



North Herts Housing Strategy

2008 – 2013

May 2008

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Foreword

Welcome to the North Herts Housing Strategy, which sets out our priorities, aims, actions and targets for housing over the next 5 years. In it you will read about our housing vision for North Hertfordshire and how it is integral to the achievement of the Council's Vision of *Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper*.

The impact of housing on the overall wellbeing of the community is hard to overestimate. Good quality homes in attractive and sustainable neighbourhoods have a significant impact on the health, educational attainment and welfare of the people who live in them and the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the communities in which they are situated. Moreover, suitable housing underpins peoples ability to meet their full potential, to live independently and to integrate with the community.

This document represents a continuous process of strategy development and has been created through comprehensive consultation and engagement with our communities, service providers, Housing Association partners, Parish Councils and with voluntary groups and represents their views, objectives and goals. On a strategic level, it also has clear links with the objectives contained within national housing policies, the East of England Housing Strategy and supports the aspirations of our partner agencies, both locally and sub-regionally.

The North Herts Housing Strategy should not be read in isolation, however. It reflects the compliments the work of the Council in respect of the development of its Sustainable Communities Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and the creation of its Local Development Framework – all of which are critical to the realisation of its Vision.

In terms of service delivery the Council values its close working relationship with a range of partners and stakeholders offering, as it does, the opportunity to try new methods of working which are flexible, effective and provide value for money. Likewise, it is important that changes in housing market conditions can be responded to quickly and therefore this Strategy should be viewed as being a living document. There will be a review process where we will monitor our progress against the targets set. As the delivery of the Strategy is crucial to the long term well-being of the community, we will keep our focus on tackling the current and future challenges facing North Hertfordshire and using every opportunity to make positive change happen.

We will publish this Strategy on our web site along with the Action Plan, Equalities Impact Assessment and the comments received as part of the consultation process. Future Housing Strategy reviews and updates will also be made available on our web site. Finally, we always welcome feedback and comments – for more information on how to do this and the sources of additional housing information please see the Council's website: www.north-herts.gov.uk.

Councillor Bernard Lovewell
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health
North Hertfordshire District Council

The London Commuter Belt Sub-Region

The sub-region comprises fifteen district councils, all ten district council areas of Hertfordshire (Broxbourne, Dacorum, East Herts, Hertsmere, North Herts, St. Albans, Stevenage, Three Rivers, Watford and Welwyn and Hatfield) and five district councils in Essex (Brentwood, Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford), two county councils, and approximately thirty social housing providers. The overall population for these fifteen districts is just over 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

1. Introduction to the North Hertfordshire Housing Strategy

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 Vision and Priorities for North Herts

The strategic vision for the district is;

Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper

This vision was developed by the Local Strategic Partnership and is supported by a mission statement and six strategic objectives which sets out how the Council will deliver on the vision.

The Council's mission statement, *to work collaboratively with our partners to deliver the vision*, acknowledges that the vision can only be delivered through partnership working.

The vision for North Herts and the Council's mission statement are brought together with a set of six strategic objectives;

- **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.

From 2009 onwards the Council will focus on the delivery of three key themes that have been identified by Councillors as high priority, these are:

- **Town centres** – to include the delivery of the town centre strategies, support to our town centre partnerships and preserving/enhancing the street scene;
- **Sustainable development** – challenging development within our green belt and ensuring that any development which does take place is sustainable in the long term; and
- **Green issues** – to include development of our climate change strategy, retention and enhancement of green spaces and increasing recycling facilities.

The Vision and Priorities for Housing

In producing the Housing Strategy, the Council has balanced the national, regional and sub-regional priorities for housing (See Annex B) against identified local needs and the priorities of local people. The long term strategic vision for housing was established in the previous Housing Strategy (2004-2007).

To meet the community's needs for decent, high quality, affordable homes in sustainable locations.

The vision for housing is supported by six priorities for action over the next five years:

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 natural and physical environment.**

These six housing 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 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) Local Development Framework
- The NHDC Sustainable Community Strategy;
- The Local Area Agreement;
- The Corporate Plan;
- The 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.

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 Annex 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;

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 Hertfordshire Supporting People Team;
- Statutory and non-statutory support and advice services; and
- ad hoc single issue groups

The Local Development Framework

The Housing Strategy has close ties to the Council's future Local Development Framework (LDF)² which will consider many issues relating to housing (both public and private). The aim of the LDF is to deliver spatial planning while taking into account social, economic and environmental factors such as health and housing need. It 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.

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 Partnership³ 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; and
- 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.

2. 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.

² www.north-herts.gov.uk

³ The North Hertfordshire Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership for the District.

⁴ Housing Needs Survey Update 2006

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.

3. The Local Housing Market

Housing 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 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.

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

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 Annex C: Tables 1 & 2). During the same period the number of households is predicted to rise by around 21% (See Annex 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 Annex 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%.

Affordable housing

Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing which is provided to meet the needs of households whose needs are not met by the market. It includes social rented housing and intermediate housing such as shared-ownership (Homebuy) and housing let at above social rent levels but below market rent. 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 deliverable, it will be reviewed on a regular basis and amended in line with current circumstances and initiatives.

Action 1

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.

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.

4. Sustainable Communities

**Housing Priority: To create sustainable communities; and
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.

Action 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 Annex 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 P. 19).

Action 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.

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.

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

Action 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 Plan¹⁴ sets out the priorities of the partnership and targets for reducing the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour in the district.

Action 5

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

The Council will:

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

¹² www.securedbydesign.com

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

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

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.

Action 6

To improve community participation in decision making

The Council will:

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

5. 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 Annex 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 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

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

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

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.

Action 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 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 Annex C: Table 7). This report will inform future planning policy to ensure the

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

¹⁹ www.north-herts.gov.uk

delivery of affordable housing can be maximised without jeopardising the viability and sustainability of developments.

Action 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 Annex 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).

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.

Action 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

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.

Action 10

To encourage sustainable rural communities

The Council will:

- Work towards meeting the need for affordable housing in rural parishes;
- Ensure that rural affordable housing remains affordable in perpetuity; and
- Ensure that new rural affordable housing is designed to meet diverse needs.

