housing in North Hertfordshire outstrips supply⁴ and house prices continue to rise at a greater rate than incomes. The high cost of housing and the shortage of homes results in homelessness, overcrowding and people being unable to realise their aspirations of independent living and home ownership.

For people to have access to decent homes and opportunities to fulfil their aspirations there must be an increase in the overall supply of housing. Moreover, while owner-occupation remains beyond the means of many households with a housing need, adequate numbers of alternative affordable tenures are necessary.

A sufficient supply of decent housing can benefit not just individual households but the whole community. There is evidence⁵ that unmet housing needs can have a wide range of negative social, economic and environmental impacts including:

- Households unable to afford dwellings suitable for the size of their household may live in over-crowded conditions or move to cheaper areas away from informal support networks;
- Limiting the availability of labour and the mobility of workers; and
- People will be unable to afford to live close to where they work and will need to travel further to work thus, increasing environmental damage.

It is also essential that housing is of a good standard. Poor quality housing can have negative outcomes in health, education, crime, employment prospects and family and community relationships. Hence, poor housing conditions may generate additional costs to other services, such as health, police and education. Moreover, poorly designed houses can consume unnecessary energy and have a correspondingly high negative impact on the environment.

In 2013 the vast majority of the stock that will be available is stock that already exists. It is therefore essential that current stock is preserved and maintained in a condition that meets the needs of future generations as the inappropriate management of the current stock can entirely offset the benefits that the new supply might bring.

4. The Local Housing Market

Priority: To work towards a balanced housing market

A balanced housing market is one in which local people can afford a home suitable for their household in a place where they want that to live. The Council is committed to attaining accurate and robust knowledge of the local housing markets that operate within the district. To this end it has commissioned a Strategic Housing Market

⁴ Housing Needs Survey Update 2006

⁵ Barker K 2003 Review of Housing Supply: Securing our Future Housing Needs; Ambrose P 2002 The Costs of Poor Housing; Phibbs P 2000 The Social and Economic Impacts of Unmet Housing Needs; Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health Report; Harker L 2006 Chance of a Lifetime

Assessment in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council. This research enables informed, evidence based decisions on the strategic direction of housing in the district.

Housing Stock

There are approximately 53,000 dwellings in North Herts. Of these, 80% are in the private sector and 20% in the social sector. In 2003 the Council transferred its housing stock to a new not-for-profit landlord, North Hertfordshire Homes (NHH) in 2003. As a result NHH is the largest of the 22 social landlords operating in the district.

The majority (71%) of the dwellings in the district were constructed post 1945. Around 84% are traditional house models (houses/bungalows) and the remaining 16% flat types⁶. This is similar to regional (85% houses, 14% flats) and national (82% houses, 17% flats) positions⁷.

Population Trends

The population in the district is predicted to grow by approximately 12 per cent by 2021 with significant growth in the over 65 age group (See Appendix C: Tables 1 & 2). During the same period the number of households is predicted to rise by around 21% (See Appendix C: Table 3) and a corresponding increase in the demand for housing can be assumed.

The variance between the increase in population and increase in households is a result of changing family relationships and circumstances and people living longer. Most notably the number of single person households is predicted to rise substantially.

Affordability

Housing in the district has become less affordable over recent years. Between 2002 and 2006, house prices increased by an average of 37.3% with the traditional entry level stock of flats and maisonettes rising in price by 39.2%. Over the same period income levels went up by 27.8%⁸. Mortgage lenders do not usually offer loans above four times household income nor would the Council encourage people to take out unsustainable loans for their housing. Thus, housing in the district has become increasingly expensive and rising numbers of households are unable to access the housing market (See Appendix C: Table 4).

As a result of the disparity between income levels and house price inflation, demand for affordable housing has risen. Between April 2005 and April 2007 the number of households on the Council's housing register increased by 125%.

The North Hertfordshire Housing Needs Survey (2006 up-date) estimates that there is an annual need for an extra 634 units of affordable homes in the years up to 2011 in order to bring supply in line with demand. However, factors such as an economic downturn in the housing market or the arrival of significant numbers of low paid economic migrants could result in an increase in demand for affordable housing and/or other pressures on housing. To ensure that the strategy remains relevant and

⁶ NHDC Housing Stock Condition Survey 2006/07

⁷ CLG Housing Statistics 2006

⁸ Based on Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings for average pay and Land Registry sales prices.

deliverable, it will be reviewed on a regular basis and amended in line with current circumstances and initiatives.

Strategic objective 1

To improve understanding and knowledge of the housing market

The Council will:

- Work in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council to produce a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA);
- Improve data collection on housing stock within the district;
- Monitor of trends in economic migration ; and
- Raise levels of expertise amongst housing staff.

5. Sustainable Communities

**Priorities: To create sustainable communities
To improve access to and choice in housing**

New Build

Historically, affordable housing was provided in large estates of council owned housing. However, this has led to segregation between those who live on social housing estates and those who do not, which can have implications for social cohesion.

Today, it is considered best practice to have a greater mix between private and affordable housing in new developments in order to promote sustainable local communities. Every new housing development over a specified size is expected to provide a significant proportion of the dwellings for affordable housing. On larger sites all the affordable housing required as a consequence of the Council's proposed planning policy should be located and designed to avoid social and tenure segregation and the creation of unbalanced housing estates that fail to provide accommodation opportunities for local communities. The Council will work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and private developers to ensure that the affordable housing delivered through planning obligations is of the type and tenure required to meet housing needs.

Strategic objective 2

To ensure that new build dwellings contribute to sustainable communities and avoid social and tenure segregation.

The Council will determine that:

- On mixed tenure sites, market and affordable housing are fully integrated; and
- New employment opportunities are balanced with the delivery of new housing.

Current Housing Stock

The majority of the current stock of social rented housing is situated on large estates. As social rented housing has become more scarce, allocations to these properties has increasingly been dominated by the most disadvantaged households in the community. In these circumstances, there is a risk that social housing estates become economically depressed places with more workless households and increased social polarisation.

For the most part there is little relative deprivation in North Herts. However, there are six areas that are ranked among the 20% most deprived in the East of England⁹, all of which are on social housing estates in Letchworth Garden City and Hitchin (See Appendix C: Table 5).

There is a strong correlation between worklessness and housing tenure. Of new social housing tenancies taken up in the district during 2006/07 only 38% of heads of households were working full time and 36.7% derived all their income from state benefits¹⁰. Explanations for this include a lack of educational qualifications and high rates of disability among social housing tenants. Nevertheless, when comparing people with similar employment disadvantages in other tenures, the rates of unemployment in the social housing sector are substantially higher¹¹.

The income mix on social housing estates can be enhanced by improving the circumstances of the people living there and by ensuring that any new development in the area includes a mix of tenures.

The physical condition of social housing in the district is generally better than that of owner-occupied housing. All social housing is expected to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 (see below).

Strategic objective 3

To improve the sustainability of estates comprised primarily of social rented housing.

The Council will:

- Work with partners and stakeholders to enhance the most deprived areas of the district;
- Investigate ways of improving the training and employment prospects of people in low income neighbourhoods;
- Endeavour to improve the mobility of people living in social housing; and
- Ensure a mix of tenure where new development occurs on estates that are primarily social housing.

⁹ An area includes around 1,500 people. There are 79 areas in the 24 wards that make up North Herts

¹⁰ Core New Lettings Summary Statistics 2006/07

¹¹ Hills J 2006 Ends and Means: The Future Role of Social Housing in England

The Physical Environment

It is important that community, leisure, recreation and cultural facilities are situated within local communities. Such facilities are vital factors in the promotion of healthier lifestyles and the creation of sustainable communities. The Council will endeavour to ensure that existing community facilities and open spaces will be protected from development pressures and that additional facilities will be provided to offset the impact of new development.

Strategic objective 4

To ensure that new development does not adversely impact community facilities

The Council will:

- Require developers to make a contribution towards new community, leisure and recreation facilities; and
- Produce a Green Space Strategy that ensures that development does not have a negative impact on the provision of open spaces

Community Safety

North Hertfordshire has a relatively low crime rate. Last year the overall crime rate was down by 14.6% on the previous year. Nevertheless, anti-social behaviour, crime and the fear of crime causes distress to individuals and is destructive to communities.

The design of housing developments can contribute to the security of residents. Research shows that design can reduce burglary and car crime by 50% and criminal damage by potentially 25%¹². To ensure that the safety of the community is maximised, new housing developments in the district will be required to show how they design out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour through the incorporation of appropriate measures to minimise the risk of crime and create safe and attractive places.

The housing circumstances of offenders released from prison can have a significant impact on their prospects of re-offending. Research shows that recidivism is more prolific amongst homeless offenders and that a third of prisoners lose their homes while they are in prison¹³. Multi-agency working, good housing advice and support can have the effect of reducing the incidence of homelessness amongst offenders thus improving the safety of the community.

The Council works with the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to identify and implement effective initiatives. The partnership brings together key statutory and non-statutory agencies, including social landlords, to identify and implement initiatives to improve the safety of the community. The North Herts Community Safety Strategy¹⁴ sets out the priorities of the partnership and targets for reducing the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour in the district.

¹² www.securedbydesign.com

¹³ Poad et al, Locked Out: CAB Evidence on Prisoners and Ex-Offenders, 2007

¹⁴ North Herts Community Safety Strategy www.north-herts.gov.uk

Strategic objective 5

To contribute towards reducing the fear of crime, crime and anti-social behaviour

The Council will:

- Produce a new Community Safety Strategy; and
- Employ initiatives that reduce the risk of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Community Involvement

The Council is committed to ensuring that local people are empowered to participate in decision making. The NHDC Sustainable Community Strategy sets out how the Council will strengthen communities and involve people. This includes:

- Encouraging communities and individuals to have a greater voice and participate in decision making;
- Increasing community involvement in decision making;
- Encouraging more people to get involved in parish, town, district and county councils;
- Developing a sense of pride in our communities;
- Promoting social inclusion;
- Tackling inequalities and improving access to services;
- Promoting equality of opportunity; and
- Supporting vibrant voluntary organisations and community groups.

RSLs are required to ensure that tenants have an opportunity to play a part in decision making and have a say on the way services are run¹⁵.

Strategic objective 6

To improve community participation in decision making

The Council will:

- Up-date the NHDC Consultation Strategy; and
- Introduce a NHDV Consultation Toolkit.

6. New Housing

**Priorities: To work towards balancing the housing market; and
To improve access to and choice in housing**

Supply

The draft East of England Plan proposes that, over the period 2001 – 2021, 15,800 new homes are to be provided in North Hertfordshire (See Appendix C: Table 6). Included within this figure is up to 9,600 new homes to be built to accommodate the growth of Stevenage; these homes will be developed on land in the administrative

¹⁵ A Charter for Housing Association Applicants and Residents
<http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/nav.546>

district North Herts on the border of Stevenage¹⁶. This leaves a balance of 6,200 for the remainder of the district of which 3446¹⁷ are yet to be built.

New Homes in North Hertfordshire on the Border with Stevenage

The first stage of the development on the border of Stevenage will provide for 3,600 dwellings. Of these, 27.5% will be classified as affordable with 2.5% earmarked for supported housing. It is likely that 40% of the remaining 6,000 dwellings will be required to be affordable.

It is expected that the site will be granted the status of being a *strategic site* by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). As such, the affordable housing on the site will open to households in need from outside the district boundary.

The benefits of cross boundary arrangements include:

- Increased mobility for residents of the district who need affordable housing. As more strategic sites are developed in the sub-region households within North Herts wishing to move outside the district will have opportunities to access affordable housing in other areas.
- Increased capacity; and
- Better funding opportunities for affordable housing.

New Homes in the rest of North Hertfordshire

The balance of 3446 homes yet to be developed will be a mix of affordable and market housing on sustainable sites across the district in both rural and urban locations.

Strategic objective 7

To ensure maximum benefit from new build housing for the residents of the district

The Council will:

- Deliver a minimum of 13,000¹⁸ new homes by 2021;
- Negotiate an agreement that ensures that the district receive a satisfactory amount of the nominations to the affordable housing on the new development the border with Stevenage; and
- Minimise Greenfield release by developing the majority of new housing in urban areas (with the exception of the development on the Stevenage border).

Affordable Housing Thresholds

Under the current Local Plan policies the Council requires 25% of dwellings on developments of 20 units or more to be affordable housing. The Housing Needs Survey (2006 up-date) suggests that the Council could increase the amount of

¹⁶ The 1998 Hertfordshire Structure Plan allocated this land for development. In 2001 a planning application was submitted to NHDC for its development. The principle of development on this site has been consistently and vigorously opposed by NHDC over this period.

¹⁷ At 1st January 2008

¹⁸ 9,600 on border with Stevenage and 3446 in the rest of the district

affordable housing attained through planning policy by considering a target of 40% affordable housing on sites of 15 units or more.

In 2007 Adams Integra was jointly commissioned by North Herts District Council and Stevenage Borough Council to carry out an Affordable Housing Economics of Development Viability Study¹⁹. The purpose of the study was to assess the optimum viable affordable housing contribution over a range of thresholds and tenure mixes (See Appendix C: Table 7). This report will inform future planning policy to ensure the delivery of affordable housing can be maximised without jeopardising the viability and sustainability of developments.

Strategic objective 8

To enable the optimum amount of affordable housing

The Council will:

- Maximise the delivery of affordable housing delivered through planning policy; and
- Monitor the number of additional affordable housing units delivered.

Delivering New Affordable Housing

The Council has an excellent track record on delivering affordable housing having exceeded its 2003 – 2008 target of enabling 500 new affordable homes by over 50% (See Appendix C: Table 8). A substantial amount of affordable housing is delivered through planning obligations which require a proportion of homes on private developments to be affordable. Thus, this achievement is a result of partnership working with Registered Social Landlords and private developers and the Housing Corporation.

The Council has also been successful in achieving a mix of property types on developments where the original proposals incorporated flats only. This has been accomplished by:

- Corporate working between Housing, Planning and Legal services;
- Early discussions with developers;
- Co-ordinating the activities of key agencies;
- Providing/identifying land suitable for sustainable housing development;
- Providing funding; and
- Matching the type of homes delivered to the housing need to be met.

All households nominated for new build affordable housing are selected from the Council's housing register. Social rented housing is in the greatest demand and, as a rule, 65% of the affordable housing on a new development is of this tenure type. Up to 35% of new affordable housing is New Build Homebuy which provides the option of purchasing a percentage share in the property and renting the remaining share from a Registered Social Landlord (RSL).

¹⁹ www.north-herts.gov.uk

The Council strives to ensure that New Build Homebuy is affordable to households on average incomes. However, the cost of new build is such that it can be more expensive for a household than buying a second-hand home on the open market. Over and above this, service charges can add considerably to the cost. Nevertheless, it does have the advantage of reducing the amount needed for a deposit thus providing a route into the housing market for households with little capital.

Strategic objective 9

To ensure new affordable housing development meets the housing needs and is of a high standard

The Council will:

- Deliver a mix of property types and tenures;
- Maximise the opportunity for households on intermediate incomes to enter the housing market; and
- Ensure that new build dwellings meet design and space standards.

Rural Housing

Priority: To create sustainable communities

Over 20% of the district's population live in rural areas. A lack of affordable housing in rural areas means that young people cannot afford to live in the area where they grew up. In many instances young people may be forced to move away. Housing growth can therefore be critical for the survival and prosperity of rural areas where the housing needs of young local people cannot be met via the current housing stock.

The Council works in partnership with the Rural Housing Enabler and Parish Councils to conduct Rural Housing Needs Surveys. Where the survey identifies a need for affordable housing the partnership will work with a registered social landlord to deliver sufficient housing within the parish to meet that need. Between March 2003 and April 2007 the partnership enabled 250²⁰ new affordable homes in rural areas across the district. Included in this figure were a number of flexible homes that are designed to enable future conversion of the existing dwelling to provide an additional bedroom.

Strategic objective 10

To encourage sustainable rural communities

The Council will:

- Work towards meeting the need for affordable housing in rural parishes;

²⁰ This includes development at Great Ashby which is categorised as rural because it is in the Parish of Graveley

- Ensure that rural affordable housing remains affordable in perpetuity; and
- Ensure that new rural affordable housing is designed to meet diverse needs.

Lifetime Homes

Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing

The Lifetime Homes Standards (LHS) were developed in the 1990s by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Lifetime Homes Group. The basis of the concept is the observation that simple design modifications can eliminate most of the design shortcomings present in many homes and render them flexible enough to accommodate people in a wide variety of circumstances. The standard incorporates 16 design standards to make homes more flexible, convenient, safe and accessible for people (See Appendix D).

Lifetime Homes 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.

The additional costs incurred to achieve the standard have been assessed to be between £545 and £1615 per property²¹. However, there are considerable savings to be made including:

- Reduced need to move into residential care;
- Savings in home care costs;
- Savings in health care costs;
- Reduced cost of re-housing disabled people; and
- Savings in the costs of minor adaptations.

Thus, it has been estimated that, in economic terms, the benefits of Lifetime Homes almost exactly match the cost of provision²².

Strategic objective 11

To increase the quantity of new build affordable homes that meet the Lifetime Homes Standard²³

The Council will:

- Require 50% all new affordable housing developed on Council or RSL land to be of Lifetime Homes Standard; and
- Provide funding to encourage Lifetime Homes Standards for affordable housing on sites subject to s.106 agreements.

²¹ The Future of the Code for Sustainable Homes: CLG (2007)

²² The Future of the Code for Sustainable Homes: Making a rating mandatory

²³ This will apply until Lifetime Homes becomes a mandatory element of the Code for Sustainable Homes

7. Greener, Healthier Homes

**Priorities: To protect the environment; and
To maintain and improve the quality of current stock**

New Housing

Carbon Emissions

The Council is committed to achieving a significant reduction in greenhouse gases and has signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change.

It is estimated that around a quarter of CO₂ emissions in the UK arise from energy used in homes. A significant reduction in emissions can be achieved by applying stringent regulations on the energy efficiency of new housing.

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. 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.

Water Consumption

In North Hertfordshire there is a high household demand for water whilst the area experiences relatively low rain fall. As the district will face considerable housing growth, it is essential that water resources are protected and that developments make provision to conserve water and use it efficiently. There are many ways in which development can contribute to sustainable water management, for example the collection of "grey" water and the management of surface water run off.

Household Waste Recycling

The Council has a comprehensive recycling scheme for household waste operating throughout the district. As part of the Hertfordshire Joint Waste Strategy it has made a commitment to reduce household waste by 50% by 2012, 8 years ahead of the National Waste Target Strategy.

Contaminated Land

Planning authorities are expected to encourage and promote the use of Brownfield (previously used) land for development. Hence, it is to be expected that, as a result of a site's historical use, land contamination will be a factor in some new developments.

The re-use of contaminated sites is a major challenge for sustainable development. Such sites can contribute to the improvement of the urban environment and reduce the consumption of Greenfield land. However, the cost of remediation of contamination may render a development unviable.

In these circumstances, the Council may encourage the development by making an exception to normal planning policy and allow higher value developments in order to fund the necessary remedial works.

Strategic objective 12

To protect the environment from the effects of new housing development

The Council will:

- Employ measures that protect the environment from the impact of new development; and
- Encourage recycling of household waste;

Current Housing Stock

Measures aimed at new build dwellings alone will not be sufficient to meet the Government's target of a reduction in carbon emissions of 60%, from the 1990 levels, by 2050. It is expected that at least 75% of properties in use today will still be in use in 2050 so any serious attempt to reduce carbon emissions will need to impact on current stock. Carbon emissions from existing homes are therefore of greater significance than those from all the new homes that will be built by then²⁴. The primary means of reducing carbon emissions in current stock is through improving thermal and energy efficiency.

RSLs are working towards ensuring that all social housing reaches the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. The Standard requires dwellings to have a reasonable standard of thermal efficiency. Hence, it is the older homes in the private sector that exhibit relatively poor thermal efficiency.

Cold homes have a negative impact on health and wellbeing²⁵. The Government commissioned *Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health* (1998) identified poor housing as a factor in health inequality and specifically recommended improved heating and insulation standards to address this problem. Inadequate thermal efficiency contributes to fuel poverty, which occurs when people need to spend more than 10% of their net income on fuel to achieve adequate levels of warmth in the home.

Aside from having a direct effect on health, improvement in energy efficiency in homes enhances wellbeing by releasing financial resources for other uses. Many social housing tenants are on low or fixed incomes and are at high risk of being affected by fuel poverty. It is estimated that 30% of social housing tenants are on gas pre-payment metres and 43% have an electricity pre-payment meter compared to 10% and 16% in the population as a whole. Pre-payment meters can cost households up to 30% more for energy than those who pay by direct debit²⁶.

Fuel poverty particularly affects older people as they are more likely to be living alone in under-occupied dwellings, more likely to have low incomes and are generally more house-bound. Fuel poverty is also linked to high rates of winter mortality.

²⁴ Communities and Local Government (2007) Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable – Housing Green Paper

²⁵ BMA: Housing & Health (2003)

²⁶ Energywatch

The North Hertfordshire Stock Condition Survey found that 17.3% of households in the district are at risk of fuel poverty, of which 2% are at risk of severe fuel poverty (See Appendix C: Table 9). This is considerably higher than the national average for England which is about 7%. Of those at risk 80% have savings of £5,000 or less. The survey recommends that, to have maximum effect, the Council's focus should be on the installation of cavity wall insulation and use of efficient heating systems in private sector housing.

Strategic objective 13

To reduced the impact of current stock on the environment

The Council will:

- Instigate strategies that contribute towards reducing CO₂ emissions;
- Encourage RSL activity in respect of energy efficiency improvements; and
- Employ initiatives to improve energy efficiency in the private sector.

8. Making Best Use of Current Stock

Priority: To maintain and improve the quality of current stock

Decent Homes

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 decency²⁷. The target was extended in 2002 to vulnerable households²⁸ 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.

²⁷ Public Service Agreement 7

²⁸ A vulnerable household is one that is in receipt of one or more of the principle means tested or disability related benefits

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 System²⁹ (HHSRS));
- Be in a reasonable state of repair;
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services: and
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort³⁰

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.

The Council carried out a Housing Stock Condition Survey (2006/07) which assessed properties in North Hertfordshire against the Decent Homes Standard. The survey found that 81.88% of public sector housing and 79.75% of private sector housing met the standard. The most frequent reasons for properties failing to meet the Decent Homes standard is either that they have a category 1 hazard due to excess cold or that they lack thermal comfort (See Appendix C: Table 10).

The Council's RSL partners are on target to bring all public sector properties up to, or above, the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. It is, therefore, more likely that non-decent homes will be found in the private sector.

Non-decent homes in the private sector are disproportionately occupied by vulnerable households. Consequently, a third of private sector dwellings occupied by vulnerable people were found to be non-decent. Nevertheless, the 2006/07 target of 65% of vulnerable private sector households living in decent homes has been exceeded.

Yet, some concerns arise when the data is analysed by tenure type. Of vulnerable households in owner-occupation 26.42% live in non-decent homes whereas, over half (52.63%) of vulnerable households in the private rented sector live in homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard. However, the largest numbers of non-decent homes belong to owner-occupiers as 75% of the total housing stock in the district is of this tenure as opposed to only 5% belonging to private landlords.

Over 77% of owner-occupiers in the district have equity in their property of over £100,000 and only 1.8% have less than £10,000 (See Appendix C: Table 11). There appears to be reluctance amongst owner-occupiers towards using equity to improve their housing conditions. The Housing Stock Condition Survey found that 88.7% of households said that they were not at all likely to use equity in their property to fund essential home improvements in the future. At present the Council offers the option of providing a loan for essential repairs³¹ by levying a charge against the property at 0% interest. A condition of the loan is that it is repaid on transfer (sale, death or otherwise) of the property or on grant of a lease. This is more likely to encourage householders to bring their homes up to standard than other options on the market.

²⁹ More information on the HHSRS is available on the NHDC website http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/living/housing_and_environmental_health_service/housing_services/private_sector_housing/housing_conditions_rented_properties/housing_health_and_safety_rating_system.htm

³⁰ A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation, June 2006 – Update, CLG

³¹ Details of eligible repairs can be found in the NHDC Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

Strategic objective 14

To reduce the number of non-decent homes in the district

The Council will:

- Employ initiatives to encourage the improvement of private sector housing; and
- Work with RSLs to continuously improve the standard of social housing.

Empty Homes

**Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing; and
To maintain and improve the quality of current stock**

Although North Hertfordshire has a relatively low number of empty homes, when compared to national figures, a rigorous process of identifying and inspecting empty properties within the district was conducted between 2004 and 2006 with the objective of taking proactive measures to bring such homes back into use. In the vast majority of cases no action was required on the part of the Council as such properties were either subject to probate issues, undergoing refurbishment or experiencing some other temporary delay. Thus, few properties left empty for 6 months remained empty for more than 12 months. Our investigations also found that of those properties left empty for more than 12 months many were not suitable in terms of location, size and type to meet the requirements of households in housing need.

Nevertheless, when homes are left empty for years they can undermine communities, be a magnet for crime and anti-social behaviour and a waste of valuable housing resources.

The intensely pro-active approach previously adopted towards bringing empty homes back into use has not resulted in the return to use of a substantial number of properties and future procedures will need to reflect this.

Strategic objective 15

To maximise the number of empty properties brought back into use

The Council will:

- Work in partnership to develop initiatives to maximise opportunities for bringing empty homes back into use; and
- Review the NHDC Empty Homes Strategy.

Under-Occupation

Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing

By definition, under-occupation occurs when a household has at least two bedrooms more than the number it actually needs (based on the household's size and composition). The 2001 Census found that over 54% of households in North Hertfordshire are under-occupied (See Appendix C: Table 12), the majority of which are in the private sector.

Under-occupation is usually a result of a change in a family's composition such as children leaving home. Some level of under-occupation may be desirable in order to ensure mixed balanced communities. 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.

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. Providing attractive incentives for under-occupying households in family sized properties to move to smaller properties which better meet their needs, can enable more families to access suitable housing.

A significant number of older people under-occupy their homes and may consider moving out if offered the right incentives together with the availability of attractive housing alternatives³². Help the Aged believes that:

The solution to under-occupancy is to offer older people housing choices, cash incentives and independent housing advice so that they can make the right decisions³³

Strategic objective 16

To improve the mobility of under-occupying households

The Council will:

- Work with RSL partners to quantify the level of under-occupation in the social sector; and
- Employ initiatives to reduce the prevalence of under-occupation.

Overcrowding

Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing

Overcrowded living conditions are often associated with mental health problems, poor educational achievement and family breakdown. Both chronic and acute illnesses are exacerbated by overcrowding as is the risk of accidents within the home.

³² Oldman J (2002): Housing Choice for Older People: Help the Aged

³³ *ibid*

The statutory definition of overcrowding as set out in part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 has not been reviewed since it was adopted during the 1930's and is widely considered to be out of date. Communities and Local Government are in the process of revising the definition but it may be some time before a new standard will come into force. A more modern definition of overcrowding is the Bedroom Standard, which is used in the English House Condition Survey (See Appendix E).

Using the Bedroom Standard, 1.6% of all households in the East of England are overcrowded. The tenure most likely to be overcrowded is social rented at 5.5% of households in England followed by private rented at 4.6% and owner-occupiers at 1.4%. Larger households of five persons or more are the most likely to be overcrowded with those in social rented housing the most prevalent group (35.9%) followed by private renters (23.5%) and owner-occupiers (13.3%).

The only data available at local level is from the Census (2001). Census analysis uses the Room Requirement (See Appendix E). Under this measure 5.16% of households in the East of England have insufficient rooms for the size of the household. In North Hertfordshire 546 households have insufficient rooms for their household including 111 households deemed to be severely overcrowded³⁴ (See Appendix C: Table 13).

Overcrowding is more prevalent in low income households and can be linked to health and social issues. Social tenants have less opportunity to move than householders in the private sector and consequently may suffer overcrowding for longer. Additionally, due to lower levels of paid employment, they may also suffer these conditions for longer periods of each day³⁵. Overcrowding can indicate a need for additional larger properties. However, a substantial amount of overcrowding is a result of newly forming households and does not require all the occupants to move to a larger property.

Strategic objective 17

To improve the mobility of overcrowded households

The Council will:

- Work with RSL partners to quantify the level of overcrowding in the social sector; and
- Employ initiatives to reduce the prevalence of overcrowding.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

There are 68 known Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) in the district although it is expected that there may be more. HMOs are inspected on a regular basis to ensure that they comply with current regulations. Around 10 larger, high risk HMOs are required to be licensed and the Council has a procedure in place for this.

There is some evidence that an increase in economic migrants from the European Union Accession States results in an increase of HMOs. Such migrants have restricted rights to social housing. They tend to be young and arrive in the country

³⁴ Households with over 1.5 persons per room

³⁵ Hills J: Ends and Means: The Future of Social Housing in England p.36

without family. In recent years, Breckland district has received a high number of migrants and seen a corresponding rise in HMOs from 40 in 2002 to 480 in 2006.

Where HMOs do not meet the current minimum standard, the Council uses its full range of powers to ensure that the required standard of repair, amenities and management are met.

Strategic objective 18

Improve administration and management of houses in multiple occupation

The Council will:

- Improve records of HMOs in the district; and
- Ensure that landlords and tenants are aware of their rights and responsibilities

9. Housing for Diversity

**Priorities: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community; and
To improve access to and choice in housing**

Housing with Support

Supported housing provides a range of services to people who cannot, either in the short-term or long-term, sustain entirely independently living. Support can be provided to people in specifically designated or purpose-designed accommodation or in general housing.

Traditionally the supported housing sector has categorised the services they provide by client groups. These include:

- Older people;
- People needing support because of mental health problems;
- People with learning disabilities needing support;
- People with physical and sensory disabilities;
- People who are homeless and parents needing support;
- People who need support as a result of substance misuse;
- Young people who are at risk including those leaving the "looked after children" system;
- Victims of domestic violence; and
- People who are at risk of committing crimes including people discharged from prison and offenders institutions

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 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 commissioned that better meet the current needs of vulnerable people. The Council has adopted the Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy and works closely with this body and support providers to improve the fit between the provision and demand for 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.

Strategic objective 19

To ensure that vulnerable people receive the housing support they need to live as independently as possible

The council will:

- Work in partnership to deliver initiatives that support vulnerable people;
- Work in partnership to provide appropriate homes for vulnerable people; and
- Monitor the delivery of services to ensure that they are accessible to all.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Around 15% of people in the district identify themselves as having a limiting long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activity (ONS: Census 2001). The Council helps people with disabilities to live as independently as possible by administering Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). These grants improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and reduce the cost of residential care and intensive home care and reduce accidents, injuries and stress for both disabled people and their carers.

DFGs are means tested grants of up to £25,000 to assist with the cost of adaptations to allow access or provide facilities for people with disabilities. Where the cost of adaptations exceeds this, additional funding can be made available by Social Services.

Demand for adaptations is increasing and the number of grants completed increased by over 300% between 2003 and 2007 (See Appendix C: Table 14). As the age profile of the population continues to increase it is likely that this trend will continue.

The majority of disabled people live in social rented housing. The Council works closely with RSLs and Social Services to ensure the smooth and speedy implementation of disabled facilities.

Strategic objective 20

To enhance the provision of disabled adaptations

The Council will:

- Follow good practice for implementing DFGs;

- Take measures to ensure that disabled adaptations are provided within a reasonable timescale; and
- Take measures to ensure that the service is accessible to all.

Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

The Council values diversity and is working through the Equality Standard for Local Government. The Standard is a means for addressing patterns of institutional discrimination and applying the principles of fairness and equality in employment and service provision.

The population of North Hertfordshire is diverse, both ethnically and culturally. The most recent estimate (2005) is that 12.85% of the population of the district belong to a minority ethnic group (See Appendix C: Table 15).

Local and national data indicates that most black and minority ethnic (BME) communities are disproportionately represented in lower income households and are likely to suffer greater housing deprivation than white British households.

The BME population tend to have larger households with more dependent children than the white British population (See Appendix C: Tables 16 & 17). The North Herts Housing Needs Survey (2002), reports that 87.2% of BME households that considered their homes to be inadequate, cited that their homes were too small as the reason for the inadequacy. Furthermore, 61.5%, (as opposed to 56.2% in the general population), of BME households that wished to move said they could not afford to do so. The Survey of English Housing (2005/06) adds to the evidence having found that 1.5% of white households in England (excluding London³⁶) and 8.1% of BME households were overcrowded.

BME owner-occupiers have been found to be significantly more likely than other owner-occupiers to own housing in need of major repair and adaptations and unable to afford remedial action³⁷.

Strategic objective 21

To ensure that housing services provide for and are accessible to minority ethnic communities

The Council will:

- Work towards qualifying for level 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government;
- Work with the London Commute Belt Sub-region to ensure that the full BME allocation is accessed;
- Investigate the housing needs of BME elders; and
- Promote the housing services provided by the Council to BME communities.

³⁶ The number of overcrowded households in London is much higher than any other region and would effectively skew the data

³⁷ Matthias. J. (2001) *Meeting the Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities*, The Housing Corporation. Tomlins. R. (2003) *Bedfordshire Black and Minority Ethnic Accommodation Needs Study*, The Housing Corporation

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 of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in the district, an Accommodation Needs Assessment³⁸ was commissioned in 2006 jointly with four neighbouring authorities³⁹ 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, North Herts will be required to provide 15 pitches by 2011 on sustainable sites within the district. This proposal is still in the consultation stage and may be amended.

A Site Scoping Report carried out by Scott Wilson Associates in 2007 identified a number of potential areas for locating sites⁴⁰. The report will be used to inform future planning policy.

Strategic objective 22

To ensure the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are met

The Council will:

- Continue to work in partnership with other Local Authorities to respond to regional consultations on Gypsy and Traveller site provision; and
- Make provision for the amount of pitches determined by EERA once a final allocation has been made.

