



Flats at Centuras Square (Kwik Save)

Housing Strategy

2009-12

St Albans City and District Council
Historic St Albans District: a premier community

September 2009

Contents

	Page No.
Foreword	4
Executive summary	6
About St Albans	7
Chapter 1: Our strategic Housing role	
Why develop a Housing Strategy?	10
Chapter 2: Setting the scene	
2.1 National context	12
2.2 Regional and Sub regional context	16
2.3 The Local context	19
Chapter 3: Consultation and Partnership	
Examples of Partnership Working	25
Stakeholder Consultation	26
Chapter 4: Energy Efficiency, Reducing Carbon Emissions and Tackling Climate Change	
4.1 Climate Change and Sustainable Development	28
4.2 Housing and the Environment	28
4.3 Affordable Warmth and Energy Efficiency	29
Chapter 5: Housing Needs – supply and demand	
5.1 Strategic Housing Market Assessment	31
5.2 Homelessness	33
5.3 Older People - Quality of life housing for older people	33
5.4 Gypsies and travellers	34
5.5 Households with disabilities	34
5.6 Young people	35
5.7 People with mental health issues	37
5.8 Offenders	37
5.9 Black and minority ethnic community	37
5.10 Health and Housing - PCT Homelessness Strategy June 2009	38

	Page No
Chapter 6: Strategic Priorities	
6.1 Making best use of existing stock	40
6.2 Increasing the supply of Affordable and Sustainable Homes	49
6.3 Preventing homelessness and delivering holistic client services	52
6.4 Creating thriving and cohesive communities including resident involvement (Sustainable Communities)	57
Chapter 7: Resources	
7.1 Revenue Expenditure - General Fund	62
Chapter 8: Monitoring the Housing Strategy	64
Appendices	
Appendix 1:	66
Housing strategy 2004 Progress against target [highlights]	
Appendix 2:	67
Local Authority performance review	
Appendix 3:	69
Housing Strategy Action planning framework 2009-12	
Appendix 4:	94
Links to other strategies and partnering agencies	
Glossary	95
Housing Strategy Contact Details	98

Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce St Albans District Council's new 5 year housing strategy. This strategy sets out the priority housing issues we have identified in the short and longer term in partnership with residents and stakeholders in the District and how we will address these by working together.

Our housing service is currently faced with many challenges and is reflected in our four priorities which are about making the best use of current housing, increasing the number of affordable homes, preventing homelessness and creating thriving and cohesive communities.

Furthermore these housing objectives have to be set in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) Emerging Core Strategy priorities which stresses the critical importance of safeguarding the unique heritage, environment and character of St Albans District and the critical need to preserve the Green Belt that separates us from the capital and prevents us becoming just another part of Greater London.

These are challenging priorities and coupled with the challenging economic climate means that we will have to be innovative and creative in order to deliver and provide a service that meets our customers' expectations.

This strategy starts by setting the strategic context we work in and shows how we work with partners nationally, regionally, sub-regionally and locally. Our Housing Strategy supports the Council's Corporate priorities and feeds into our Sustainable Community Strategy and LDF Core Strategy.

This strategy also highlights some of our achievements since the production of the 2004 - 2007 Housing Strategy and includes: meeting the Decent Homes standard, implementing a Choice Based Lettings Scheme, improving energy efficiency within both private and public housing and achieving 281 new affordable homes completed in the District.

The ageing population and their housing requirements are a very important issue for us and we have started work on transforming our whole sheltered housing stock on a programmed basis. This will improve accommodation for older people across the District and enable greater choice and flexibility to meet different case needs at different stages of old age in appropriately designed housing. This will allow for more self contained accommodation than at present, independent living in flats or bungalows and extra care schemes for the very frail elderly.

Our Action Plan in Appendix 3 sets out how we will be working to ensure that our priorities are delivered and this will be updated over the life of the strategy to show the progress that we have made.

If you have any comments on the strategy our contact details can be found at the end of this document so please do respond if you wish.