Lifetime Homes

Housing 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

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

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 Annex 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. They are not intended to be special needs housing nor are they necessarily a home where people will stay for life. A property built to Lifetime Homes Standard provides 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.

Action 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.

6. Greener, Healthier Homes

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

New Housing

Carbon Emissions

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

The Council is committed to achieving a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions 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.

Action 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.

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 Annex 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.

Action 13

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

²⁵ BMA: Housing & Health (2003)

²⁶ Energywatch

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.

7. Making Best Use of Current Stock

Housing 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.

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;

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

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

- Have reasonably modern facilities and services: and
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort ³⁰

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 Annex 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 Annex 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.

Action 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.

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

Empty Homes

Housing 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 and potentially act as a magnet for crime and anti-social behaviour. They are also 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.

Action 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

Housing 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 Annex 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

Action 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

Housing 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.

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 Annex 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

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

³³ *ibid*

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 Annex 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 Annex 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.

Action 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 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.

Action 18

³⁴ Households with over 1.5 persons per room

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

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

8. Housing for Diversity

**Housing priority: 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 needs 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;
- 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.

Action 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 Annex C: Table 14). As the age profile of the population continues to increase it is likely that this trend will persist.

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.

Action 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 Annex 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 Annex 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.

Action 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.

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

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

commissioned in 2006 jointly with four neighbouring authorities³⁹ and Hertfordshire County Council. The study ascertained a need for 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.

Action 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 in respect of the administrative district of North Hertfordshire.

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 letting 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.

Action 23

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 Counties 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](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/nino_allocation.asp)

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

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;
- Re-sales of former New Build Homebuy properties; and
- 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.

Action 24

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

The Council will:

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

9. 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;

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

- 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 Annex C: Table 18). The effect of this has been a substantial reduction of households living in temporary accommodation (See Annex 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;
- Funding a Relate Mediation scheme;
- 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.

Action 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;

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

- Employ initiatives that prevent homelessness; and
- Improve the service through monitoring and customer feedback.

10. Delivering the strategy

The Action Plan

The Actions 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 Action 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 5 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.

Current investment in Housing:

Revenue:

Private sector Housing and Renewal Grants	£293,000 annually
Homelessness	£656,000 annually
Housing Options 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;

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.

- **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.

The Council commits considerable resources towards meeting housing needs in the district and strives to achieve value for money. This is done through adopting recognised good practice and delivering more without increasing costs. Value for money can also be measured by benchmarking activities against other similar organisations.

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.

Action 26

To deliver the Housing Strategy the Council will:

- Set up a Housing Strategy Action Group;
- Monitor trends in the housing market;
- Provide funding to meet the objectives of the strategy;
- Review the RSL partnership agreement; and
- Increase benchmarking of housing activities.

12. The Housing Strategy Action Plan

Key to Responsible Officers

CO	Consultation Officer
CSSO	Community Safety Strategy Officer
EPM	Environmental Protection Manager
ESO	Equalities Strategy Officer
HCDCS	Head of Community Development and Cultural Services
HHEH	Head of Housing and Environmental Health
HOM	Housing Options Manager
HSRM	Housing Strategy & Renewals Manager
LCBSR Officers	London Commuter Belt Sub-Region Officers
LDFM	Local Development Framework Manager
PCCM	Planning Control & Conservation Manager
PCDM	Parks & Countryside Development Manager
PM	Policy Manager
PPM	Planning Projects Manager
PropM	Property Manager
RSSM	Regional & Strategic Sites Manager
SM (WM)	Strategy Manager (Waste Management)

Action 1: To improve understanding and knowledge of the housing market						
<i>Housing priority: To work towards balancing the housing market</i>						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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	HSRM/LDFM	June 2008	Officer time/Funding for consultants	Robust SHMA delivered		

b) SHMA up-dated in – house regularly	HSRM	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, regional& sub-regional policies/initiatives and other influences	HSRM	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	HSRM/HOM	Sept 2008	Within existing resources	NROSH data available for all social housing in the district	Partnership Agreement/RSL Housing Management Forum	
f) Improve knowledge of buy-to-let/leave properties in the district	HSRM	2008/09	Officer time	District level data on buy to let/leave		
3. Monitor trends in economic migration						
See action 23						
4. Raise levels of expertise amongst housing officers						
Train officers to up-date SHMA in-house	HSRM	October 2008	Within existing resources	Capacity to up-date SHMA in-house		

Action 2: To ensure that new build dwellings contribute to sustainable communities and avoid social and tenure segregation						
Housing priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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	LDFM	From 2011	Within existing resources	Policy included in LDF	Planning policy (LDF)	
b) New build affordable housing to be physically indistinguishable from market housing on mixed tenure sites	LDFM	From 2011	Within existing resources	Policy included in LDF	Planning policy (LDF)	
c) Deliver a mix of affordable tenures on new build developments	LDFM/HSRM	Ongoing	Within existing resources	A minimum of 78 new build homes 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	LDFM	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	LDFM	From 2011	Within existing	Employment targets	Planning policy (LDF)	

delivery of new housing with additional opportunities for employment			resources	based on principle of providing 1 job per new dwelling		
Action 3: To improve the sustainability of estates comprised primarily of social rented housing						
Housing priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work with partners and stakeholders to enhance the most deprived areas of the district						
a) Work with RSLs and developers on the regeneration of Jackmans Estate	HSRM/HCDCS/PCCM	Jan '09	Community Benefit Fund	Start on site	Partnership working (RSLs/Developer/Jackmans Community Association)/Community Benefit Fund	
b) Secure new community facilities on Jackmans Estate	HSRM/HCDCS/PCCM	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	HSRM/HCDCS/PCCM	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	HSRM/HCDCS/	Jul '09	Community	Start on site	Partnership working (RSLs/Developer/Westm	