Economic Migrants from EU Accession States

There are relatively large number of people from the 10 new countries that joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007⁴¹ living and working in Britain. However, there is no reliable data on exactly how many people from the 12 Accession States have settled in the district. An indication can be derived at from national insurance number (NINo) data which shows 240⁴² registrations from migrants from the Accession States in 2006/07⁴³.

³⁸ www.north-herts.gov.uk

³⁹ East Herts, Stevenage, Broxbourne and Welwyn Hatfield

⁴⁰ www.north-herts.gov.uk

⁴¹ Eight countries joined the EU in 2004, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Malta and (Greek) Cyprus. Two Countries became full members in 2007, Bulgaria and Romania.

⁴² Unregistered and self-employed workers are not included in this figure.

⁴³ [National Insurance Number Allocations to Overseas Nationals entering the UK 2007: Tables detailing latest 'registration' information](#)

There is no evidence of migrant workers putting pressure on social housing in North Hertfordshire. In 2006/07 there were only four known lettings of social housing to nationals of the Accession States⁴⁴. All four lettings were to Polish nationals. North Hertfordshire has historically had a high number of Polish residents and it is possible that none of those housed were recent arrivals.

Strategic objective 23

To gauge the impact on housing provision of economic migration and to ensure that economic migrants are aware of their rights

The Council will:

- Improve data on economic migration to North Hertfordshire from the Accession States; and
- Promote the housing services provided by the Council to eligible economic migrants.

Key Worker and Intermediate Income Households

The steep rise in house prices over recent years has had the effect of squeezing households on intermediate incomes out of the housing market.

The Council works in partnership with Lea Valley Homes⁴⁵ and RSLs to assist key worker and intermediate income households to access housing through low cost home ownership and intermediate rent schemes. These include:

- Open Market Homebuy - 17.5% government loan only;
- Open Market Homebuy – 25% government and lender equity loan;
- First Time Buyers Initiative;
- New Build Homebuy; and
- Re-sales of former New Build Homebuy properties;
- Housing for rent at a cost of no more than 80% of market rent.

Between 2003 and 2007, the Council enabled 198 New Build Homebuy units on developments across the district.

Strategic objective 24

To work towards meeting the needs of key worker and intermediate income households

The Council will:

http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/nino_allocation.asp

⁴⁴ Core New Lettings Summary Statistics April 2006 – March 2007 www.core.ac.uk

⁴⁵ Lea Valley Homes is the Homebuy agent for Hertfordshire: a government-led initiative set up specifically to help people purchase or rent an affordable home see www.leavalleyhomes.co.uk

- Deliver housing affordable to intermediate income households; and
- Work in partnership with Lea Valley Homes to enable intermediate income households to access affordable housing.

10. Homelessness

Homelessness and living in temporary accommodation is associated with a wide range of disadvantages. Homeless households are more likely to be affected by:

- Mental health issues;
- Physical health problems;
- Poor educational attainment in children;
- Worklessness;
- Stigma and stereotyping;
- Accidents within the home; and
- Loss of informal support networks.

Whether these issues exist prior to homelessness or not, they are almost certainly exacerbated by it. Therefore, preventing homelessness and ensuring that households have adequate support is fundamental to improving the life chances of households threatened with homelessness.

The Council has successfully achieved a dramatic reduction in the number of homeless households (See Appendix C: Table 18). The effect of this has been a substantial reduction of households living in temporary accommodation (See Appendix C: Table 19). Some of the measures taken to ensure this include:

- Restructuring the service to focus on prevention;
- Increasing the number of officers employed to prevent homelessness;
- Increasing the resources for the Housing Options Service
- Increasing the housing options available;
- Improving training for officers;
- Carrying out home visits where homelessness is threatened due to parental eviction;
- Introduction of a Deposit Guarantee Scheme to assist households in securing private rented housing;
- Earlier intervention;
- Funding of a Court Caseworker;
- Fund Relate Mediation;
- Funding a Crashpad Mediation service for young people; and
- Funding 'Sanctuary' rooms for victims of domestic violence who want to remain in their home.

Where homelessness cannot be avoided families with children and vulnerable adults are provided with temporary hostel accommodation until they can be re-housed permanently. Living in hostel accommodation can be a negative experience for homeless households many of which may have problems over and above homelessness. However, with sufficient resources and motivation, hostels can be places that encourage positive outcomes⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Places of Change: Tackling homelessness through the Hostels Capital Investment Programme CLG 2006

Strategic objective 25

To secure the good outcomes for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness

The Council will:

- Provide an holistic service to households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- Ensure that temporary accommodation is of a good standard;
- Employ initiatives that prevent homelessness; and
- Improve the service through monitoring and customer feedback.

11. Delivering the strategy

The Action Plan

The strategic objectives identified in the Housing Strategy will be delivered through the action plan. The action plan sets out how each of the objectives will be achieved and who is responsible for ensuring success.

A Housing Strategy Monitoring Group will be established to oversee, monitor and review the action plan.

Delivery vehicles

The tools available for ensuring delivery of the action plan include;

- 1) **Partnership working:** The Housing and Environmental Health Service cannot deliver the Strategy without the co-operation and participation of other services and agencies. The co-ordination of multiple services within the Council and working in partnership with other statutory, voluntary and commercial agencies is, therefore an essential element of meeting the objectives of the Strategy. Partnership working is enabled through local and sub-regional groups and fora.

See page 2 for a list of key partners.

- 2) **Planning policy**

Planning policy can be used in a positive way to achieve the strategic aims of the Council and help deliver desirable outcomes such as sustainability and ensuring social, economic and environmental benefits to the community.

The planning policies that contribute towards delivering the Housing Strategy include:

- **The Local Development Framework (LDF)**, will set out the Council's planning policies and spatial vision for the District. It will also allocate land for housing and other land uses. The LDF will also provide detailed guidance on other planning related matters including Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing; and

- **Agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (s.106 Agreements);** The planning system can help the provision of affordable housing units through the implementation of planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These are contractual agreements entered into between a local planning authority and a developer that determine what proportion of units provided in residential developments will be designated as affordable housing units.

3) **Publicity**

Many actions in the Strategy will not be delivered unless eligible members of the community access the services provided. Used effectively, publicity campaigns will raise awareness of services and increase the number of people making use of them.

4) **Funding**

Ensuring adequate funding is key to the effective delivery of this strategy. The Council seeks to maximise and coordinate investment in housing to meet housing needs. Funding towards meeting the objectives of the Housing Strategy is available from a number of sources including:

Current investment in Housing:

Revenue:

Private sector Housing and Renewal Grants	£293,000 annually
Homelessness	£656,000 annually
Housing Needs and Strategy	£1,077,000 annually
Handypersons scheme	£12,000 annually
Choice based lettings	£19,000 annually

Capital:

Tenant Cash Incentive Scheme	£175,000 annually
Grant for affordable housing development	£3,000,000 annual average
Renovation and Reinstatement Grants	£815,000 annually

Funding resources

- **Capital receipts from the sale of Council land and property:** The Council currently holds £8.1 million of capital reserves towards the Council's capital programme 2008 – 2012;
- **Capital receipts from the preserved Right to Buy:** In partnership with North Hertfordshire Homes, the Council has established a Community Benefit Trust to ensure that money from this source is reinvested in social housing and community development initiatives. Currently the fund is in deficit but is expected to move into surplus by March 2009;
- **Capital receipts from the sale of assets** are expected to contribute £11 million towards the Council's programme over the next 4 years;
- **Borrowing:** If deemed necessary the Council has the opportunity to borrow money in line with, the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (2003);
- **The Single Region Housing Pot (SRHP):** Money from the SRHP is distributed to the Housing Corporation⁴⁷ for the funding of new build housing and directly to Local Authorities towards funding Disabled Facilities Grants;
- **Disposal of Council land at low cost:** The Council's Asset Management Plan supports the Housing Strategy by making land available to housing associations for development of affordable housing. The Council currently holds 17 acres of land in advance of need that could be discounted provided there is a local need.;
- **Supporting People:** provide revenue funding to deliver housing related support for vulnerable people;
- **Homelessness Grant Programme:** Money from Central Government to tackle homelessness;
- **Ad Hoc Government funding opportunities:** Money for which the Council can bid to fulfil Government priorities for housing;
- **Developer subsidy:** This is secured through planning obligations and includes money for social and environmental benefits. It may also include any cost of providing affordable housing over and above grants and/or the mortgage the RSL can raise on the basis of future rents.

Risks

The risks associated with implementing Housing Strategy include:

- A dependency on partners, in particular RSLs;
- The possibility of a substantial downturn in the housing market;
- An increased demand due to migration; and
- A change in the priorities for housing from regional and central Government.

Strategic objective 26

To deliver the Housing Strategy the Council will:

- Set up a Housing Strategy Monitoring Group;

⁴⁷ The functions of the Housing Corporation and English Partnership will amalgamate in April 2009 in the formation of a new agency, The Homes and Communities Agency.

- Monitor trends in the housing market;
- Provide funding to meet the objectives of the strategy; and
- Review the RSL partnership agreement.

Appendix A Consultation

Consultation Events

Feedback on affordable housing from a number of public consultation events has been taken into account in the preparation of this strategy. These include consultation on the Local Development Framework in October 2005, June 2006 and September 2007 and a Community Consultation event in September 2007.

Agencies Consulted on Draft Strategy

The following agencies were sent a copy of the draft Housing Strategy and invited to comment:

All RSLs operating in the district
The North Herts Minority ethnic Forum
The Supporting People Team
All Parish Councils in the district
All Town Councils in the district
The Community Development Agency
All local authorities in the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region (all Herts LAs and 5 Essex LAs)
Herts Young Homeless Group
Ravidassia Community Centre
Go East
Adult Care Services
Children Schools & Families
Jackmans Community Association
Westmill Community Association
Baldock Community Association
Grange Fellowship Community Association
The Probation Team
Community Drug and Alcohol Team
Youth Offending Team
Citizen's Advice Bureau
Mental Health Team
Lea Valley Homes
Housing Corporation
North Herts & Stevenage Primary Care Trust

The draft strategy was also made available on the NHDC website with an invitation for consultation.

The responses can be viewed on the NHDC website www.north-herts.gov.uk

Appendix B Priorities

Key national priorities

The core policy documents which set out the Government's strategy for housing are:

- *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All, and, Building for the Future*⁴⁸: sets out the Government's aim to offer everyone the opportunity of a decent home at a price that they can afford by providing more homes where they are needed, enhancing the environment and revitalising communities suffering deprivation. It also aims to offer more opportunities for home ownership, better housing and services for those who rent and to reduce homelessness.
- *Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity*⁴⁹: sets out the Government's agenda to revitalise neighbourhoods, strengthen local leadership create places where people want to live and work.
- *The Housing Act (2004)*⁵⁰: legislation that contains a wide range of measures aimed at helping to protect the vulnerable and creating a fairer housing market for those who own, rent or let residential property.
- *Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing)*⁵¹: Sets out how the Government's objectives of supplying high quality, well designed housing in mixed communities and sustainable locations, can be delivered through planning policy.

Key Regional Priorities

The *East of England Housing Investment Plan*⁵² sets out the priorities for housing in the region. These include:

- Ensure new, high quality affordable homes are delivered as part of well designed, balance, inclusive and sustainable communities
- Ensure an appropriate balance is delivered between social rented and intermediate mixed tenure housing, supported by the provision of appropriate social infrastructure.
- Ensure the decent home standard is met in both the public and private sector.
- Prevent and tackle homelessness.
- Ensure the provision of appropriate homes and services to vulnerable groups.
- Ensure the provision of homes and services that meet the needs of the region's diverse communities.
- Ensure that the provision of high quality homes promotes good health and contributes to the reduction of health inequalities.
- Use housing investment to encourage and support sustainable economic development.

⁴⁸ Sustainable Communities: Homes for All

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/corporate/homesforall>

Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/sustainablecommunitiesbuilding>

⁴⁹ Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/corporate/peopleplacesprosperity>

⁵⁰ Housing Act (2004): http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga_20040034_en_1

⁵¹ Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing>

⁵² East of England Housing Investment Plan

<http://www.eera.gov.uk/Text.asp?cat=45&id=SXD2F8-A77FC873>

Key sub-regional priorities

The current London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Housing Strategy 2005 – 2008⁵³ sub-regional strategy sets out the vision for housing in the sub-region:

- To enable growth in the sub-region and to provide for the needs of homeless people and those who require affordable housing, whilst protecting the environment;
- To create and maintain sustainable communities and achieve social inclusion; and
- To make the best use of the existing stock whilst improving its condition in both the public and private sectors.

In order to achieve this vision, five sub-regional priorities have been identified:

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

A new strategy is due to be produced by the autumn of 2008, at which time the vision and priorities may be amended.

Local priorities

The Council's strategic vision is; *Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper*. In order to deliver the vision six strategic objectives have been developed: -

- **Sustainable communities** – to promote sustainable development of the district to ensure we deliver adequate affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic settlements.
- **Safer Communities** – to encourage responsible citizenship and to create safer communities with less crime and less fear of crime.
- **Healthier Communities** – to promote first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all our citizens.
- **Equal Communities** – to target resources at areas of disadvantage in the district to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone.
- **Prosperous Communities** – to create opportunity for all by promoting sustainable economic development.
- **Satisfied Communities** – to ensure that we listen to our citizens and deliver responsive, high quality, value for money, customer-focused services.

⁵³ London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Housing Strategy 2005 – 2008 http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/living/housing_and_environmental_health_service/housing_services/housing_strategy/sub-regional_housing_strategy.htm

Appendix C Tables

Table 1: Population change in North Hertfordshire, 2003 to 2021

	<i>2003</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2021</i>	Change
Total population	119,100	121,800	126,400	131,300	136,100	
Change		+2,700	+ 4,600	+4,900	+4,800	+17,000
% Change		+2.3	+3.8	+3.9	+3.7	+14.3

© Crown Copyright
Rounded to nearest 100

Table 2: Population Age Band Forecast, North Hertfordshire, 2003 - 2021

	<i>2003</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2021</i>	Change
0 - 19	29,500	29,700	29,600	29,700	30,400	+ 900
20 - 29	12,500	12,700	13,500	14,000	13,700	+ 1,200
30 - 44	28,800	29,300	28,600	28,200	29,100	+ 300
45 - 64	29,100	30,500	33,200	35,300	37,000	+ 7,900
65 +	19,200	19,700	21,300	24,100	26,100	+ 6,900
Total	119,100	121,800	126,400	131,300	136,100	+ 17,000
% Change		+2.3	+3.8	+3.9	+3.7	+ 14.3

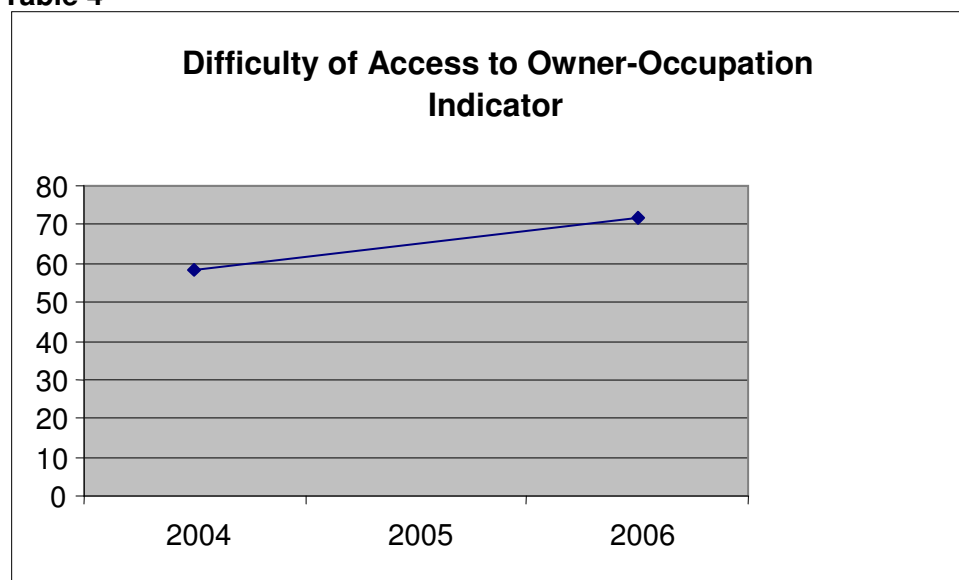
© Crown Copyright
Rounded to nearest 100

Table 3: Household projections by type 2003 - 2021*

<i>Household Types</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2021</i>	Increase 2003 - 2021	
						No.	%
<i>Married + cohabiting couples</i>	<i>30,000</i>	<i>30,000</i>	<i>31,000</i>	<i>32,000</i>	<i>34,000</i>	<i>4,000</i>	<i>13.3%</i>
Married couple	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	0	
Cohabiting couple	5,000	6,000	7,000	8,000	9,000	4,000	80%
Lone parent	3,000	3,000	3,000	4,000	4,000	1,000	33.3%
Other multi-person	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	0	
One person	15,000	16,000	18,000	21,000	23,000	8,000	53.3%
All Households	50,000	52,000	56,000	59,000	63,000	13,000	26%
Private household population	118,000	120,000	125,000	130,000	134,000	16,000	13.5%
Average household size	2.33	2.30	2.24	2.18	2.14		

DCLG, 2006

Table 4

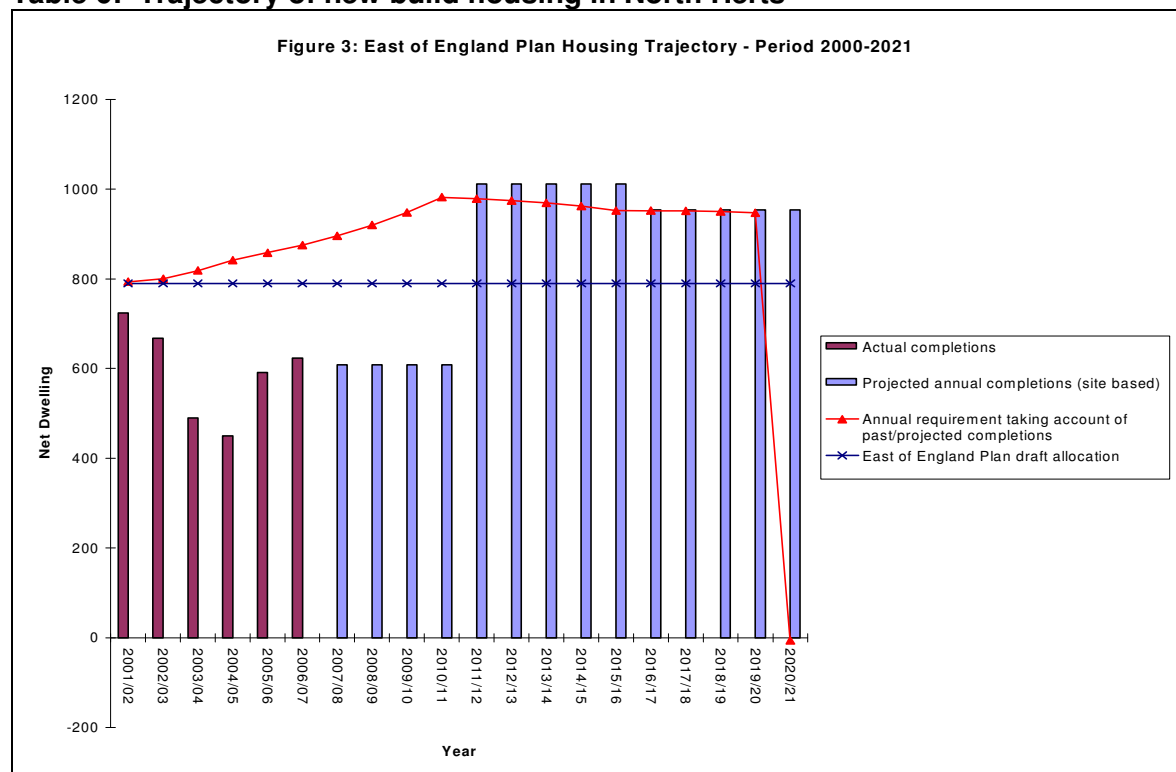


Source: ONS Neighbourhood Statistics

Table 5: Index of Multiple Deprivation: 6 most deprived areas in North Herts

Ward (part)	NH Rank 2007	NH Rank 2004	East Rank 2007	East Rank 2004
Hitchin Oughton (Westmill)	1	1	271	416
Letchworth Wilbury (Fearnhill School)	2	2	454	568
Letchworth South (Radburn Way/Whiteway)	3	4	506	641
Letchworth Grange (Southfields/Firecrest)	4	5	509	810
Letchworth South East (Woolgrove School/Lannock)	5	3	542	628
Letchworth South West (Highfield School)	6	7	634	850

Table 6: Trajectory of new build housing in North Herts



This data is updated at least annually and is likely to change

Table 7: Adams Integra suggested sliding scale of optimum viable affordable housing contributions

Site size (No of dwellings)	% of affordable housing considered viable				
	20%	30%	35%	40%	50%
5	✓				
10	✓	✓			
15		✓	✓	(x)	
20		✓	✓	(x)	(x)
25		✓	✓	✓	(x)
50		✓	✓	✓	(x)
100 +		✓	✓	✓	(✓)

Source: Affordable housing development economics study: Adams Integra 2007

✓ = general viability support

(✓) = guarded viability support – only likely to work where very low land value expectations exist

(x) = unable to support generally

Table 8: New affordable homes enabled 2003 - 2008

Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Affordable homes enabled	103	168	149	175	168

Table 9: Proportions of households at risk of fuel poverty

Gross income band £	Income assumed (net of tax and NI) £	Fuel costs exceed 10% of income %	Fuel costs exceed 20% of income %	Fuel costs exceed 30% of income %
Under 3,500	3,499	83.3	16.7	0.0
3,500 – 4,500	4,000	85.7	21.4	0.0
4,501 – 5,500	4,919	61.9	4.8	0.0
5,501 – 6,500	5,709	40.5	5.4	2.7
6,501 – 7,500	6,443	42.2	4.4	0.0
7,501 – 8,500	7,113	40.9	2.3	0.0
8,501 – 10,000	7,951	19.5	0.0	0.0
10,001 – 12,500	9,291	9.7	0.0	0.0
12,501 – 15,000	10,966	13.0	0.0	0.0
15,001 – 20,000	13,478	11.1	3.2	0.0
20,001 – 30,000	18,503	1.5	0.0	0.0
30,001 – 40,000	25,116	1.2	0.0	0.0
40,001 – 60,000	33,864	0.0	0.0	0.0
Over 60,000	45,664	0.0	0.0	0.0
Totals		17.3	2.0	0.1
Number of homes		9,133	1,074	77

Source: NHDC House Condition Survey 2006/07

Table 10: Causes of non-decency by sub-area (%)

	Category 1 hazard	Repair	Amenities	Thermal comfort	Any
Baldock	63.64	48.48	6.06	48.48	100.00
Hitchin	60.61	57.57	6.06	42.42	100.00
Letchworth	61.22	59.18	0.00	40.82	100.00
Royston	64.29	39.29	14.29	50.00	100.00
Southern Rural	65.79	57.89	0.00	39.47	100.00
District total	62.98	53.59	4.42	43.65	100.00
As a proportion of stock	12.35	10.51	0.87	8.56	19.61

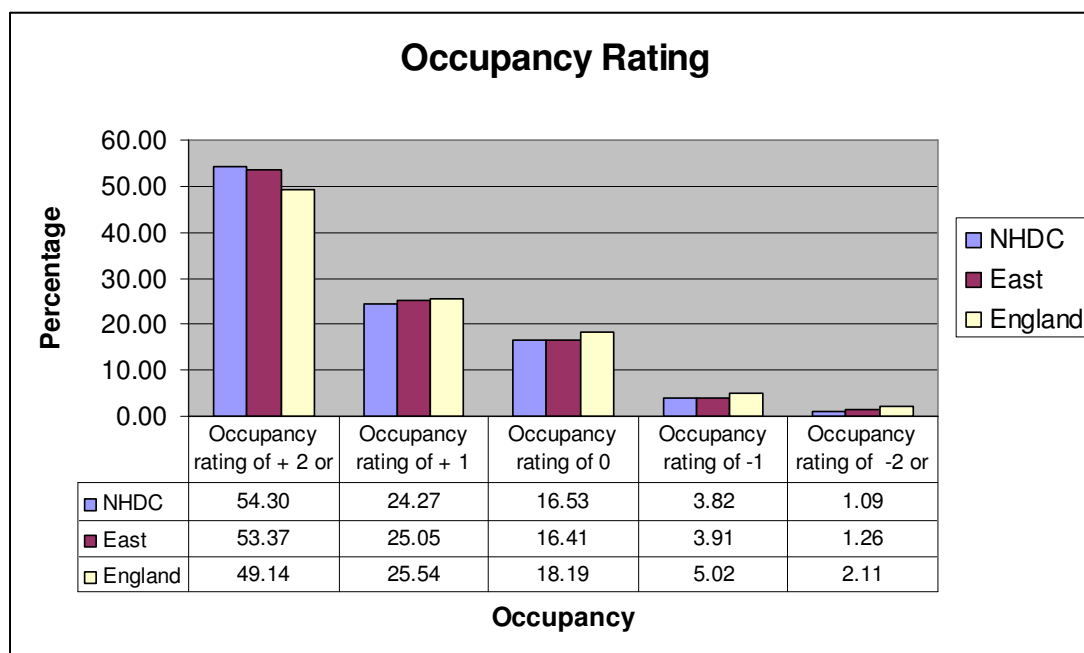
Source: North Herts DC House Condition Survey 2006/07

Table 11: Distribution of equity level by household (%)

Equity Level (£)	Distribution (%)
1 – 4,999	1.4
5,000 – 9,999	0.4
10,000 – 19,999	1.3
20,000 – 29,999	1.8
30,000 – 39,999	0.9
40,000 – 49,999	4.0
50,000 – 59,999	4.1
60,000 – 69,999	1.6
70,000 – 79,999	0.7
80,000 – 89,999	2.2
90,000 – 99,999	4.1
Over 100,000	77.5

Source: NHDC House Condition Survey 2006/07

Table 12



Source: ONS Neighbourhood Statistics 2001

Table 13: Persons per room (Households) April 2001

	North Herts	East of England	England
All Household (Households)	48,810	2,231,974	20,451,427
Up to 0.5 persons per room (Households)	36,148	1,626,151	14,545,916
Over 0.5 & up to 1.0 persons per room (Households)	12,116	578,520	5,518,751
Over 1.0 and up to 1.5 persons per room (Households)	435	20,545	269,925
Over 1.5 persons per room (Households)	111	6,758	116,835

Source: ONS Neighbourhood Statistics

Table 14: Disabled Facilities Grants completed April 2003 to Mar 2007

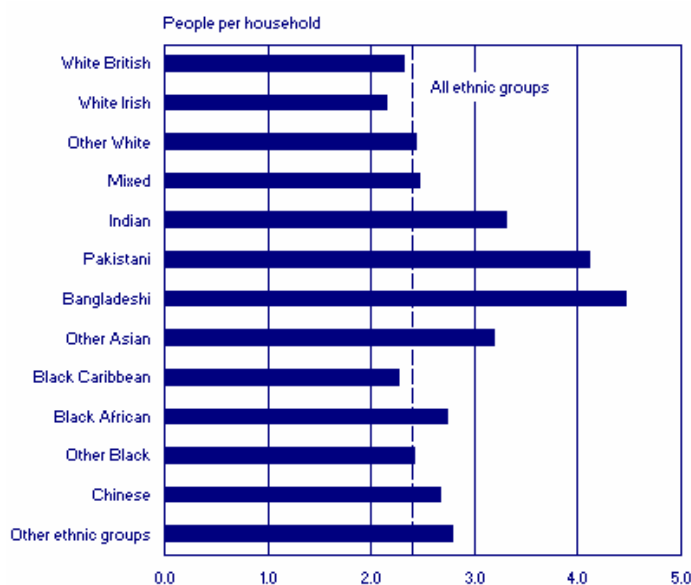
2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
40	52	63	123

Table 15: Population by Ethnicity - North Herts

Description	Population 2001	Population 2004	Population 2005
White British	89.35%	87.6%	87.15%
White Irish	1.29%	1.25%	1.24%
Other White	2.57%	3.25%	3.40%
Indian	2.67%	2.58%	2.57%
Pakistani	0.22%	0.42%	0.41%
Bangladeshi	0.29%	0.42%	0.41%
Other Asian	0.32%	0.42%	0.41%
Caribbean (Black)	1.01%	1.1%	1.08%
African (Black)	0.18%	0.42%	0.58%
Other Black	0.11%	0.17%	0.17%
Chinese	0.35%	0.42%	0.50%
Mixed ethnicity	1.45%	1.67%	1.74%
Other ethnic group	0.19%	0.33%	0.33%
Totals	100.00%	100.05%	99.99%

The percentages in the "population 2001" column are from the April 2001 Census (total population = 116,908). Those in the "population 04" and "population 2005" columns are from the mid 2004 (total population 119,900) and mid 2005 (total population 120,600) estimates. The mid 2005 ethnicity estimates were released in October 2007.

Table 16: Average household size: by ethnic group of household reference person, April 2001, GB



Source: Focus on Ethnicity & Identity, ONS

Table 17: Percentage of households with dependent children by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Dependent children %
All	23.0
White	22.3
Indian	27.4
Pakistani	39.1
Bangladeshi	58.5
Black Caribbean	18.3
Black African	26.4
Other & Mixed	46.4

Source: Data extracted from ONS, 2001 Census, Standard Tables for Local Authorities, Tables S101 & T12.

Table 18:

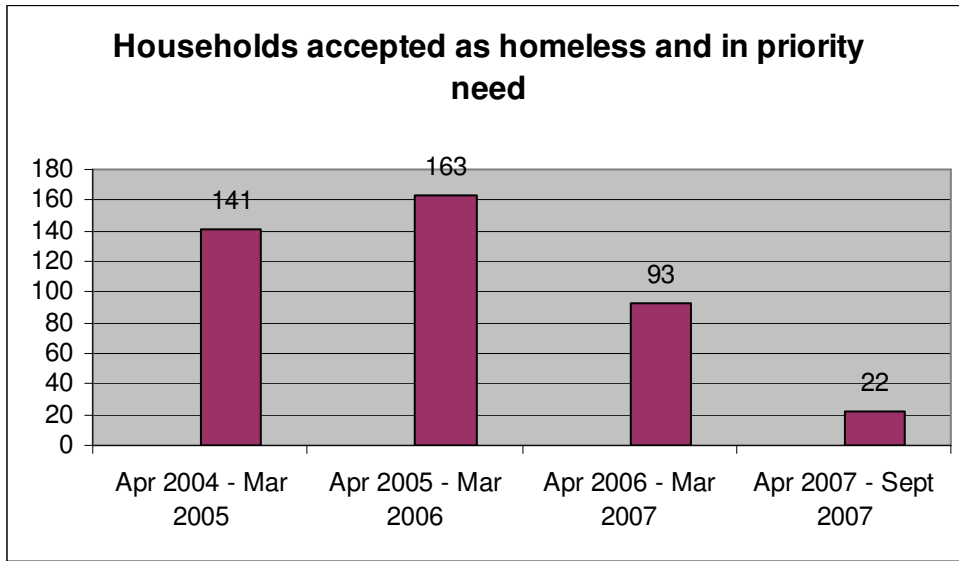
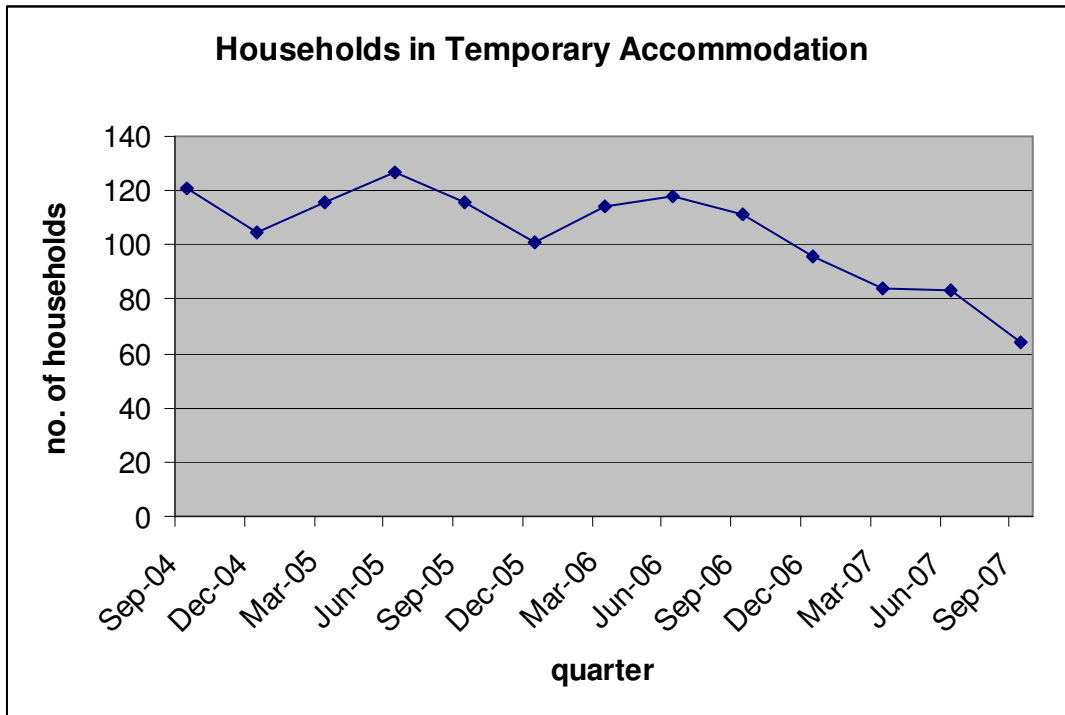


Table 19:



Appendix D

Lifetime Homes Criteria

There are 16 design features which combined make up the Lifetime Homes standard:

- 1) Car parking space should be easily capable of enlargement to attain a width of 3300mm
- 2) The distance from the car parking space to the home should be kept to a minimum and should be level or gently sloping
- 3) The approach to all entrances should be level or gently sloping
- 4) All entrances should be illuminated
- 5) Communal stairs should provide easy access and where levels are reached by lift, the lift should be fully wheelchair accessible
- 6) Doorways and hallways have to be at least 750mm wide, or at least 900mm wide when the approach is head-on
- 7) Dining and living areas should have space for turning a wheelchair and there should be adequate circulation space for wheelchair users
- 8) The living space should be at the level of the entrance
- 9) If homes of two or more storeys, there should be space at entrance level which should be used as a convenient bed space
- 10) The design of the property should incorporate a provision for a future stair lift and a suitably identified space for a through-the-floor lift from the ground to the first floor
- 11) The design of the property should provide for a reasonable route for a potential hoist from a main bedroom to the bathroom
- 12) There should be a WC situated at the entrance level of the property and a drainage provision enabling a shower to be fitted in the future
- 13) Walls in the bathrooms and toilets should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails
- 14) The bathroom should be designed to incorporate ease of access to essential amenities such as the bath, basin and WC
- 15) Living room windows should begin 800mm from the floor or lower and be easy to open
- 16) Switches, sockets, ventilation and service controls should be situated between 450mm and 1200mm from the floor

Appendix E

Measures of overcrowding

The Bedroom Standard - used in the Survey of English Housing.

