

# Financial and Regulatory Services

## Planning Policy & Projects

### Housing Monitoring Report 2006-07



#### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This paper analyses the changes in the District's housing stock between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2007. It examines:

- Completions;
- Tenure of new dwellings;
- Size and type of new dwellings;
- Density of new housing
- Distribution of new housing
- Price of housing
- Refusals
- Starts and dwellings under construction
- Appeal decisions
- Residential Development Potential

#### 2.0 Completions

2.1 There was a net increase of 623 dwellings in the district during the year. This arises from a gain of 661 dwellings and a loss of 38. Of the net dwellings, 570 were new buildings, with a further 53 being conversions and changes of use.

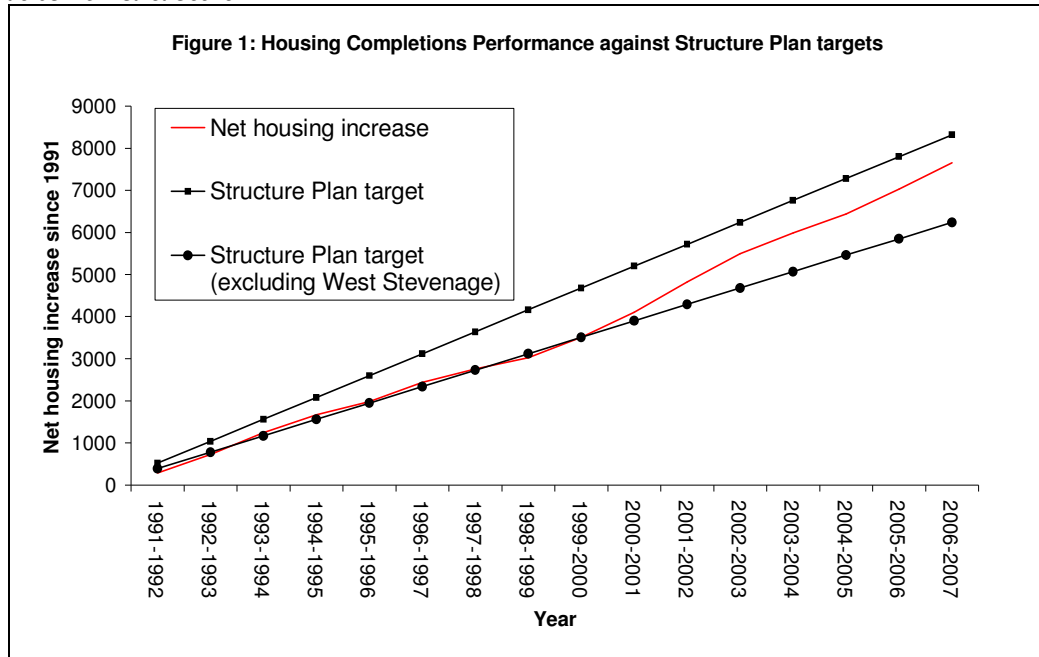
2.2 This is the third consecutive year in which the net increase has risen – from a low of 450 dwellings in 2003/04, it increased to 490 in 2004/05, 590 in 2005/06 and now 624 in 2006/07.

2.3 Of the net dwelling increase, 372 were on previously developed land (PDL) and 251 on greenfield sites, representing 59.7% on PDL. The Government's target is that 60% of all new dwellings should be on previously developed land. However, this is a national target, and in North Hertfordshire the large greenfield sites at Great Ashby and Burleigh Park make it very difficult to achieve this target at a district level. It is therefore all the more remarkable that we have practically achieved this target this year. The past three years have all seen rates in excess of 50% of net dwelling increase being on previously developed land.

2.4 These completions need to be considered in the context of both the adopted Hertfordshire Structure Plan and the emerging East of England Plan.