Councillor Robert Donald
Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing Strategy

Housing Strategy 2009-12

Council's Vision

Historical St Albans District: a premier community

Sustainable Community Strategy Vision

A progressive, unique and vibrant District, which values its environment, heritage and culture and cares for the future: an outstanding place to live where everyone can flourish.

Housing Strategy Vision

To pursue activities which foster sound partnership arrangements and to create a qualitative and responsive Housing Service and in doing so positively contribute to local planning, infrastructure and cohesive communities.

Housing Services

St Albans City and District Council Civic Centre
St Peters Street St Albans Herts. AL1 3JE

Head of Housing: Karen Dragovic

www.stalbans.gov.uk

Executive summary

St Albans District Council's Housing Strategy provides the overall framework for housing activity and investment by the Council and its partner organisations. It replaces the previous Housing Strategy published in 2004 and sets out the vision to 2012 and covers all housing tenures.

There have been some key achievements during the previous Housing Strategy which are detailed at Appendix 1. These include an additional 281 affordable housing units delivered by local housing associations, adoption of supplementary planning guidance in 2004 to negotiate 35% affordable housing on qualifying sites, £15 million on improvements to the Council's housing stock and meeting the Government's target to eliminate bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children. The Council was also a winner of the Green Apple Environment Award 2007 for its pilot "Eco House".

The Housing Strategy is a key strategic document for other strategies and policies developed by the Council including homelessness, affordable housing, energy conservation and private sector housing. It has clear links with the Council's Corporate Plan, Sustainable Community Strategy and emerging Core Strategy for Local Development Framework. It also develops links from national, regional and local priorities for St Albans.

Since the last Housing Strategy the Sustainable Community Strategy has been refreshed and now includes a new priority on economic sustainability as well as increased emphasis throughout on caring for older people. We have seen the implementation of Choice Based Lettings and the shift in management of homelessness to a preventative service and advice on all housing options to those in housing need. At a national level the Homes and Communities Agency and Tenant Services Authority have been created, and there has been a more targeted focus on sustainable and mixed tenure housing, climate change and actions to manage the impact of the current economic recession. The Housing Strategy has a key role in delivery against these priorities.

The four priorities set out in the Housing Strategy in Chapter 6 are:-

- Making best use of existing stock - which includes reducing emissions and adapting to climate change.
- Increasing the supply of Affordable and Sustainable Homes.
- Preventing Homelessness and delivering holistic client services.
- Creating thriving and cohesive communities including resident involvement.

The Action Plan linked to these priorities is set out in Appendix 3. The delivery requires effective partnership working with other statutory and voluntary organisations.

The Housing Strategy and action plan are working documents which will be kept under review through regular monitoring as set out in Chapter 8. We anticipate that new or growing issues and other policies may emerge during the lifetime of this strategy. We will amend the strategy, action plan and associated policies as required.

About St Albans

“We are fortunate to live in an area rich in history and with good leisure facilities. It is important that we protect our historical and cultural heritage and natural environment”

St Albans and City District covers an area of 161 square kilometres with a population density of 821 people per square kilometre. The district lies in the heart of Hertfordshire and is only 20 miles from the centre of London. The city of St Albans grew out of the Roman town Verulamium and the area has many important sites of historic interest. The population is mainly based in the areas of St Albans, Harpenden, Wheathampstead, London Colney, Redbourn, Park Street, Chiswell Green, Bricket Wood and Colney Heath.

St Albans is a vibrant city rich in heritage, with evidence of the pre-Roman, Roman, medieval and the modern forming a continuous link between the past and present.

The St Albans of today is based on the medieval town which grew up around the Abbey. The medieval street pattern can still be experienced and many of the original buildings remain. The market has continued in use since these early times and contributes to the lively atmosphere.

With the exception of specifically excluded settlements, the whole of the District is within the Hertfordshire Green Belt, which currently limits any further unplanned expansion.