The Bedroom Standard is 'based on the ages and composition of the family. A notional number of bedrooms is allocated to each household in accordance with its composition by age, sex and marital status and relationships of family members. A separate bedroom is allocated to each:

- Married or cohabiting couple;
- Adult aged 21 years or more;
- Pair of adolescents aged 10-20 years of the same sex;
- Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex.'
- Any unpaired person aged 10 – 20 is paired if possible with a child under 10 of the same sex
- Unpaired child

The Room Requirement – used in the Census

The room requirement is calculated as follows:

- a one person household is assumed to require three rooms (two common rooms and a bedroom)
- where are two or more residents it is assumed that they require a minimum of two common rooms plus one bedroom for:
 - i. each couple (as determined by the relationship in question)
 - ii. each lone parent
 - iii. any other person aged 16 or over
 - iv. each pair aged 10 to 15 of the same sex
 - v. each pair formed from a remaining person aged 10 to 15 with a child aged under 10 of the same sex
 - vi. each pair of children aged under 10 remaining
 - vii. each remaining person (either aged 10 to 15 or under 10)

Strategic objective 1: <i>To improve understanding and knowledge of the housing market</i>						
Priority: <i>To work towards balancing the housing market</i>						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council to produce a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)						
a) Produce a Strategic Market Assessment in partnership with Stevenage BC	Alan Davey/Andy Beavan	June 2008	Officer time/Funding for consultants	Robust SHMA delivered		
b) SHMA up-dated in – house regularly	Alan Davey	April 2009 April 2010 April 2011 April 2012 April 2013	Officer time	SHMA up-dated		
c) Housing Strategy reviewed to bring it in line with SHMA, new national policies/initiatives and other influences	Alan Davey	April 2009 April 2011 April 2013	Officer time	Housing Strategy reviewed		
2. Improve data collection on housing stock within the district						
e) Encourage RSLs to supply the National Register of Social Housing (NROSH) with data on their stock	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence	2008/09	Within existing resources	NROSH data available for all social housing in the district	Partnership Agreement/RSL Housing Management Forum	

APPENDIX B

f) Improve knowledge of buy-to-let/leave properties in the district	Alan Davey	2008/09	Officer time	District level data on buy to let/leave		
3. Monitor trends in economic migration						
See Strategic objective 23						
4. Raise levels of expertise amongst housing officers						
Train officers to up-date SHMA in-house	Alan Davey	October 2008	Within existing resources	Capacity to up-date SHMA in-house		
Strategic objective 2: To ensure that new build dwellings contribute to sustainable communities and avoid social and tenure segregation						
Priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Market and affordable housing to be fully integrated on mixed tenure sites.						
a) New build affordable housing to be distributed evenly across the site or, in the case of flats, in small clusters distributed evenly across the development	Andy Beavan	From 2011	Within existing resources	Policy included in LDF	Planning policy (LDF)	
b) New build affordable housing to be physically	Andy Beavan	From 2011	Within existing	Policy included in	Planning policy (LDF)	

indistinguishable from market housing on mixed tenure sites			resources	LDF		
c) Deliver a mix of affordable tenures on new build developments	Andy Beavan/Alan Davey	Ongoing	Within existing resources	A minimum of 78 new build for social rent and 42 for intermediate tenures enabled per annum	Planning policy (s106 Agreements)	
d) Set a target for the percentage of dwellings of any one type to be permitted on residential developments	Andy Beavan	2011	Within existing resources	Target set and included and included in LDF	Planning policy (LDF)	
2. New employment opportunities to be balanced with the delivery of new housing						
e) Planning policy to balance the delivery of new housing with additional opportunities for employment	Andy Beavan	From 2011	Within existing resources	Employment targets based on principle of providing 1 job per new dwelling	Planning policy (LDF)	
Strategic objective 3: To improve the sustainability of estates comprised primarily of social rented housing						
Priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work with partners and stakeholders to enhance the most deprived areas of the district						
a) Work with RSLs and	Alan	Jan '09	Community	Start on site	Partnership working	

APPENDIX B

developers on the regeneration of Jackmans Estate	Davey/Patrick Candler/Mary Caldwell		Benefit Fund		(RSLs/Developer/Jackmans Community Association)/Community Benefit Fund	
b) Secure new community facilities on Jackmans Estate	Alan Davey/Patrick Candler/Mary Caldwell	May '08	Council Land	Planning permission granted	Partnership working (RSLs/Developer, Jackmans Community Association)/Council Land	
c) Increase economic diversity on Jackmans Estate through mixed tenure development	Alan Davey/Patrick Candler/Mary Caldwell	Dec '10	Within current resources	New mixed tenure housing delivered	Partnership working (RSLs/Developer/Westmill Community Association)/Community Benefit Fund	
d) Work with RSLs and developers on the regeneration of Westmill Estate	Alan Davey/Patrick Candler/Mary Caldwell	Jul '09	Community Benefit Fund	Start on site	Partnership working (RSLs/Developer/Westmill Community Association)	
e) Secure new community facilities on Westmill Estate	Alan Davey/Patrick Chandler/Mary Caldwell	Sept '08	Council Land	Planning permission granted	Partnership working (RSLs/Developer, Westmill Community Association)/Council Land	
f) Increase economic diversity on Westmill Estate through mixed tenure development	Alan Davey/Patrick Candler/Mary Caldwell	June '11	Within current resources	New mixed tenure housing delivered	Partnership working (RSLs/Developer)	

2. Investigate ways of improving the training and employment prospects of people in low income neighbourhoods						
a) Work with RSLs, employment agency, education and training providers to investigate setting up an integrated housing/training/employment support scheme	Martin Lawrence		Officer time	Decision on viability of integrated housing/employment scheme	RSL management forum	
b) If decision to implement an integrated housing/training employment scheme is made, produce action plan/timetable for its introduction	Martin Lawrence			Scheme introduced	RSL management forum	
c) Investigate ways of employing local people in low income neighbourhoods to deliver local services	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		RSL Management forum	
3. Improve the mobility of people living in social housing						
a) All RSLs with stock in the district to give tenants access to a mutual exchange scheme	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence		Within existing resources		RSL Partnership Agreement/RSL Management Forum	
b) Provide a 'cash incentive scheme' to assist social housing tenants to move into private sector housing	Martin Lawrence		Funding		Funding	

APPENDIX B

c) Raise awareness of the 'cash incentive scheme'	Martin Lawrence			Free up x of social housing units per annum	Publicity	
d) Work with the North Herts Housing Partnership to introduce a common housing allocation scheme	Martin Lawrence		Officer time	Common Housing Allocation Scheme introduced	North Herts Housing Partnership	
e) Increase the priority given to applicants to the Housing Register who have work related reasons for moving	Martin Lawrence		Within existing resources	Common Housing Allocation Scheme introduced	Housing Allocation Scheme	
f) Introduce a Choice Based Lettings Scheme	Martin Lawrence			CBL Scheme introduced	North Herts Housing Partnership	
g) Explore the possibility of cost savings through merging CBL schemes where appropriate circumstances apply	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		LCBSR/RSLs	
h) Explore the possibilities for cross boundary nominations schemes within the sub-region	Alan Davey	Dec '09	Officer time	Cross boundary nomination protocol agreed	LCBSR	
i) Investigate the viability of reciprocal arrangements with other LAs for housing tenants who need to move for work	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		Homelessness Forum/RSL Housing Management Forum	

reasons						
j) When new affordable housing products are initiated by central Government make them available to local households where viable	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence	Ongoing	Officer time	Full range of housing options available to households in the district	Lea Valley Homes/RSL Housing Management Forum	
4. Ensure a mix of tenures where new development occurs on estates that are primarily social housing						
See Strategic objective 9 (1c)						
Strategic objective 4: To ensure that new development does not adversely impact community facilities						
Priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Developers to make a contribution towards new community, leisure and recreation facilities	Mary Caldwell	Ongoing		On site-by-site basis	Planning policy (LDF/Local Plan)	
2. Produce a Green Space Strategy that ensures that development does not have a negative impact on the provision of open spaces	Steve Geach/Louise Symes	Sept '08	Officer time	Strategy adopted		

Strategic objective 5: To contribute towards reducing the fear of crime, crime and anti-social behaviour						
Priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Produce a new Community Safety Strategy	Linda Whamby	Sept '08?	Officer time	Strategy adopted	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership	
2. Employ initiatives that reduce the risk of crime and anti-social behaviour						
a) Development proposals to be required to show how they design out opportunities for crime and ASB	Andy Beavan	Ongoing – backed by policy from 2011		All development proposals to include measures that design out opportunities for crime	Planning policy (Design & Access Statements)	
b) Work jointly with Stevenage BC, and the Probation service to produce an ex-offenders housing protocol	Martin Lawrence	Sept '08	Officer time	Joint protocol in place	Partnership working	
c) Fund a Handy person scheme to fit security measures to the homes of vulnerable people	Alan Davey	Ongoing	Within existing resources	X no per annum	Anchor Staying Put	
d) Work with the Children's Trust Partnership, Children Schools and Families and RSLs to make parenting programmes available to	Martin Lawrence/Beth Knight			Parenting programme introduced	RSL Housing Management Forum/Joint Action Group	

APPENDIX B

address anti-social behaviour						
e) Raise awareness of the Crashpad Mediation Service among professionals working with households in which teenagers are committing anti-social behaviour	Martin Lawrence/Beth Knight		Within existing resources		RSL Housing Management Forum/Joint Action Group	
Strategic objective 6: To improve community participation in decision making						
Priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Up-date the NHDC Consultation Strategy	Ashley Hawkins	Jul '08	Officer time	Strategy adopted		
2. Introduce a NHDC Consultation Toolkit.	Ashley Hawkins	Jul '08	Officer time	Toolkit adopted		
Strategic objective 7: To ensure maximum benefit from new build housing for the residents of the district						
Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage

1. Deliver a minimum of 13,000 homes by 2021						
a) Assess housing land availability	Andy Beavan	Annually (April)	Officer time	5 years worth of sites in sustainable locations ready for development identified		
b) Carry out a strategic housing land availability assessment	Andy Beavan	Sept '08	Officer time	A further 10 years worth of land in sustainable locations for housing development identified	Partnership working with Stevenage BC	
c) Meet the targets set in the East of England plan for new homes in North Herts (excluding development to the west of Stevenage)	Andy Beavan	Ongoing	Officer time	6,200 new homes delivered between 2001 and 2021		
d) Meet the targets set in the East of England plan for new homes to the west of Stevenage	John Ironside/Alan Davey	Ongoing	Officer time	9,600 new homes delivered by 2021 (detailed project programme to be produced)	Partnership working with Stevenage BC/ Housing Corporation funding (strategic site allocation)/developer subsidy (affordable housing)	
2. Negotiate an agreement that ensures that the district receive a satisfactory amount of the nominations to the affordable housing on the new development the border with Stevenage						

a) Carry out research to establish demand from households in North Herts for affordable housing to the west of Stevenage	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence	Oct '09	Officer time	Demand for affordable housing on the development quantified	Housing Corporation funding (strategic site allocation)	
b) Negotiate a 'host premium' on the west of Stevenage development if demand justifies it	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence	Dec '09	Officer time	Agreement on number of nominations allocated to N. Herts reached		
3. Minimise Greenfield release by developing the majority of new housing in urban areas (with the exception of the development on the Stevenage border).	Andy Beavan	Ongoing		At least 60% of new dwellings to be built on brownfield land (with the exception of west of Stevenage)	Planning policy (LDF)	
Strategic objective 8. To enable the optimum amount of affordable housing						
Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1) Maximise the delivery of affordable housing delivered through planning policy						
a) Increase the amount of affordable housing provided	Andy Beavan	From 2011	Within existing resources	Adopt a sliding scale of thresholds based on the Adams	Planning policy (LDF)	

APPENDIX B

on site				Integra viability assessment		
b) Investigate the possibility of requiring financial contributions for affordable housing on sites below the threshold for on site provision	Andy Beavan	2008/09	Financial resources for consultant	Increased financial contributions towards affordable housing		
c)) Investigate purchasing a scheme assessment viability toolkit	Andy Beavan					
d) Enable a minimum of 120 affordable homes per annum (exclusive of those on the border with Stevenage)	Alan Davey	Ongoing	NHDC Capital Funding	120 affordable homes enabled per annum	Partnership working (RSLs/developers)/Planning policy (s.106)/Housing Corporation funding/NHDC funding/Officer time	
2. Monitor the net gain/loss of affordable homes per annum	Alan Davey	April annually	Officer time	Reliable data on affordable housing stock in district	Partnership working (RSLs)	
Strategic objective 9: To ensure new affordable housing development meets the housing needs and is of a high standard						
Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage

1. Deliver a mix of property types and tenures						
a) Set a target for the percentage of dwellings of any one type to be permitted on residential developments	See strategic objective 2 (1d)					
b) Secure a mix a mix of property types on new affordable housing developments.	Alan Davey	Ongoing	NHDC Capital Funding	At 2013 total delivery of new dwellings equates to 35% 3 bed houses, 30% 2 bed houses, 25% 1 bed flats and 10% 4 bed houses	Housing Corporation funding/Council funding/s.106 Agreements/Developer Subsidy/joint working with RSLs/Affordable Housing SPD	
c) Secure a mix of tenures on new build affordable housing developments	Alan Davey/Andy Beavan	Ongoing	NHDC Capital Funding	At 2013 total delivery of new affordable dwellings equates to 65% social rent and 35% other tenures	Housing Corporation funding/Council funding/Developer Subsidy/joint working with RSLs/Affordable Housing SPD	
2. Maximise the opportunity for households on intermediate incomes to enter the housing market						
a) Ensure that New Build Homebuy products are affordable to households on average income for the district	Alan Davey	Ongoing	NHDC Capital Funding	Cost of New Build Homebuy Products is no more than 1/3 of average income for the district	RSL Partnership Agreement/Council funding / Housing Corporation funding/Developer subsidy	

APPENDIX B

b) On New build Homebuy products, RSLs to work towards rent level of 2% of unsold equity	Alan Davey	Ongoing	NHDC Capital Funding	At 2011 All New build Homebuy to have a rent level of 2% of unsold equity	RSL Partnership Agreement/Council funding /Housing Corporation funding/Developer subsidy	
c) Work towards setting a limit to the cost of service charges	Alan Davey	Apr '10	Officer time	Maximum level of service charge agreed with partner RSLs	RSL Partnership Agreement/RSL Management Forum	
d) Social rents to be set at or below target rents	Alan Davey	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Social rents to remain affordable to households on low incomes	RSL Partnership Agreement	
e) Intermediate rents to be not more than 80% of market rent	Alan Davey	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Housing for intermediate rent to remain affordable to households on intermediate incomes	RSL Partnership Agreement	
f) Work with Lea Valley Homes to promote intermediate tenure products	Martin Lawrence/ Alan Davey	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Increased awareness of affordable housing products	Partnership working/Publicity	
g) Work with Lea Valley Homes to match Homebuy products to households in	Martin Lawrence		Officer time	Suitable households allocated to intermediate tenure	Partnership working	

housing need				dwelling within x		
3. Ensure that new build affordable dwellings meet design and space standards						
a) All new grant funded affordable housing to meet Housing Corporation Design Quality Standards	Alan Davey	Ongoing	NHDC Capital Funding	All new affordable housing to meet current regulation standards	RSL Partnership Agreement/Council funding/Housing Corporation funding	
b) Work with RSLs to gather and analyse customer feedback from new build affordable housing tenants	Alan Davey	Ongoing	Officer time	Feedback from completed developments to inform new development	Partnership working/RSL Management Forum	
Priority 10. To encourage sustainable rural communities						
1. Work towards meeting the need for affordable housing in rural parishes						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
Priority: To create inclusive sustainable communities						
a) Secure funding for part-time Rural Enabler post	Alan Davey	Sept '08	May require additional financial resources	Rural Enabler in position	Council funding/RSL funding	
b) If funding for Rural Enabler secured, work in partnership	Alan Davey	Ongoing	Officer time	3 Rural Housing Needs Surveys	Partnership working (RSLs/Parish)	

APPENDIX B

with Parish Councils to identify housing needs in rural parishes				undertaken per annum	Councils)	
c) Allow development on rural exception sites where an identified need for affordable housing cannot be met through current provision	Andy Beavan	Ongoing	Within existing resources	New housing delivered in rural parishes within no more than 4 years of identification of housing need	Planning policy (LDF/Local Plan)	
d) Work in partnership with RSLs and developers to deliver rural housing where a need has been identified	Alan Davey	Ongoing	NHDC Capital Funding	New housing delivered in Rural Parishes within no more than 4 years of identification of housing need	Council funding/Housing Corporation funding/Developer subsidy	
2. Ensure that rural affordable housing remains affordable in perpetuity						
a) In rural parishes with a population of under 3000, purchases of new-Build Homebuy restricted to a maximum of 80%	Alan Davey	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Rural New Build Homebuy to remain affordable in perpetuity	RSL Partnership Agreement/s.106 Agreements	
3. Ensure that new rural affordable housing is designed to meet diverse needs						
All new build affordable housing in rural parishes ¹ to	Alan Davey	From Jul '08	NHDC Capital Funding	New build affordable housing better able	RSL Partnership Agreement/Council	

¹ Excluding Great Ashby

APPENDIX B

meet Lifetime Homes Standard				to meet current and future housing need	funding/Housing Corporation funding	
All 1 & 2 bed affordable houses in rural parishes ² to be able to facilitate an extra bedroom within the existing structure	Alan Davey	From Jul '08	NHDC Capital Funding	As above	RSL Partnership Agreement/ Council funding/Housing Corporation funding	
Strategic objective 11: <i>To increase the quantity of new build affordable homes that meet the Lifetime Homes Standard⁶</i>						
Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Until Lifetime Homes becomes mandatory, 50% of affordable dwellings on L.A. or RSL owned sites to be of Lifetime Homes Standard	Alan Davey	From Jul '08	NHDC Capital funding	50% of new build affordable dwellings on L.A./RSL owned sites meet LHS	RSL Partnership Agreement/Council funding	RSL Partnership Agreement
2. Provide funding to encourage Lifetime Homes Standards for affordable housing on s.106 sites	Alan Davey		Council grant of between £700 & £1000 per dwelling at May '08 costs	As above	RSL Partnership Agreement/Council grant	Council funding/Housing Corporation funding

² Excluding Great Ashby

³ This will apply until Lifetime Homes becomes a mandatory element of the Code for Sustainable Homes

Strategic objective 12: <i>To protect the environment from the effects of new housing development</i>						
Priority: To protect the environment						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Employ measures that protect the environment from the impact of new development						
a) Meet the East of England Plan requirements for embedded renewable energy	Andy Beaven	From May 2008	Within existing resources	At least 10% of the energy a new property uses to be produced on site through embedded renewable energy	East of England Plan/Planning Control	
b) Maximise the water efficiency of new dwellings	Andy Beavan	From 2011	Within existing resources	New development to include sustainable drainage solutions and demonstrate the highest levels of water efficiency possible for the site	Planning policy (LDF)	
c) Reduce the risk to Health and the Environment from contaminated land	Victor Quashie		Officer time	All new housing developments to be assessed in relation to land contamination	Planning development team	

2. Encourage recycling of households waste						
a) Require all new RSL developments to make provision for appropriate receptacles for waste storage	Alan Davey	From Jul '08	Within existing resources	Clause included in the RSL partnership agreement	RSL Partnership Agreement	
b) Require all new dwellings to have space for recycling bins	Daniel Kingsley/Andy Beavan	From 2011	Within existing resources	Policy included in LDF	Planning policy (LDF)	
Strategic objective 13: To reduced the impact of current stock on the environment						
Priority: To protect the environment						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Instigate strategies that contribute towards reducing CO ₂ emissions						
a) Produce a Home Energy Conservation Strategy	Jim Turner					
b) Produce a Climate Change Strategy	Jim Brown	Dec '08	Officer time	Strategy adopted		
2. Encourage RSL activity in respect of energy efficiency improvements						
a) RSLs to carry out annual review of the energy efficiency of their stock using the	Jim Turner	From Apr '09	Within existing resources	Ability to identify areas with lowest	RSL Partnership Agreement	

APPENDIX B

Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)				SAP ratings		
b) RSLs to provide the Council with details of energy improvements or strategies being implemented	Alan Davey	From Apr '09	Within existing resources	Survey completed - data available to inform NHDC Climate Change and HECA Strategies	RSL Partnership Agreement	
c) Work with RSLs to investigate energy service schemes that benefit tenants and the environment	Martin Lawrence				RSL Housing Management Forum	
d) Commission consultants to carry out a Housing Stock Condition Survey	Alan Davey	2011	Council finding for consultants	Up to date data on housing stock available	Council funding	
3. Employ initiatives to improve energy efficiency in the private sector						
a) Provide funding to top-up Warm front Grants	Alan Davey	ongoing	Council Funding	5 per year	Council funding	
b) Offer a housing options service to people living alone in large house facing fuel poverty	Martin Lawrence				Publicity	
Strategic objective 14: <i>To reduce the number of non-decent homes in the district</i>						

Priority: To maintain and improve the quality of current stock						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Employ initiatives to encourage the improvement of private sector housing						
a) Improve the take up of grants	Alan Davey	Ongoing	Officer time	5% annual increase number of HRAGs and RENOs	Publicity/landlord forum	
b) Work with health and care agencies to target vulnerable households in need of home improvements	Alan Davey	2009	Officer time	Joint working with Health Care Agencies established	Partnership working	
c) Use all powers available to ensure that category 1 hazards in private sector housing are rectified	Alan Davey	Ongoing	Officer time	Improved condition of housing stock		
d) Investigate the viability of RSLs providing a maintenance service to private sector households	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence	2011	Officer time		Housing Management Forum	
e) Increase awareness amongst tenants and landlords on their rights and responsibilities	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence	2009	Officer time	Improved availability of information and guidance	Landlord forum/publicity	
2. Work with RSLs to continuously improve the standard of social housing						

APPENDIX B

a) Monitor RSLs' delivery of the Decent Homes Standard	Alan Davey	2008 - 2010	Officer time	All social housing at DHS by 2010	RSL Partnership Agreement/RSL Housing Management Forum	
b) RSLs to rectify category 1 hazards within time limit specified by EHO	Alan Davey	Summer 2008	Within existing resources	All RSLs signed up to Partnership Agreement	RSL Partnership agreement	
c) Work with RSLs to agree programme of improvements beyond Decent Homes	Alan Davey	2011 onwards	Officer time	Continuous improvement of RSL stock	RSL Housing Management Forum	
d) Investigate stock rationalisation in the public sector	Martin Lawrence				RSL Housing Management Forum	
Strategic objective 15: <i>To maximise the number of empty properties brought back into use</i>						
Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing; and To maintain and improve the quality of current stock						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work in partnership to develop initiatives to maximise opportunities for bringing empty homes back into use						
a) Work with The Herts and Beds Housing Group and Pathmeads (RSL Property	Alan Davey	Dec 2009	Officer time	Good Practice Guidance produced	Partnership working	

Management) to develop good practice on the use of EDMOs						
b) Investigate establishing a partnership with an RSL to bring empty properties back into use through the use of EDMOs	Alan Davey	Dec 2010	Officer time	Partnership with an RSL established	Partnership working	
c) Investigate using revenue from Council Tax empty property charge to fund grants to bring empty properties back into use	Alan Davey	Dec 2010	Officer time	Funding available to bring empty properties back into use		
2. Review the NHDC Empty Homes Strategy						
Revise the Empty Homes Strategy to bring it in line with new initiatives	Alan Davey	2009	Officer time	New strategy adopted		
Strategic objective 16: <i>To improve the mobility of under-occupying households</i>						
Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work with RSL partners to carry out research to quantify under-occupation in Social	Martin Lawrence				RSL Housing Management Forum	

Housing						
2. Employ initiatives to reduce the prevalence of under-occupation						
a) Investigate what incentives and housing alternatives under-occupying households would find attractive	Martin Lawrence				RSL Housing Management Forum	
b) Work with RSLs to introduce an under-occupation scheme with more weighty incentives	Martin Lawrence				RSL Housing Management Forum	
c) Encourage development of smaller specialist accommodation to enable elderly occupiers to downsize if they wish	Andy Beavan				Planning policy (LDF)	
Strategic objective 17: To improve the mobility of overcrowded households						
Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work with partner RSLs to research the extent and causes of overcrowding in social rented housing	Martin Lawrence				RSL Housing Management Forum	

2. Employ initiatives to reduce the prevalence of overcrowding						
a) Revise housing allocations scheme to maximise the opportunity to move overcrowded households	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		Housing Allocation Scheme	
b) Give priority for low cost home ownership schemes to current social housing tenants	Martin Lawrence		Within existing resources		Housing Allocation Scheme	
c) Investigate the possibility of extending the homes of overcrowded RSL tenants	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence				RSL Housing Management Forum	
d) Ensure that sufficient three and four bedroom properties are delivered on new affordable housing developments	See strategic objective 9 (1b)				Planning policy (Affordable Housing SPD/s.106 Agreements)	
Strategic objective 18: <i>Improve administration and management of houses in multiple occupation</i>						
Priority: To maintain and improve the quality of current stock						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Improve records of HMOs in the district						

a) Carry out a publicity campaign to encourage landlords and tenants to inform the Council of the location of HMOs	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence	2009	Officer time	Improved records of HMOs	Publicity	
b) Monitor National Insurance Number data on registration of workers from the Accession states	See strategic objective 23					
2. Ensure that tenants and landlords of HMOs are aware of their responsibilities						
a) Carry out a publicity campaign giving information and sources of advice for landlords and tenants of HMOs	Alan Davey	ongoing	Officer time	Improved information available in a number of formats	Publicity	
Strategic objective 19: <i>To ensure that vulnerable people receive the housing support they need to live as independently as possible</i>						
Priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community; and To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work in partnership to deliver initiatives that support vulnerable people						
a) Work in partnership to	Andy		Officer time		Supporting People	

APPENDIX B

implement the Supporting People Strategy	Godman/Martin Lawrence				Commissioning Body & Programme Delivery Group	
b) Work in partnership with the Supporting People Team to identify gaps in provision of support	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		Partnership working	
c) Work with Supporting People and other stakeholders to deliver a generic floating support/tenancy sustainment service	Martin Lawrence		Within existing resources		Supporting People Commissioning Body & Programme Delivery Group	
d) Ensure local interests are represented on the Supporting People Commissioning Body and Programme Development Group	Andy Godman/Martin Lawrence		Officer time		Supporting People Commissioning Body & Programme Delivery Group	
2. Work in partnership to provide suitable homes for vulnerable people						
a) Work with RSLs and stakeholders to deliver new supported housing units to meet identified needs in locations accessible to local people	See strategic objective 25 (2b)				Partnership working	
b) Work in partnership with the Adult Care Services, the	Alan Davey/Martin	Ongoing	Possible Capital	Sheltered housing stock better	Partnership working	

Supporting People Team, RSLs and other stakeholders to rationalise the stock of sheltered and frail elderly housing	Lawrence		Funding	matched to need		
3. Monitor the delivery of services to ensure that they are accessible to all						
Extend monitoring of service delivery to include disability, age, sexuality and religion or belief	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence	2008	Officer time	Improved equalities monitoring		
Strategic objective 20: To enhance the provision of disabled adaptations						
Priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Follow good practice for implementing DFGs						
a) Produce written procedures for implementing DFGs that incorporate good practice	Alan Davey	2009	Officer time	Good practice identified and adopted		
b) Work with RSLs and Social Services to establish a service level agreement on disabled adaptations	Alan Davey	2009	Officer time	All DFGs to be approved within 6 months of completed application	Partnership working	

2. Take measures to ensure that disabled adaptations are provided within a reasonable timescale						
a) Work in partnership with RSLs to set up a register of adapted social rented properties	Martin Lawrence/Alan Davey		Officer time		RSL Housing Management Group	
b) Investigate making an agreement between RSLs and the Council to share the costs of providing adaptations in social housing	Alan Davey	Summer 2008	Within existing resources	Clause included in the RSL Partnership Agreement	RSL Partnership Agreement	
3. Take measures to ensure that the service is accessible to all						
a) Monitor delivery of adaptations to ensure equal treatment across tenures	Alan Davey	2009	Officer time	Equality of outcome across tenure	RSL Housing Management Forum	
b) Improve equalities monitoring of the Private Sector Renewals Service	Alan Davey See strategic objective 19 (3)					
c) Carry out an impact assessment on the private sector renewals policy	Alan Davey	2010	Officer time	Equality Impact Assessment produced		
Strategic objective 21: <i>To ensure that housing services provide for and are accessible to minority ethnic communities</i>						

Priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community; and To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work towards qualifying for level 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government						
a) Qualify level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government	Martin Fountain	March '09	Officer time	Level 3 of Equality Standard achieved		
b) Set target dates for qualifying levels 4 and 5 of the Equality standard for Local Government	Martin Fountain					
2. Work with the London Commute Belt Sub-region to ensure that the full BME allocation of Housing Corporation Capital Funding is accessed						
Work with EERA Consultant on new proposals for accessing BME funding	LCBSR Officers	Ongoing	Officer Time	BME funding system based on realistically measurable indicators	LCBSR	
3. Investigate the housing needs of BME elders						
a) Work with the Supporting People Team, Accommodation Services for Older People (ASOP) and the North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum to research the	Alan Davey	Dec '08	Officer time	Housing needs of BME elders identified	Partnership working (NHDC, SP team and NHEMF)	

housing needs of BME elders						
b) Produce an action plan to provide for identified needs of BME elders	Alan Davey	Feb '09	Officer time	Plan for addressing housing needs of BME elders in place	Partnership working (NHDC, SP team and NHEMF)	
4. Promote the housing services provided by the Council to BME communities						
a) Distribute literature on services provided by the Council to churches, social clubs, workplaces etc with high attendance from ethnic minorities	Alan Davey/Martin Lawrence	Feb '09	Officer time	Raised awareness of Council's housing services amongst BME communities		
b) Arrange bi-annual housing services awareness sessions at the North Herts Ethnic Minority forum	Martin Lawrence		Officer time	As above	Partnership working	
Strategic objective 22: To ensure the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are met						
Priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Continue to work in partnership with other Local Authorities to respond to regional consultations on	Andy Beavan		Officer time		Partnership working	

Gypsy and Traveller site provision						
2. Make provision for the amount of pitches determined by EERA once a final allocation has been made	Andy Beavan		Within existing resources	Suitable sites identified and provided for in LDF	Planning policy (LDF)	
Strategic objective 23: To gauge the impact on housing provision of economic migration and to ensure that economic migrants are aware of their rights						
Priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Improve data on economic migration to North Hertfordshire from the Accession States;						
a) Monitor NINo data on registrations from the Accession States	Alan Davey	6 monthly from Sep '08	Officer time	Local data on trend in economic migrants in the district		
b) Monitor lettings of social housing to applicants from the Accession States	Martin Lawrence		Officer time	Reliable data on trends in demand for social housing from economic migrants		
2. Promote the housing services provided by the Council to eligible economic migrants						
a) Target promotion of the housing services provided by	Martin		Officer time		Publicity	

the Council and its partners at economic migrants	Lawrence					
Strategic objective 24: To work towards meeting the needs of key worker and intermediate income households						
Priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Enable housing affordable to intermediate income households						
a) 35%of new build affordable housing to be for intermediate tenures	See strategic priority 8 (2c)				Planning policy (Affordable Housing SPD)	
2. Work in partnership with Lea Valley Homes to enable intermediate income households to access affordable housing						
a) Work with Lea Valley Homes to promote intermediate tenure products	See strategic objective 9 (2f)				Partnership working	
b) Work with Lea Valley Homes to match Homebuy products to households in housing need	See strategic objective 9 (2g)				Partnership working	
Strategic objective 25: To secure the good outcomes for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness						