Westmill Estate	PCCM		Benefit Fund		ill Community Association)	
e) Secure new community facilities on Westmill Estate	HSRM/HCDCS/ PCCM	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	HSRM/HCDCS/ PCCM	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	HOM	March 2010	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	HOM	March 2010	Officer time	Scheme introduced	RSL Management forum	
c) Investigate ways of employing local people in low income neighbourhoods to deliver local services	HOM	March 2010	Officer time	Decision on whether to pursue local employment scheme	RSL Management forum	
3. Improve the mobility of people living in social housing						

a) Improve access to social housing exchange schemes	HSRM/HOM	Sept 2008	Within existing resources	All RSLs with stock in the district to give tenants access to a mutual exchange scheme	RSL Partnership Agreement/RSL Management Forum	
b) Provide a 'cash incentive scheme' to assist social housing tenants to move into private sector housing	HOM	Ongoing	Council Funding	5 households assisted to move out of social housing per annum	Council Funding	
c) Raise awareness of the 'cash incentive scheme'	HOM	Sept 2008	Within existing resources	As above	Publicity	
d) Work with the North Herts Housing Partnership to introduce a common housing allocation scheme	HOM	Sept 2008	Officer time	Common Housing Allocation Scheme introduced	North Herts Housing Partnership	
e) Review the priority given to applicants to the Housing Register who have work related reasons for moving	HOM	Mar 2010	Within existing resources	Decision of whether enhanced priority will impact on worklessness	Housing Allocation Scheme	
f) Introduce a Choice Based Lettings Scheme	HOM	June 2009	Council funding (secured)	CBL Scheme introduced	North Herts Housing Partnership	
g) Explore the possibility of cost savings through merging CBL schemes where appropriate circumstances apply	HOM	Mar 2011	Officer time	Investigation of feasibility of merged CBL Scheme completed	LCBSR/RSLs	
h) Explore the possibilities for cross boundary nominations	HSRM	Dec '09	Officer time	Cross boundary nomination protocol	LCBSR	

schemes within the sub-region				agreed		
i) Investigate the viability of reciprocal arrangements with other LAs for housing tenants who need to move for work reasons	HOM	Mar 2010	Officer time	Decision on whether to proceed with reciprocal scheme	Homelessness Forum/RSL Housing Management Forum	
j) When new affordable housing products are initiated by central Government make them available to local households where viable	HSRM/HOM	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 action 9 (1c)						
Action 4: To ensure that new development does not adversely impact community facilities						
Housing priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Developers to make a contribution towards new community, leisure and recreation facilities	PCCM	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	PCDM/PPM	Sept '08	Officer time	Strategy adopted		

of open spaces						
Action 5: To contribute towards reducing the fear of crime, crime and anti-social behaviour						
Housing priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Produce a new Community Safety Plan	CSSO	Jun '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	LDFM	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	HOM	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	HSRM	Ongoing	Within existing resources	275 households assisted per annum	Anchor Staying Put	
d) Work with the Children's Trust Partnership, Children Schools and Families and RSLs to make parenting programmes available	HOM/CSSO	Mar 2010	Officer time	Parenting programme introduced	RSL Housing Management Forum/Joint Action	

to address anti-social behaviour					Group	
e) Work with households committing anti-social behaviour to prevent eviction	HOM/CSSO	Dec 2008	Within existing resources	Crashpad Mediation Service made available to households in which teenagers are committing anti-social behaviour.	RSL Housing Management Forum/Joint Action Group	
Action 6: To improve community participation in decision making						
Housing priority: To create sustainable communities						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Up-date the NHDC Consultation Strategy	CO	Jul '08	Officer time	Strategy adopted		
2. Introduce a NHDC Consultation Toolkit.	CO	Jul '08	Officer time	Toolkit adopted		
Action 7: To ensure maximum benefit from new build housing for the residents of the district						
Housing priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage

1. Deliver a minimum of 13,000 homes by 2021						
a) Assess housing land availability	LDFM	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	LDFM	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)	LDFM	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	RSSM/HSRM	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	HSRM/HOM	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	HSRM/HOM	Dec '09	Officer time	Agreement on number of nominations allocated to N. Herts reached	Partnership working with Stevenage BC	
3. Minimise Greenfield release by developing the majority of new housing in urban areas (with the exception of the development on the Stevenage border).	LDFM	Ongoing		At least 60% of new dwellings to be built on brownfield land (with the exception of west of Stevenage)	Planning policy (LDF)	
Action 8. To enable the optimum amount of affordable housing						
Housing priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1) Maximise the delivery of affordable housing delivered through planning policy						
a) Produce a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Affordable Housing	LDFM	2010	Officer time	SPD adopted	Planning Policy (LDF)	
b) Increase the amount of affordable housing provided on site	LDFM	From 2011	Within existing resources	Adopt a sliding scale of thresholds based on the Adams Integra viability assessment	Planning policy (LDF)	
c) Investigate the possibility of requiring financial contributions for affordable housing on sites	LDFM	2008/09	Financial resources for consultant	Increased financial contributions towards affordable housing		

below the threshold for on site provision						
d) Investigate purchasing a scheme assessment viability toolkit	LDFM	Apr '09	To be confirmed	Decision on whether to purchase viability toolkit		
e) Enable a minimum of 120 affordable homes per annum (exclusive of those on the border with Stevenage)	HSRM	From Apr '08	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	HSRM	From April '08 annually	Officer time	Reliable data on affordable housing stock in district	Partnership working (RSLs)	
Action 9: To ensure new affordable housing development meets the housing needs and is of a high standard						
Housing priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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 action 2 (1d)					

b) Secure a mix a mix of property types on new affordable housing developments.	HSRM	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	HSRM/LDFM	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	HSRM	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	
b) On New build Homebuy products, RSLs to work towards rent level of 2% of unsold equity	HSRM	Dec '09	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	HSRM	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	HSRM	From Jun '08	Within existing resources	Social rents to remain affordable to households on low incomes	RSL Partnership Agreement/RSL Management Forum	
e) Intermediate rents to be not more than 80% of market rent	HSRM	From Jun '08	Within existing resources	Housing for intermediate rent to remain affordable to households on intermediate incomes	RSL Partnership Agreement/RSL Management Forum	
f) Work with Lea Valley Homes to promote intermediate tenure products	HOM/HSRM	Annual publicity programme from Oct '08	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 housing need	HOM	March 2008	Officer time	System in place for sharing of applications	Partnership working	
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	HSRM	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	HSRM	From Sept '08	Officer time	Feedback from completed developments to inform new development	Partnership working/RSL Management Forum	