Population

Mid-year population estimates (2008) report that 133,700 people live in the District. The District has higher than national average population of people aged 0 to 14 with activities for teenagers one of the top three resident priorities for improvement. The area has a lower than average proportion of people aged 15 to 29 and of working age. It has a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) population of 6.9 per cent (Office of National Statistics 2004). The Bangladeshis form the largest minority group. A well-established Italian community and a less well established but increasing community from Eastern European, particularly from Poland, adds to the cultural mix of the District.

137,600 (Source: Home track Projected Population data 2008)

*Breakdown of Religious denominations within St Albans:

Christian	91634 (71.1%)
Buddhist	353 (0.3%)
Hindu	940 (0.7%)
Jewish	1160 (0.9%)
Muslim	3378 (2.6%)
Sikh	172 (0.1%)
Other religion	304 (0.2%)
No religion	22520 (17.5%)
Religion not stated	8499 (6.6%)

*Breakdown of Ethnicity within St Albans

White	120112 (93.1%)
Mixed	2069 (1.6%)
Asian or Asian British	4257 (3.3%)
Black or Black British	1280 (1.0%)
Chinese or other ethnic group	1278 (1.0%)

*(Source: Census 2001)

Quality of Life

The health of the people of St Albans is generally better than the England average, but significant inequalities exist. For example men from the least deprived areas in St Albans can expect to live nearly 8 years longer than those from the more deprived areas; for women the difference is nearly six years. Access to health services is the second most important issue for residents in what makes somewhere a good place to live; and is now one of the Council's new priorities. Levels of smoking and obesity are better than the national average but still one in six adults smokes and one in seven is obese.

Crime levels are falling ahead of target but remain higher than average for the Hertfordshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership area. Fear of crime is falling but remains above the regional average although the percentage of residents who feel safe outside after dark is above regional and national averages.

The Place Survey results 2008/09 shows that the overall satisfaction with the local area was 90% compared to 84% in 2007. This is the highest of all Hertfordshire Districts. There are also improved perceptions of anti-social behaviour including litter, drugs, young people hanging around which as a problem fell from 27% in 2006/07 to 19% in 2008/09.

Housing Stock and Pressures

The District enjoys a high standard of housing across all tenures. The housing stock within the District totals around 55,000 dwellings of which 78% are owner occupied, with some 13% renting from the Council and Housing Associations and about 9% privately rented. House prices are amongst the highest in the East region. The high cost of housing and land makes it very difficult for low and middle income households to either rent or buy the type of housing they need at a price they can afford.

There is a mix of affordable housing in the District covering social rented, shared ownership and intermediate rented housing. There are also some key worker housing schemes.

Many residents have concerns about the shortage of affordable housing in the District. Average house prices are high, at an average cost of £402,027 (January to March 2008). The Government target for extra housing within the District in the period 2001 to 2021 is a minimum of 7,200. Developing affordable housing is therefore a priority for the Council which has increased the proportion of affordable

units within new developments (of 15 houses and above) to 35 per cent. Owner occupation, at 78 per cent, is high and well above the England average of 68.5 per cent. The Council manages its own housing stock of 5,222 properties at 1 April 2009.

Economy

Unemployment remains one of the lowest in the Country at 2.1% compared to a national figure of 3%. The close proximity to London and in particular the excellent rail and road communications have a significant effect on the District's economic activity. A large number of the local resident population travel out of the District to work (around 51%) where many residents with high skill levels can command higher paid employment.

The local economy is dominated by the service sector with offices, small businesses, retailing, catering and 'tourism based' enterprises. It consequently has a distinct and thriving local business community, which hosts 59,300 jobs, around 48% are taken by in-commuting. Recruitment, particularly of specialist and professional staff, can be difficult due to the cost of living in the District.