Priority: To improve access to and choice in housing and: To Provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community						
How	Who	When	Resources	Target/PI	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Provide an holistic service to households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness						
a) Work in partnership with Stevenage BC to produce a new Homelessness Strategy	Martin Lawrence	June '08	Officer time	Strategy adopted	Partnership working	
b) Develop a new joint housing protocol with Children Schools and Families Review existing?	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		Partnership working	
c) Work with the Probation Service and Stevenage Borough Council to establish an offender and ex-prisoner protocol	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		Partnership working	
d) Work with SBC, HYHG, CSF, RSLs and Connexions to review the Joint Housing Protocol for young people	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		Partnership working	
e) Work with the Supporting People Team, Herts CC and other Hertfordshire local authorities to jointly	Martin Lawrence				Partnership working	

commission a holistic package of services for 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness						
f) Work with Supporting People and other stakeholders to deliver a generic floating support/tenancy sustainment service	See strategic objective 19 (1c)				Partnership working	
2. Ensure that temporary accommodation is of a good standard						
a) Work with North Herts Homes on the modernisation of family hostel accommodation into self contained units	Martin Lawrence				Partnership working	
b) Work with North Herts Homes, Aldwyck H.A and the Supporting People Team to provide new supported housing for young people in Sun Street, Baldock	Martin Lawrence				Partnership working	
3. Employ initiatives that prevent homelessness						
a) Work in partnership with RSLs to produce a pre-eviction protocol	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		North Quadrant Homelessness Forum/RSL Housing Management Forum	

APPENDIX B

b) Work in partnership with RSLs to produce a homelessness prevention protocol	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		North Quadrant Homelessness Forum/RSL Housing Management Forum	
c) Monitor trends in repossessions due to mortgage arrears	Martin Lawrence		Officer time			
d) Investigate setting up a mortgage rescue scheme managed by an RSL	Martin Lawrence				RSL Housing Management Forum	
e) Work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau to provide a money/debt advice drop-in for households threatened with repossession	Martin Lawrence				Partnership working	
f) Work with HYHG to set up a Deposit Guarantee Scheme for 18 – 25 year olds	Martin Lawrence		Within existing resources		Partnership working	
g) Provide funding for a Sanctuary Scheme for victims of domestic violence	Martin Lawrence				Funding	
h) Investigate joint Council/RSL funding for Sanctuary rooms in social housing	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		North Quadrant Homelessness Forum	

APPENDIX B

i) Explore the viability of a cross-boundary reciprocal housing scheme for victims of domestic violence/harassment living in social housing	Martin Lawrence		Officer time		North Quadrant Homelessness Forum	
j) Provide funding for a Citizens Advice Bureau Court Caseworker	Martin Lawrence				Funding	
k) Provide funding for HYHG Crashpad/Mediation service	Martin Lawrence		Within existing resources		Funding	
l) Provide funding for the Relate mediation service	Martin Lawrence		Within existing resources		Funding	
4. Improve the service through monitoring and customer feedback						
a) Introduce and monitor customer feedback on front-line services	Martin Lawrence		Officer time			
b) Participate in County wide benchmarking and monitoring of homelessness services	Martin Lawrence		Officer time			
c) Monitor the employment/support needs of homeless households to better target initiatives/resources	Martin Lawrence		Officer time			

Strategic objective 26: To deliver the housing strategy						
1. Set up a Housing Strategy Monitoring Group	Alan Davey	June 2008	Officer time	Housing Strategy monitored and reviewed on a 6 monthly basis		
2. Monitor trends in the housing market	See strategic objective 1 and strategic objective 25 (3c)					
3. Provide funding to meet the objectives of the Housing Strategy						
4. Review the RSL partnership agreement	Alan Davey	Summer 2008	Officer time	All RSLs with stock in the district signed up to the RSL Partnership Agreement		

Equality Impact Assessment

Service Area: Housing and Environmental Health	Department Section: Draft Housing Strategy and Development	Person responsible for the assessment: S. Forde	Date of assessment: 14 th April 2008
Name of Policy to be assessed: Draft Housing Strategy 2008 - 2013		Existing or new policy?	New

1. Brief description of the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy	The Draft Housing Strategy sets out the Council's strategic priorities for housing in the district over the period 2008 – 2013 and includes an action plan for achieving them.
2. Are there any associated objectives of the policy?	The strategy has six priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work towards balancing local housing markets; • To create sustainable communities; • To improve access and choice in housing; • To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community; • To maintain and improve the quality of current stock; and • To protect the environment.
3. Who is intended to benefit from the policy and in what way?	Once adopted the Strategy will be used by officers and partners as a plan for delivering the Council's vision for housing which is, 'To meet the community's needs for decent, high quality, affordable homes'.
4. What outcomes are wanted from this policy?	To ensure that there is a consistent, planned approach to

APPENDIX C

	delivering on the vision and priorities.
5. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?	Contribute: Partnership working with statutory, voluntary and private agencies. Detract: Availability of funding. Changes in the housing market.
6. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to this policy?	The Council, Registered Social Landlords, Housing Corporation, Go East, London Commuter Belt Sub-Region, Developers, Supporting People, Parish and Town Councils, support and advice agencies, members of the public.
7. Who implements the policy and who is responsible for the policy?	The Council through partnership working with key agencies.
8. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact on minority ethnic groups?	Positive: the draft strategy identifies the needs of minority ethnic communities and actions for addressing them.
What evidence is available to support this?	The draft strategy proposes improved monitoring across the service, investigations into the needs of BME elders, improved access to information on the housing functions of the Council and targeted housing advice services. The strategy will be made available in other languages if requested.
9. Will the policy have a positive/negative impact due to gender?	Positive
What evidence is available to support this?	The draft strategy supports measures to improve the outcomes for victims of domestic violence (the majority of which are women).
10. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact due to disability?	Positive: The draft strategy identifies the needs of people with disabilities
What evidence is available to support this?	The draft strategy proposes to increase the number of dwellings built to lifetime homes standards (homes that are easily adaptable). It also proposes better monitoring of Disabled Facilities Grants, a register of adapted properties, monitoring of

APPENDIX C

	applications to the housing register from people with disabilities, provision of a generic support service, and an equalities impact assessment on the Private Sector Renewals Policy.
11. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact due to sexual orientation?	Positive
What evidence is available to support this?	The draft strategy proposes the introduction of monitoring sexuality.
12. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact due to age?	Positive
What evidence is available to support this?	The draft strategy proposes an increase in the number of dwellings built to lifetime homes standards. The draft strategy recognises that local young people often cannot afford to live in the area where they grew up and proposes increased provision of affordable housing. It also proposes research on the housing options that under-occupying households (most often elderly) would find attractive. It encourages the development of smaller specialist accommodation to enable elderly under-occupiers to downsize if they wish and a the rationalisation of the stock of sheltered housing.
13. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact on people due to their religious beliefs?	Positive
What evidence is available to support this?	The draft strategy proposes the introduction of the monitoring of religion/faith.
14. Could the positive/negative impact identified in 8 – 13 amount to there being potential for adverse impact in this policy?	No
15. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	N/A
16. Is it necessary to perform a more in-depth impact assessment?	No

17. In-depth impact assessment to be completed by (date)	
--	--

Signed (Completing Officer) _____

Signed (Service Manager) _____

NHDC Housing Strategy 2008 – 2013 Comment Sheet

Strategy Section	Comment	Type of agency	NHDC Officer	Response
1. Introduction	P.3 – Key agencies for delivery ought to include private house builders	Jephson HA	SF	Amended.
	Kelshall Parish is a relatively small one with a population of around one hundred and twenty people and has thus far not been an area earmarked for development, an unselected village whereas the neighbouring village of Therfield; one mile away has had some selective development including property for rent or part-buy. Thus far there has been little support for development within Kelshall village subject to survey carried out by the Community Development Agency.	Kelshall Parish Council		
	A little bit more info would be useful to give a broader picture of housing in the district. What are the main tenancy types in NHDC area? Main landlords? What types of stock in locality. Explain stock transfer.	Papworth Trust	SF	Amended.
	Section 1. introduction I have a problem with this section, heading “consultation” The events quoted as consultation were feedback comments from the public on October 2005, June 2006 and Sept 2007 on LDF proposal documents and do not qualify as consultation as specified in criteria PPS1 sec 43, and many PPS3 and PPS12 consultation requirements PPS1 sec 43. “Community involvement in planning should not be a reactive, tick-box, process. It should enable the local community to say what sort of place they want to live in at a stage when this can make a difference. Effective community involvement requires an approach which: – tells communities about emerging policies and proposals in good time; – enables communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate in developing proposals and options. It is not sufficient to invite them to simply comment once these have been worked-up; – consults on formal proposals; – ensures that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible; – provides and seeks feedback.” None of the required consultations procedures have been followed As for the six area consultation events, I would be interested to know when and where these were held. The appendix A you refer to for detail is blank. Also if these events were held, where and when were they advertised and where is the feedback detail which should have been made public by now.	Member of public	SF	The Housing Strategy is not a planning document and not subject to the same rules on consultation. Letter sent in response reassuring of intent to consult and inviting further comment on content of strategy. Feedback on affordable housing from LDF consultation and Community Conference taken into account in preparation of strategy. All key agencies provided with copy of draft for comment. Draft and comment sheet made available on website.

APPENDIX D

	<p>In addition this consultation does not in any way comply with the NHDC LDF Statement of Community Involvement. There is no evidence of any past feedback from the community being stated or recognised within this document.</p> <p>This document is not a consultation document as described but it is a statement of NHDC corporate policy intentions. Under the section heading of Rural Housing there appears to be a further problem – It is stated that the council works in partnership with Rural Development Enablers (RDE) to provide evidence of social housing requirements for North Herts area. It is my understanding that all government funds have been withdrawn from support for RDE units and they no longer exist. As the information RDE units produced is fundamental to NHDC social housing policy, where does this leave the council on the social housing issues if the data for decision making is no longer available ? This document is not sufficiently up to date to address this fundamental issue.</p>			
2. Vision and Priorities	P.3 we are happy to support the Visions and Priorities	Jephson HA	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Include link to LAA, LSP and Sustainable Communities Plan?	Watford BC	SF	Amended.
	Support – To Protect the environment and to provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	The Papworth Trust supports the six strategic priorities and would be happy to assist in developing the Housing Strategy Action Plan.	Papworth Trust	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	There should be greater mention of adequate infrastructure being put in place for all new housing as to date there has not been much sign of this happening in North Herts, especially in Royston	Royston Town Council	SF	Infrastructure is a planning issue dealt with in the LDF.
Agree	Agree	St Ippolyts Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
3. The challenge for housing	P.4 The current fluctuations in the housing market will have an effect on the overall supply of new dwellings, and perhaps deserves attention. Can Halifax figures help?	Jephson HA	SF	Noted – Risk section added to strategy.
	Support – current stock should be preserved and maintained in a condition that meets the needs of future generations to try to minimise the additional costs to other services (i.e. police and education)	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Any restrictions due to resources?	Papworth Trust	SF	Resources included under delivery vehicles section.
	The level of housing required is quite unacceptable, the high population growth in this area should be addressed and efforts made to deal with this. A sensible percentage of housing should be in the areas where it is needed. Are other areas of the country being made more attractive to people to live and work in? Why is the East of England being allowed to become so overcrowded?	Royston Town Council	SF	Beyond the remit of a local Housing Strategy. Housing and Planning endeavour to deliver housing where it is needed on sustainable sites – see Sustainable Communities section.
	“Demand for housing in North Hertfordshire outstrips supply” – there is no indication where this demand is coming from. Is it from people wanting	St Paul's Walden	SF	Access to market housing from households outside the district is beyond the control of the Council.

APPENDIX D

	to move to the area? Is it NHDC's responsibility to house everybody who simply wants to live here?	Parish Council		The Council has a statutory responsibility towards those in housing need and gives priority to households with a local connection.
	There should be a review of Social Housing stock, especially looking at under utilised dwellings where one single widow or widower or single person occupies a multi bed roomed property. Affordable housing needs to be prioritised. We need to have a good balance in the area	St Ippolyts Parish Council	SF	Research on under-occupation and actions to address it are included in section 8.
4. The local housing market	How do you know that demand exceeds supply? RSL	Councillor	SF	Reference to findings of Housing Needs Survey included.
	P.4 Really the same comment as for section 3 that the private house building market deserves a paragraph in so far as it is a key deliverer of part of your strategy and new homes. How will a falling market influence your strategy?	Jephson HA	SF	Amended.
	Where do you get the 13,000 figure. Does it agree with Regional Spatial Strategy?	Councillor	SF	Footnote added.
	The impact of inward migration – E. European workers mentioned later but could be mentioned here	Watford BC	SF	Amended.
	It is common knowledge that young families have been priced out of the housing market owing to the high rise in affordable housing	Parish Council	SF	The Strategy seeks to improve the circumstances of households priced out of the housing market by supporting the delivery of affordable housing.
	Support - Deliver new housing in sustainable locations Improve understanding and knowledge of housing market Make the best of current stock Enable a range of tenures	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	When will the commissioned SHMA be completed and information be available? Will the Housing Strategy need to be reviewed at that point? Under 'affordability' figures are quoted but the text does not explain where this info came from – presumably the last Housing Needs Survey? Also suggest that this section could explain the links between planning policy, the local housing market and housing delivery, e.g. what does local planning policy require in terms of affordable housing provision if the shortfall annually is 634 units? Although some of this does come later.	Papworth Trust	SF	Up-dates to the Housing Strategy are included in the Action Plan. Footnote added to affordability figures. Paragraph on LDF added
	Agree with the suggested possible responses. These could also include some responses for which planning would be responsible e.g. through the emerging LDF, will there be an Affordable Housing DPD or SPD?	Papworth Trust	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
Mix of tenures on new build estates should be carefully handled, the level of social housing required seems inordinately high. Housing trends should be monitored and the amount and variety of new builds adjusted to accommodate all levels. Do not agree with the social engineering strategy of affordable housing being physically indistinguishable from market housing and mixed in with private housing. How is the Stevenage Borough Council SHM assessment going to help with the rest of North Herts?	Royston Town Council	SF	The Strategy seeks to avoid social and economic segregation and deliver sustainable mixed communities. New housing delivery is monitored and a mix of types and tenures are sought on new build developments – this is made clear in the Housing Strategy and Action Plan. The SHMA is jointly commissioned with Stevenage and will provide data on both areas.	

APPENDIX D

	Does this mean that houses are to be built only for those working locally not commuters?	St Paul's Walden Parish Council	SF	The Council has no control over where households that move into market housing originate from. Priority for affordable housing is given to households with a local connection.
	Support: Improve understanding and knowledge of the Housing Market Encourage local RSLs to supply NROSH with any data they request Monitor housing market trends Make the best use of current stock Facilitate housing of sizes appropriate to the requirements of households in housing need Raise levels of expertise amongst housing and planning staff	Barley Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Agree - especially about the importance of making best use of current stock. Affordable, warden or sheltered accommodation for the Elderly may well release other properties onto the market. At present there is a lack of such places, causing people to stay where they are.	St Ippolyts Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
5. Sustainable communities	P.6 in terms of possible response, you need to make more play regarding the mix of affordable homes as part of s.106's to ensure that developers have no policy basis for offering a block of 1 bed units as the affordable element on a scheme of 4 bed private houses because they meet your needs.	Jephson HA	SF/RK	Included in Action Plan/LDF.
	P. 6 Happy to support the employment proposals so long as they permeate throughout new development not just affordable. You will also need to measure output otherwise it will just be words.	Jephson HA	SF/AD/DE	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	P.8 You may struggle to achieve Secure by Design on affordable units as part of a s.106 unless this requirement is placed on all tenures. Is this possible?	Jephson HA	SF/RK	Amended – all new development proposals to show how they design out crime.
	New build – possible responses – no mention of planning policy on first couple of points, does it support these responses or do developers determine what happens to these?	Watford BC	SF/Planning Policy	Delivered through LDF – see Action Plan.
	Current housing stock – should action plan support back to work schemes?	Watford BC	SF/DE	Included in Action Plan.
	Community Safety – possible responses – include link to county wide ex-offender protocol.	Watford BC	SF/ML	
	Crashpad – does this fit with new SP contract or is it something extra?	Watford BC	SF/ML	Supporting People contract.
	Community involvement – needs more robust actions?	Watford BC	SF/AH	These will be included in new strategies.
Support – Affordable housing to be distributed across the site Only small developments of one bedroom flats Try to include a mix of tenures Increase the range of housing options available Improve mobility by escalating the priority given to households who have work related reasons for moving	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.	

APPENDIX D

	<p>Developers required to make a contribution towards community leisure facilities including retention or creation of open spaces Use secured by design when making decisions Work with relevant agencies to produce an ex-offenders protocol Make the crashpad mediation service available to households in which teenagers are committing anti-social behaviour Update the system to enable participating local residents to have a say on service provision</p>			
	<p>Would be useful to see an earlier reference to the proportion of affordable housing required in new developments. See comments above in 4.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	Included in Action Plan.
	<p>New build - Agree with possible responses suggested under new build. All should be incorporated in planning policy.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	<p>Current housing stock. Agree with possible responses suggested</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	<p>Physical environment – this section could also cover inclusive design i.e. not just the provision of facilities but how accessible they and the wider environment are to all members of the community including those with physical or sensory disabilities. The Papworth Trust would be pleased to work with North Herts on improving the Housing Strategies approach on this issue.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	Planning Policy issue.
	<p>Community Safety – agree with possible responses.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	<p>Strongly agree that developers should be required to make a contribution towards new community leisure and recreation facilities and that new builds must not have a negative impact on provision of open spaces. Community involvement very important in decision making, what are the processes in place to enable this? Agreements between residents and developers have not always been enforced by NHDC or HCC in the past. There should be strict enforcement of Section 37 and 106 planning obligations by HCC and NHDC. HCC have now implemented a formal monitoring procedure but NHDC have not!</p>	Royston Town Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	<p>All very interesting but no mention of infrastructure apart from shops and entertainment. Where is the provision for new roads, sewerage, water etc.?</p>	St Paul's Walden Parish Council	SF	Planning Policy issue.
	<p>Current Housing Stock – Possible Responses Neighbourhood Services expressed concern about the expansion of CBL on a geographical basis as this is politically sensitive and not part of the current strategy. Neighbourhood Services are not sure about setting up a “rent plus” scheme – the implications are not clear.</p> <p>Community Safety – Main Text Neighbourhood Services are concerned that there is no mention of how RSLs are involved in CDRP to “identify and implement initiatives to</p>	NHH	SF	These are actions that will be ‘investigated’ in partnership with RSLs.

APPENDIX D

	<p>improve the safety of the community” – we need some formal agreement covering this aspect and how we will feed into the Community Safety Strategy.</p> <p>Community Safety – Possible Responses Neighbourhood Services are concerned that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating the Community Cohesion Strategy should be done with the involvement of RSLs. <p>Parenting programmes should not be seen as the sole responsibility of RSLs. This should say that NHDC and RSLs will work together to make these available, but that a joint project should be led by NHDC. It is not only social tenants who cause ASB!!</p>		<p>LW</p> <p>SF</p> <p>SF</p>	<p>NHH are represented in the CDRP.</p> <p>There is no mention of a 'Community Cohesion Strategy' in the Housing Strategy.</p> <p>Amended wording on parenting programmes. Agree it is not only Social tenants that cause anti-social behaviour however, this tenure is at risk of losing their homes if they commit ASB, the Council is committed to preventing homelessness.</p>
	<p>Support: New Build Affordable Housing to be physically indistinguishable from market housing on mixed tenure sites Current Housing Stock Work with partners and stakeholders to explore ways to enhance the most deprived areas of the district Improve mobility by escalating the priority given to households who have work related reasons for moving through the allocations scheme An expanded geographical base for Choice Based Lettings Cross boundary nominations and reciprocal arrangements with other local authorities Increase the range of housing options available The Physical Environment Produce a Green Space Strategy that ensures that development does not have a negative impact on the provision of open spaces</p>	Barley Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	<p>Agree broadly with the proposals. Social housing organisations should sell off some of their stock in desirable areas (when it becomes available) to balance the social mix as well as provide funding for mixed developments. Not happy about selling social housing but if it is sold should be at market value. Difficult to balance the aspiration of reducing “ghettos” of social housing with the wishes of those households who have spent huge sums of money on their properties often because it is in a “good area” and who would be very concerned if they had affordable housing next door due to the perceived problems associated with such tenants.</p>	St Ippolyts Parish Council	SF	<p>Comments noted and taken into consideration in preparation of Housing Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Not intended to suggest that social housing should be sold off – wording of Housing Strategy checked to ensure clarity.</p>
6. New housing	<p>p.10 The sentence commencing “however ...” is very weak and has the potential to undermine your s.106 strategy. To my mind a much more robust statement should be offered particularly as you have done the</p>	Jephson HA	RK	Amended.

APPENDIX D

	Adams Integra economic research and published the findings.			
	P.10 in a similar vein the paragraph commencing “in 2007 ...” could be made more robust.	Jephson HA	RK	No action taken.
	P.11 I am looking for a clear commitment in this section to your partner RSL’s and the Housing Corporation relationship.	Jephson HA	SF/DE	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	P.11 I am also looking for some clear investment priorities (and Budget?) for any North Herts investment.	Jephson HA	SF/AD	Awaiting figures for budget – will be included in resources section.
	P.12 I support your proposals for Lifetime homes. I would caveat the deliverability in respect of s.106 schemes and flats above the ground floor. Is this something which needs identifying through the planning process?	Jephson HA	RK	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Remember that NHDC opposes development west of A1 (M) – make this clear.	Councillor	SF	Footnote added.
	Lifetime Homes – possible responses – how will this be achieved?	Watford BC	SF/AD	Council funding to be made available – see Action Plan.
	Overcrowding – possible responses – could arrange improved mutual exchange involving chains of people and get RSLs on board.	Watford BC	SF/ML	RSLs to be required to give tenants access to a mutual exchange scheme as part of the partnership agreement.
	Support: Create a mix of affordable supported and market housing on sustainable site in both rural and urban locations Consider working with the LCB sub-region to allow cross boundary nominations Create better funding opportunities for affordable housing Devise a practical system to identify sites for development now and in the future consider the results of the Adams Integra study Continue to discuss with developers matching the housing stock to meet current housing needs in early discussion Identify land suitable for sustainable housing developments Continue to deliver a mix of property types Continue to deliver a mix of tenures Gather and analyse customer feedback from new build affordable housing tenants Aim to continue to provide affordable housing in the rural areas – it is not only local young people who may prefer to live in a rural setting Continue flexible design to enable the creation of an additional bedroom within the existing structure Continue with the Rowntree Foundation lifetime homes standards with regard to the increase in age of the general population and disabled people either from illness or hereditary cause	Kelshall Parish Council		Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Again it would be useful to understand a bit more about progress towards new planning policy – what’s the LDF timescale? Plans for affordable housing DPD, SPD etc.	Papworth Trust	SF	This is a planning policy matter – do not want to reproduce LDF in Housing Strategy. Timescales of actions to be delivered through the LDF included in Action Plan.
	New Build Homebuy – how does the Council ensure affordability? E.g. what are the average % initial equity sales and % rental values? Will the Council be setting parameters around this for RSL providers?	Papworth Trust	SF	Affordability criteria included in Action Plan.

APPENDIX D

	<p>Agree with possible responses but perhaps they could be more specific e.g. deliver a mix of types – what is greatest local need? Use this to set target for % of affordable homes to be delivered of specific size and type. Set % target for tenure split.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	Included in Action Plan.
	<p>Rural housing – is there a rural affordable housing development programme? What is target for rural housing needs survey to be completed annually. Perhaps appendices could include breakdown of units delivered by parish showing tenure type and whether on exception site or not. Do rural housing needs survey identify need for accessible homes?</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	<p>No development Programme at present – need for Rural Housing needs Study's initiated by Rural Parishes who are invited to participate. Action Plan included – all new rural affordable housing to meet Lifetime Homes Standard which includes accessibility criteria.</p>
	<p>Lifetime homes – Papworth Trust strongly supports NHDC approach to lifetime homes. With the recent publication of 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' perhaps this section could be strengthened even further – set target of 100% affordable housing to lifetime homes standards. This section could also incorporate information on inclusive design, people's enjoyment of their home is closely linked to its environment and an accessible home is no use in an inaccessible environment</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	<p>RSLs indicate they would be unwilling to do this without additional funding from the Council. The target has been set at 50% to ensure that funding can be made available.</p>
	<p>Where are all these 3,446 new houses yet to be developed in North Herts going to go? This is too high a number, Royston is already nearly at its full quota of new housing anyway and should not be saddled with even more. A very high percentage of affordable homes (40%) is being proposed. So we really need this amount? How is our struggling electricity supply and water supply going to cope with all these extra homes? How is one job to be provided for every new dwelling? We must retain land for arable and renewable energy crops. Lifetime Homes requirement for new builds is a very good idea.</p>	Royston Town Council	SF	<p>Not aware of any quota for new housing in Royston. There is evidence of unmet housing need in Royston. New housing will be developed on sustainable sites – see Action Plan.</p> <p>For every new dwelling a proportional amount of land will be allocated for commercial development – see Action Plan</p>
	<p>To class Great Ashby as rural can only be described as bizarre. Great Ashby is an urban area.</p>	St Paul's Walden Parish Council	SF	<p>This is an issue for the Boundary Commission.</p>
	<p><i>"Lifetime Homes are ordinary family homes ..."</i> it is an extraordinary supposition that people would want to live in, what can only be described as, a house for the disabled. Most people's needs are individual, and a one size fits all approach is illogical.</p>	St Paul's Walden Parish Council	SF	<p>Lifetime Homes are not adapted properties and are specifically designed to counteract a one-size –fits-all approach. Wording of Housing Strategy checked to ensure no confusion.</p>
	<p>Delivering New Affordable Housing – Possible Responses You state that you will gather and analyse customer feedback from all new build projects after 6 months. However many RSLs already do this (we certainly do). If you do it as well, then won't the customer get consultation overload? Isn't it silly for both of us to ask similar questions at the same time. Perhaps you should amend this to state that you will work with RSLs to gather...etc.</p> <p>Lifetime Homes – Main Text You state that there are possible long-term savings to RSLs that offset the high costs associated with building homes to lifetime homes</p>	NHH	SF	<p>Amended.</p> <p>It is not stated that there will be savings for RSLs – the savings are made by a number of service providers.</p>

APPENDIX D

	standards. However most of these savings are to other organisations, particularly the local authority and other public bodies, and not the RSL. If you want lifetime homes you therefore need to reflect this in your own grant rates or in supporting higher bids to the Housing Corporation if you are going to get RSLs to comply. If you don't, then RSLs may not be able to afford to do this			The Council will provide funding for Lifetime Homes where RSLs are unwilling or unable to provide them without funding.
	Support: Rural Housing Continue to work in partnership with the rural enabler and parish councils to identify housing need in rural parishes Allow exception sites <i>to be considered for development</i> where an identified need cannot be met through current provision Continue to work in partnership with developing RSLs to deliver affordable rural housing where a need has been identified Ensure new affordable rural housing remains available in perpetuity by restricting purchases of shared ownership to a maximum of 80% All 1 and 2 bed new build houses in rural areas to be able to facilitate an additional bedroom within the existing structure	Barley Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Agree - need to comply with plan.	St Ippolyts Parish Council		Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
7. Greener healthier homes	Need for study of water resources	Councillor	SF	Planning issue.
	Support - Try to reduce CO2 emissions by efficient build in new housing Create methods for sustainable water management Try to ensure dwellings have space for recycling bins Risk of flood and contaminated sites to be of low priority for development RSLs to review the energy efficiency of their stock on a regular basis Investigate RSLs raising funds for energy efficiency improvements	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Support.	Papworth Trust	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Agree with all responses to this section, particularly provision of space for recycling bins.	Royston Town Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Water is dismissed in one paragraph. More buildings mean more water usage, however good the conservation etc. is. There is no mention of where this extra water is coming from. Hertfordshire is one of the driest counties in England, please explain where is the water coming from?	St Paul's Walden Parish Council	SF	New development will be delivered on sustainable sites – see Action Plan.
	New Housing – Main Text You make no mention here of the higher costs associated with developing homes to the Code for Sustainable Homes' standards, and I think that you should because it is a material factor in how new homes are built. For example, reach Code Level 3 is calculated to cost around 8% - 10% more than a Building Regs compliant home. Building to Code Level 4 can be another 10% or more on top of that. The Housing Corporation	NHH	SF	Level 4 was not required only above level 3. Amended to current Code for Sustainable Homes level.

	<p>recognise this, and pay more in grant for homes that exceed minimum standards, and perhaps you should consider doing the same if you are serious about this.</p> <p>New Housing – Possible Responses Could you please remove the “such as” list from the renewable energy point? This may be seen by some as prescriptive, and some of those you list or either way too expensive (photovoltaic panels) or useless (micro-scale wind turbines).</p> <p>You state that NHDC funding will only be available for schemes that exceed HC standards. While the intent behind this is laudable, you should be aware that if you set your bar higher than that set by the Housing Corporation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You will have to increase the funding you give - £30k per unit isn't going to cut it given the much higher costs associated with level 4 (see the point above). 2. It is not always possible to exceed targets cost effectively at all – particularly on smaller infill schemes. <p>This aim could therefore see you losing perfectly good, compliant schemes, or have schemes proceed without your support. Also – does this mean that you won't support bids for HC grant that comply with, but don't exceed, their requirements? If so, then you are going to upset a lot of your RSL partners. If not, then you are applying two standards, which can be confusing – and what will you do if a scheme that is important to NHDC, is compliant but does not exceed requirements, does not get HC funding? Your own rules would not allow you to step in with LA grant to save it, and you could end up losing the scheme!</p> <p>Also, I wonder what the HC's view of this approach would be. How do they feel about council's setting a higher standard than them?</p> <p>Another risk is that some RSLs – but not this one I hasten to add – and most developers may prefer to build out a mixed tenure developments at building regs level only, but which do not require grant funding. We are seeing this more and more – particularly on s106 schemes where developers tell me that it's cheaper and easier for them to accept a lower “without grant” price from an RSL and then build cheaper homes that do not have to comply with Housing Corp. standards. If you impose your point you may find that you actually have the opposite effect to that intended. RSLs and developers will be increasingly tempted to build without grant and the new homes will be built to building regs standards only (NB: building regs won't catch up with the current Code Level 3 requirement until 2013).</p>		<p>SF</p>	<p>No change – list is for example and is not prescriptive.</p> <p>Amended – HC standards required.</p>
--	--	--	-----------	---

APPENDIX D

	That said, you do want to make a statement on this issue, and not be seen to be funding schemes that don't comply with the Code for Sustainable Homes. Perhaps this point could therefore be amended to read "Council funding will only be made available on affordable housing developments that meet the current requirements of the Code for Sustainable Homes" and then add another along the lines of "NHDC will work with developers and RSLs to provide new, affordable homes that exceed the Code for Sustainable Homes".			
	<p>Support:</p> <p>New Housing Investigate introducing a local policy requiring all new dwellings to have space for recycling bins Development will be refused where the risk of flooding to the site is unacceptable Development must include sustainable drainage solutions and must demonstrate that the highest levels of water efficiency possible for the site have been achieved Use the powers available to the Council to enforce Building Regulations All new developments will be assessed vis-à-vis land contamination</p> <p>Current Housing Stock RSLs to carry out annual reviews of the energy efficiency of their stock using the Government's SAP ratings, confirm energy improvements or strategies being implemented during the previous year and provide details to NHDC</p>	Barley Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Agree	St Ippolyts Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
8. Making best use of stock	P.20 Has NHDC produced a Private Sector Housing Strategy. If so is there a clear link from that to this section.	Jephson HA	AD	No NHDC Private Sector Housing Strategy.
	<p>Support - Provide guidance and advice to tenants and landlords on their rights and responsibilities Work with LCB Empty Homes Group and Herts Beds and Bucks EHO Group to develop good practice Encourage development of smaller specialist accommodation to enable elderly occupiers to downsize if they wish Encourage RSLs to participate in mobility schemes Ensure that sufficient four bedroom properties are delivered on affordable housing developments Improve records of HMOs in the district Ensure landlords are aware of their responsibilities</p>	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Overcrowding. The bedroom standard appears to make no recognition of the size of the room. Hence a small room that can take bunk beds but without any space for any study area is officially large enough for two fully grown teenage boys. Size of room is vital for children particularly when	Herts CC	SF/ML	Bedroom size part of Design Standards on new build. Current Stock – the size that a room must be to count as a bedroom is included in the Housing Allocations Scheme.