Action 10. To encourage sustainable rural communities						
Housing priority: To create inclusive sustainable communities						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work towards meeting the need for affordable housing in rural parishes						
a) Secure funding for part-time Rural Enabler post	HSRM	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 with Parish Councils to identify housing needs in rural parishes	HSRM	From Apr '08	Officer time	3 Rural Housing Needs Surveys undertaken per annum	Partnership working (RSLs/Parish Councils)	
c) Allow development on rural exception sites where an identified need for affordable housing cannot be met through current provision	LDFM	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, Rural Housing Enabler, Parish Councils and developers to deliver rural housing where a need has been identified	HSRM	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%	HSRM	Sept '08	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 ⁴⁸ to meet Lifetime Homes Standard	HSRM	From Jul '08	NHDC Capital Funding	New build affordable housing better able to meet current and future housing need	RSL Partnership Agreement/Council funding/Housing Corporation funding	
All 1 & 2 bed affordable houses in rural parishes ⁴⁹ to be able to facilitate an extra bedroom within the existing structure	HSRM	From Jul '08	NHDC Capital Funding	As above	RSL Partnership Agreement/ Council funding/Housing Corporation funding	
Action 11: To increase the quantity of new build affordable homes that meet the Lifetime Homes Standard⁵⁰						
Housing priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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	HSRM	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

⁴⁸ Excluding Great Ashby

⁴⁹ Excluding Great Ashby

⁵⁰ This will apply until Lifetime Homes becomes a mandatory element of the Code for Sustainable Homes

Standard						
2. Provide funding to encourage Lifetime Homes Standards for affordable housing on s.106 sites	HSRM	Sept '08	Council grant of between £700 & £1000 per dwelling at May '08 costs	As above	RSL Partnership Agreement/Council grant	Council funding/Housing Corporation funding
Action 12: To protect the environment from the effects of new housing development						
Housing priority: To protect the natural and physical environment						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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	LDFM	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	LDFM	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) Actively encourage low carbon development wherever possible	LDFM	Affordable housing From 2008 Private sector housing From 2011	Within existing resources	The Council will not fund/support bids for funding for affordable housing development that does not meet current required level of the Code for Sustainable Homes Policy included in LDF with target for reducing carbon emissions	Housing Association Partnership Agreement Planning Policy	
d) Reduce the risk to Health and the Environment from contaminated land	EPM	From April 2008	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	HSRM	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	SM (WM)/LDFM	From 2011	Within existing resources	Policy included in LDF	Planning policy (LDF)	
Action 13: To reduced the impact of current stock on the environment						
Housing priority: To protect the natural and physical environment						

How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Instigate strategies that contribute towards reducing CO2 emissions						
a) Produce a Home Energy Conservation Strategy	PropM	Dec '08	Future growth item	HECA Strategy adopted		
b) Produce a Climate Change Strategy	PM	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 Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)	PropM	From Apr '09	Within existing resources	Ability to identify areas with lowest SAP ratings	RSL Partnership Agreement	
b) RSLs to provide the Council with details of energy improvements or strategies being implemented	HSRM	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	HOM	Mar '10	Office time	Decision on viability of implementing an energy service scheme	RSL Housing Management Forum	
d) Commission consultants to carry out a Housing Stock Condition Survey	HSRM	Apr '11	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) Raise awareness of Warm Front energy efficiency grants	HSRM	From Aug '09	Officer time	%% per annum increase in take up of grants		
b) Provide funding to top-up Warm front Grants	HSRM	ongoing	Council Funding	15 per year	Council funding	
c) Raise awareness of housing options available to elderly people	HOM	From Aug '09	Officer time		Publicity/visits to social clubs etc	
e) Work with the LCBSR to establish where areas of lowest energy efficiency private sector homes are within each Local Authority on a ward basis	LCBSR Officers	April 08	Staff Time	2 target wards per local authority		
f) Work with a recognised affordable warmth charity to survey the highest priority ward in each LA in the sub-region and to source appropriate affordable warmth grants	LCBSR Officers	June 08	Staff Time PSH budget if required LCB budget EERA special projects budget	1 ward per quarter per LA		
Action 14: To reduce the number of non-decent homes in the district						
Housing priority: To maintain and improve the quality of current stock						

How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Employ initiatives to encourage the improvement of private sector housing						
a) Improve the take up of grants	HSRM	Sept '08	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	HSRM	Sept '09	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	HSRM	Sept '08	Officer time	Improved condition of housing stock		
d) Investigate the viability of RSLs providing a maintenance service to private sector households	HSRM/HOM	Apr '11	Officer time	Decision on whether to take forward a RSL maintenance service	Housing Management Forum	
e) Increase awareness amongst tenants and landlords on their rights and responsibilities	HSRM/HOM	Jul '09	Officer time	Improved availability of information and guidance	Landlord forum/publicity	
2. Work with RSLs to continuously improve the standard of social housing						
a) Monitor RSLs' delivery of the Decent Homes Standard	HSRM	Throughout 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	HSRM	Sept '08	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	HSRM	2011 onwards	Officer time	Continuous improvement of RSL stock	RSL Housing Management Forum	
d) Investigate stock rationalisation in the public sector	HOM	Mar '09	Within existing resources	Programme for rationalising stock where viable	RSL Housing Management Forum	
Action 15: To maximise the number of empty properties brought back into use						
Housing priority: To improve access to and choice in housing; and To maintain and improve the quality of current stock						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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 Management) to develop good practice on the use of EDMOs	HSRM	Dec 2009	Officer time	Good Practice Guidance produced	Partnership working	
b) Investigate establishing a partnership with an RSL to bring empty properties back into use	HSRM	Dec 2010	Officer time	Partnership with an RSL established	Partnership working	

through the use of EDMOs						
c) Investigate using revenue from Council Tax empty property charge to fund grants to bring empty properties back into use	HSRM	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	HSRM	Sept '09	Officer time	New strategy adopted		
Action 16: To improve the mobility of under-occupying households						
Housing priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work with RSL partners to carry out research to quantify under-occupation in Social Housing	HOM	Apr '09	Officer time	Research project on levels of under-occupation completed	RSL Housing Management Forum	
2. Employ initiatives to reduce the prevalence of under-occupation						
a) Investigate what incentives and housing alternatives under-occupying households would find attractive	HOM	Apr '09	Officer time	Research project completed and used to inform under-occupation scheme	RSL Housing Management Forum	