#### ***Hertfordshire Structure Plan***

2.5 The adopted Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011 (April 1998) allocates 10,400 dwellings to North Hertfordshire, which included 2,600 dwellings at West Stevenage. This requires 520 dwellings per year, or 390 dwellings per year at locations other than West Stevenage.



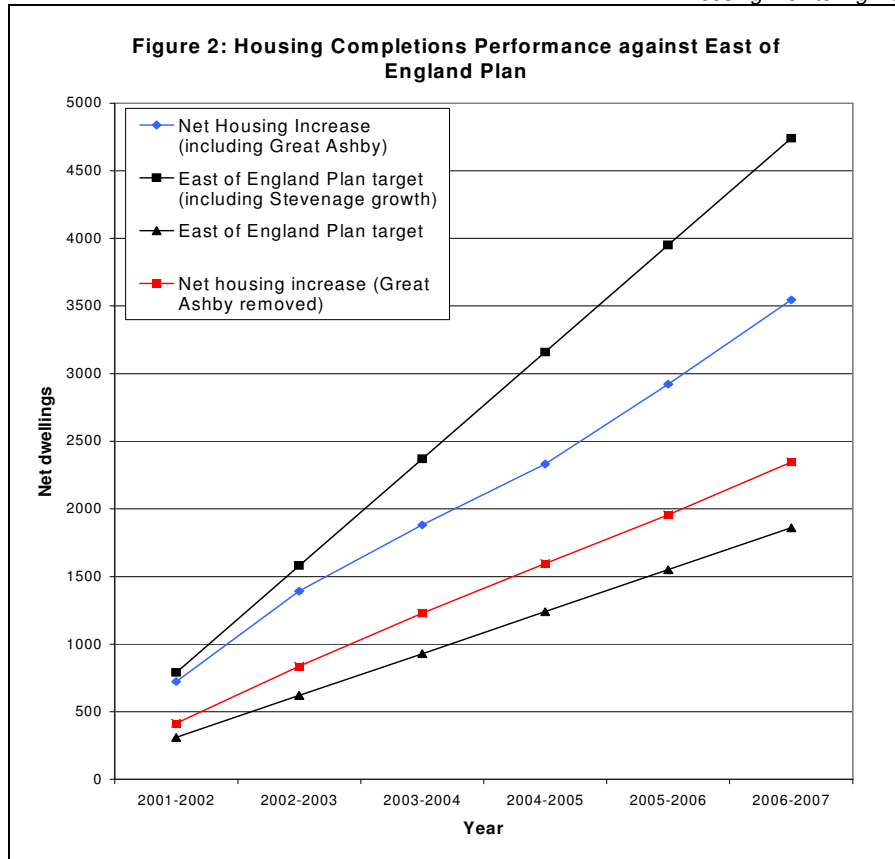
2.6 It can be seen from Figure 1 above that the actual net housing increase since 1991 has not met the overall Structure Plan target. However, when the West Stevenage element is removed it can be seen that through the 1990s the District's performance was very close to the target, and since 2000 has significantly out-performed it.

***Draft East of England Plan***

2.7 The Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications to the emerging East of England Plan<sup>1</sup> 2001-2021 allocate 6,200 dwellings to North Hertfordshire. This requires 310 dwellings per year. However, it also suggests that additionally up to 9,600 dwellings will be required in North Hertfordshire associated with the expansion of Stevenage. The completions which have occurred since 2001 at Great Ashby will count towards this 9,600 rather than towards North Hertfordshire's 6,200 allocation.

2.8 In Figure 2, over, it can be seen that our completions excluding Great Ashby have consistently exceeded the requirement for the district. The larger implied target which includes Stevenage expansion has not been met, but this is due to the fact that this figure is based on significant expansion of Stevenage west of the A1(M), which has yet to receive planning permission from the Secretary of State.

<sup>1</sup> The final version of the East of England Plan is anticipated to be published Summer 2007.