APPENDIX D

	studying for examinations. Low income can be linked to health, social issues and low educational achievement due to lack of space to have privacy and quiet			
	Decent homes – support, especially commitment to increasing decent homes in the private sector. May have missed the reference to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System but info should perhaps be included if it is not.	Papworth Trust	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Empty properties – support.	Papworth Trust	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Under occupation – support.	Papworth Trust	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Over crowding – support.	RSL	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	HMOs – could be more specific on how NHDC is progressing with HMO licensing and explain the Government requirements for this.	Papworth Trust	SF	No action taken – brief synopsis included in the housing Strategy – not felt appropriate to explain procedures in detail in this document as it covers so many topics.
	Perhaps an additional section in either 8 or 9 on helping people remain in their own homes longer could be added? Would give opportunity to mention the HIA and their role, how the Council links with them etc.	Papworth Trust	SF	HIA mentioned in Action Plan Strategic objective 19: To ensure that vulnerable people receive the support they need to live as independently as possible.
	Council's should be more pro-active in reducing the number of HMOs and should enforce this reduction where necessary. Many HMOs are often used to house cheap emigrant labour in squalid conditions etc. Many homes are already shared with the rents and mortgages shared.	Royston Town Council	SF	The Council has no power to reduce the number of HMOs. To improve the conditions for tenants, the Strategy seeks to increase our knowledge of the whereabouts of HMOs and thus require those that fit the criteria to be licensed. It also seeks to ensure landlords and tenants are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
	<i>"A significant number of older people under-occupy their homes and may consider moving out if offered the right incentives together with the availability of attractive housing alternatives."</i> – to suggest that older people should leave the family home and move, possibly out of the area away from friends and family, is offensive. An incentive can often be seen as coercion.	St Paul's Walden Parish Council	SF	The Council does not seek to force people out of their homes and there is no suggestion that anyone would have to move out of the area. The Strategy is to provide desirable alternatives and help for those who wish to move.
	Support: Decent Homes Continue to monitor RSL's delivery of decent homes Where a NHDC Environmental Health Officer identifies a Category 1 Hazard (HHSRS) in an RSL property, the landlord will be required to remedy the hazard within the time limit specified Facilitate a local RSL group to plan improvements to social housing stock beyond 2010 Under-Occupation Work with RSL partners to carry out research to quantify under-occupation in Social Housing Investigate what incentives and housing alternatives under-occupying households would find attractive Deliver more Lifetime Homes to make it easier for elderly people to move to suitable accommodation or, in future, stay in their own homes	Barley Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

APPENDIX D

	<p>Work with RSLs to introduce an under-occupation scheme with more weighty incentives Encourage development of smaller specialist accommodation to enable elderly occupiers to downsize if they wish</p> <p>Overcrowding Work with RSLs to research the extent and causes of overcrowding in social rented housing Review housing allocations schemes to maximise the opportunity to move over-crowded households into larger properties Work with RSLs to introduce an under-occupation scheme with more weighty incentives</p> <p>Houses in Multiple Occupation Ensure landlords are aware of their responsibilities</p>			
	Under occupation is clearly a problem – need to ensure that single households could be moved to more suitable homes in the same locality. Need to be careful no one is forced to move or feels pressured into moving. Also refer to 3 and 4.	St Ippolyts Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
9. Housing for diversity	p.21 Should the list of possible responses not include Lifetime Homes as we've seen elsewhere?	Jephson HA	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	P.24 Interesting comment regarding migrant workers. There are restrictions to migrant workers access to housing. Are migrant workers aware of how to go about getting access. i.e. are they being left out?	Jephson HA	ML	Amended to include raising awareness of the Council's housing service amongst economic migrants.
	P.24 The wording varies between shared ownership and Homebuy. Some consistency between the terms would assist understanding for some readers	Jephson HA	SF	Amended.
	Key worker section – could include mention of intermediate/below market rent properties.	Watford BC	SF	Amended.
	Support -Work in partnership to deliver the Supporting People strategy Work with the Supporting People Team and other stakeholders to deliver a generic floating support/tenancy sustainment service Programme development group to ensure representation of local interests All DFGs to be considered within 6 months of completed application Work with RSLs and Social Services to ensure equal treatment across tenures Set up a register of adaptations Distribute literature on services provided by the Council to churches and social clubs with high attendance from ethnic minorities Deliver more affordable larger properties Give practical consideration to the need for (gypsy & traveller) sites and take into account that the criteria should satisfy the physical need of this group Monitor lettings to applicants from accession states a percentage of new build affordable housing to be for intermediate tenures	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

APPENDIX D

	<p>The Papworth Trust – a specialist RSL provider of accessible and supported housing – welcomes the approach taken by NHDC to the provision of homes suitable for the diverse needs of the community. It would be very useful to see a breakdown of housing need for accessible and supported housing in either this section or the one covering new homes. The Council should set a target for the % of accessible and supported housing in new housing developments or make clear statement of how this will be assessed on site by site basis. Planned housing growth in the area gives a great opportunity to address the needs of wheelchair users and people with support needs. The Papworth Trust would be happy to work with NHDC to establish local need and deliver units in line with this.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	<p>Housing Options Manager made aware of this offer. Actions in Strategy include plans for increasing the number of accessible new build homes and setting up a register of adapted social housing. The Housing Register takes account of households that are in housing need due to disability.</p>
	<p>Possible responses – support all suggested but also would like to see the inclusion of targets for accessible and supported housing. If the Council does not currently have the up to date evidence to set such targets then suggest an additional response around establishing local need for accessible and supported housing through survey work, liaison with social services, PCT and RSLs etc. As mentioned the Papworth Trust may be able to offer some assistance in this.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	<p>Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan. See above.</p>
	<p>DFG's – What's the Herts and beds Environmental Health and Housing Specialist Group and what's their remit</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	<p>No amendment – the name of the Group gives an indication of their remit. It is not appropriate to go into detail of all the groups and agencies mentioned in the document.</p>
	<p>BME – support.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	<p>Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.</p>
	<p>Gypsies and Travellers – support.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	<p>Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.</p>
	<p>Economic migrants – support.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	<p>Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.</p>
	<p>Key worker – is Lea Valley the Zone Agent? Might be useful to explain role of Zone Agent and how the Council uses the info they store on applicants to inform strategy and policy development.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	<p>Footnote added.</p>
	<p>BME communities should be encouraged to integrated more fully; they should not be given special help over and above other communities. Do not agree that there is no evidence of migrant workers putting pressure on social housing, they are definitely putting pressure on other housing; see your appendix c which states that the BME numbers have already doubled since 2001 while white British pop. has decreased by at least 2% since 2001 and will no doubt continue decreasing. They also have the highest numbers of dependent children. Such unrestrained population growth is putting huge strain on local resources and is unsustainable in the long term for such a small area as North Herts, never mind the country as a whole.</p>	Royston Town Council	SF	<p>The purpose of monitoring is to ensure that the services provided by the Council are accessible to, and provide for, the needs of all members of the community. Action plan includes monitoring trends in economic migration. The numbers of people from BME groups have not doubled since 2001. The table shows that the percentage of the population that is from a BME group has gone up from 10.65% to 12.5%. The percentage of the population that is white British has gone down correspondingly but the number has risen as the population in the district is rising year on year.</p>

APPENDIX D

	<p>If people (whatever their ethnic origin) desire to have large families, it is surely their responsibility to provide for themselves?</p> <p>N Herts does not have a problem of unauthorised gypsy encampments, and EERA has not shown this need. The gypsy community have made it very clear that they require sites in urban areas, adjacent to good facilities, and do not wish to live on the outskirts of villages.</p>	St. Paul's Walden Parish Council	SF	<p>Curbs on family size are beyond the remit of the Council.</p> <p>The Council assists eligible households of all sizes and ethnicities that are in housing need.</p> <p>The Council is working with neighbouring authorities to respond to EERA. Any future sites identified as suitable to Gypsies and Travellers will be in sustainable locations.</p>
	<p>Key Worker and Intermediate Income Households – Possible Responses</p> <p>Could I suggest that you work with Lea Valley Homes and RSLs to promote intermediate market products? Some of us do our own marketing in addition to that provided by Lea Valley, and have access to all manner of publications, events, etc.</p>	NHH	SF	Amended.
	<p>Support:</p> <p>Housing with Support</p> <p>Work in partnership to implement the Supporting People Strategy</p> <p>Work in partnership with the Supporting People Team to identify gaps in provision of support</p> <p>Work with RSLs and stakeholders to deliver new supported housing units to meet identified needs in locations accessible to local people</p> <p>Continue to have representation on the Supporting People Commissioning Body Programme Development Group to ensure representation of local interests</p> <p>Extend monitoring of service delivery to include disability, age, sexuality and religion or belief</p> <p>Gypsies and Travellers</p> <p>Continue to work in partnership with other Local Authorities to respond to regional consultations on Gypsy and Traveller site provision</p> <p>Economic Migrants from EU Accession States</p> <p>Improve records of Houses in Multiple Occupation in the district</p> <p>Monitor lettings to applicants from the Accession States</p>	Barley Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Agree with response set out.	St Ippolyts Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
10. Homelessness	Would be useful to explain what HYHG DGS is	Watford BC	SF/ML	Moved to Action Plan.
	<p>Support - Work in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council to a new homelessness strategy</p> <p>Use measures currently in place</p> <p>Make a homelessness prevention fund available to front line officers</p> <p>Monitor the circumstances of homeless households employment /support to better target initiatives/resources</p>	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	This section could possible give more mention to the Homelessness Strategy and its timescale for review etc.	Papworth Trust	SF	Timescale for adoption included in Action Plan – timescale for review will be included in the Homelessness Strategy.
	Support development of protocols for people in need of accessible and/or	Papworth	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

APPENDIX D

	supported housing (might be a better phrase than 'special needs'?) for an example of good practice in developing and implementing this type of protocol contact	Trust		
	I agree with the responses here.	Royston Town Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Support: Monitor the circumstances of homelessness households – employment/support needs etc to better target initiatives/resources	Barley Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Agree with response set out.	St Ippolyts Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
Appendixes	Appendix B – generally acceptable priorities	Kelshall Parish council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Appendix D – basic practicalities of need and requirement	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	Working within a recovery philosophy many service users are ready to move on to complete independence within a 18 – 24 month period. It is essential that the needs of service users ready to move on to general needs accommodation is recognised as a priority in order that specialist supported and rehabilitation units can be released for new people requiring the service	Herts CC	SF	The Housing Allocations Scheme already includes a procedure for move on of households in accommodation with support that no longer require support.
	Very useful.	Papworth Trust	SH	Noted for inclusion in Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
	I agree with local priorities. In table 10 why are the causes of non-decency so high in Royston compared to other areas in North Herts?	Royston Town Council	SH	Reasons for Non-decency are in the NHDC House Condition Survey.
Other	Option appraisal for other key priorities – why were they discarded	Jephson HA	SF	Will liaise with Jephson to clarify
	<p>The problems outlined in the document are unfortunately the results of current politically related issues. The need for additional housing overall in the provinces is the result of overcrowding in the cities due to influx of overseas residents pushing out to the regions those that had lived in the cities.</p> <p>The issues then faced in the "country" are to either give up areas of green belt, not ideal, or move the demands further North, because the South already stretched to capacity in many areas, does not have the resources to continually support the building demands being made of it. Houses continually being build require support of mains services, transport, schools, better roads to name but few, and given the systems are already under immense pressure, and not coping in many cases, there is little point in continually loading more into the system.</p> <p>The comment that people should not have to move out of their birth area no longer is sustainable. Workplace demand can determine where people should live and if it means moving to other parts of the country that</p>	Ickleford Parish Council	SF	<p>Immigration is an issue for the Home Office and is beyond the remit of the Housing Strategy.</p> <p>The Strategy encourages mobility for people who want to move to work and encourages sufficient development for people who do not want to move out of the area where they live and work and receive</p>

APPENDIX D

<p>should be the case. Hertfordshire may appear a prosperous county, but if the prices for housing are so high then people should look at other areas, in the North possibly. The South is becoming totally saturated in every way, and with continued blocks of flats being built in North Herts the problem is going to get worse.</p> <p>An unenviable solution for anyone with no simple remedy, but if the countries immigration policy is not going to be strengthened there will never be an acceptable answer.</p>			<p>support from formal and informal sources. It seeks to improve affordability for those priced out of the housing market.</p> <p>The Strategy seeks to avoid developments of a single property type.</p>
<p>The matter was discussed at the March meeting of the Parish Council. Parish councillors who have reviewed the draft report considered it to be very good.</p> <p>It was resolved that a letter be sent commending the authors.</p>	Ashwell Parish Council	SF	N/A
<p>Try not to forget that homeownership creates a necessary balance to all the criteria</p>	Kelshall Parish Council	SF	N/A
<p>Rushden and Wallington Parish Council have no comments to make on the Housing Strategy for North Herts 2008 - 2013</p>	Rushden and Wallington Parish Council	SF	N/A
<p>Might assist with delivering the strategy and developing action plan to break the 6 key priorities down into aims and objectives.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	N/A
<p>Resourcing the strategy - there's no section covering how the Housing Strategy will be resourced. E.g. how much H Corp grant is likely to be available for affordable housing development programme, how much does Council intend to spend on strategic housing work i.e. private sector housing (empty homes, DFGs etc), enabling, homelessness prevention, General Fund/HRA (if still have stock) how does district housing strategy link to the district Capital Strategy? How much SP funding comes in to the district, how does this break down by service provision? Etc. While Go East may not have set guidance other regions have and their requirements might be useful to NHDC e.g GOSE</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	Section to be added.
<p>Policy context – as well as including additional info on local planning policy it would be useful to see a section (perhaps in appendices) setting out the main national, regional, sub-regional and local policies that influence the Housing Strategy with a brief explanation of the links between them.</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	This is included in Appendix A with references for those who wish to research this area in greater depth.
<p>Monitoring and review process – it would be useful to see how the Council will progress the Housing Strategy, e.g. will there be some sort of Housing Strategy Action Group, when will the strategy next be reviewed? How will its development be monitored by Members and stakeholders?</p>	Papworth Trust	SF	Section to be added
<p>Agree with Lifetime Homes criteria.</p>	Royston Town Council	SF	Noted for inclusion in the Housing Strategy Action Plan
<p>We accept that, in time, there will be slow growth to the Parish (St. Paul's Walden) housing, as we do not have the infrastructure of shops etc. to</p>	St. Paul's Walden Parish	SF	N/A

APPENDIX D

<p>come with sudden influxes of more dwellers. Otherwise, in the larger planning concept which NHDC must look at under Government pressure, any big changes to that will only come from the Parliament who are unlikely to press for pushing the larger growth in housing into the Midlands or North unless some dramatic events alter the current financial growth of this Country.</p> <p>The use of words such as – workless, worklessness and unviable, which do not exist in the English language, is unacceptable and should be discouraged.</p>	Council		<p>Workless(ness) is a term commonly used by Government it is defined as a generic term for unemployed or otherwise economically inactive.</p>
<p>The NHDC Housing strategy does not address the growth associated with Luton and South Beds that could occur in North Herts in accordance with the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy... One of the areas being considered is within North Herts....it is considered that the potential of housing development associated with Luton being brought forward before 2013 in North Herts should be acknowledged in the Housing Strategy. The NHDC Core Strategy Preferred Options addresses this situation east of Luton from paragraphs 3.68 – 3.73. The Housing Strategy should recognise the potential for development east of Luton in a similar way... although the housing figures will count towards the Luton growth area whilst there are likely to be site-specific policies/requirements reflecting the cross boundary issues, it may be that the affordable housing provision affects North Herts. This could be the case if commuted affordable housing payments are made to facilitate provision off site and within rural settlements in North Herts. Such an impact could be quite significant....</p>	Terence O'Rourke on behalf of Bloor Homes	SF	<p>The growth associated with Luton and South Beds is not part of the Strategy for Housing in North Herts. The LDF approach to this is that it will be dealt with separately.</p>
<p>... Businesses, in relocating to a new area, not only seek suitable offices, but explore the availability of housing in general for their employees. The key people making these decisions also wonder where they are going to live, and the number of Victorian/Edwardian vicarages in this area is limited.</p> <p>The plan should address this imbalance and might I suggest a potential solution? We have in this area, a number of small, mid-30s bungalows generally sub-standard but occupying large plots, many in rural areas. These would be ideal for demolition and rebuild and could provide some of the housing required for this end of the market...</p>	Court Homes Ltd	SF	<p>There is no evidence of a shortage of larger properties in the district. 44.57% of properties in the district are in Council tax bands D – H. This is higher than for the East of England, 38.23% and England as a whole 33.81%.</p> <p>This is a planning policy issue – letter sent to responder to advise of this</p>

Responding Officers

AD – Alan Davey: Housing Strategy and Renewals Manager
 DE – Debbie Ealand: Housing Development Liaison Officer
 LW – Linda Whamby – Community Safety Strategy Officer
 ML – Martin Lawrence – Housing Options Manager

Richard Kelly – Planning Officer
 Sharon Forde – Housing Policy Officer

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No.
----------------------------------	------------------------

14

TITLE OF REPORT: ADOPTION OF NEW HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Attached is the report that will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 24 June 2008.

[Note: Due to their bulk, the appendices to the report are attached under separate cover for Members of the Scrutiny Committee only. They are available in hard copy on request, or can be viewed on the Council's website.]

The Scrutiny Committee has asked to comment on the report before it is considered by Cabinet. Members' views are invited.

THIS PAGE IS BLANK

TITLE OF REPORT: THE ADOPTION OF A NEW HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY FOR 2008-2013

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR B. LOVEWELL

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to adopt the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013.

2. FORWARD PLAN

2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan 1st March 2008.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Although the Council is no longer a social landlord, it retains the statutory responsibility to provide a housing advice and homelessness service to members of the public.

3.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) to review their homelessness services and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review.

3.3 All local housing authorities were required to publish their first homelessness strategy by 31st July 2003. The Council published its current homelessness strategy in July 2003, and this covered the period of five years.

3.4 The new strategy document has been produced in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council (SBC). As all Local Housing Authorities are required to produce new homelessness strategies, the pooling of resources with SBC has enabled both organisations to develop and share information and expertise in connection with the management of homelessness that have been integrated within the proposed strategy document. More specifically, the partnership arrangement with SBC has enabled both local authorities to :-

- Conduct a joint review of local homelessness issues;
- Provide joint services to members of the public, where appropriate; and
- Fully engage the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum (NQHF) in the development of the proposed homelessness strategy.

3.5 The NQHF consists of agencies from the public, private and voluntary sectors who have an interest in preventing homelessness and working with vulnerable people. The NQHF meets every two months alternately between North Hertfordshire and Stevenage. The NQHF has been heavily involved in the identification of the strategic priorities contained in the proposed Homelessness Strategy.

3.6 The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) provides a homelessness grant to the Council of £42K per annum. The Council has received confirmation that this funding will continue until the financial year 2010/11. The grant

has been provided to support local authorities with their homelessness strategies and enable them to meet the Government's homelessness targets. These include:-

- To reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010;
- To reduce the number of households accepted as homeless, by offering appropriate alternative options;
- To ensure no 16/17 year olds are placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation by 2010, except in emergencies and then for no longer than 6 weeks;
- To maintain the two thirds reduction rough sleeping target; and
- To ensure families with children are not placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, except in emergencies and then for no longer than 6 weeks.

3.7 The regional Specialist Advisor on Homelessness from the DCLG has been attending the NQHF meetings and has contributed to the proposed Homelessness Strategy.

3.8 The Council's *Housing Strategy 2008-2013* is also being considered by Cabinet. The proposed Homelessness Strategy contributes to the broader aims of the Housing Strategy and the Council's proposed Sustainable Communities Strategy - its content is consistent with these other strategic documents, where applicable.

3.9 The Council has been very successful in its management of homelessness over the past few years. In particular, the number of households in temporary accommodation has been reduced from a peak of 124 in 2005 to 52 in May of this year. This significant reduction may be attributable to the re-prioritisation of services in order to focus on homelessness prevention, additional investment and policy changes in respect of social housing allocation policy. However, the current problems in the housing market are increasing pressures on homelessness services.

4. ISSUES

4.1 The current Homelessness Strategy was produced for five years, and this period ends in July 2008.

4.2 All Local Housing Authorities are under a legal obligation to produce new homelessness strategies by the end of July 2008.

4.3 The proposed Homelessness Strategy includes an Action Plan and Performance Framework that will form the basis of the implementation of the tasks contained in the document.

4.4 Should Cabinet adopt the new Homelessness Strategy, the NQHF will become the delivery vehicle for the Action Plan. The NQHF will also monitor the Performance Framework contained in the document.

4.5 Should Cabinet agree the adoption of the new Homelessness Strategy, an updated Action Plan will be published annually.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Terms of Reference for Cabinet state that it should develop the policy of the Council in relation to housing matters including enabling and provision of housing and homelessness.
- 5.2 The Council has the statutory responsibility for homelessness under the Housing Act 1996 Parts 6 and 7 and the Homelessness Act 2002.
- 5.3 Sections 1 and 3 of the Homelessness Act 2002 outline the requirement of all Local Housing Authorities to develop homelessness strategies.
- 5.4 Section 3 (1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 defines a homelessness strategy as a strategy formulated by a Local Housing Authority for:-
- a) preventing homelessness in their district;
 - b) securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless;
 - c) securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district –
 - i) who are or may become homeless; or
 - ii) who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- 5.5 Section 1 (4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 states that the Local Housing Authority will ensure that a new homelessness strategy for their district is published within the period of five years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published.
- 5.6 Section 1 (5) of the Homelessness Act 2002 states that a Local Housing Authority shall take their homelessness strategy into account in the exercise of their functions.
- 5.7 Section 3 (5) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires Local Housing Authorities, when formulating a homelessness strategy, to consider the extent to which any of the strategy's objectives could be achieved through joint action involving two or more of the persons or other bodies tackling homelessness in the district.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The DCLG homelessness grant to the Council of £42K per annum, which will continue until the financial year 2010/11, could be withdrawn if the conditions of its provision are not met, as outlined in paragraph 3.6. Actions outlined in the strategy can be accommodated from existing resources and no additional budgets are required. Working in partnership to produce and deliver the strategy provides efficiency savings for both authorities.
- 6.2 The Council could face legal challenge if a new homelessness strategy is not introduced within the conditions outlined in paragraphs 5.3 and 5.5.

6.3 The Council could be criticised by the DCLG if a new homelessness strategy is not produced by the end of July 2008.

6.4 If the Council did not produce a homelessness strategy the NQHF is likely to lack future focus, resulting in reduced partnership working and a decline in the number, and effectiveness, of local homelessness services.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no Human Resource implications directly arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

8.1 A consultation event was jointly hosted with SBC in November 2007.

8.2 The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health, Cllr Lovewell, has been consulted and an article has also been placed in MIS.

8.3 Regular meetings with the NQHF have been undertaken.

8.4 Registered Social Landlords operating in the district have also been consulted.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Cabinet adopt the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 as contained within Appendix 1.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 If the Council does not produce a new homelessness strategy, the risks identified in Section 6 may be realised.

10.2 Although there are statutory responsibilities around the production of a homelessness strategy, the requirement for strategic planning in this important policy area would inevitably be required, and production of this document has provided the opportunity to conduct this exercise.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11.1 The Council could decide against producing a new homelessness strategy, however, this is subject to the risk factors identified in Section 6, above.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1: the proposed Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

13.1 Report Author: Martin Lawrence
Housing Options Manager
01462 474250
martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk

13.2 Consultees: Andy Godman
Head of Housing and Environmental Health
01462 474293
andy.godman@north-herts.gov.uk

13.3 Katie White
Senior Lawyer
01462 474315
Katie.white@north-herts.gov.uk

13.4 Barrie Jones
Head of Financial Services
01462 474243
barrie.jones@north-herts.gov.uk

13.5 Kerry Shorrocks
Head of Human Resources
01462 474224
kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 North Hertfordshire Homelessness Strategy, July 2003
http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/homelessness_strategy

14.2 The Homelessness Act 2002
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020007_en_1#pb1

THIS PAGE IS BLANK

Appendix 1:



Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013

Foreword

Welcome to the joint Homelessness Strategy for North Hertfordshire and Stevenage.

Although production of a Homelessness Strategy is a statutory duty for all local authorities, we welcome this opportunity to outline our joint approach to preventing homelessness, providing advice and support services to those who need housing assistance and reducing the numbers who reside in temporary accommodation.

Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Councils have a long history of partnership working in the area of homelessness and work closely with a number of organisations in the area in providing joint services to assist those at risk of homelessness. Producing this Homelessness Strategy in partnership is a natural progression in joint working and reinforces the positive working relationship between both local authorities and other key partners that will ensure that we continue to provide high quality services.

The North Quadrant Homelessness Forum has contributed to the production of this strategy and their continued participation is vital as they will oversee the delivery of the tasks in the action plan. Their role includes driving through the measures that will ensure continuous improvement in the provision and delivery of housing advice and homelessness services for local residents.

The Homelessness Strategy is a key element in meeting North Hertfordshire District Council's vision of "*Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper*" and Stevenage Borough Council's vision of "*A town we can be proud of, a place people want to be*". As Portfolio Holders for Housing for our respective authorities, we are both pleased and proud to present the Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013.

Cllr Bernard Lovewell

Cllr Ann Webb

**Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental
Health**

Portfolio Holder for Housing

North Hertfordshire District Council

Stevenage Borough Council

Contents Page

	<u>Page</u>
1. Introduction	1
2. Vision and Strategic Priorities	2
3. Local Profiles	3
4. The context in which we work	5
5. Local Position	12
6. Strategic Responses	21
7. Action Plan	32
8. Performance Framework	45
9. Governance	47
Appendices	
A – Consultation Event delegate list	51
B – Consultation Event workshop feedback	53
C – North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Service Reviews	63
D – Equality Impact assessments	68

1. Introduction

The Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Homelessness Strategy has been developed to meet the statutory requirements under the Homelessness Act 2002. The document defines the strategic approach for 2008-2013 and replaces the previous Homelessness Strategies 2003-2008. Although this document spans five years, the action plan will be reviewed and published annually.

The strategy sets out the plan to tackle homelessness in the districts and has been developed by the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum and representatives from Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council.

A Homelessness Consultation Event was held in November 2007 to look at the causes of homelessness and to review existing homelessness services. It was attended by key partners, stakeholders and service users and their views have helped to identify the priorities contained in this document.

2. Vision and Strategic Priorities

The North Quadrant Homelessness Forum will manage the implementation of the actions contained in this strategy, and their vision is as follows :

“The North Quadrant Homelessness Forum’s Vision is to develop modern, accessible and cost effective services that will provide information on housing options, deliver support to those who need it and help to prevent homelessness”.

The six strategic priorities that emerged from consultation are:

Prevention of Homelessness

To ensure a joint working approach to prevent homelessness and provide good quality advice about alternative housing options

Tackling Youth Homelessness

To provide good quality specialist housing advice and homelessness services for young people

Single People and Vulnerable Groups

To ensure the provision of effective advice and assistance for those who need support in identifying housing solutions

Reducing the use of Temporary Accommodation

To maximise the opportunity for homeless households to access settled accommodation

Partnership Working

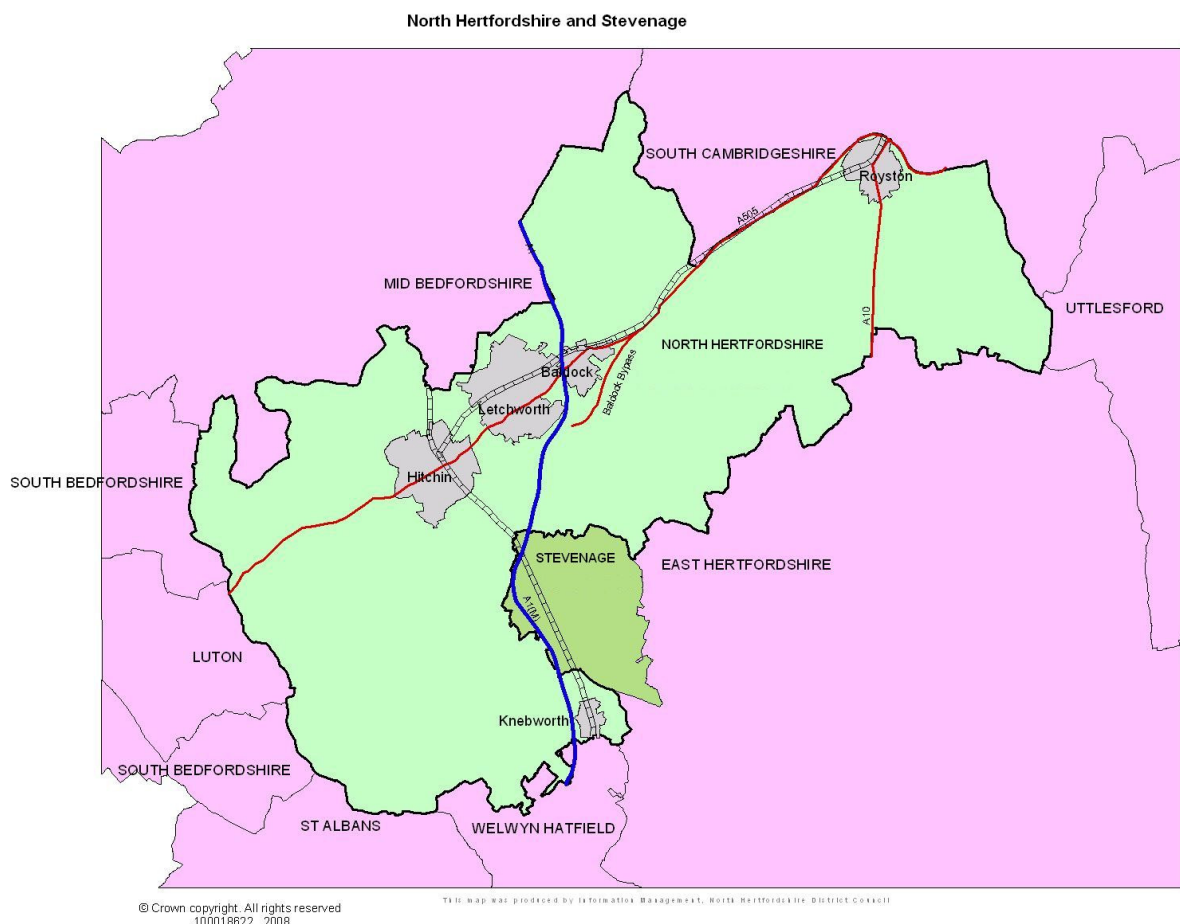
The members of the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum will seek to develop appropriate partnerships in order to deliver high quality services that offer value for money

Continuous Improvement

The North Quadrant Homelessness Forum will monitor the performance of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, identify areas for improvement and oversee the delivery of enhanced services

3. Local Profiles

There are ten local authorities in Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage occupy the northernmost extreme of the County.



Situated 30 miles north of London off the A1 (M), Stevenage has a population of approximately 80,000 people. Good transport links to London make Stevenage and North Herts an attractive location for commuters. Stevenage is a compact urban area, with residential areas centred around seven original neighbourhoods.

The population of Stevenage is forecast to increase by 5.5% between 2001 and 2009, one of the highest growth rates in Hertfordshire. It has the highest number of people living in social housing in Hertfordshire.

North Hertfordshire encompasses both urban and rural environments. There are four urban areas, Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Royston and 33 rural parishes. In total the district covers over 375 square kilometres and has boundaries with ten other local authority areas.

There are about 121,000 people living in 52,000 households within the district. The population of the district is both growing and ageing. It is estimated that the number of people residing in North Hertfordshire will rise by 14,300 between 2006 and 2021. Of this growth, 40% will be over 65 years of age and only 11% below the age of 30.

The tenure profile in both Stevenage and North Herts has changed significantly in the last ten years. There are more owner occupied properties in 2007 compared to 1997. This is due to the decline in the production of social rented housing, the exercising of the Right to Buy and the construction of new homes in large estates by private developers, for example in Great Ashby.

Around 19.4% of the homes in North Hertfordshire and approximately 29.9 % of the homes in Stevenage are in the social sector, which is high compared with the East of England average 15.7% and 18.1% in England overall¹. Table 1 illustrates the tenure profile and makes comparisons with the East of England Region.

Table 1 – Tenure profile of Stevenage and North Hertfordshire
Source: Hometrack Housing Intelligence System 2008

Tenure	Stevenage Borough (%)	Relative to the East of England Region (%)	North Hertfordshire District (%)	Relative to the East of England Region (%)
Owns outright	18.40%	12.30%	26.50%	-4.10%
Owns with a mortgage or loan	44.10%	2.50%	41.30%	-0.30%
Shared ownership	0.80%	0.20%	0.50%	0.00%
Private rented - landlord or letting agency	4.30%	-3.30%	7.20%	-0.40%
Private rented – employer	0.10%	-0.30%	0.20%	-0.10%
Private rented - friend or relative	0.40%	-0.20%	0.50%	-0.10%
Social Rented	27.60%	16.00%	17.50%	5.90%
Other social rented	3.40%	-1.50%	4.50%	-0.40%
Living rent free	1.10%	-0.90%	1.60%	-0.40%
Other	0.10%	-0.30%	0.20%	-0.10%
Total	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%

¹ ONS: Dwelling Stock by Tenure and Condition April 2006

4. The context in which we work

There are many influencing factors on the provision of local housing advice and homelessness services.

The national context of homelessness

Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All: The Way Forward for Housing ²(December 2000) sets out the role of local authorities as a strategic housing enabler for affordable housing and a key influencer in decisions with a direct role in the building of new homes where it provides value for money.

The Homelessness Act 2002 ³ - placed a duty on local authorities to carry out a review of their homelessness services and publish their first homelessness strategy by July 2003. Local authorities are required to review their homelessness strategies within five years.

The Government launched the Supporting People Programme in 2003⁴. The aim of the programme is to provide a better quality of life for vulnerable people to live more independently and maintain their tenancies to prevent homelessness, institutional care and hospitalisation. It provides housing related support services to over 1.2 million vulnerable people. It is delivered locally and has the following objectives:

- A programme that delivers quality of life and promotes independence.
- Services that are of high quality, strategically planned, cost effective and complement existing care services.
- The planning and development of services is 'needs led'.
- A working partnership of local government, probation, health, voluntary sector organisations, housing associations, support agencies and service users.

'More than a roof – a report into tackling homelessness'⁵(March 2003), set out the Government's commitment to work with local authorities, public bodies and voluntary sector organisations to prevent homelessness.

Every Child Matters: Change for Children ⁶(2004), is an approach adopted by the Government centred around the well-being of children and young people from birth to the age of 19. This requires all organisations providing services to children and young people to work together to protect them from harm and help them achieve what they want in life.

Plans to tackle homelessness are also outlined in the Government's strategy Sustainable Communities: Homes for All (January 2005)⁷. The strategy aims to develop more affordable homes and raise the standards of accommodation in the private sector.