We have a high rate of economic activity [81.7%], the unemployment rate stands at around 2.1% (May 09) against a County rate of 3%. The national rate of unemployment is 7.6%. There are, however, some areas within the district that have pockets of unemployment and worklessness. The District is a wealthy area, ranking 333 out of 354 in 2007 when compared to other local authorities; putting it among the 10 per cent least deprived districts - Index of Multiple Deprivation. However, wide relative gaps in deprivation exist. There are pockets of social and economic inequality, such as in Sopwell ward, where individuals and groups are not experiencing the same high quality of life. This led the LSP to form Sopwell Community Partnership and a project to reduce inequalities. Improved community transport, extended outreach work to older people, an Asian Women's Support Group and the 'onside football programme' followed local decision making on how best to address gaps in provision. An action plan of community based issues has been developed for other pockets of deprivation in the District including Batchwood and London Colney.

Audit Commission findings

During the Corporate Performance Assessment and on-site scrutiny carried out in October 2008, we were classed as "a good council that is performing well". This 'good' rating is an improvement on the 'fair' assessment received in 2004 and acknowledges improved performance and targeted action in areas such as recycling, planning, addressing the needs of homeless people, reduced anti-social behaviour, good quality parks and increased leisure opportunities. Residents are satisfied with the council and delivery of many of its services. The report acknowledges that the Council are listening and responding to their needs.

(Source: Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, The Audit Commission, March 2008 and Audit Commission report February 2009)

(Source: Housing Needs Survey Update 2006 PIE statutory returns)

(Source: Office of National Statistics
Apr 2006-March 2007)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Why develop a housing strategy?

The Council has a number of responsibilities many of which are set out in key pieces of legislation such as the Homelessness Act 2002 and Housing Act 2004. They include homelessness prevention and monitoring the quality and licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation [HMO's]. The Government also requires the Council to report annually on a number of housing related performance indicators. (See appendix 3)

Good housing is at the heart of the environmental agenda and sustainability with greener homes contributing to the wider aim of tackling climate change and energy efficiency. Sensitive and well thought out housing development contributes to wider planning policy, such as: maintaining green spaces, improving the built environment and designing out crime and anti-social behaviour.

In the Local Government White Paper (2006) the government outlined the importance of housing as being *“at the heart of achieving the social, economic and environmental objectives that shape a community and create a sense of place”* highlighting the key role housing can play in anchoring people, services and the local economy.

The development and production of a Housing Strategy is an integral part of our role as the document sets out the steps we will take to address the housing problems affecting St Albans. Our Housing Strategy also gives us an opportunity to take stock and identify our strengths and weaknesses. This Housing Strategy replaces the previous Housing Strategy which was published in 2004. Revised Guidance on how to produce housing strategies was only published by DCLG/Go-East during the later part of 2008 and all local authorities in Hertfordshire and LCB sub region are in the process of updating their documents.

The Housing Strategy has been developed by:-

- Reviewing the key achievements since the publication of the previous Housing Strategy in 2004 (see Appendix 1).
- Looking at the various national, sub-regional and local priorities connected to housing and the key changes since 2004 (see Chapter 2).
- Identifying the key partnerships to deliver the Housing Strategy (see Chapter 3).
- Consideration of two key issues and the evidence base around climate change and housing needs (see Chapters 4 and 5).
- Considering the best options to both meet these needs and link up the identified priorities (see Chapter 6).
- Identifying the key resources to deliver the housing strategy and how it will be monitored (See Chapters 7 and 8).

An Action Plan is attached at Appendix 3 which has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders in the District.

We are committed to tackling the long-term structural demand and supply imbalance in housing provision – through effective development and procurement of homes, coupled with a thorough understanding of local housing need

1.2 Our strategic Housing role

Our strategic Housing Service provides us with a firm platform upon which we are able to shape our activities and priorities. We are committed to addressing the housing needs of all residents across all tenures within St Albans as well as building and creating sustainable communities. We have a number of housing and planning powers which support our core activities.

Our strategic Housing role embraces 5 broad principles which are set out below:

1. Establishing a robust and shared understanding of the trends and drivers which influence housing needs and demand.
2. Establishing a robust and shared understanding of the wider implications for planning, infrastructure and communities.
3. Pursuing activities that involve creating new housing and managing existing housing in the built environment.
4. Pursuing activities that involve creating functioning neighbourhoods, supporting individuals and providing a safe area to live within.
5. Helping to support and improve the overall performance of the Council across key indicators.