### 3.0 Tenure of new dwellings

3.1 The majority of new homes have been built by private developers. Of the 623 new dwellings 120 have been affordable housing, representing 19%. These are split between the following ten sites:

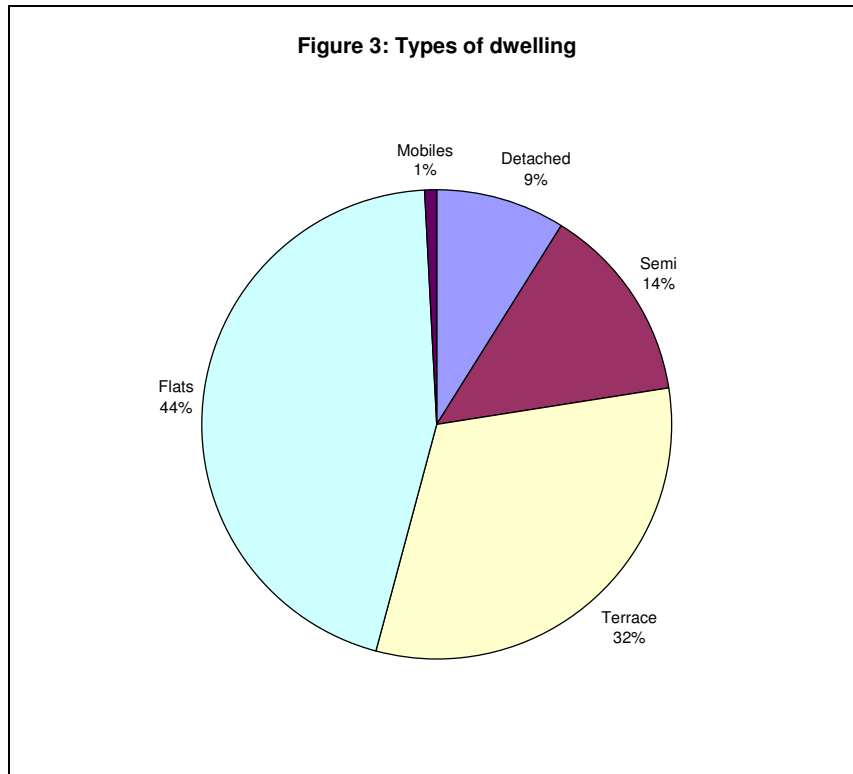
BP2, Burleigh Park	Graveley	8
BP3, Burleigh Park	Graveley	21
BP4a, Burleigh Park	Graveley	3
BP5, Burleigh Park	Graveley	4
BP6b, Burleigh Park	Graveley	28
GA13, Great Ashby	Graveley	24
William Ransom	Hitchin	19
Lloyd Way	Kimpton	7
Former Letchworth Tennis Club	Letchworth	2
Tower Clothiers	Weston	4

(It should be noted that these figures represent physical completions rather than dwellings which have legally been handed over to the relevant housing associations.)