² www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/qualitychoice2

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020007_en_1

⁴ www.spkweb.org.uk

⁵ www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/morethan

⁶ www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/

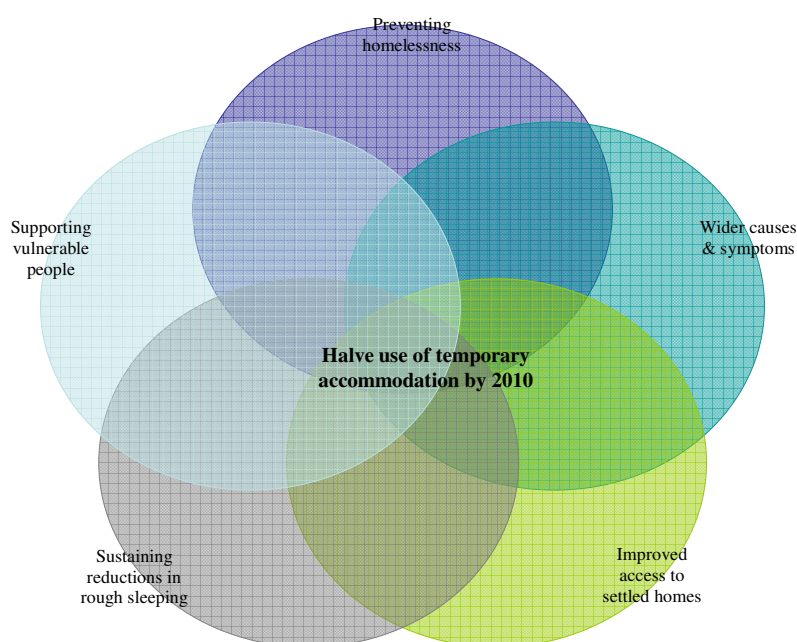
⁷ www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/homes-for-all

The Government published its strategy for tackling homelessness in 2005: Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives⁸. The strategy aims to expand housing opportunities for disadvantaged sections of society. It aims to reduce homelessness by offering preventative measures and increasing access to settled homes. The key objective of the strategy is to halve the numbers in temporary accommodation by 2010 by:

- Preventing Homelessness
- Providing Support for Vulnerable People
- Tackling the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness
- Helping more people move away from rough sleeping
- Providing more settled homes

Figure 1 illustrates the Government's five year strategy to reduce homelessness.

Figure 1:
The Government's five year strategy to reduce homelessness



⁸ www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/137815

The regional context of homelessness

Stevenage and North Hertfordshire form part of the East of England Region which includes East Anglia, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

The East of England Regional Assembly published its Housing Strategy in 2005⁹. The strategy outlines options for targeting housing need and homelessness, including:

- Providing a larger stock of affordable housing
- Increasing access to the private rented sector to provide temporary accommodation
- Using the two points above in combination with a policy option to develop more preventative measures for those threatened with homelessness.

The Government Office for the East of England, has also published their priorities in their East of England Housing Strategy, 2005 – 2010¹⁰.

The Government Office has also developed a Regional Homelessness Action Plan¹¹ which identifies key priorities and deliverable actions. The key priorities are derived from the region and focus on the main causes of homelessness:

- Parental Eviction
- Eviction by families and friends
- Termination of assured shorthold tenancies
- Violent relationship breakdown

The sub-regional context of homelessness

The Region is further divided into a sub-region, Stevenage and North Hertfordshire are part of the 'London Commuter Belt' (LCB). The LCB comprises of fifteen district councils. We share the view that:

- London has an impact on local homelessness
- The average cost of housing has continued to increase
- The number of people seeking homeless and housing advice has increased
- Joint working in the sub-region has a significant positive impact on tackling homelessness

The LCB authorities identify, share and promote good practice within the group. The LCB groups are divided into specialist areas which comprise of homelessness, strategic housing and development. They also look for opportunities to pool resources for economically effective solutions to commonly identified issues.

The county context of homelessness

The Homelessness Strategy will inform and contribute to the aims and objectives of several countywide strategies and plans.

⁹ www.eera.gov.uk/category.asp?cat=461

¹⁰ www.go-east.gov.uk/goeast/people_and_sustainable_comm/housing/housing_policy/?a=42496

¹¹ www.go-east.gov.uk/goeast/people_and_sustainable_comm/housing/helping_communities/475550/

The Hertfordshire Community Strategy; Hertfordshire 2021: A Brighter Future¹² encompasses all key agencies in the County with an interest in improving the quality of life and well being of local people. The strategy has identified a number of key areas, one of which is 'safer and stronger communities' this theme contains priorities such as 'encourage more cohesive communities'. The strategic objectives of the Homelessness Strategy are consistent with many of the priorities of the Hertfordshire Community Strategy.

The Local Area Agreement 1 (LAA) 2006-2009 is a countywide agreement between the local area and central government that lasts three years. It sets out the core priorities for the area to be delivered through a partnership approach that avoids duplicating or conflicting targets. The LAA is a delivery mechanism for the Hertfordshire Community Strategy, it is structured around four themes:

- Economic development and enterprise
- Children and young people
- Safer and stronger communities
- Healthy communities and older people

The LAA 2 will be adopted in June 2008. However, Hertfordshire local authorities will continue to meet the targets of the LAA1 until April 2009 when LAA2 will be implemented. The Homelessness Strategy contributes to several areas including the Healthy Communities and Older People priority of "reducing the number of people aged 16-25 who leave Supporting People funded schemes in an unplanned way".

The Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy 2007-2012¹³ provides a framework for the development and delivery of housing related support services for local people. The strategy recognises that vulnerable people, including the homeless, require support to achieve and maintain independent living.

The Supporting People Programme plays a central role in tackling homelessness. Its primary purpose, 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.

By preventing homelessness and enabling people to live as independently as possible, the Supporting People programme contributes to making communities more stable and settled.

The local context of homelessness

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage have developed local strategies that will inform and contribute to the aims and objectives of the Homelessness Strategy.

Both local authorities have produced Community Strategies:

¹² www.hertslink.org/hertfordshireforward

¹³ www.hertsdirect.org/infobase/docs/pdfstore/SPpart2.pdf

- Stevenage Community Strategy, Stevenage 2021 – Our town – our future¹⁴
- Sustainable Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire (currently out for consultation)¹⁵

The Homelessness Strategy reflects and contributes to the delivery of the separate Community Strategies. They set out the long-term vision for each district. Each Community Strategy states how the Council will meet its objective of creating a sustainable community by addressing economic, social and environmental needs through the Local Strategic Partnerships.

Some of the measures identified in the respective Community Strategies will be delivered through the Local Area Agreement.

- The North Hertfordshire Housing Strategy 2008-13¹⁶

The draft Housing Strategy 2008 – 2013 for North Hertfordshire is currently out for consultation. The Council's vision for housing is:

To meet the community's needs for decent, high quality, affordable homes

The aim is to deliver sustainable housing solutions by making the most of new developments and of current stock.

The North Hertfordshire Housing Strategy identifies key local housing issues and establishes six strategic priorities for housing:

- To work towards balancing local housing markets;
- To create sustainable communities;
- To improve access to, and choice, in housing;
- To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community;
- To maintain and improve the quality of current stock; and
- To protect the environment.

The final version will incorporate an action plan for delivering these priorities

- Stevenage Housing Strategy 2005 – 2010¹⁷

The Housing Strategy is due to be reviewed. It currently sets out the how Stevenage Borough Council plans to meet local housing need. It includes the improvement of support services for both vulnerable and homeless people.

The Homelessness Strategy and its action plan will enable the improvement of these support services. This will involve joint delivery with the Supporting People Programme.

¹⁴ www.stevenage.gov.uk/townandcommunity/sostevenage/stevenagecommunitystrategy

¹⁵ www.north-herts.gov.uk

¹⁶ www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/living/housing_and_environmental_health_service/housing_services/housing_strategy.htm

¹⁷ www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/housingpolicyandstrategies/housingstrategy

- Stevenage Affordable Housing Strategy 2007¹⁸

Affordable housing is central to the need of homeless households. The Affordable Housing Strategy provides a framework for partnership working to deliver the Council's affordable housing programme over the next three years. The Strategy also sets out the current position facing Stevenage and details the affordable housing needs in the town. The Strategy complements the Council's Housing Strategy.

- Stevenage Social Inclusion Strategy 2007-10

An action area of the Social Inclusion Strategy is to support the development of sustainable communities. The aim of the strategy is to improve opportunities for people who experience disadvantage or discrimination and are at greater risk of social exclusion in Stevenage. The Homelessness Strategy and the Action Plan will help achieve the objectives of this strategy by providing support services through accommodation and advice to:

- Young People
- Women experiencing domestic violence
- Ex Offenders
- Single homeless and rough sleepers
- Stevenage Community Safety Rolling Plan 2008-11¹⁹
- The Community Safety Strategy for North Hertfordshire²⁰

Both strategies are currently out for consultation. One of the priorities in the Community Safety Strategies is to reduce violent crime in the home and the community by working together with partners and the community to reduce fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Violence and the fear of violence, domestic or otherwise, and anti-social behaviour can be a cause of homelessness. Measures included in the Community Safety Strategy will assist joint working on the prevention of homelessness.

One of the strategic priorities of the Homelessness Strategy is to provide adequate support for vulnerable groups. These include victims of domestic violence and ex-offenders. Through better housing support services to these groups, the homelessness strategy contributes directly to the strategic aims of the Community Safety Strategy, to build a safer community.

- The Corporate Plan, North Hertfordshire District Council 2005-2015²¹
- The Corporate Plan, Stevenage Borough Council, Making a Difference 2008-2013²²

¹⁸ www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/housingpolicyandstrategies/affordablehousingstrategy

¹⁹ www.stevenage.gov.uk/townandcommunity/communitysafetypartnership/communitysafety

²⁰ www.north-herts.gov.uk/cs_strategy_1.pdf

²¹ www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/about_council/plans_and_objectives/corporate_plan.htm

²² www.stevenage.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy/planspoliciesandperformance

The Corporate Plans for North Hertfordshire and Stevenage are high level strategic documents that set out the ambitions and aspirations for each of the Councils up to 2015. They focus on what each Council will do to contribute to achieving the Local Strategic Partnership vision, which is:

To make North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper

To provide quality, affordable housing in Stevenage

Each Corporate Plan attaches a high priority to enabling more affordable housing which will give more choice to households in housing need.

- The Stevenage Local Development Framework²³
- The North Hertfordshire Local Development Framework²⁴

The individual Local Development Frameworks (LDF) for Stevenage and North Hertfordshire will set out each Council's planning policies and spatial vision for the District. It will also allocate land for housing and other land uses and provide detailed guidance on other planning related matters.

The LDF will be closely linked to the priorities identified in the Community Strategy. It sets out to maximise the amount of affordable housing provided through the planning system. It also encourages sufficient smaller and specialist accommodation to enable older people to downsize if they so wish. The LDF will therefore play a positive role in improving the housing options available.

²³ www.stevenage.gov.uk/planningandregeneration/planningregulationsandpolicy/ldf/localdevelopmentframework

²⁴ www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/Local_Development_Framework

5. The local position

Background

The population in North Hertfordshire is becoming more ethnically diverse. The most recent estimate from 2005 is that 12.8%²⁵ of the population in the district belong to a minority ethnic background, rising from 8.1% in 2001. Local and national data indicates that most black and minority ethnic communities are disproportionately represented in lower income households²⁶ and are likely to suffer greater housing deprivation than white British households. People from BME groups make up 7% of the population of Great Britain. However the same groups constitute 22% of households accepted by local authorities as homeless and are therefore considerably over represented²⁷.

Stevenage has a lower percentage of BME residents, with approximately 5.4% of the population (2001 census) belonging to a minority ethnic group. This figure has increased significantly since the last census in 1991. In 2003 Stevenage Borough Council commissioned David Couttie Associates (DCA) to carry out a town-wide needs assessment. The study found that 74% of BME households who wished to move but could not, said they could not afford to move, compared to 63% for the whole of the population. The study found that BME households had a higher rate of overcrowding compared with the population as a whole.

Statistical information for the Gypsy and Traveller population is limited; data for this group was collected under the BME category in the 2001 UK Census of Population. Gypsies and Travellers in permanent dwellings are very difficult to identify because the housing waiting lists do not identify them as a separate ethnic group. In June 2006 Opinion Research Services undertook an assessment of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in Northern and Eastern Hertfordshire. The study found that there is a growing population of Gypsy and Travellers in Hertfordshire and that current Traveller sites have reached their full capacity²⁸.

In Stevenage, a significant number of people do not enjoy the same quality of life as many people do in the rest of Hertfordshire - poor health, lack of qualifications, low skills and low aspirations. The Stevenage teenage pregnancy rate was nearly double the Hertfordshire rate in 2004; there has been a reduction in recent years however it is still higher than the rest of Hertfordshire.

In comparison, North Hertfordshire is a prosperous area and is ranked among the top 20% of least deprived areas in England with some pockets of deprivation in large housing estates such as the Grange and the Jackmans in Letchworth Garden City and Westmill in Hitchin.

Table 2 details the average weekly gross incomes in comparison to the East of England Region. Although the average weekly incomes for both North Hertfordshire and Stevenage in 2006 are above the average for the East of England, house prices are significantly out of reach.

²⁵

www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=7&b=276994&c=north+hertfordshire&d=13&e=13&g=455064&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1211891895348&enc=1&dsFamilyId=1812

²⁶ DWP, Opportunity for All; 5th Annual Report 2003

²⁷ ODPM, Housing and BME Communities: Review of the evidence base, number 180, 2003

²⁸ Northern and Eastern Hertfordshire: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment; Opinion Research Services June 2006

Table 2:

Average weekly gross incomes for the Eastern Region Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

	East of England £ (GOR)	Stevenage £ (Borough)	North Hertfordshire £ (District)
2002	392.4	403	466
2003	410.1	402	463
2004	431.3	415	489.5
2005	442.3	431	501
2006	456.1	462.6	498.4

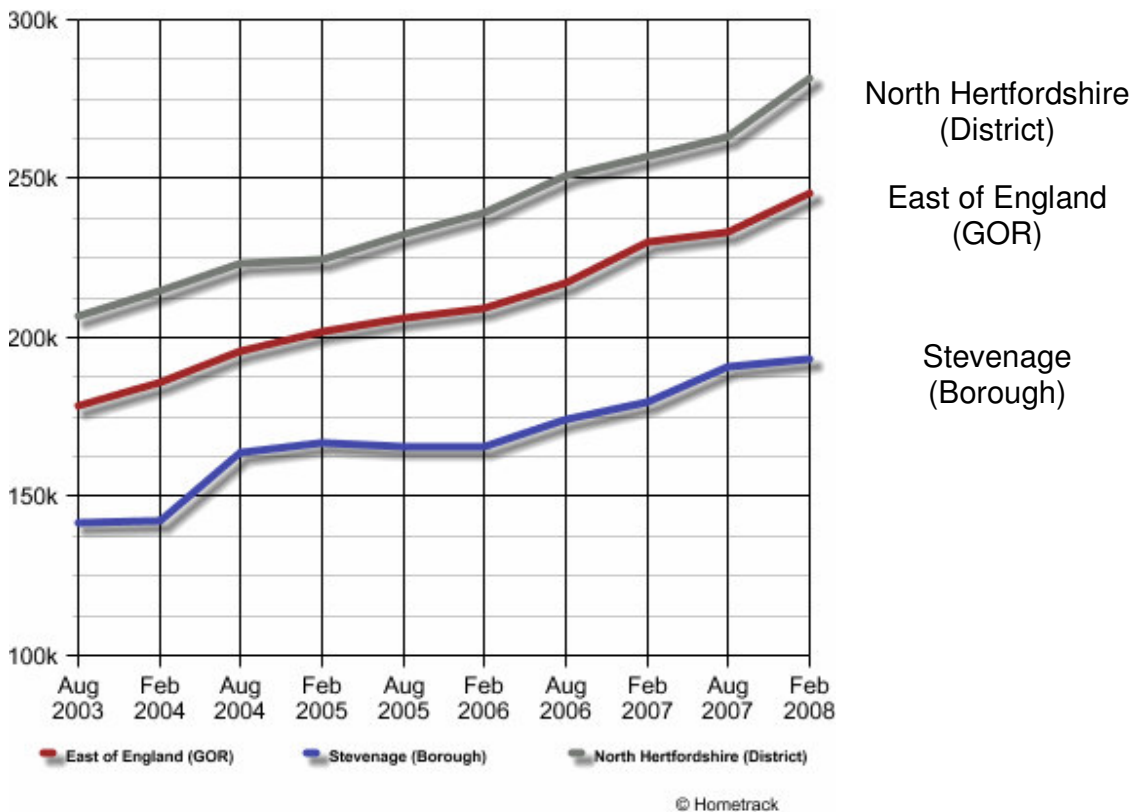
Source: Hometrack, Housing Intelligence System 2008

Note

The table shows the gross weekly pay of full time employees at local authority level using data from the latest Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. The data is displayed over time but due to the change in 2004 from the New Earnings Survey the data may not be directly comparable.

Housing for owner-occupation has become increasingly expensive over recent years. Figure 2 illustrates the steady rise in house prices from 2003 to February 2008 in Stevenage and North Hertfordshire in comparison with the Eastern Region.

**Figure 2:
Average House Prices August 2003 – February 2008**



Note

Based on Hometrack’s automated Valuation Model

In 2006, the average house price in Stevenage was £175,516 and £248,212 in North Hertfordshire²⁹. The average house price is therefore between 8.5 and 9.5 times the average annual income of residents in Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

As a result of rising house prices the demand for affordable housing has risen. The number of households on the waiting lists has increased by 125% in North Hertfordshire and 33% in Stevenage between April 2005 and April 2007. Table 3 illustrates this point.

**Table 3:
Number of households on the Housing Register in North Hertfordshire and Stevenage**

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
North Hertfordshire District	852	1,220	1,923
Stevenage Borough	3,078	3,907	4,099

²⁹ Land Registry data, 2006

House prices are predicted to rise faster in the East of England than anywhere in the country over the next five years, estimating an increase of 52% by 2012. This coupled with the loss of social housing through the Right to Buy scheme and the predicted loss of owner-occupied homes caused by a rise in interest rates means that the pressure will grow on social housing³⁰. An increasing demand for affordable housing coupled with the reduction in supply has put a considerable strain on both local authorities. The future prospects are likely to be longer waiting lists, more overcrowding, more adult children unable to move from the parental homes and a rise in homelessness.

A more detailed analysis of the situation on housing need can be found in the:

- Stevenage Affordable Housing Strategy 2007³¹
- Stevenage Housing Strategy 2005 – 2010³² (currently under review)
- Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Housing Market Assessment (2008) (currently being finalised)
- North Hertfordshire Housing Strategy 2008-2013³³ (currently out to consultation)

Domestic Violence in Stevenage and North Hertfordshire

Domestic violence is usually committed by someone the victim will know well. This is often a partner or former partner, and the incidents occur in their own home, the very place they should feel safe. All too often these incidents happen in front of children.

Statistically, in their life times, 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence, and often victims will suffer over 30 incidents of abuse before they get help.

Both North Hertfordshire and Stevenage experience approaches from victims of domestic violence. Stevenage, both historically and at present, has an incidence of domestic violence which is higher than the National and County average. Last year over 1240 incidents of domestic violence were reported in Stevenage alone. Sadly domestic violence is a 'hidden' crime, as it takes place out of public view, but despite that, in Stevenage, it accounts for more than 1 in 5 of all offences of violence. In North Hertfordshire, 577 incidents of domestic violence were reported in the first six months of 2007/8.

Tackling domestic violence remains a priority for all agencies who deal with it. Those agencies include the Police, Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage Homes Limited, North Hertfordshire District Council and their Housing Association partners including North Hertfordshire Homes, the

³⁰Hometruths, The real cost of housing 2007-2013, National Housing Federation

³¹www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/housingpolicyandstrategies/affordablehousingstrategy

³²www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/housingpolicyandstrategies/housingstrategy

³³www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/living/housing_and_environmental_health-service/housing_services.htm

Probation Service, Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Magistrates Courts, Hertfordshire County Council and members of the Domestic Violence Forum.

Both North Hertfordshire and Stevenage will work with victims of domestic violence to provide advice and support in order for them to decide on the most appropriate course of action. The possible response include:

- Legal remedies;
- Sanctuary scheme;
- Staying with family and friends;
- Finding private rented accommodation;
- A management transfer (Social housing tenants);
- Deposit guarantee scheme;
- Women's refuge;
- Making a homelessness application to North Hertfordshire District Council or Stevenage Borough Council, or elsewhere.

The area also has a well established support network in the private and voluntary sector, with Victim Support, the Domestic Violence telephone Help Line, Citizens Advice and the Stevenage Women Resource Centre.

The Stevenage Women's Aid offer refuge spaces in the area subject to availability, to help victims flee violence and gain advice and assistance in respect of perpetrators and family members.

Homelessness

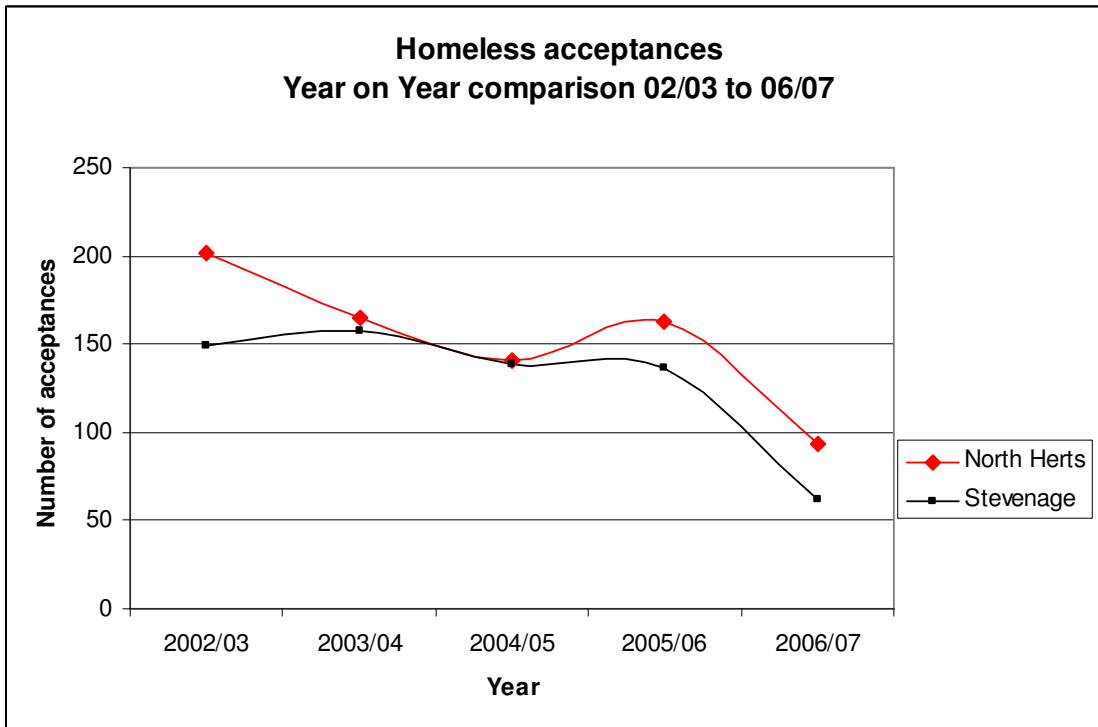
Changing patterns in housing need and economic factors both have an impact on homelessness. Stevenage has seen a rise in the number of mortgage repossession cases. This reflects the national trend over the last 12 months. The CAB is undertaking social policy work to uncover why Stevenage residents have been significantly affected. Although no robust data has yet been collated, both the CAB and the Housing Advice services believe that a second loan secured on the property is one of the determining factors leading to mortgage repossession.

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage have been monitoring mortgage repossession cases over the last 12 months and will report their findings to the Sub-regional Homelessness Group and the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum to seek solutions.

Figure 3, details the number of households accepted as homeless from 1st April 2002 to 31st March 2007 in North Hertfordshire and Stevenage. The table illustrates a significant reduction in the number of homelessness acceptances. In 2002/03 SBC accepted a total of 149 households as homeless, compared to 62 in 2006/07. This represents a decrease of 41% over the period in question. Over the same period NHDC, the number of households accepted reduced from 202 to 93, which represents a decrease of 46%.

Figure 3:
The number of households accepted as homeless in North Hertfordshire and Stevenage

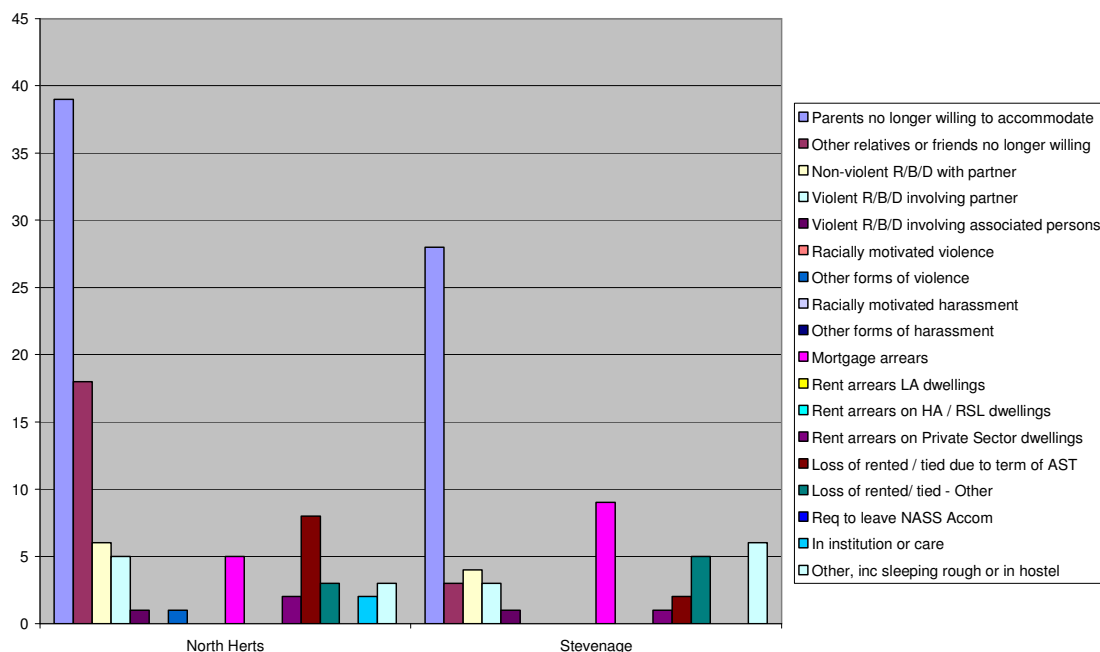
Source: P1e data



The profile of homelessness has changed significantly since 2003. Figure 4 illustrates the causes of homelessness in 2006/07. The most common cause in both North Hertfordshire and Stevenage is 'parents no longer willing to accommodate'. The second most common cause of homelessness in North Hertfordshire is due to 'other relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate'. However this is not in common with Stevenage, where 'mortgage arrears' is the second most common reason.

**Figure 4:
The reasons for Homelessness in North Hertfordshire and Stevenage for 2006/07**

Source: P1e data



The emphasis on homelessness prevention and the implementation of prevention initiatives has played a major role in reducing the number of households accepted as homeless. A multi-agency approach has helped sustain the reduction in homelessness.

The review of Stevenage Borough Council’s Allocations Scheme in June 2006 introduced a new category of priority, ‘vulnerable household at risk.’ In this category, additional priority is awarded where the households are threatened with homelessness. This is consistent with the North Hertfordshire Allocation Scheme that seeks to assist those in housing need before homelessness becomes an issue.

North Hertfordshire conducted rough sleeper counts in 2001 and 2003, however, no rough sleepers were found. The feedback through the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum leads us to believe that there are minimal numbers of rough sleepers in both districts. This subject forms part of the performance framework and will be continued to be monitored by the Forum.

The homelessness prevention initiatives have had a positive effect on the number of households living in temporary accommodation, which has fallen significantly in both North Hertfordshire and Stevenage. In order to meet the Government’s 50% reduction in the total number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010, the following targets need to be achieved:

Stevenage Borough Council: 50% reduction target for March 2010 is 129

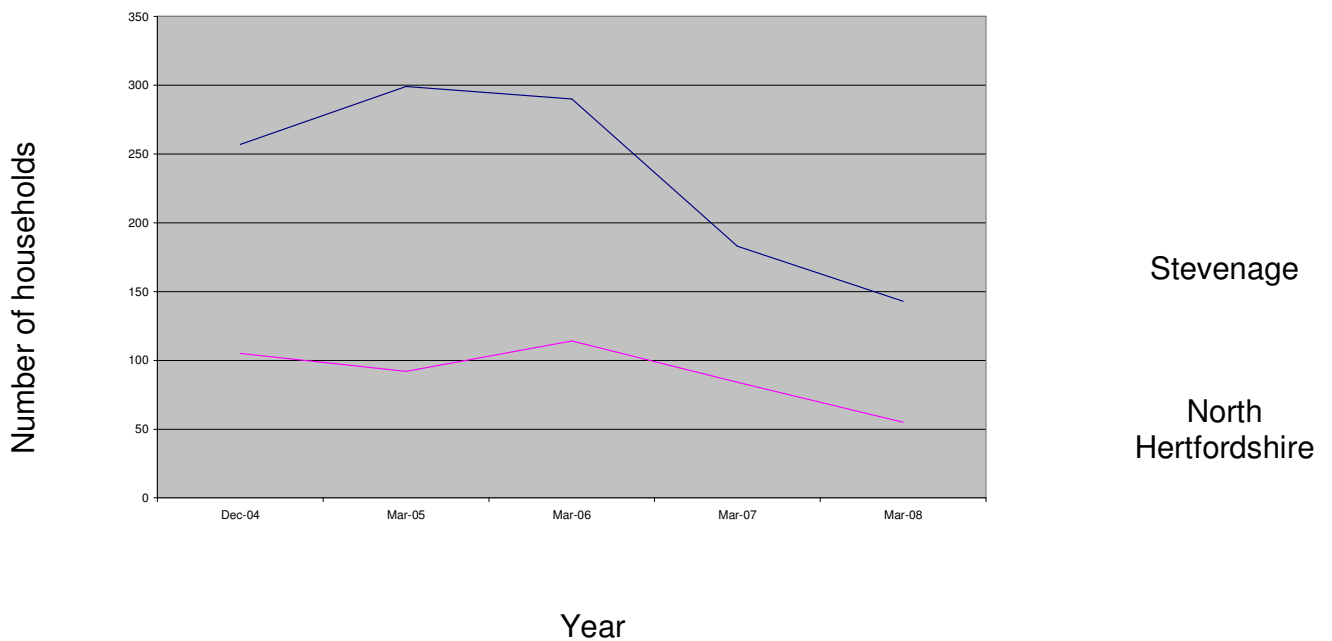
North Hertfordshire District Council: 50% reduction target for March 2010 is 52

Table 4 and Figure 5 highlight the progress made in the reduction of temporary accommodation.

**Table 4:
Reduction in temporary accommodation**

	Dec 2004	March 2005	March 2006	March 2007	March 2008
Stevenage	257	299	290	183	143
North Hertfordshire	105	92	114	84	55

**Figure 5:
Reduction in temporary accommodation**



In recent years Stevenage has received increasing approaches for housing advice and homelessness services:

2005/06 1776 (Housing Advice approaches only)
 2006/07 2638
 2007/08 3024

North Hertfordshire has similar figures derived from several systems and is currently reviewing the most meaningful way to monitor approaches.

The Homelessness and Housing Advice Services continue to face challenges in preventing homelessness. A number of landlords and High Street letting agents are reluctant to let properties to people dependent on housing benefit to service rent. This creates a barrier for many homeless households in accessing the private rented sector. This problem could be exacerbated by the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) which was implemented on the 8th April 2008. The LHA will generally be paid direct to claimants, with some exceptions. For private landlords this means the loss of control over rent payments, making the acceptance of a tenant dependent upon LHA even less desirable. LHA pilot schemes noted an increase in contractual rent in poorly maintained properties which would have otherwise commanded rents lower than the market value. The impact of this may be that those families not dependant on housing benefit will face affordability issues and being forced to occupy substandard accommodation.

Some single clients continue to face problems accessing accommodation. Raising funds to service up-front costs in the private sector, together with generally limited priority on the housing waiting list mean that single people are sometimes forced to live with friends and family. Some landlords are increasing their demands on prospective tenants by requesting a tenancy deposit equivalent to two months rent in advance as opposed to the traditional one month in advance, placing a further financial burden. This client group falls out of the statutory provisions and is often pushed out of the affordability arena.

6. Strategic Responses

The North Quadrant Homelessness Forum provides a platform for members to work together to achieve shared goals and provide high quality services. These goals, or priorities, have been identified and shaped through collective consultation. The Homelessness Strategy consultation event held on the 1st November 2007 was very successful, with almost 50 attendees. The output from the workshops is contained in Appendix B.

The six priorities reflect the national framework as well as the views of stakeholders and this provides strategic direction for the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum. Each strategic priority is reviewed below, highlighting their individual challenges.

The strategic responses lead to specific tasks in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan and the Performance Framework, where delivery and performance will be managed by the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum.

Strategic Priority one: Prevention of Homelessness.

Objective: *To ensure a joint working approach to prevent homelessness and provide good quality advice about alternative housing options*

Challenges:

Local authorities are legally required to assist people who are under threat of homelessness by taking reasonable steps to prevent them losing their homes³⁴. Local authorities must also produce prevention focused homelessness strategies³⁵ and use government grants to deliver preventative measures.

In 2005 the ODPM (CLG) published its strategy for tackling homelessness, Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives with the overall aim of halving the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010. The key to meeting this target is preventing households from becoming homeless.

Homelessness and living in temporary accommodation is associated with a wide range of disadvantages³⁶ including:

- Mental health issues
- Physical health problems
- Poor educational attainment in children
- Worklessness
- Stigma and stereotyping
- Accidents within the home and
- Loss of informal support networks

Whether these issues exist prior to homelessness or not, they are almost certainly exacerbated by it. Therefore, preventing homelessness and ensuring that households have adequate support is fundamental to improving the life chances of households threatened with homelessness.

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Councils take a proactive and holistic approach to households facing housing problems. The Councils work in partnership with housing providers

³⁴ Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

³⁵ Homelessness Act (2002)

³⁶ ODPM: Homelessness Statistics, December 2003: Addressing the Health Needs of Homeless Families with Children

and statutory and voluntary support and advice agencies to deliver effective prevention measures including;

- A dedicated housing advice and homelessness prevention service;
- Private sector rent deposit guarantee scheme;
- Crashpad Mediation Scheme;
- Citizen's Advice Bureau: Court Desk Worker and Money Advice Worker;
- RSL Tenancy Support Officers;
- A Sanctuary Scheme for victims of domestic violence;
- Relate Mediation;
- Home visits – where threat of homelessness is due to family/friends no longer willing to accommodate the client; and
- Effective signposting and referral to appropriate support and advice agencies.