b) Set a target for reducing under-occupation in social housing	HOM	Apr '09	Within existing resources	Target set	RSL Housing Management Forum	
c) Work with RSLs to introduce an under-occupation scheme with more weighty incentives	HOM	Apr '10	To be confirmed	Under-occupation scheme introduced	RSL Housing Management Forum	
d) Encourage development of smaller specialist accommodation to enable elderly occupiers to downsize if they wish	LDFM	Backed by policy from 2011	Within existing resources	Improved provision of accommodation suitable for elderly households	Planning policy (LDF)	
Action 17: To improve the mobility of overcrowded households						
Housing priority: To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work with partner RSLs to research the extent and causes of overcrowding in social rented housing	HOM	Apr '09	Officer time	Research project on levels of overcrowding completed	RSL Housing Management Forum	
2. Employ initiatives to reduce the prevalence of overcrowding						
a) Set a target for reducing overcrowding in social housing	HOM	Apr '09	Within existing resources	Target set	RSL Housing Management Forum	
b) Revise housing allocations scheme to maximise the	HOM	Apr '10	Officer time	Reduction in overcrowded	Housing Allocation Scheme	

opportunity to move over-crowded households				households in social housing		
c) Give priority for low cost home ownership schemes to current social housing tenants	HOM	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Increase 'exit power' of social housing tenants	Housing Allocation Scheme	
d) Investigate the possibility of extending the homes of over-crowded RSL tenants	HSRM/HOM	Apr '09	Within existing resources	If viable, set a target for number of home extensions to be delivered	RSL Housing Management Forum	
e) Ensure that sufficient three and four bedroom properties are delivered on new affordable housing developments	See action 9 (1b)				Planning policy (Affordable Housing SPD/s.106 Agreements)	
Action 18: Improve administration and management of houses in multiple occupation						
Housing priority: To maintain and improve the quality of current stock						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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	HSRM/HOM	2009	Officer time	Improved records of HMOs	Publicity	
b) Monitor National Insurance Number data on registration of	See action 23					

workers from the Accession states						
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	HSRM	Nov '08	Officer time	Improved information available in a number of formats	Publicity	
Action 19: To ensure that vulnerable people receive the housing support they need to live as independently as possible						
Housing priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community; and To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Work in partnership to deliver initiatives that support vulnerable people						
a) Work in partnership to implement the Supporting People Strategy	HHEH/HOM	Ongoing	Officer time	Required actions are implemented and monitored	Supporting People Commissioning Body & Programme Delivery Group	
b) Work in partnership with the Supporting People Team to identify gaps in provision of support	HOM	Ongoing	Officer time	Programme for providing support where none exists	Supporting People Programme Delivery Group	
c) Work with Supporting People and other stakeholders to deliver	HOM	From Sept '08	Within existing resources	Generic floating support scheme	Supporting People Commissioning Body &	

a generic floating support service				introduced	Programme Delivery Group	
d) Ensure local interests are represented on the Supporting People Commissioning Body and Programme Development Group	HHEH/HOM	Ongoing	Officer time	Local priorities represented at County level	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 action 25 (2b)				Partnership working	
b) Work in partnership with the Adult Care Services, the Supporting People Team, RSLs and other stakeholders to rationalise the stock of sheltered and frail elderly housing	HSRM/HOM	Ongoing	Possible Capital Funding	Sheltered housing stock better matched to need	Partnership working	
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	HSRM/HOM	From Oct '08	Officer time	Improved equalities monitoring		
Action 20: To enhance the provision of disabled adaptations						
Housing priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community						

How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage
1. Follow good practice for implementing DFGs						
a) Produce written procedures for implementing DFGs that incorporate good practice	HSRM	Nov '09	Officer time	Good practice identified and adopted		
b) Work with RSLs and Social Services to establish a service level agreement on disabled adaptations	HSRM	Apr '09	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	HOM/HSRM	Oct '08	Officer time	Register of adapted properties in place	RSL Housing Management Group	
b) Investigate making an agreement between RSLs and the Council to share the costs of providing adaptations in social housing	HSRM	Aug '08	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	HSRM	Apr '09	Officer time	Equality of outcome across tenure	RSL Housing Management Forum	
b) Improve equalities monitoring of the Private Sector Renewals	HSRM See action 19 (3)					

Service						
c) Carry out an impact assessment on the private sector renewals policy	HSRM	Sept '10	Officer time	Equality Impact Assessment produced		
Action 21: To ensure that housing services provide for and are accessible to minority ethnic communities						
Housing priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community; and To improve access to and choice in housing						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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	ESO	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	ESO					
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 housing needs of BME elders	HSRM	Dec '08	Officer time	Housing needs of BME elders identified	Partnership working (NHDC, SP team and NHEMF)	
b) Produce an action plan to provide for identified needs of BME elders	HSRM	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	HSRM/HOM	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 Minority Ethnic Forum	HOM	From Apr '09	Officer time	As above	Partnership working (NHMEF)	
Action 22: To ensure the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are met						
Housing priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	Delivery vehicle	Progress/Slippage

1. Continue to work in partnership with other Local Authorities to respond to regional consultations on Gypsy and Traveller site provision	LDFM		Officer time	Local interests represented at regional level	Partnership working	
2. Make provision for the amount of pitches determined by EERA once a final allocation has been made	LDFM		Within existing resources	Suitable sites allocated in the LDF	Planning policy (LDF)	
Action 23: To gauge the impact on housing provision of economic migration and to ensure that economic migrants are aware of their rights						
Housing priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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	HSRM	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	HOM	From Sept '08	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 the Council and its partners at economic migrants	HOM	Apr '09	Officer time	Increased awareness amongst economic migrants of housing services provided by the Council	Publicity	
Action 24: To work towards meeting the needs of key worker and intermediate income households						
Housing priority: To provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community						
How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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 action 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 action 9 (2f)				Partnership working	
b) Work with Lea Valley Homes to match Homebuy products to households in housing need	See action 9 (2g)				Partnership working	

Action 25: To secure the good outcomes for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness