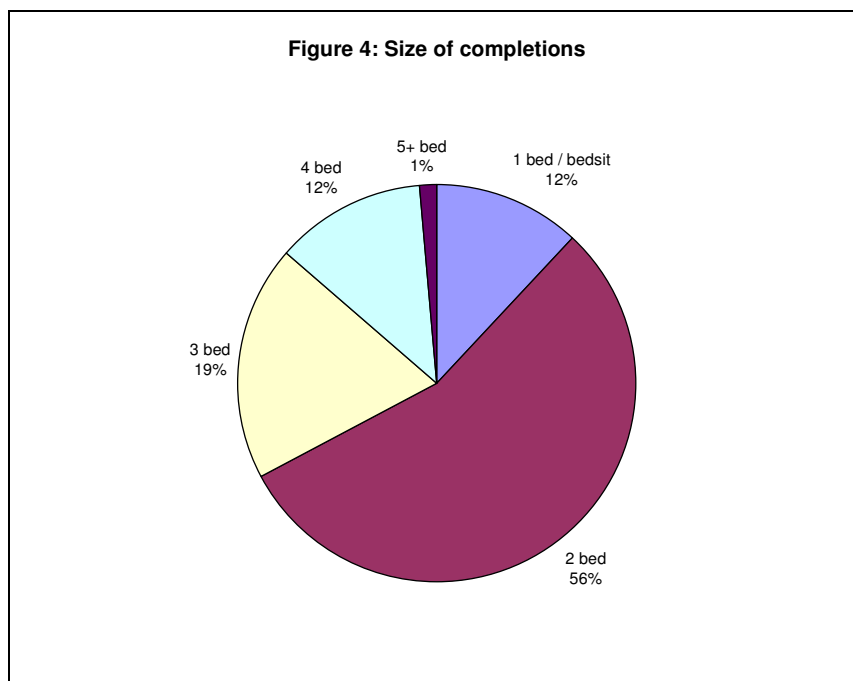
3.2 This is not quite as many affordable houses provided through completions (as distinct from additions to the affordable housing stock through acquisition of existing dwellings, which are not covered by this paper) as last year, when 157 were built. However, it is still significantly higher than the preceding two years (2003/04 and 2004/05) when 10 and 83 new homes were provided respectively.

#### 4.0 Size and type of new dwellings

4.1 The commonest size and type of dwelling completed this year has been two bedroom flats, with a net increase of 218 such dwellings. The next commonest type is two bedroom terraced houses, with 86 completed. This is closely followed by three bedroom terraces, of which 84 have been completed. At the other end of the scale, there has been a net loss of three bedroom bungalows.



4.2 As Figure 3 shows, the commonest type of dwelling was the flat. Of the 623 dwellings completed in the year, nearly half were flats. However, last year over half the completions were flats. Mobile homes were the least common type completed in the last year.



4.3 As Figure 4 shows, just over half the new dwellings have had two bedrooms. This year has seen a slight increase compared to last year in the proportion of dwellings with four or more bedrooms. The combined total percentage of four and five+ bedroom houses had been falling for a number of years. In 2001-02 it was 32%, falling to 27% in 2002-03, 16% in 2003-04, 13% in 2004-05 and 9% in 2005-06. This year it increased back to 13%.

#### 5.0 Density of new housing

5.1 The average density of housing development this year was 23.5 dwellings per hectare. This is lower than last year, when the average density was 33.9 dwellings per hectare.

5.2 Taking the density in the urban areas only (Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, Royston and North East Stevenage), the average density of development was 38.3 dwellings per hectare, also lower than last year when it was 55.7 dwellings per hectare. Conversely, the average density in the rural areas was only 7.0 dwellings per hectare, similar to last year's 5.4 dwellings per hectare.

5.3 The highest density scheme was at 304 dwellings per hectare, for a flat in the centre of Baldock. The lowest density scheme was at 0.3 dwellings per hectare for a barn conversion at Willian. Fourteen sites have achieved densities in excess of 100 dwellings per hectare.

#### 6.0 Distribution of new housing

6.1 The completions were distributed as follows:

**Figure 5: Net Completions by parish**

Parish	Total	Parish	Total
Ashwell	5	Langley	1
Baldock	24	Letchworth Garden City	44
Barkway	1	Lilley	0
Barley	11	Newnham	0
Bygrave	0	Nuthampstead	0
Caldecote	0	Offley	0
Clothall	0	Pirton	13
Codicote	13	Preston	0
Graveley (except NES)	0	Radwell	0
Graveley (NES)*	233	Reed	0
Hexton	0	Royston	29
Hinxworth	0	Rushden	1
Hitchin	220	Sandon	1
Holwell	0	St Ippolyts	1
Ickleford	2	St Paul's Walden	2
Kelshall	0	Therfield	0
Kimpton	10	Wallington	0
King's Walden	3	Weston	9
Knebworth	0	Wymondley	0
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>623</b>

\*Graveley (NES) refers to that part of Graveley parish east of Weston Road, comprising the Great Ashby/Burleigh Park development at North East Stevenage.