Homelessness is often the result of non-housing related issues such as mental health illness, debt, relationship breakdown and substance abuse. In the first instance housing difficulties are very often brought to the attention of professionals and agencies outside local government. The effective prevention of homelessness can only be delivered through efficient joined up service delivery through:

- Interagency protocols and working practices;
- Joint training;
- Consultation with service users; and
- Cross boundary/sub-regional/regional working.

Strategic response

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Councils will work with their partners to:

- Continue to develop and refine joint working with housing providers and support agencies;
- Expand and progress housing options for households in housing need;
- Provide holistic housing advice and homelessness prevention services;
- Meet targets to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation;
- Introduce and monitor customer feedback on front line services
- Deliver more effective mediation services;
- Work with the Supporting People programme and other stakeholders to deliver a generic floating support/tenancy sustainment service; and
- Work with private sector landlords to secure private rented accommodation for households in housing need.

Strategic Priority two: Tackling Youth Homelessness

Objective: to provide good quality specialist housing advice and homelessness services for young people

Challenges:

Young people are a vulnerable group with specialised housing needs. The statutory protection available to young people threatened with homelessness was strengthened in the Homelessness Act 2002. It gave 16 and 17 year olds and young people between 18 and 20 who were formerly in care a priority need for accommodation. The local authority has a duty to secure suitable accommodation should they become homeless through no fault of their own.

The majority of youth homelessness is a result of eviction from the family home due to a breakdown in the relationship between the young person and their parents. Through appropriate intervention and support many young people can be enabled to remain within the family home or undertake a planned move. The successful prevention of youth homelessness due to parental eviction can be facilitated through:

- Early identification of young people at risk of homelessness;
- Providing advice on housing options;
- Home visits;
- Mediation;
- The provision of short-term respite accommodation;
- Raising awareness of homelessness among school age children; and
- Appropriate signposting and referral to support and advice agencies.

In some cases homelessness cannot be prevented, or the family home is not the most appropriate environment for the young person. Young homeless people have often experienced educational disruption, family breakdown, and in some cases mental health problems and drug and alcohol issues. A high proportion are not in education, employment or training³⁷. In these circumstances, young people need suitable accommodation and support to acquire the skills necessary for independent living.

Good quality housing and support can have a positive impact on the life chances of young homeless people. This can be facilitated through joint working between local authorities, housing providers, support and advice agencies and young homeless people (see priority 5; Partnership working).

³⁷ CLG: Statutory Homelessness in England: The experiences of families and 16-17 year olds (2008)

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Councils work in partnership with several providers of services for young people including:

- Herts Young Homeless Group;
- Connexions;
- Supported Housing Providers;
- The Youth Offending Team;
- The Community Drug and Alcohol Team;
- The Supporting People Team;
- Children Schools and Families; and
- The Mental Health Team.

Strategic response

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Councils will work with their partners to:

- Identify young people likely to become homeless;
- Deliver a more comprehensive, seamless service by improving joint working between service providers;
- Raise awareness of homelessness and housing options for young people;
- Improve tenancy support for young people;
- Deliver more effective mediation services to young people and their parents; and
- Improve the support available to young people leaving care.

Strategic Priority three: Single People and Vulnerable Groups.

Objective: to ensure the provision of effective advice and assistance for those who need support in identifying housing solutions

Challenges

Non-priority need households

Homeless single people or childless couples often fall outside the full protection provided by the homelessness legislation. Local authorities have no duty to provide accommodation to homeless households without dependent children unless they have a priority need due to their vulnerability. While some may be able to resolve their own housing problems, others lack the resources, knowledge or ability to find and retain suitable long-term accommodation. Local authorities have a duty to provide them with advice and assistance on housing and homelessness prevention.

Homelessness prevention

The housing advice and homelessness prevention service is available to all households.

Housing options

Where homelessness cannot be prevented households without a priority need have limited options available to them. In the short term they will need to secure temporary accommodation either with family or friends or in direct access hostel accommodation. In the longer term, it is likely that they will have to secure accommodation in the private sector either in lodgings, shared accommodation or an assured shorthold tenancy.

Households without a priority need can be assisted with:

- Referral to direct access hostels;
- Access to the private sector rent deposit guarantee scheme;
- Signposting/referral to advice and support services;
- Negotiations with family/friends to allow them to stay for a reasonable period while alternative accommodation is secured;
- Advice on private rented sector accommodation; and
- Making an application to the housing register.

Priority need households

A single person or couple without children who are homeless through no fault of their own, will have a priority need if they are vulnerable. Local authorities have a duty to provide suitable accommodation to homeless households with a priority need. A person may be vulnerable as a result of :

- Old age;
- Mental illness or learning disability or physical disability;
- Having been in care;
- Having been a member of the armed forces;
- Having been in custody or detention;
- Violence or threats of violence.

(this list is not exhaustive)

Single homeless households with a priority need are by definition vulnerable and will, therefore, require some level of support. In practice, single homeless people often have complex needs. Accordingly, it is essential that the support needs of such households are delivered through partnership working.

Strategic response

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Councils will:

- Continue to develop and refine joint working with housing providers and support agencies;
- Expand and progress housing options for households in housing need;
- Provide an holistic housing advice and prevention service;
- Increase the supply of affordable housing;
- Deliver more effective mediation services;
- Work with private sector landlords to secure private rented accommodation for households in housing need;
- Fund a private sector rent deposit guarantee scheme;
- Work with Housing Benefit to fast-track claims from households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- Continue to fund a sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic violence;
- Introduce and monitor customer feedback on front line services;
- Continue to support the Stevenage Women's Refuge
- Continue to play a leading role in the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Domestic Violence Forum
- Work with the Supporting People team and other stakeholders to deliver a generic floating support/tenancy sustainment service; and
- Work with temporary accommodation providers to ensure a good quality physical environment and services that improve outcomes for residents.

Strategic Priority four: Reducing the use of temporary accommodation

Objective: *To maximise the opportunity for homeless households to access settled accommodation*

Challenges

Homelessness prevention is the key strategic tool for meeting the target of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation by half between 2005 and 2010. However, where homelessness cannot be avoided, families with children, 16–17 year olds and vulnerable adults are provided with temporary accommodation.

To meet the target of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010, and ensure positive effects for homeless households, it is essential that:

- Temporary accommodation provides a good quality physical environment and services that improve outcomes for residents; and
- The opportunities for households to move on to settled accommodation are maximised.

A period in temporary accommodation can benefit some households. This particularly applies to 16 – 17 year olds³⁸ who are in supported accommodation which prepares them for the transition to independent living. In such cases it is important that households are not moved on until they have the appropriate skills and support to sustain their own tenancy. Nevertheless, for most households, settled housing, with the right support, provides a better quality of life than temporary accommodation³⁹.

Strategic response

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Councils will:

- Develop their understanding of the dynamics of the supply of and demand for temporary accommodation;
- Improve the 'move on' opportunities of households in temporary accommodation;
- Make the best use of social housing stock by working with Registered Social Landlords and Stevenage Homes Limited to produce an under-occupation scheme with attractive incentives;
- Ensure that temporary accommodation is of good quality and work towards all family units being self contained; and
- Work in partnership with accommodation providers, support services and the Supporting People Team to ensure that homeless households are appropriately supported.

³⁸ CLG: Statutory Homelessness In England: The experiences of families and 16 – 17 year olds; Homelessness research Summary No. 7, 2008

³⁹ *ibid*

Strategic Priority five: Partnership working.

Objective: *The members of the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum will seek to develop appropriate partnerships in order to deliver high quality services that offer value for money*

Challenges

Partnership working underpins the delivery of a comprehensive and holistic service to households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Councils have long established partnerships with statutory and voluntary service providers and are developing partnerships with the private sector.

Households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness present with a wide range of issues such as:

- Debt;
- A history of offending;
- Relationship breakdown;
- Violence or threats of violence;
- Economic inactivity;
- Lack of skills/training;
- Mental/physical health issues;
- Learning difficulties;
- Substance abuse;
- Leaving local authority care;
- Leaving institutions such as the armed forces or hospital; and
- Being old or young and vulnerable.

Many homeless people will have a complex range of problems which, in addition to their lack of housing, makes it difficult for them to access and sustain support networks.

The delivery of sustainable solutions for households facing housing problems cannot be successfully achieved without addressing non-housing related issues which, very often, contribute to their housing difficulties.

Support and advice services are delivered through an increasingly fragmented range of organisations. Hence, in the absence of a co-ordinated framework, there is a risk of people 'falling through the net' on the one hand and duplication of services on the other. In these circumstances it is essential that networks are established between services that allow for:

- Positive working relationships;
- Agreed expectations, goals and roles;
- Comprehensive client assessments;

- Clear lines of communication;
- Making best use of expertise;
- A pooling of resources and sharing of information where possible;
- Shared commitment and accountability;

Partnership working on homeless prevention and homelessness involves a considerable range of agencies dealing with a wide range of issues. The coordination of service delivery will involve:

- Service Level Agreements (SLA) between organisations and local authority service areas;
- Joint protocols;
- Agreed procedures;
- Joint decision making;
- Liaison between organisations;
- Joint strategic planning;
- Joint training; and
- Cross boundary/sub regional and regional working.

Strategic response

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Councils will coordinate and streamline partnership working by:

- Reviewing established formal and informal partnership working practices;
- Facilitating new partnership working relationships where gaps exist; and
- Monitoring the effectiveness of joint service delivery.

Strategic Priority six: Continuous improvement.

Objective: *The North Quadrant Homelessness Forum will monitor performance of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, identify areas for improvement and oversee the delivery of enhanced services*

Challenges

Continuous improvement has been included as a strategic priority in order to emphasise the need to review and develop services, and to embed this as a core value for the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum. In order for continuous improvement to take place, the following areas need to be addressed:

- North Quadrant Homelessness Forum membership is inconsistent
- The North Quadrant Homelessness Forum experiences occasional low attendance
- North Quadrant Homelessness Forum terms of reference need to be agreed
- The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan needs to be managed by the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum
- The effectiveness of services need to be benchmarked in order to target resources effectively
- Systems need to be developed to assess service user opinion, comments and feedback
- Systems need to be developed in order to understand the circumstances of service users and analyse the effectiveness of services

Strategic response

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Councils will seek continuous improvement by:

- Ensuring that the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum becomes the delivery vehicle for the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan
- Capturing and analysing service user feedback and reviewing services
- Ensuring that necessary data is recorded to reflect the circumstances of service users and understand their needs
- Benchmarking services with other local authorities and exchanging good practice

7. Action Plan

The Action Plan details the agreed tasks under each strategic priority. This will be monitored by the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum.

STEVENAGE AND NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN – 2008/9

Strategic Priority 1 - Prevention of Homelessness

Objective: to ensure a joint working approach to prevent homelessness and provide good quality advice about alternative options

Ref:	Task	Lead team/partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How is success measured?	Target date
1.1	Monitor numbers of cases involving mortgage arrears or possession action.	SBC, NHDC, CAB	Within existing resources	Assess impact of current economic climate	*Feed findings into sub-regional homelessness meetings	Ongoing
1.2	To increase the accessibility and provision of debt advice	NHDC, SBC (to confirm) and CAB	NHDC - £5K CLG grant pa	High quality specialist advice to service users	*Implementation of new service	Sep-08
1.3	Improve deposit guarantee scheme	NHDC	Within existing resources, CLG grant	Increase the number of properties made available through the scheme	*Enhancements completed	Aug-08
1.4	To improve links with Housing Benefits to ensure high take up of eligible benefits including discretionary housing payments (DHP)	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum members	Within existing resources	Increase take up of benefit entitlement and full use of DHP budget	*(a) Benefit Liaison meeting initiated *(b) Entire DHP Budget spent	(a) Oct 08 (b) Apr 09
1.5	To explore the provision of mortgage rescue schemes with RSLs	SBC, NHDC, RSLs	Within existing resources	Explore and assess viability of schemes	*Mortgage rescue scheme agreed/or deemed not viable with reasons cited from viability report	Dec-08
1.6	Explore viability of countywide, or sub-regional reciprocal housing scheme in cases where violence or harassment are known	NHDC, SBC	Within existing resources	Increased mobility throughout the area	*Mobility scheme agreed/or deemed not viable with reasons cited from viability report	Dec-08

Ref:	Task	Lead team/partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How is success measured?	Target date
1.7	To improve partnership working with private landlords and letting agents and develop the Landlord Forum	NHDC, SBC and Landlord Forum	Within existing resources	More effective relationship with the private rented sector and improved supply and access to accommodation	* (a) Regular landlord forums hosted by NHDC and SBC *(b) NHDC and SBC websites enhanced with information for landlords and the public	Dec-08
1.8	To review tenant induction at commencement of tenancy with RSLs and SHL	SBC, NHDC, RSLs, SHL	Within existing resources	More sustainable tenancies to meet the objectives of the 'So Stevenage' Community Strategy and NHDC Sustainable Community Strategy	*Review completed	Apr-09
1.9	Production of Homelessness prevention Toolkit	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum	Within existing resources	Collective understanding of roles and accessibility to services	*Toolkit agreed and introduced	Apr-09
1.10	All agencies to strive to prevent homelessness wherever possible	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum	Within existing resources	Improvements in the number of homelessness preventions	*(new P1E definition, Forum to agree collective target for 2008/9)	Apr-09
1.11	Explore joint funding of Sanctuary Schemes for Domestic Violence with RSLs	NHDC, RSLs, Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association	Within existing resources	Improved funding for Sanctuary Rooms for tenants of RSLs	*Viability study concluded	Sep-08
1.12	To work with the local DV Forum and the Police to establish a budget to fund the Sanctuary Scheme for victims of DV	NHDC, Police, DV Forum	TBC	Regular funding of Sanctuary Rooms	*Funding confirmed	Sep-08
1.13	Explore provision of a homelessness prevention fund	NHDC	Within existing resources	Viability assessed	*Assessment of viability completed	Jul-08

Ref:	Task	Lead team/partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How is success measured?	Target date
1.14	To develop Homelessness Prevention protocol with RSLs and SHL	NHDC, SBC, RSLs, SHL	Within existing resources	Improvements in homelessness prevention and more co-ordinated service for tenants	*New protocol agreed	May-09

Strategic Priority 2 - Tackling youth homelessness

Objective: to provide good quality specialist housing advice and homelessness services for young people

	Task	Lead team/Partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
2.1	To link effectively with HYHG mediation and crashpad services	HYHG, SBC, NHDC, CSF	Supporting People, Crouchfield Trust, within current resources	More sustainable solutions for young people via efficient case management	*Monitor outcomes at HYHG steering group meetings	Ongoing from Jul 08
2.2	Review opportunities to improve awareness of housing options in Schools	HYHG, SBC, NHDC, HCC	Review opportunities/existing resources	Improve understanding of housing options	*New scheme launched	Apr-09
2.3	To monitor floating support schemes for young people	SP, RSLs, SHL	Within Supporting People funds	To increase the number of young people aged 16-25 who sustain their own tenancy for over six months to meet LAA1 target	*LAA1 target met	Apr-09
2.4	Improve assessment and referral processes to avoid complexities for young people	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	To increase the young people's levels of satisfaction with their transition into their own tenancy in line with LAA1 target	*Common referral and assessment process agreed *LAA1 target met	Apr-09
2.5	To monitor progress of young people in temporary accommodation and ensure that 'move on' is accompanied with support	HYHG, SP, SHL, NHH, NHDC, SBC, Aldwyck Housing Association, Nacro	Within existing resources	Reduce the number of young people aged 16-25 who leave supporting people funded accommodation schemes in an unplanned way, to meet LAA1 target	*LAA1 target met	Apr-09
2.6	Develop housing options toolkit for young people	CSF, HYHG, SBC, NHDC, Connexions	Within existing resources	Raise awareness of services available to young people	*Directory of services for young people *Publication of relevant literature	Apr-09

	Task	Lead team/Partnership		Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
2.7	To explore availability and access to counselling services for parents and young people	CSF, HYHG	Within existing resources	Increase parental awareness on impact of homelessness on young people	*Services availability publicised and utilised	Dec-08

Strategic Priority 3 – Single People and Vulnerable Groups

Objective: to ensure the provision of effective advice and assistance for those who need support in identifying housing solutions

	Task	Lead team/Partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
3.1	To review the SBC allocation scheme to reflect changes in referral criteria to the SBC Special Needs Panel.	SBC and SHL	Within existing resources	Ensure access to the Special Needs Panel for mental health clients	*Updated allocation scheme	Sep-08
3.2	To implement joint protocol to improve accommodation and housing advice services to ex-offenders	Probation, SBC, NHDC	Within existing resources	Co-ordinated multi-agency services for ex-offenders	*New protocol launched	Jun-08
3.3	To explore 'move on' options for the North Hertfordshire Sanctuary and Stevenage Haven	SP, North Hertfordshire Sanctuary, NHDC, NHH, Stevenage Haven, SBC, SHL	Within existing resources, SP	To assess the viability of second stage accommodation for shelter residents	*Options appraisal completed	Dec-08
3.4	Develop protocol with Lister hospital for discharge of homeless people	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Improved communication leading to more sustainable solutions	*New protocol agreed	Dec-08
3.5	Ensure adequate support is available so that clients are not disadvantaged by CBL	SHL, NHDC, SBC, NHH, HCHA	Within existing resources	Equal access to CBL scheme	*Vulnerability strategy introduced	Mar-09
3.6	To implement the accommodation provision for people with poor Mental Health in North Hertfordshire	SP, NHH, Aldwyck Housing Association, NHDC, HPT, Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association	SP	Availability of cluster and satellite units	*Full launch of scheme	Apr-09
3.7	Explore viability of supported lodgings scheme with the private rented sector	Stevenage Haven and SBC	Within existing resources	Viability assessed	*Viability study completed	Dec-08
3.8	To explore a joint protocol with CDAT	NHDC, CDAT	Within existing resources	Improved information sharing between the agencies in line with regional objectives	*Protocol agreed/or deemed not viable with reasons cited from viability report	Apr-09

	Task	Lead team/Partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
3.9	Co-ordinate support services for victims of domestic violence and support existing and new initiatives	North Quadrant Homelessness Form, DV Forum	Within existing resources	Co-ordinated multi-agency services for victims of domestic violence	*Services for victims of domestic violence are mapped out and publicised	Ongoing
3.10	Review effectiveness of Supporting People generic floating support service	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Assessment of success of service	*Quarterly reviews on progress from SP	Sep-08 and ongoing

Strategic Priority 4 - Reducing the use of temporary accommodation

Objective: To maximise the opportunity for homeless households to access settled accommodation

	Task	Lead team/Partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
4.1	Monitor the effectiveness of allocation policies in relation to the proportion of lets to homeless households	SBC, NHDC, SHL	Within existing resources	Assessment of effectiveness of rehousing policies in relation to homeless households	*Assessment completed and presented to North Quadrant Homelessness Forum	Nov-08
4.2	Produce temporary accommodation strategy	NHDC, NHH, Aldwyck Housing Association, SP	Within existing resources	Agreed plan that ties together partner priorities	*Strategy signed off	Nov-08
4.3	Develop supply and demand model for temporary accommodation	SBC, NHDC	Within existing resources	Adoption of a tool to assess future requirement of units	*New model introduced	Dec-08
4.4	To improve 'move on' opportunities from temporary accommodation	NHDC, SBC, SP, RSLs, SHL	Within existing resources	More timely resettlement	*Reduced length of stay in temporary accommodation - NHDC 38 weeks, SBC 5 weeks * SP target (TBC)	Apr-09
4.5	Explore opportunities for development of new affordable housing	NHDC, SBC, RSLs	Housing Corporation, NHDC, SBC, Developer subsidy	Affordable homes delivered, or enabled	*SBC target 150 homes pa *NHDC target 120 homes pa	Apr-09
4.6	Review levels of under occupation in social housing and co-ordinate approach to findings	NHDC, SBC, RSLs, SHL	Within existing resources	Extent of under occupation assessed	*Report produced on levels of under occupation *Develop housing options and incentives package if appropriate	Apr-09
4.7	CBL and homelessness - review effectiveness for homeless households	SBC	Within existing resources	Equal opportunity for homeless households and engagement with process	*Annual monitoring reports to North Quadrant Homelessness Forum	Apr-09
4.8	Promote availability of Low Cost Home Ownership schemes	Aldwyck Housing Association, NHDC, SBC	Within existing resources	Increased awareness of schemes	*Marketing campaign agreed and launched	Sep-08

	Task	Lead team/Partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
4.9	Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation in line with NI156	NHDC, SBC	Within existing resources	Continued reduction in the numbers of households in TA	*NHDC 2010 target 52 *SBC 2010 target 129	Apr-10

Strategic Priority 5 - Partnership working

Objective: The members of the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum will seek to develop appropriate partnerships in order to deliver high quality services that offer value for money

	Task	Lead team/Partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
5.1	To monitor the effectiveness of partnership working through North Quadrant Homelessness Forum	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Better understanding of each others roles. Forum members to agree Terms of Reference for Group	*Feedback from members *Case studies *Awareness of roles	On-going
5.2	Review RSL partnership agreement	NHDC, RSLs	Within existing resources	New document agreed	*Launch of new document	Jul-08
5.3	Develop joint training programme with Forum for all members	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	More opportunities for forum members to learn from each other and procure more cost effective training. Ensure services complement, not duplicate, or contradict one another	*Joint training needs identified, and programme produced	Aug-08
5.4	Forum membership to be reviewed with a view to increasing agency representation	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	More productive Forum, with agencies such as CSF, CMHT, Benefits representative, Shelter, RSL homelessness champions and DV forum attending regularly	*Enhanced forum membership *Seek feedback from members on how productive they feel forum is now compared to previous years	Sep-08
5.5	To link employment and housing/homelessness issues by including JobCentre Plus and Connexions as part of the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Enhanced attendance at forum meetings	*JobCentre Plus and Connexions representatives attending meetings	Sep-08

	Task	Lead team/Partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
5.6	Develop an information sharing protocol	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	New protocol with common consent form	*New protocol agreed	Dec-08
5.7	Develop common Housing Allocation Policy	NHDC, NHH, HCHA, RSLs	Within existing resources	Standardised policy for service users	*Common policy adopted	Dec-08
5.8	Adopt standardised risk assessments and referral forms by agreement at the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Streamlined service	*Adoption of standardised documents	Apr-09
5.9	Develop communication system to identify housing issues or possible homelessness for service users at an early stage	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Advice and prevention services accessed at an earlier stage and better outcomes for service users	*New system agreed and launched	Sep-08
5.10	Contribute to review of joint housing protocol with CSF and HYHG	CSF, NHDC, SBC, HYHG	Within existing resources	New updated protocol	*Launch of new document	Apr-09

Strategic Priority 6 - Continuous improvement

Objective: The North Quadrant Homelessness Forum will monitor the performance of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, identify areas for improvement and oversee the delivery of enhanced services

	Task	Lead team/Partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
6.1	Benchmark performance of Housing Advice and Homelessness services against other Authorities in Hertfordshire	SBC, NHDC	Within existing resources	Identify best practice	*Updates at forum meetings	Nov-08
6.2	Invite service users to join forum	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Enhanced membership of forum	*New members join or participate in Service User focus group	Aug-08
6.3	Produce generic questionnaire to survey service users	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Feedback to improve services	*Launch of questionnaire	Sep-08
6.4	Improve awareness of services by promoting them more widely	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Improved public awareness and access to services	*Partners to jointly publicise services through own media	Sep-08
6.5	Introduce monitoring systems for disability, sexual orientation and religion/belief	NHDC, SBC	Within existing resources	To link customer circumstances to outcomes	*Update standard forms to include these criteria *Introduce monitoring form	Oct-08
6.6	Research why there were lower levels of homelessness preventions amongst clients aged 25-44 and 45-59	NHDC	Within existing resources	Identify reasons for disparity, if it exists	*Introduce monitoring for comparison *Analyse further for 2008/9	Apr-09
6.7	Research differences in outcomes for homelessness applications between female and male single applicants and lone parent applicants	NHDC, SBC	Within existing resources	Identify reasons for disparity, if it exists	*Monitor throughout 2008/9 *Examine differences between priority need and reasons for homelessness for single men and women	Apr-09

	Task	Lead team/Partnership	Funding	Expected outcome	How success measured?	Target date
6.8	Further research into low numbers of approaches from BME communities for the homelessness prevention services	NHDC, SBC	Within existing resources	Identify reasons for disparity, if it exists	*Attend and participate at North Hertfordshire Minority Ethnic Forum to promote services twice a year *Monitor throughout 2008/9 *Produce service leaflet and distribute to cultural centres	Apr-09
6.9	Review literature around housing advice and homelessness	NHDC, SBC	Within existing resources	Updated literature	*Suite of forms and leaflets updated	Apr-09
6.10	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum to conduct bi-monthly reviews of the action plan and publish updated versions on an annual basis	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members	Within existing resources	Continuous review of action plan that is updated accordingly	*New action plan agreed	Jun-09

KEY

	NHDC	North Hertfordshire District Council		HPT	Herts Partnership Trust	
	SBC	Stevenage Borough Council		HCC	Herts County Council	
	HYHG	Herts Young Homeless Group		CSF	Children, Schools and Families	
	CLG	Department of Communities and Local Government		CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau	
	RSL(s)	Registered Social Landlord(s)		DHP	Discretionary Housing Payment	
	SP	Supporting People Team		CMHT	Community Mental Health Team	
	SHL	Stevenage Homes Limited		DV Forum	Domestic Violence Forum	
	NHH	North Hertfordshire Homes Limited		LAA	Local Area Agreement	
	HCHA	Howard Cottage Housing Association				

8. Performance framework

The performance framework and the action plan are the tools that will enable progress to be measured. The performance framework will be updated regularly and its current status will indicate whether progress is 'on target', ahead of schedule or behind schedule.

Performance Indicator Definition	Type of Indicator (NI, LPI, LAA, P1E, HIP)	LA	Target 2008-9	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Target 2009-10	Status
TA reduction	NI 156	SBC	130	130	130	130	130	117	
		NHDC	50	50	50	50	50	45	
Number of Affordable homes	NI LAA	SBC	150	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	150	
		NHDC	120	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	120	
Number of homeless preventions	Local PI/P1E	SBC	200	50	100	150	200	tbc	
		NHDC	150	37	75	112	150	tbc	
Young people sustaining tenancies	LAA	SBC and NHDC	tbc					tbc	
% of vulnerable people achieving independent living	NI141, KP2	SBC and NHDC	tbc					tbc	
Number of acceptances	P1E	SBC	60	15	15	15	15		
		NHDC	60	15	15	15	15		
Acceptances associated to BME	P1E	SBC	4	1	1	1	1		
		NHDC	7	2	2	2	1		
Average length of stay in TA (weeks)	Local PI	SBC	5	5	5	5	5	5	
		NHDC	38	38	38	38	38	tbc	
Number of LA evictions	HIP	SBC	15						
		NHDC	tbc						
Rough sleepers (annual desk survey)	P1E, HIP	SBC	0	0	0	0	0	0	
		NHDC	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Performance Indicator Definition	Type of Indicator (NI, LPI, LAA, P1E, HIP)	LA	Target 2008-9	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Target 2009-10	Status
Attendance at Forum meetings as a % of membership	Local PI	SBC NHDC	75%						
Number of Forum meetings held (bi-monthly)	Local PI	SBC NHDC	6						

9. Governance

The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan and Performance Framework will be monitored by the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum.

A new Action Plan will be published annually. Progress will be monitored regularly and reported to the Forum with updates published on the website. The Action Plan forms a vital part of monitoring the progress made against the strategic objectives of the Strategy. The tasks set out in the Action Plan have been agreed and formulated by the Forum using the results of the Homelessness Consultation Event. The Forum will nominate a lead person or agency to deliver the task who will report progress made bi monthly.

Monitoring of the Action Plan and the measurement of success will be reported within a performance framework. The performance framework comprises a set of national and local indicators relevant to the strategic objectives of the Strategy, please see chapter 8.

North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Terms of Reference

Aim

The role of the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum is to take a proactive approach to tackling and preventing homelessness in North Hertfordshire and Stevenage. The Forum will encompass local issues affecting homelessness, seek strategic resolutions and work on addressing equality and diversity enabling social inclusion and empowering individuals to make choices.

The Forum will manage risk by identifying threats at the earliest opportunity, for example the reduction of funding streams. Tasks will be incorporated into the Action Plan to minimise the effect to homelessness services.

Objectives

- To provide input at the Local Strategic Partnership on homelessness issues and the tasks delivered against the Local Area Agreement
- To implement and deliver the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Homelessness Action Plan (2008)
- To monitor the progress of the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Homelessness Action Plan (2008)
- To share good practice and learning by disseminating information through regional, sub-regional and local networks.
- To work in partnership in developing new services to prevent homelessness and assist homeless people in Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

Meeting Arrangements

- The Forum will meet bi monthly and alternate between Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Office locations. Additional meetings may be arranged as needs arise.
- The Forum will be facilitated and administered by both Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Councils.
- North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Councils will share the responsibility of chairing the Forum

Decision Making Process

The Forum is made up of statutory and non statutory organisations. Each representative is involved in the decision making process. Decisions that are not reserved for the Forum are taken by the Council, for example matters relating to financial resources and statutory provisions.

The Forum will also monitor trends and patterns around:

- Reasons for homelessness
- Age profile of all approaches
- Number of homelessness presentations
- Reasons for loss of last settled home
- Priority need of acceptances
- County Court possession and re-possession cases

Where performance falls below target the Forum will develop joint Improvement Plans to meet targets.

North Quadrant Homelessness Forum Members

Organisation	Name	Title	Signature
Executive Member, SBC	Cllr Ann Webb	Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health	
Executive Member North Hertfordshire District Council	Cllr Bernard Lovewell	Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health	
Department of Communities and Local Government	Tracey Brushett	Specialist Advisor	
Stevenage Borough Council	Sukhvinder Rai	Strategy Officer	
Stevenage Borough Council	Sukhdev Sidhu	Principal Advice & Homelessness Officer	
Federation of Stevenage Tenants Association	John Ginger	Tenant Representative	
North Hertfordshire District Council	Martin Lawrence	Housing Options Manager	
Stevenage Homes Limited	Celia Lord	Senior Housing Officer (Special Needs)	
Stevenage Homes Limited	Adele Miell	Temporary Accommodation Officer	
Aldwyck Housing Association	Amy Callaway	Deputy Link Manager- North Hertfordshire Schemes	
Aldwyck Housing Association	Paul Woolveridge	Link Manager – North Hertfordshire Schemes	
<u>Aldwyck</u> Housing Association	Angela Lawrence	Hutton House Scheme Manager	
Aldwyck Housing Association	Janet Manning	Lettings Manager	
Aldwyck Housing Association	Julie Piercey	Senior Lettings Officer	
North Hertfordshire Homes	Stephen Gage	Tenancy Sustainment Manager	
North Hertfordshire Homes	Andrew Buchan	Head of Care and Supported Housing	
North Hertfordshire Homes	David Beckett	Choices Manager	
Stevenage Haven	Barbara Howard	Project Director	
Stevenage Haven	Mike Nash	Service Development Manager	
Connexions	Bev Ankin		
Connexions/North Hertfordshire College	Chris Moss	PA – Welfare and Support	
Community Mental Health Services, Hertfordshire County Council	Brid Kelly		
Community Mental Health Services, Hertfordshire County Council	Sally Revels		
Community Mental Health Services, Hertfordshire County Council	Liz France	Team Leader	
Howard Cottage Housing Association	Brioney Standley		
Howard Cottage Housing Association	Jaz Cousins		
Probation Services	Heather Smith		
Probation Services	Clare Martindale		
Probation Services	Tom Downes	Probation Officer	
Letters Property Management	Dawn Dainty	Managing Director	
Hertfordshire Young Homeless Group	Kathryn Salmon	Crisis Intervention Manager	

Organisation	Name	Title	Signature
Herts Young Homeless Group	Sue Haynes	Homelessness Prevention Manager	
Herts Young Homeless Group	Debbie Lovelock	Health Development and Specialist Services Manager	
Relate	Jill Adams	Centre Manager	
Children Schools & Families, Herts County Council	Kath Gould		
Children Schools & Families, Herts County Council	Zoe Tubb		
Supporting People, Herts County Council	Laura Fortune	Programme Manager	
Supporting People, Herts County Council	Sarah Taylor	Strategic Development Officer	
Herts County Council	Lesley Carr		
Herts County Council	Liz France		
Stevenage CAB	Marian Hurle	Bureau Director	
NHDC CAB	Sally Salisbury	Bureau Manager	
NHDC CAB	Tina Fletcher	Court Desk Worker	
NHS Primary Care Trust	Michelle Harber		
NHS West Herts Primary Care Trust	Sue Hazelton		
Hertsreach Turning Point	Mick Tomazou	Housing Support Officer	
Nacro	Vernon Flood		
North Hertfordshire Sanctuary	<u>Nicki</u> Dawson	Deputy Manager	
North Hertfordshire Sanctuary	Judy Recontre	Manager	
Pohwer	R Muldoon		
Pohwer	Roma Mills		
William Sutton Trust	Sue Hopkins		
SBC Housing Benefits Service	Theresa Mortimer	Benefits Manager	
Stevenage Womens Refuge	Tina Vincent	Scheme Support Worker	
YMCA, Central Hertfordshire	Tim Fox		

Appendices

Appendix A

North Quadrant Homelessness Strategy event – 1/11/07

LIST OF DELEGATES

Councillor Ann Webb	SBC Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health
Councillor Margaret Notley	SBC
Councillor Leonard Lambert	SBC
Councillor Lis Knight	SBC
Azma Ahmed	Hertsmere Borough Council
Martin Lawrence	North Hertfordshire District Council
Les Betts	Stevenage Haven
Sukhvinder Rai	Stevenage BC
Andrew Buchan	North Hertfordshire Homes
Amy Callaway	Aldwyck Housing Group
Dawn Dainty	Letters Property Management
Tom Downes	Stevenage Probation
Tina Fletcher	CAB, Letchworth
Vernon Flood	NACRO
Laura Fortune	Herts County Council - Adult Care Services
Stephen Gage	North Hertfordshire Homes
Tracey Brushett	DCLG
Laura Green	SBC Service User
Nana Gyebi	Dacorum Borough Council
Monique Haulett	Paddington Churches H.A.
Cynthia Hayford	Dacorum Borough Council
Mark James	Herts County Council – Supporting People
Brid Kelly	Community Mental Health Service
Angela Laurance	Paddington Churches H.A.
Hayley Lindsell	Service User, SBC
Fiona Macdonald	Herts Young Homeless Group
Janet Manning	Aldwyck Housing Group
Theresa Mortimer	SBC
Jenny Martin	Stevenage Womens Aid
Ken Moore	Longmeadow Evangelical Church
Chris Moss	North Hertfordshire College/Connexions
Tara O'Shaughnassy	Service User, SBC
Paul Packham	Herts County Council - Crime/Drugs Strategy Unit
Craig Retburg	Service User, Stevenage Haven
Sally Revels	Community Mental Health Service
Debbie Reynolds	CAB, Stevenage
Annie Robson	CAB, Stevenage
Reverend Michael Roden	St Mary's Church, Hitchin
Sally Salisbury	CAB, Letchworth
Kathryn Salmon	Herts Young Homeless Group
Sukhdev Sidhu	SBC
Ruth Edwards	SBC
Helena Hon	SBC
Aaron Hutber	SBC
Ann Upson	SBC
Alaine Edwards	SBC

Husnara Malik	SBC
Claire Staddon	Service User, Stevenage Haven
Danielle Straker	Service User, SBC
Mark Swan	Shelter
Sarah Taylor	Herts County Council - Supporting People
Stephen Tingley	Broxbourne Borough Council
Mick Tomazou	Turning Point
Andy Vincent	Stevenage Homes Ltd
Tina Vincent	North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Womens Aid
Karen Freimanis	North Hertfordshire District Council
Paul Woolveridge	Aldwyck Housing Group

Appendix B

Consultation Event – Feedback from workshops

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION WORKSHOP

General comments on the workshop:

In workshops, name/organisation cards for attendees would be useful.