Chapter 2: Strategic Context

The Housing Strategy links to the national, regional and local context in which we work. The key priorities and issues which influence the Housing Strategy are set out below.

2.1 National Context

2.1.1 Local Government White Paper Strong and Prosperous

In October 2006 the Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous" was published setting out the Government's aim of giving local communities more power and influence. It further reinforced the local authority role as strategic leader and 'place shaper' operating through LAA's and promoted the importance of community cohesion to address the challenges of an increasingly diverse society.

2.1.2 The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008

This was presented to Parliament on 15th November 2007 and received Royal Assent on 22nd July 2008. It will help to deliver the commitments set out in the Housing Green paper of July 2007 to provide more and greener homes in mixed and sustainable communities.

The Act established the new Homes and Communities Agency, which will focus on delivering more new and affordable homes across all tenures and will drive and invest in regeneration. The new agency will support regeneration and provide decent places as well as decent homes, eg by grant funding social housing and Investing in infrastructure.

This implements the changes proposed in the Green Paper to give councils more freedoms and incentives to build new homes, and makes rating against the Code for Sustainable Homes mandatory for new homes.

It also established the Tenants Services Authority which gives tenants more choice and a voice over how their homes are managed, by reforming social housing regulation, giving tenants a stronger say in stock transfer decisions by making a tenant ballot mandatory and giving local authority tenants greater powers over options for the future management and ownership of their homes.

Changes will also be implemented to improve the way that housing services are provided, including creating a level playing field for members of the armed forces applying for local authority housing and changes to improve the way the Right to Buy scheme operates.

2.1.3 Hill Report 2007

January 2007 saw the publication of the Hill Report which addressed the future role of social housing in England. The report endorsed the current approach to social housing whilst highlighting a number of issues that needed to be tackled.

- low resident satisfaction
- poor estate environments
- lack of tenant mobility
- high levels of unemployment in the sector
- increasing social polarisation

2.1.4 Decent Homes

The Government has set a target for 'decent' homes which is defined as homes that are warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities. The Government has set specific targets in relation to both the Social and Private Sector. By 2010 all social rented homes should be made decent and 70% of vulnerable households in the private sector should live in decent homes.

2.1.5 Recession Measures

The Government has introduced a number of initiatives to help combat the effects of recession on local communities and their residents. These include:

- additional funding for prevention of homelessness initiatives;
- national mortgage rescue scheme;
- additional funding for affordable homes brought forward;
- rent to buy schemes for first time home buyers.

2.1.6 Reform of Council Housing Finance

The Government issued a consultation paper in July 2009 to reform Council housing finance. The consultation paper reaffirms the Government's commitment to dismantle the existing HRA subsidy system and replace it with a self financing model. The consultation sets out proposals for local authorities to retain 100% of their capital receipts from Right To Buy and other HRA assets. The Government will be publishing its response to the consultation in early 2010 and intends to put an offer to all local authorities in relation to the self financing model in Spring 2010.

2.1.7 National Performance Indicators

New National Indicators (NIs) were established by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) for 2008/09 onwards. Best Value performance indicators (BVPIs) were abolished at the end of March 2008. In total 55 National Indicators are required to be monitored and reported on by the Council.