6.2 It can be seen that the majority of the completions are located in Hitchin and at Great Ashby/Burleigh Park (in Graveley parish).

6.3 Under the current local plan, there are nineteen locations within the district where development will normally be acceptable (Ashwell, Baldock, Barkway, Barley, Codicote, North-East Stevenage in Graveley parish, Hitchin, Holwell, Ickleford, Kimpton, Knebworth, Letchworth, Offley, Pirton, Royston, Sandon, Whitwell in St Paul's Walden parish, Therfield and Little Wymondley).

**Figure 6: Housing growth by parish**

	Estimated households 2001	Completions 2001-2006	Completions 2006-2007	Growth 2001-2007	Growth 2006-2007	Annualised average growth rate 2001-2007
Ashwell	734	53	5	7.9%	0.6%	1.3%
Baldock	3482	132	24	4.5%	0.7%	0.7%
Barkway	299	19	1	6.7%	0.3%	1.1%
Barley	252	15	11	10.3%	4.1%	1.6%
Bygrave	96	2	0	2.1%	0.0%	0.3%
Caldecote	7	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Clothall	62	1	0	1.6%	0.0%	0.3%
Codicote	1350	41	13	4.0%	0.9%	0.7%
Graveley	202	9	0	4.5%	0.0%	0.7%
Graveley (NES)	545	959	233	218.7%	15.5%	21.3%
Hexton	52	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Hinxworth	119	7	0	5.9%	0.0%	1.0%
Hitchin	10581	516	220	7.0%	2.0%	1.1%
Holwell	159	1	0	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%
Ickleford	807	4	2	0.7%	0.2%	0.1%
Kelshall	60	3	0	5.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Kimpton	827	24	10	4.1%	1.2%	0.7%
King's Walden	393	2	3	1.3%	0.8%	0.2%
Knebworth	1890	22	0	1.2%	0.0%	0.2%
Langley	70	0	1	1.4%	1.4%	0.2%
Letchworth	11621	207	44	2.2%	0.4%	0.4%
Lilley	154	2	0	1.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Newnham	43	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Nuthampstead	55	1	0	1.8%	0.0%	0.3%
Offley	540	36	0	6.7%	0.0%	1.1%
Pirton	481	6	13	4.0%	2.7%	0.6%
Preston	148	4	0	2.7%	0.0%	0.4%
Radwell	36	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Reed	126	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Royston	5853	778	29	13.8%	0.4%	2.2%
Rushden	94	2	1	3.2%	1.0%	0.5%
Sandon	202	3	1	2.0%	0.5%	0.3%
St Ippolyts	743	17	1	2.4%	0.1%	0.4%
St Paul's Walden	482	30	2	6.6%	0.4%	1.1%
Therfield	201	11	0	5.5%	0.0%	0.9%
Wallington	51	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Weston	396	8	9	4.3%	2.2%	0.7%
Wymondley	455	8	0	1.8%	0.0%	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>43668</b>	<b>2923</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>

6.4 The greatest growth in the last year has been 15.5% at Graveley (NES), due to the continued growth of the Great Ashby and Burleigh Park developments. This is followed by Barley, with growth of 4.1%. Pirton, Weston and Hitchin have also seen growth seen growth of 2% or more.

6.5 Over the last five years, the pattern is similar. The highest growth has been in Graveley (NES), where the number of houses has more than doubled since 2001, followed by Royston which has grown by 13.8% since 2001. Barley,

Ashwell, Hitchin, Barkway, Offley, St Paul's Walden, Hinxworth, Therfield and Kelshall have all seen growth in excess of 5% since 2001.