Housing priority: To improve access to and choice in housing and:
To Provide dwellings suitable for the diverse needs of the community

How	Responsible Officer	When	Resources	Target	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	HOM	June '08	Officer time	Strategy adopted	Partnership working (North Quadrant Homelessness Forum)	
b) Develop a new joint housing protocol with Children Schools and Families	HOM	Apr '09	Officer time	New joint protocol adopted	Partnership working (CSF, HYHG, Herts LAs)	
c) Work with the Probation Service and Stevenage Borough Council to establish an offender and ex-prisoner protocol	HOM	Jun '08	Officer time	New joint protocol adopted	Partnership working (SBC, Probation)	
d) Work with SBC, HYHG, CSF, RSLs and Connexions to review the Joint Housing Protocol for young people	HOM	Apr '09	Officer time	Revised protocol agreed	Partnership working (SBC, HYHG, Aldwyck HA, CSF, Connexions)	
e) Work with the Supporting People Team, Herts CC and other Hertfordshire local	HOM	Jul '08	Officer time	New service launched	Partnership working (SP, support providers)	

authorities to jointly 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 action 19 (1c)					
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	HOM	Nov '08	Officer time	Programme for modernisation of family hostels agreed	Partnership working (NHH)	
3. Employ initiatives that prevent homelessness						
a) Work in partnership with RSLs to produce a pre-eviction protocol	HOM	Sept '09	Officer time	New joint protocol adopted	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum/RSL Housing Management Forum	
b) Work in partnership with RSLs to produce a homelessness prevention protocol	HOM	Sept '09	Officer time	New joint protocol adopted	North Quadrant Homelessness Forum/RSL Housing Management Forum	
c) Monitor trends in repossessions due to mortgage arrears	HOM	From May '08	Officer time	Robust local data on trends for repossessions	Herts Homelessness Officers Group	

d) Investigate setting up a mortgage rescue scheme managed by an RSL	HOM	Dec '08	Officer time	Decision made on whether to pursue implementing a mortgage rescue scheme	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	HOM	From May '08	CLG Homelessness Grant	Drop in service delivered	Partnership working (CAB)	
f) Work with HYHG to explore setting up a Deposit Guarantee Scheme for 18 – 25 year olds	HOM	Sept '08	Within existing resources	Decision made on whether to pursue implementing a DGS for young people	Partnership working (HYHG)	
g) Provide funding for a Sanctuary Scheme for victims of domestic violence	HOM	Sept '08	To be confirmed	Funding confirmed	Council funding	
h) Investigate joint Council/RSL funding for Sanctuary rooms in social housing	HOM	Sept '08	Officer time	Improved funding for Sanctuary Rooms for tenants of RSLs	SRL Housing Management Forum	
i) Explore the viability of a cross-boundary reciprocal housing scheme for victims of domestic violence/harassment living in social housing	HOM	Dec '08	Officer time	Mobility scheme agreed or deemed not viable	Herts Homelessness Officers Group	
j) Provide funding for a Citizens Advice Bureau Court Caseworker	HOM	Ongoing	CLG funding (secured)	Scheme available to local residents threatened with homelessness	Funding/ Partnership working (CAB)	

h) Provide funding for the Relate mediation service	HOM	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Scheme available to households threatened with homelessness due to relationship breakdown	Funding	
4. Improve the service through monitoring and customer feedback						
a) Introduce and monitor customer feedback on front-line services	HOM	Sep '08	Officer time	Feedback and monitoring system in place		
b) Participate in County wide benchmarking and monitoring of homelessness services	HOM	From Nov '08	Officer time	Improved ability to gauge value for money	Herts Homelessness Officers Group	
c) Monitor the employment/support needs of homeless households to better target initiatives/resources	HOM	Sept '09	Officer time	Monitoring system in place		
Action 26: To deliver the housing strategy						
1. Set up a Housing Strategy Action Group	HSRM	Jul 2008	Officer time	Housing Strategy monitored and reviewed on a 6 monthly basis		
2. Monitor trends in the housing market	See action 1 and Action 25 (3c)					

3. Provide funding to meet the objectives of the Housing Strategy	HSRM	June 2008		Budget agreed with Head of Financial Services		
4. Review the RSL partnership agreement	HSRM	Jul '08	Officer time	All RSLs with stock in the district signed up to the RSL Partnership Agreement		
5. Encourage increased benchmarking by sub-regional groups on all aspects of housing services	HSRM	From Sept '08	Officer time	Improved ability to gauge value for money	London Commuter Belt Sub-Region	

Annex 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.

Area consultation events were held in Royston, Lilley, Hitchin, Knebworth, Letchworth and Ickleford between November and December 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

Annex 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*⁵¹: 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*⁵²: 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)*⁵³: 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)*⁵⁴: 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*⁵⁵ 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.

⁵¹ 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>

⁵² Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity

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

⁵³ Housing Act (2004): http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga_20040034_en_1

⁵⁴ Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pp3housing>

⁵⁵ 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 – 2008⁵⁶ 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.

⁵⁶ 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

Annex C Tables

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

	2003	2006	2011	2016	2021	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

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Rounded to nearest 100

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

	2003	2006	2011	2016	2021	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

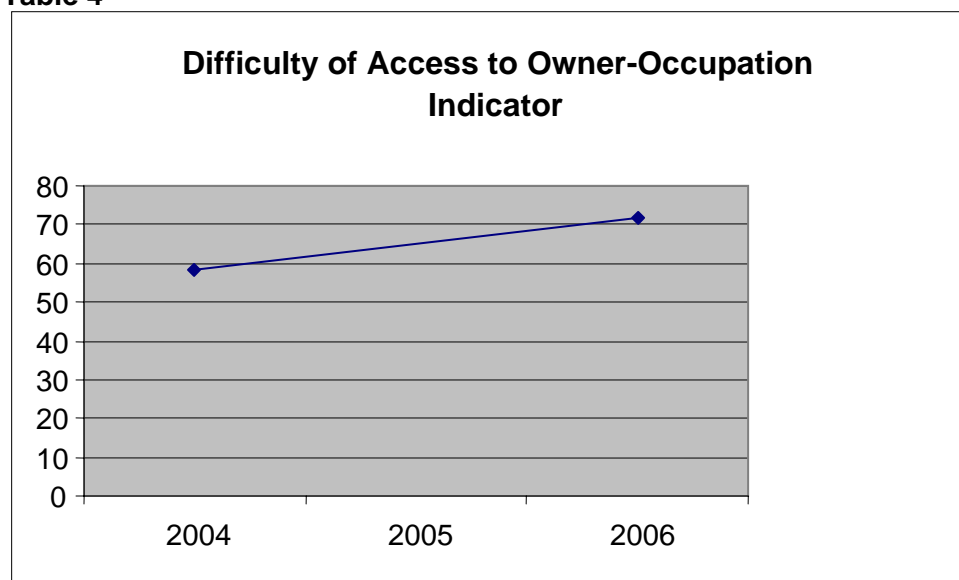
© Crown Copyright
Rounded to nearest 100