The provision of a glossary of terms would be useful for those who are unfamiliar with the housing environment.

General comments on homelessness:

Ignoring homelessness doesn't solve the problem.

Consideration should be given to the issues which cause relationship breakdowns.

Develop additional affordable housing.

People's expectations:

The Local Authority will always house the people of Stevenage, which is not possible.

The housing that is offered to homeless applicants will always be Council owned housing.

Local Authority duties:

Local authorities are under pressure to reduce homelessness and have a vested interest in not giving appropriate advice.

The Customer Service Centre, (CSC), is 'batting' people away from the Council without giving them the relevant information on homelessness.

The CSC is not telling people about tenancy deposits.

More information should be provided about tenancy deposits.

Average arrears are about £2,000, so the provision of £1,500 for a 'finders fee' could be seen as an affordable solution.

Concerns expressed over the effectiveness/value of providing tenancy deposits to people in high arrears.

Should all clients be offered advice on their options, e.g. Housing Benefit, (HB), for the private sector instead of 'homeless at home.'

Local authorities have a duty to provide the appropriate information.

The voluntary sector is not obliged to provide information free of charge and these organisations are not always funded to enable them to provide it.

Parental Exclusions:

There is a high correlation between school exclusions and home exclusions.

Educate parents that 'chuck out' is not an alternative to the waiting list. Their children will not be housed more quickly in these circumstances.

Invite parents to the interview in order to explain the situation and reality to them. Discuss issues like being able to join the waiting list at 16, other options, shared ownership and tenancy deposits etc....

Are people aware that 16 year olds can join the waiting list, or of the other options available, e.g. private rented accommodation, shared ownership, the long timescales involved.

Homelessness Officers to visit at home. In theory these should be carried out, however, in practice they aren't.

Mediation with parents may work, but this is not always the answer.

Young people don't choose to be homeless, therefore, it is pointless going into schools to 'educate' them about not wanting to stay at home. Young people want to be at home.

If consideration is given to visiting schools, to provide information about housing options, then visiting Youth Centres should also be considered. Young people are more likely to feel comfortable discussing personal issues there, rather than in school.

Mediation:

The use of mediation should be considered with private landlords, in order to overcome HB issues/problems.

Floating Support:

Consider using floating support, in order to help people living in privately rented properties.

Herts Young Homeless Group, (HYHG), will offer advice/support to 16 – 25 year olds. It is down to local authorities to tell people about this service.

Private Rented Sector:

Should public money be given to landlords who provide the properties that SBC require, in terms of a fee finder?

Prospective tenants of private landlords should be offered 12 month tenancies.

Concerns expressed about the level of standards within privately rented accommodation.

Assured Shorthold tenancies should be offered, in order to provide some protection to prospective tenants.

Would private landlords have to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check?

Potential problems with HB should be overcome, in order to encourage private landlords to offer accommodation to clients referred to them by SBC.

£1,500 is a 'cheap' way of providing homelessness prevention.

Use expertise to settle people into affordable housing, (private rent topped up by HB). This should result in less homelessness acceptances, which in turn will free up SBC staff time to spend on settling people in.

Query raised as to who would monitor the standard of private rented accommodation, e.g. Supporting People, (SP), framework.

Private Landlords:

Advertise in the local press, in order to encourage more private landlords to come forward and offer their accommodation for use by SBC clients.

Contact Letting Agents, in order to increase the supply of privately rented properties.

There is a need to emphasise the advantages available to private landlords who agree to work with SBC clients, some suggestions are:

Fast tracked HB.

Offer of a fee finder of £1,500 to landlords who provide two bedroom properties.

Working with the Housing Advice Team offers better value than Letting Agents.

Tenants are likely to remain with the same landlord for longer than 6 months.

Landlords have a guaranteed income.

The HB system is much improved.

Private landlords prefer not to offer accommodation to clients claiming HB as there is a stigma attached to these claimants.

Some landlords will not accept anyone who claims HB.

Concerns expressed about the entitlement of a landlord to increase the rent.

The Rent Officer will determine a Fair Rent.

Discretionary HB payments can be made to tenants where their HB entitlement doesn't meet the entire rent level.

The introduction of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), caused some concerns with regard to the potential for landlords not being made aware of vulnerable tenants, which may result in the tenants' needs not being taken into account, particularly in respect of the payment of rent.

The potential for landlords to begin to act in an unwelcoming way to clients, when they find out that they are receiving HB, was highlighted as a potential issue.

The introduction of the LHA will give HB claimants absolute control over their future payment of rent.

Local authorities can make a decision to pay the landlord directly.

Previously, private landlords have ignored offering accommodation to HB claimants, as they have been able to let their properties due to the buoyancy of the market.

The benefits of a Landlords Forum were mentioned.

A Landlords Forum can be used to help agencies work together more effectively when dealing with private sector tenants.

Housing Benefit:

Blackpool – the HB figures went down following the introduction of the LHA.

Tenants can choose to have HB paid directly to their landlord.

Under 25s are not entitled to receive full HB. They are entitled to receive a shared allowance.

Benefit paid directly to the tenant (LHA). New claims not for the Council, Registered Social Landlords, (RSLs), tenants.

Concerns expressed about what happens if a claimant doesn't return HB claim form.

Benefit Officers will contact the claimant, in order to advise about the missing information. They will also liaise with RSLs, and other landlords, about any problems.

TACKLING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS WORKSHOP

Young people require:

Good advice

Supported accom to teach life skills & parental skills

Floating support

Support should be tailored to meet the young person's needs

Intensive support required at commencement of tenancy

Education on homelessness and housing options to be delivered in schools from 13+, more effective when approached from an early age

Encourage younger people to go into schools to deliver awareness training

Arrange trips around homeless hostels

Mediation service for parents and children to resolve relationship problems

Family counselling

specialist support required for drug and alcohol issues

more provisions to move in and out of areas to get away from bad influences/peers

more consistency in approach – one provider for accom and support

more partnership working

to share SBC's good practice partnership working with HYHG and CSF

to encourage joint housing protocol panels as they are effective

SBC special needs panel works well

more support provisions needed for parents

to help to relate to children better

making parents more responsible

manage parents' expectations re social housing

Mapping process required, support should not cease abruptly, support should be holistic and based on moral principles

A need for more affordable housing

16/17 year old no longer priority need?

SINGLE HOMELESSNESS INC VULNERABLE GROUPS

Causes of homelessness:

- Relationship breakdown
- Housing benefit
 - Delays in process
 - Complex process
 - single room rent rule unfair and disqualifying
 - rent officer determinations cause shortfalls in rent

- chaotic lifestyle
- drugs and alcohol misuse
- literacy issues
 - poor education
- lack of support for ex-offenders
 - help with tenancy sustainment
 - general day to day support
 - lack of advice on realistic housing options
 - problems with HB on custodial sentence

- Private rented sector landlords
 - Stigmatise housing benefit dependant tenants
 - Some are unprofessional and illegally evict

- Immigration
 - Not familiar with process
 - Language barriers

- Debt culture
 - Lack of understanding
 - Unable to differentiate between priority and non priority debts

- Council tax burden on young people
- Lack of provision in tenancy sustainment, suggested:
 - Foyer system
 - Halfway house
 - Use Ridgeway model

- Abandoned responsibility
- Pregnancy
- Domestic violence
- Unemployment
- Health to include mental health
- Natural disaster: fire, flood
- Learning difficulties

- Shortage of affordable housing
- Overcrowding
- Mortgage repossession
- Lack of security in the private sector

Homelessness affects whom?

- Everyone at some point in life
 - Unemployed/unemployable
- Relationship breakdown
 - Trying to support two homes
- Elderly people
- Mental health problems
- Members of armed forces
 - Post traumatic stress i.e. returning from service in Iraq

List of Partners/agencies working with homeless persons

- Nightshelters inc the Haven
- Wellfield Court
- Hostels
- CSF/ACS
- Connexions
- Aldwyck
- Nacro
- HYHG
- NH Sanctuary
- Womens Refuge
- YMCA
- Salvation Army
- Foyer with Aldwyck/Broxbourne
- Voluntary Sector
- Information and Advice
- Probation
- Medical Services
- Drugs Centre/Drugs line
- Living Room
- CAB
- Hospital
- GP Surgery
- LA Housing Service
- RSLs
- Extended family/friends

- Counselling
- Schools
- Churches
- Better partnership working of existing services aided by HML Forum
- Recognition/Diagnosis is important for people who need support e.g. tenancy sustainment
- Accessibility
- Expansion criteria e.g. when reaches certain age problem does not go away
- Young offenders require higher support facilities
- Free phone advice line i.e. Shelter should be better advertised
- Information sheet/database of services needed
- Effective prevention/strategy/sufficient housing
- Service users should be involved in service delivery

Solutions

- schools play an important role
 - teaching key life skills
 - financial management
 - awareness of homelessness
 - managing expectations
- more single person accommodation
- more affordable housing
- more social rented accom
- allocation scheme criteria too rigid e.g. cannot bid for two bed as qualifies for three bed
- short term safety net
- common assessment framework with partners to ensure joined up working
- abolish RTB to make better use of existing stock
- tackle under occupation
- review Hill's report
- establish link between employment and housing
- partnership counselling service
 - more effective mediation
- realistic funding & resources
 - back up strategy
 - tenancy sustainment v cost of possession action and void periods
- Social L/L needs accurate info re tenant to ensure appropriate support
- Housing benefit triggers problems
 - Lack of tenancy support from Housing Officers
- more people living with family and friends
 - hidden homelessness
- government criteria misleading and unrealistic
- system exploited by some

Role of local authorities in tackling homelessness

- Better joined up working
- More constructive partnership working
- Raise profile of social housing
 - Education
 - Not homes for everyone
- Manage perception inc high income groups
 - Of lone parents
 - Housing of eastern Europeans
- Improve relationships with the PRS and private landlords
- Improve wider community understanding of homelessness
- Improve relationships with financial services

REDUCING THE USE OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION WORKSHOP

Explore Incentives

- Use Private Rented Sector (PRS) for more homes
 - Increase use of PRS
 - Forge relationships with Letting Agents and help overcome stigma attached to HB tenants and people with poor credit history
 - Use only private sector L/Ls with good standard accom should match actual rents in PRS
 - Tenancy sustainment support should also be available in PRS
 - Increasing the use of PRS and better routes via allocations scheme will discourage HML presentations
 - Rent Officer Determinations
- Adjust the Allocations Scheme to award priority to 'homeless at home households'.
- Better use of Rent Deposit Schemes
- Educate and raise awareness of homelessness in schools
 - Award more priority to young people living at home
 - Award more priority to young people in education or training programmes to encourage an active community role and to take responsibility

Review Current Policy

- Reduce priority for those households in adequate temporary accommodation (TA)
- Once duty accepted place directly into permanent housing
- Review family composition only every ten years to discourage expanding families

Maximise Current Use of TA

- Make use of Alms housing
- Monitor void turnaround and recycle properties more efficiently
- Use all void properties as TA

Increase provisions for specific housing advice

- More true prevention work needed not gate keeping
- More resources required to carry out genuine prevention
- Lack of specialist housing law advice
- Councils to fund focussed and in depth training for Housing Advice Champions
- 'Out of hours' provisions for advice should be made
- Information on availability of stock should be accessible on internet to manage expectations and give realistic prospects.

Appendix C

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Service Reviews

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage have conducted separate homelessness and housing advice service reviews in order to meet new challenges, as outlined in this strategy document.

Stevenage Borough Council

The objectives of the SBC Homelessness and Housing Advice Service is to provide a service within the legal framework and in line with the Council's corporate values:

- Putting People First
- Delivering Value for Money
- Working Together

The Service comprises of two sections: Homelessness and Housing Advice, each with a separate function. Each Section is resourced by three full time Officers and overall has one full time assistant. The Housing Advice Service is unique in its delivery providing an impartial service with compliance to confidentiality. The Housing Advice Service has been accredited with the Community Legal Services Quality Mark. The Service, in addition to the standard corporate requirements also complies with the requirements under Community Legal Services. The two roles are distinguished by the level of casework undertaken to prevent homelessness. Housing Advice Officers deliver prevention advice and undertake casework prior to a threat of homelessness, this approach gives optimum opportunities to sustain accommodation. Homelessness Officers undertake further prevention work where homelessness is imminent and in some cases where an alternative housing option is not available, will proceed with a homelessness presentation and associated investigations.

The Homelessness Services was inspected by the internal Audit Assurance in 2004/05. The outcome of the inspection indicated 37 recommendations, following a recent review 22 of these recommendations have been implemented. The 15 recommendations outstanding are of a low significance and will be incorporated into the Service improvement plan with some actions forming part of the Homelessness Action Plan under Strategic Priority six, Continuous Improvement.

The Housing Advice Service was inspected by the internal Audit Assurance more recently (2007/08). Detailed testing was carried out on the systems of control and the management of risk within the area. The outcome of the inspection was that the quality of housing advice provided is satisfactory, although there is more scope to improve this through more effective training for staff. Recommendations have been made to improve the level of monitoring and verification of cases, which may impede upon the reporting of performance indicators. The associated tasks will be incorporated in the Service Plan with some actions forming part of the Homelessness Action Plan under Strategic Priority six, Continuous improvement. Overall, the Internal Audit has assigned **substantial assurance** to the systems and procedures; definition:

“basically a sound system but there are weaknesses which put some of control objectives at risk.....Substantial assurance will be attributed to a system where in the auditor’s judgement the recommendations relate to actions that are considered necessary to avoid exposure to significant risks”

A further internal evaluation of the Homelessness and Housing Advice Services has been carried out by the management as part of the drive for continuous improvement. The evaluation is with reference to the Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE):

- Access to Customer Care and User Focus
- Diversity
- Housing Advice, homelessness preventions and options services
- Homelessness Strategy, services and applications
- Temporary Accommodation for statutory homeless households
- Value for money

Conclusions drawn from this evaluation are as follows:

Strengths

- A customer focussed service with officers committed to meeting customers needs
- Regular training is undertaken
- Service demonstrates a commitment to equality and diversity issues
- Provides comprehensive and recognised quality housing advice with some specialisation
- Is well resourced and understands its strategic role
- Has an established homelessness forum to enable multi-agency working
- Has effective protocols to avoid 16 and 17 year olds in bed and breakfast
- Has the facility to monitor outcomes of homeless prevention to show reduced cost to homelessness service
- Is making good progress to reduce temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010

Weaknesses

- Insufficient publicity and awareness of services
- More robust procedures required to collate BME data
- Policies and procedures require updating
- Performance to be measured to recognise achievements
- Insufficient service user involvement to improve services
- Repeat homelessness not adequately monitored
- Currently no model to predict the future supply and demand of temporary accommodation.

Opportunities

- The private rented sector could prove to be a valuable resource as a prevention option
- Marketing and publicity to raise awareness of quality services available
- Make use of the expertise of partner agencies to share good practice

- Maximise use of media publications
- Increase profile of homelessness within local political system
- Make best use of Housing Benefit services to support prevention initiatives

Threats

- Infrequent supervision and verification of casework could lead to external challenges
- Inconsistent reporting of data by the Council and external agencies could lead to inaccuracies in data collation and thus a negative impact on future service planning
- A limited training budget could lead to staff delivering out of date/inaccurate advice
- A lack of policies and procedures could lead to inconsistent service delivery and poor performance assessment

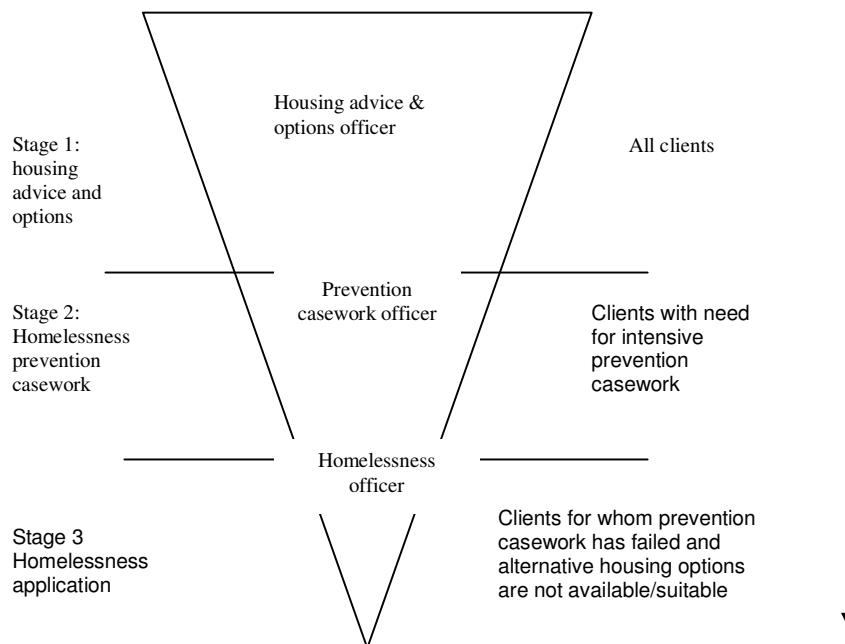
North Hertfordshire District Council

Prior to 2006 NHDC delivered a homelessness and housing advice service that focused on exploring whether the council has a statutory duty to provide a client with temporary accommodation. The authority had a large amount of hostel accommodation available to meet the duty to accommodate homeless households. Consequently, it had not been necessary to explore and pursue alternative forms of accommodation.

The increasing emphasis within homelessness legislation and guidance on housing authorities obligations to prevent homelessness and offer alternatives to temporary accommodation, presented the authority with a considerable challenge. This entailed a shift away from crisis management towards a strategic response based on early intervention, increased housing options and support for clients. As a result officers roles have been redefined and new prevention tools have been introduced.

Old generic working practices have been replaced with a structure in which applicants pass through a system in which officers are dedicated to fulfilling the statutory duties owed to the client.

**Figure 5:
The new housing advice and homelessness approach for North Hertfordshire**



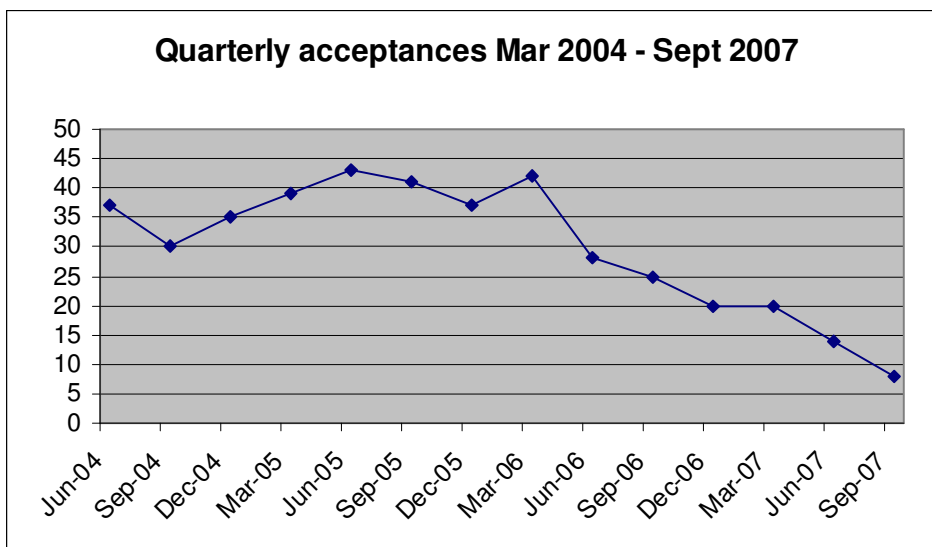
The new model altered the focus to one of preventing the homelessness, with temporary accommodation used only as a last resort in cases where the full housing duty is owed.

In introducing this model North Hertfordshire District Council has;

- Increased the number of staff delivering the service;
- Implemented a comprehensive training programme for staff;
- Facilitated joint training with other agencies;
- Introduced new prevention measures; and
- Improved corporate working between Housing Options, Housing Benefit and Private Sector Renewals.

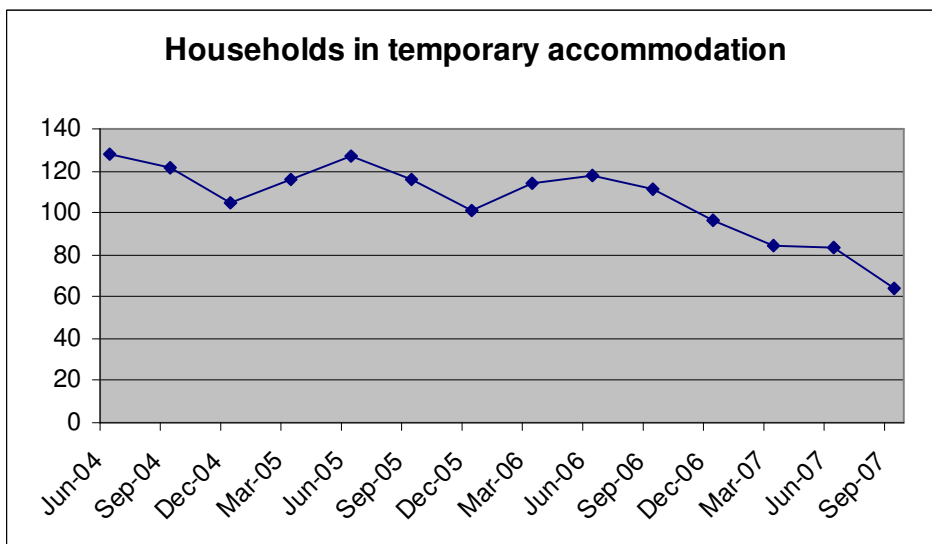
The prevention approach has been successful in reducing the number of households for which the full housing duty has been accepted (See table 4).

Figure 6:
The number of homelessness acceptances by North Hertfordshire



It has also contributed towards a steep reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation (See table 5)

Figure 7:
The number of households in temporary accommodation in North Hertfordshire



NHDC is keen to build on this success through enhancing the tools available for homelessness prevention and improving partnership working.

Appendix D

North Hertfordshire District Council – Equality Impact Assessment – May 2008

Service Area: Housing and Environmental Health	Department Section: Housing Options Team	Person responsible for the assessment: Martin Lawrence, Housing Options Manager	Date of assessment: 23 rd May 2008
Name of Policy to be assessed: Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013		Existing or new policy?	New

1. Brief description of the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy	The Homelessness Strategy sets out the Council's strategic priorities for tackling homelessness in the district over the period 2008 – 2013 and includes an action plan for achieving them.
2. Are there any associated objectives of the policy?	The strategy has six priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of Homelessness; • Tackling Youth Homelessness; • Single People and Vulnerable Groups; • Reducing the use of Temporary Accommodation; • Partnership Working; and • Continuous Improvement.
3. Who is intended to benefit from the policy and in what way?	Once adopted, the Strategy will be used by officers and partners as a plan for delivering the Council's priorities to tackle homelessness and provide high quality services for local people.
4. What outcomes are wanted from this policy?	To ensure that there is a co-ordinated, consistent and planned approach to delivering housing advice and homelessness services.
5. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?	Contribute: Partnership working with statutory, voluntary and private agencies. Deduct: Availability of funding. Changes in the housing market.
6. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to this policy?	The Council, Stevenage Borough Council, The North Quadrant Homelessness Forum, Registered Social Landlords, London Commuter Belt Sub-Region, Supporting People Team, Service Users, Herts Young Homeless Group, Children, Schools and Families, the CAB, and North Herts Homes.
7. Who implements the policy and who is responsible for the policy?	The Council through partnership working with North Quadrant Homelessness Forum.

8. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact on minority ethnic groups?	Positive: the strategy identifies specific tasks concerning minority ethnic groups to ensure that they experience equal access to services.
What evidence is available to support this?	The strategy identifies enhanced monitoring across the service, improved access to information on the homelessness service of the Council and targeted housing advice services. The strategy will be made available in other languages if requested.
9. Will the policy have a positive/negative impact due to gender?	Positive
What evidence is available to support this?	The strategy identifies actions to support victims of domestic violence (the majority of which are women). Further analysis of homelessness applications has also been identified in order to understand the differences in outcomes for male or female single and lone parent applicants.
10. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact due to disability?	Positive:
What evidence is available to support this?	The strategy highlights the need to introduce monitoring of disability.
11. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact due to sexual orientation?	Positive
What evidence is available to support this?	The strategy highlights the need to introduce monitoring of sexual orientation.
12. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact due to age?	Positive
What evidence is available to support this?	The strategy has highlighted the need for research into lower levels of the prevention of homelessness for the 25-44 and 45-59 age groups. It also proposes research on the level of RSL tenants that are under-occupying (most often elderly) and to develop a housing options and incentives package if appropriate.
13. Could the policy have a positive/negative impact on people due to their religious beliefs?	Positive
What evidence is available to support this?	The strategy highlights the need to introduce monitoring of religion/belief.

14. Could the positive/negative impact identified in 8 – 13 amount to there being potential for adverse impact in this policy?	No
15. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	N/A
16. Is it necessary to perform a more in-depth impact assessment?	No
17. In-depth impact assessment to be completed by (date)	

Signed (Completing Officer) _____

Signed (Service Manager) _____

Stevenage Borough Council – Equality Impact Assessment – May 2008

Service Area: Strategic Housing	Department Section: Housing Strategy and Development	Person responsible for the assessment: Rosey Notley, Policy Officer	Date of assessment: 23 rd May 2008
Name of Policy to be assessed: Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013		Existing or new policy?	New

What are the main aims and objectives or purpose of the strategy?
Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Councils have developed this strategy in partnership. Local Authorities are statutorily required to have a homelessness strategy. The strategy sets out the strategic priorities for tackling homelessness and includes an action plan for achieving them.
What outcomes do you want to achieve and for whom?
<p>The strategy has 6 key strategic priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention of Homelessness Tackling Youth Homelessness Single People and Vulnerable Groups Reducing the use of Temporary Accommodation Partnership Working Continuous Improvement <p>Anyone who approaches the Homelessness and Housing Advice Service who is homeless or threatened with homelessness will benefit from advice and assistance. Services focus on homelessness prevention and working in partnership with other agencies to provide high quality services and improve outcomes.</p>
Who is affected by this policy, service or function or by the way it is carried out? i.e. who are the internal and external customers, groups, communities or any other stakeholders?
A range of agencies will be involved with Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Councils in delivering this strategy. These include, among others, North Quadrant Homelessness Forum, Stevenage Homes, North Hertfordshire Homes, Supporting People, Social Services, Hertfordshire Young Homeless Group.
Who implements, carries out or delivers the policy, practice, service or function? Please state where more than one person, team, department or body?

Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Councils have the strategic responsibility to deliver homelessness services. The North Quadrant Homeless Forum will be responsible for ensuring that the Homelessness Strategy is implemented, through continuous monitoring and reviewing of the delivery of the Action Plan.
Is the policy, practice, service or function affected by external drivers for change? e.g. new legislation, national policy, external inspections etc.
Yes, including legislation, case law, government guidance, best practice and performance management.
How is information about the strategy publicised?
The strategy will be published on the Council's website and through North Quadrant Homelessness Forum meetings
Is the strategy up-to-date? State when last reviewed
The strategy has been completely revised for 2008 – 2013. The last Homelessness Strategy was produced in 2003 to cover the period 2003 – 2008.
How was it drawn up? Who was consulted?
A consultation event was held in October 2007 that was attended by all the key stakeholders and partners of both Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Councils, together with service users. Feedback from this event was used to determine the six key priorities of the strategy.
How was it communicated?
The completed strategy has been circulated to all key stakeholders and partners for comment and has also been published on the Council's website.
How have managers and staff been made aware of their rights and responsibilities?
Staff are made aware of their rights and responsibilities through the PDM process, team meetings, written policies and procedures. Development opportunities that are identified will be considered to ensure a fair and equitable service. All complaints will be investigated and the service will continually strive to improve.
What are the key performance indicators? These may be national and/or local?

Reduction in the use of temporary accommodation by half by 2010 – Government target
Numbers of households living in temporary accommodation – National Indicator 156
Number of rough sleepers in the area on a given night – Housing Investment Programme
Homelessness prevented through housing advice intervention – P1E
Average length of stay in hostel accommodation – local indicator

What links are there between this strategy and other corporate objectives?

The strategy works towards achieving the Council's ambition of Good Housing for All. It is synonymous with the principles of the Local Strategic Partnership and links with the Council's Housing and Community Safety Strategies and with Hertfordshire County Council's Supporting People Strategy

What steps have you taken to ensure that your procurement procedures address equality issues, if the policy, practice, function or service is provided by another organisation or agency on behalf of the Council?

Services incorporated within the protocol will be delivered by partner agencies and Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Councils and delivery will be monitored by the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum. Service delivery will be equitable with those organisation's Equal Opportunities Policies

What information do you have from recent consultation that may help with the assessment? Have you have specific arrangements for consulting 'hard to reach' groups? Do you have an ongoing dialogue with certain groups?

The consultation event held in October was attended by service users from Stevenage Haven, an emergency hostel for single homeless people. This group are hard to reach as they are often roofless and transient. Other service users who attended the event were young single mothers living in supported accommodation with 24 hour support.

Race:

This question not only looks broadly at adverse impacts/barriers in terms of race, but also considers impacts/barriers which may be particular to people from one ethnic group.

Identify an adverse impacts/barriers of the policy of procedure on people who may be disadvantaged because of their race

Positive impact: The strategy identifies specific tasks concerning minority ethnic groups to ensure they experience equal access to services, including enhanced monitoring, improved access to information and targeted housing advice services.

Gender:

It is worthwhile remembering that women and men have different priorities in relation to what services they want and different needs for how these are provided.

Identify and adverse impact/barriers of policy, practise, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their gender.

Women

Positive impact: The strategy identifies actions to support victims of domestic violence (the majority of which are women). Further analysis of homelessness applications has also been identified in order to understand the differences in outcomes for male or female single and lone parent applicants.

Where do you think improvements could be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their gender?

The gender of all housing applicants is held on the applications database. There is no evidence that gender influences how an application for housing is assessed.

Disability:

All service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities, including physical features of premises, so it is advisable to anticipate any adjustments that may be required. Consider the barriers faced by different groups of people with disabilities as listed in the boxes below. Note also that changes to legislation mean that conditions such as MS, HIV and cancer are now included under the DDA from the time of diagnosis.

Identify any adverse impact/barriers of policy, practise, service on people who may be disadvantaged because of their disability.

Positive impact: People with disabilities are more likely to be classed as in priority need when homeless as a result of their disability. The homelessness legislation classifies disability as one of the “vulnerable” groups to whom priority for re-housing should be given.

Where do you think improvements could be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their disability?

The strategy highlights the need to introduce monitoring of disability

Age:

When answering the following questions consider the needs of the wider age range of the Borough.

Identify any adverse impact/barriers of policy, practice, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their age.

Positive impact: Homelessness legislation defines all 16/17 year olds as being in priority need and the over 60's are given increased weighting when considering vulnerability.

Where do you think improvements could be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their age?

The strategy has highlighted the need for research into lower levels of the prevention of homelessness for the 25-44 and 45-59 age groups. It also proposes research on the level of RSL tenants that are under-occupying (most often elderly) and to develop a housing options and incentives package if appropriate

Religion and Belief

Identify any adverse impact/barriers of policy, practice, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their religion or belief.

None identified

Where do you think improvements can be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their religion or belief?

Sexuality

Identify any adverse impact/barriers of policy, practice, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their sexuality.
None identified

Where do you think improvements could be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their sexuality?

The strategy highlights the need to introduce monitoring of sexual orientation