6.6 Looking at the average annual growth rate from 2001 to 2007, it can be seen that rates of growth in the district have been less than 2% per year everywhere except Graveley (NES), which has grown at 21.3% per year on average over the last six years, and Royston, which has grown at 2.2% per year on average.

**7.0 Price of housing**

7.1 Figure 7 shows the average price of dwelling types in the district sold within January – March 2007. There were a total of 660 sales of dwellings in that time, reflecting approximately 1.3% of the district's housing stock. The average price for all sales was just under £250,000.

**Figure 7: Dwellings sold in North Hertfordshire Jan-Mar 2007**

Dwelling type	Detached	Semi	Terraced	Flat/mais	Overall
Average price	£414,068	£253,055	£193,258	£153,398	£249,506
Number of sales	147	170	205	138	660

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7.2 Data for smaller areas is only available based on postcodes, the boundaries of which do not coincide with administrative boundaries. Figure 8 records only those postcode sectors which are mostly within North Hertfordshire, and does not therefore record some postcodes (e.g. AL4 8: Wheathampstead) which occur in the district.

**Figure 8: Dwellings sold by postcode sector Jan-Mar 2007**

Area		Detached	Sales	Semi-Det	Sales	Terraced	Sales	Flat/Mais	Sales
Great Ashby	SG1 6	£346,392	15	£222,641	24	£191,801	24		
Knebworth	SG3 6	£443,600	10	£300,172	11	£199,454	12	£140,741	6
Hitchin (east)	SG4 0	£296,772	9	£229,395	17	£178,746	15	£126,799	5
Preston, Weston, St Ippolyts and the Wymondleys	SG4 7	£598,650	7	£261,908	6	£231,498	3		
Codicote, Kimpton, Breachwood Green and Whitwell	SG4 8	£327,000	6	£276,190	5	£246,237	4		
Hitchin (south)	SG4 9	£360,172	11	£286,287	12	£240,700	5	£146,686	8
Hitchin (north)	SG5 1	£370,416	3	£223,041	6	£216,166	25	£190,532	46
Hitchin (west)	SG5 2	£390,716	9	£298,795	19	£206,073	15	£132,750	7
Offley, Pirton, Ickleford and Shillington	SG5 3	£487,567	14	£293,087	8	£215,243	8		
Letchworth (north east)	SG6 1					£164,270	12	£126,416	6
Letchworth (south east)	SG6 2	£401,333	6			£197,666	9		
Letchworth (south west)	SG6 3	£372,500	6			£258,666	3		
Letchworth (north west)	SG6 4			£233,923	15	£160,466	15	£118,477	14
Baldock (north) and Ashwell	SG7 5	£398,625	8	£251,991	6	£200,425	8	£162,449	5
Baldock (south) and Clothall	SG7 6	£334,592	7	£248,415	13	£189,254	23	£140,158	15
Royston (north west)	SG8 5	£353,520	22	£238,766	15	£166,660	18	£136,166	15
Royston (north east)	SG8 7	£309,686	16	£267,661	12	£190,377	12	£141,100	5
Barkway, Barley and Reed	SG8 8	£525,833	9	£268,687	4	£191,016	3		
Royston (south) and Therfield	SG8 9	£409,832	6	£245,550	10	£185,090	11	£147,333	3

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- 7.3 It can be seen that the lowest average price paid is for flats or maisonettes in SG6 4, north west Letchworth (covering the Grange estate and Wilbury area), at £118,477. The highest is for detached houses in SG4 7, the rural area around Preston, Weston, St Ippolyts and the Wymondleys, at £598,650.
- 7.4 The mean average annual earnings of full-time workers resident in the district is £32,902 (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2006). This is 3.5% lower than the previous year. At this rate, the district's average house price of £249,506 is 7.6 times the average full time earnings.
- 7.5 The mean average annual earnings of full-time workers whose principal place of work is within the district (regardless where they live) is £27,334 (ibid.). This is 7.5% higher than the previous year, indicating that the discrepancy in pay between jobs based in North Hertfordshire and jobs outside the district to which district residents commute has narrowed in the last year, although the district's resident out-commuters still earn more on average than those who

work in the district. The average house price represents 9.1 times the average earnings of those who work in the district.