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>	30,000	30,000	31,000	32,000	34,000	4,000	13.3%
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

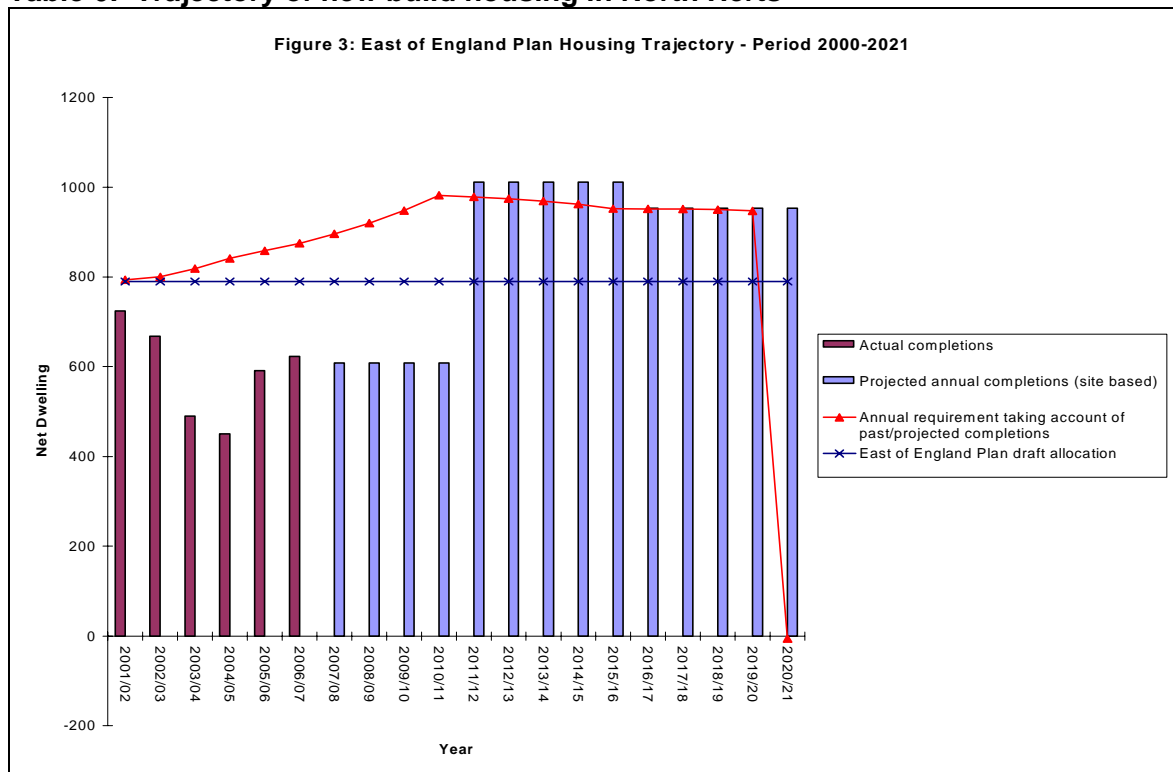


Source: ONS Neighbourhood Statistics

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

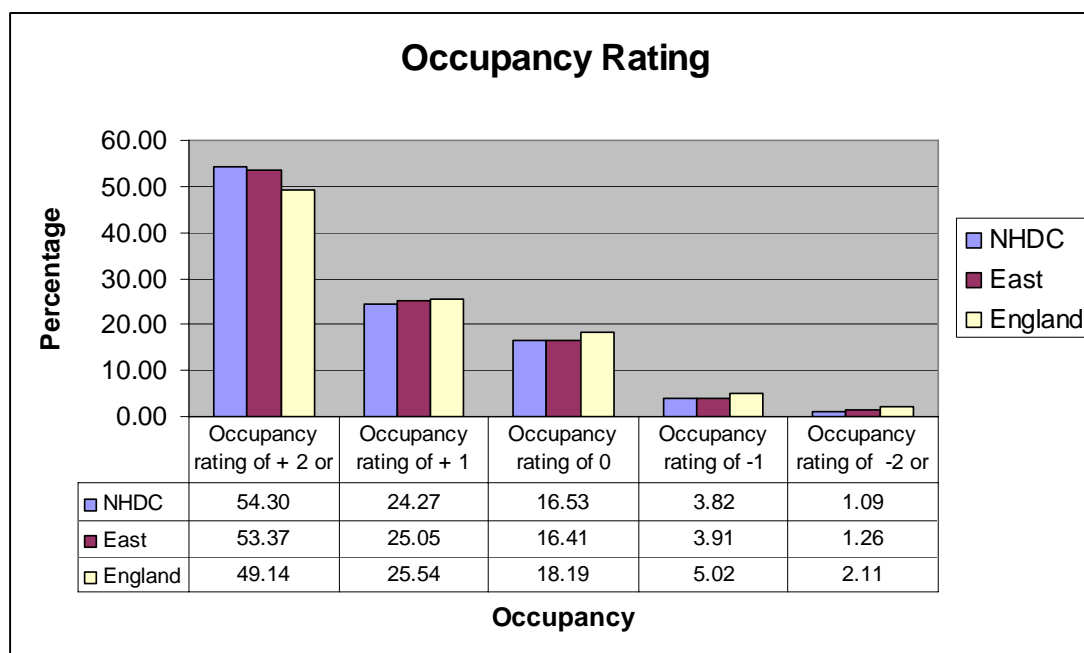
Source: North Herts DC House Condition Survey 2006/07