## 8.0 Refusals and appeal decisions

8.1 A total of 45 applications for residential development were refused during the year. As in previous years, the most common reason for refusal (used 35 times) was Policy 57 on residential guidelines, which covers issues such as design and relationship to neighbouring properties. The other policies used more than once in these refusals were:

- Policy 20, Conservation Areas (13 times);
- Policy 1, Pattern and character of North Hertfordshire (9 times);
- Policy 2, Green belts (8 times);
- Policy 6, Rural areas beyond the green belt (8 times);
- Policy 26, Housing proposals (6 times);
- Policy 55, Car Parking (5 times);
- Policy 18, Listed Buildings (5 times);
- Policy 21, Landscape and Open Space Pattern (3 times);
- Policy 58, Letchworth Garden City Design Principles (twice);
- Policy 25, Re-use of rural buildings (twice); and
- Policy 3, Settlements within the Green Belt (twice).

8.2 The other common reason for refusal relates to highway safety, although this is not explicitly linked to a policy in the local plan.

8.3 There were eighteen appeals relating to residential development determined during the year. All but one were dismissed; the one which was allowed was for a single dwelling adjoining 2a Lower Gower Road, Royston.

## 9.0 Starts and dwellings under construction

9.1 There were 577 dwellings started during the year. This is less than during 2005-6, when 794 dwellings were started.

9.2 On 1 April 2007, there were 614 dwellings under construction. This is similar to last year, when 660 dwellings were under construction.

## 10.0 Planning Permissions and five year land supply

10.1 At 31 March 2007, there were outstanding permissions (either not started or under construction) for 1893 dwellings. Of these, 445 are at Great Ashby and 1448 in the rest of the district.

10.2 Translating this into a five year land supply, we have to calculate the residual requirement over the plan period (to 2021). For the part of the district not adjoining Stevenage, the East of England Plan target is 6,200 dwellings, of which 2346 have been completed. This leaves 3854 dwellings to be completed over the next fourteen years, or 275 dwellings per year. The 1448 outstanding dwellings here therefore represents 5.3 years' supply.

10.3 In the part of the district affected by the expansion of Stevenage, the Secretary of State's proposed modifications to the East of England Plan propose a target of 16,000 dwellings for the town of Stevenage rather than the administrative area of Stevenage Borough. To analyse the situation in this area we need to consider the completions and outstanding permissions within Stevenage Borough as well as within North Hertfordshire adjoining Stevenage.

**Figure 8: Completions within and adjoining Stevenage Borough**

	Completions 2001-2007	Outstanding Permissions 1 April 2007
Stevenage Borough	978	779
North Herts adjoining Stevenage	1199	445
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2177</b>	<b>1224</b>

*Figures within Stevenage Borough supplied by Stevenage Borough Council*

- 10.4 The residual requirement for the town of Stevenage is therefore 13,823 dwellings (16,000 – 2,177) over the next fourteen years, or 987 dwellings per year. The outstanding 1224 permissions therefore represent 1.2 years' supply. Taking into account the additional allocations without planning permission (155) and permissions subject to s.106 agreements (535) within Stevenage Borough would increase the supply to 1.9 years' supply. Taking into account further the 3,600 dwellings at West Stevenage that the former Secretary of State announced he was 'minded to grant' increases the supply to 5.6 years' supply.
- 10.5 There is a striking contrast between the rate of completions within and adjoining Stevenage since 2001 and the proposed rate of growth implied by the five year supply. Since 2001, completions within and adjoining Stevenage (including Great Ashby) have averaged 363 dwellings per year. The proposed increase to 987 dwellings per year is therefore a marked change in rate of delivery.

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