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

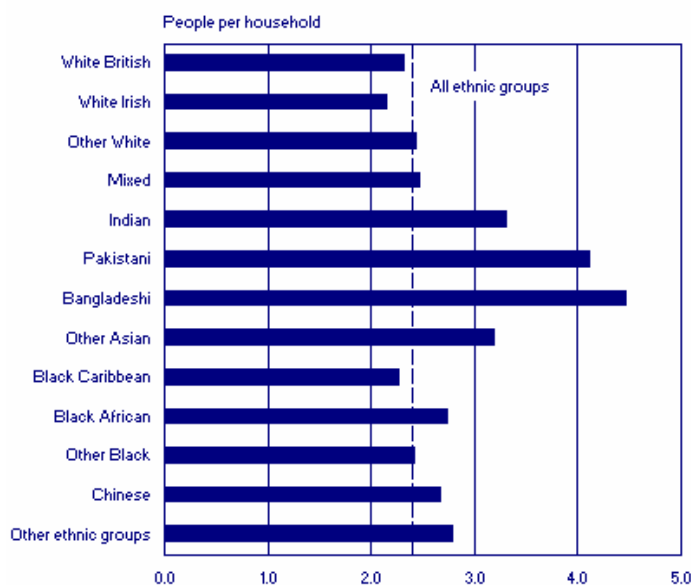
2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
40	52	63	123

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:

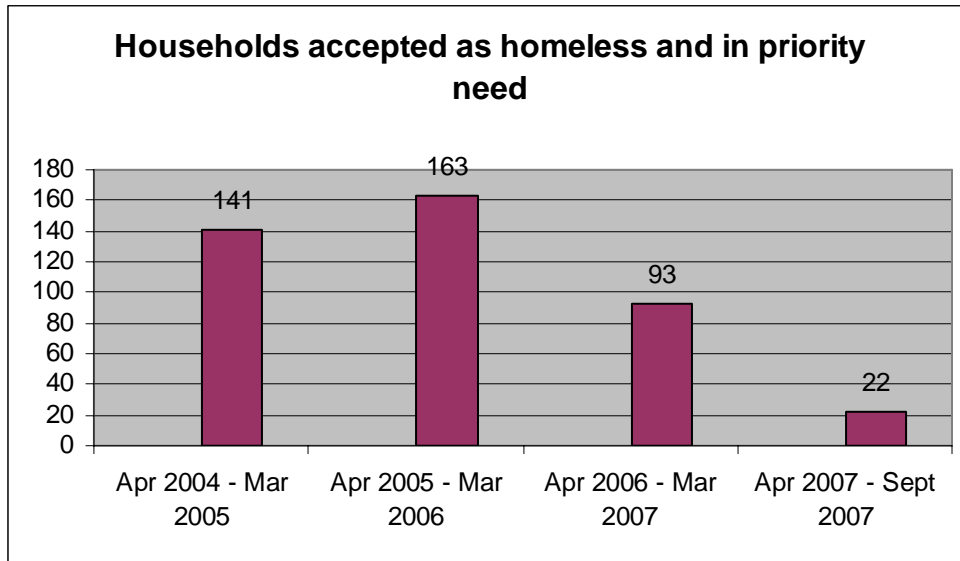
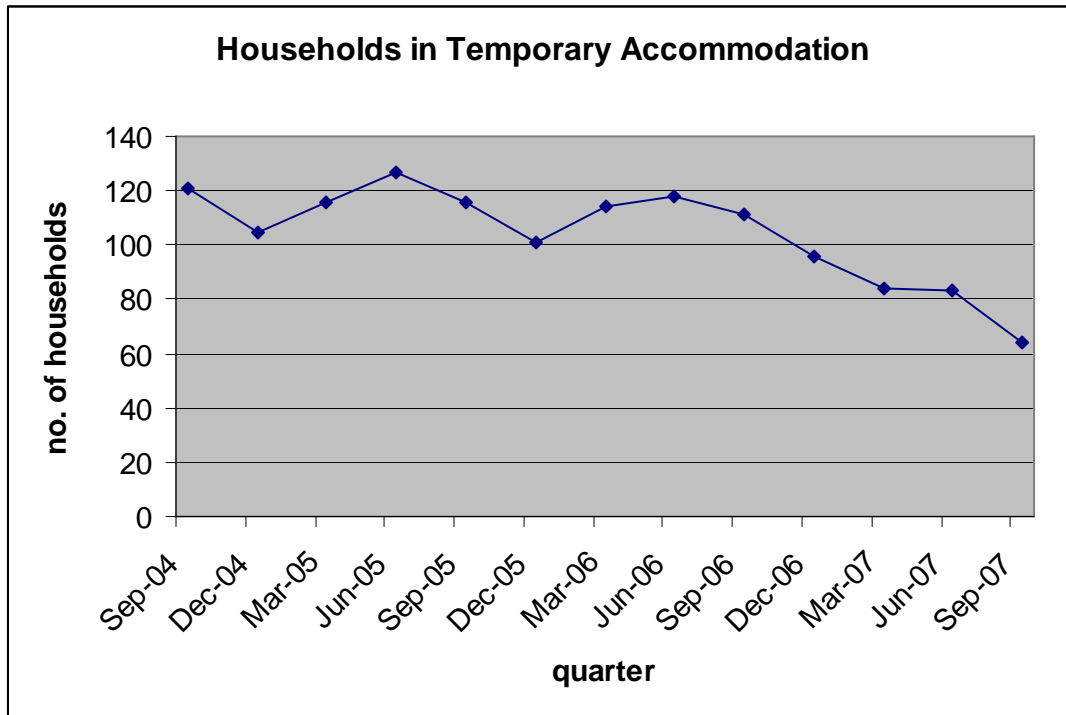


Table19:



Annex 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

Annex 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)

Annex F 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: 14th 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?	<p>The strategy has six priorities:</p> <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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect the natural and physical 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 in sustainable locations'.
4. What outcomes are wanted from this policy?	To ensure that there is a consistent, planned approach to 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 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	No

being potential for adverse impact in this policy?	
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) _____