Those keys indicators relevant to the Housing Strategy are set out in the table below:

Indicator	Definition
NI 125	Achieving independence for older people through rehabilitation/intermediate care.
NI 141	Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living
NI 142	Percentage of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living
NI 154	Net additional homes provided
NI 155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
NI 156	Number of households living in temporary accommodation
NI 158	Percentage of non decent homes
NI 159	Supply of ready to develop housing sites
NI 160	Local Authority tenants' satisfaction with landlord services
NI 185	CO ₂ reduction from local authority operations
NI 186	Per capita reduction in CO ₂ emissions in the local authority area
NI 187	Tackling fuel poverty - % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating
NI 188	Adapting to climate change

The national indicator set has been designed to be the sole measure of progress against agreed national priority outcomes in the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

2.1.8 Climate Change and Conservation

In recent years the Government has become increasingly concerned about climate change and the need to conserve energy. Actions taken by the Government include the following:

- The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995

The Home Energy Conservation Act requires every local authority with housing responsibility to focus on improving the energy efficiency of all homes in order to tackle the problems of fuel poverty and climate change. Authorities are required to report annually on the measures that have been put in place to increase the energy efficiency of housing stock and the progress resulting from implementing the measures.

- The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000

The Government, as far as reasonably practicable, aims to end fuel poverty in vulnerable households by 2010 and all other households by 2016. This requires a strong contribution on the part of local authorities to ensure that steps are taken to improve energy efficiency across the housing stock and

signpost vulnerable householders to available grants.

- The Renewable Energy Strategy

In 2000, the Government set a target of 10% of electricity supply from renewable energy by 2010 and in 2006 announced the aspiration to double that level by 2020. This is in line with EU targets and these targets have been adopted in the East of England Plan. However, in 2007 just 5% of the UK's electricity supply came from renewable sources. Local renewable energy sources will definitely need to be encouraged in order to reach this ambitious target. The integration of renewable energy into new housing development as well as through retro-fit is therefore paramount.

- The Climate Change Bill

The Climate Change Bill was introduced into Parliament on 14 November 2007 and became law on 26th November 2008. The legislation contains legally binding targets on greenhouse gas emission reductions. The targets are for a 26% reduction by 2020 and 80% by 2050, against a 1990 baseline.

2.1.9 Every Child Matters (including 16 and 17 year olds)

Published in 2003 and extended in 2004 [*Every Child Matters: the Next Steps in 2004*]. This key document discusses and acknowledges the risk of poor outcomes for young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The document set out 5 key themes which support and underpin the Every Child Matters ethos:

- being healthy
- staying Safe
- enjoying and Achieving
- making a positive contribution
- economic well-being.

2.1.10 Sustainable Communities Act

'Sustainability' is defined as encouraging the improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area.

In February 2003 the Deputy Prime Minister launched the Sustainable Communities Plan. The plan sets out a long term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. It aims to tackle housing supply and demand issues as well as improving the quality of our public spaces with a view to meeting the social, economical and environmental needs of communities.

St Albans City and District Council agreed a motion in September 2008 'opting in' to the process for the Sustainable Communities Act. In practice, this meant developing a process for selecting possible actions to submit to Government, via the LGA, which they consider would contribute to promoting the sustainability of local communities. This was done concurrently with the Sustainable Community Strategy refresh.

In July 2009 two proposals were put forward under the Act following extensive consultation with the LSP Board informing the basis of the selection panel for propositions (called the 'panel of representative persons' under the Act). Other proposals are to be progressed locally without the need to use the Act but the two proposals submitted were:

- Scrutiny of Practice based Commissioning groups
- Stronger support (locally) for small business set up, training and guidance.

2.2 Regional and Sub Regional Context

2.2.1 The East of England Regional Plan

The East of England Plan (approved May 2008) proposes a minimum of 83,200 additional homes in Hertfordshire 2001-2021 (i.e. 4,160 per annum), excluding any expansion of Harlow or Luton into the County. The minimum target for St Albans District is 7,200 homes and that land is identified for longer term needs.

The East of England Regional Assembly is preparing a review of the East of England Plan. The review is extending the time horizon on to 2031, and the consultation process started in September 2009.

2.2.2 Eastern Region/London Commuter Belt context

St Albans District Council is located in the Eastern region and within that the London Commuter Belt. This sub region comprises 10 District Councils in Hertfordshire and 5 District Councils in Essex and is the largest of the nine sub-regions in the East of England. Since the last sub-regional housing strategy the extent of joint working between the local authorities across the District has increased significantly. A sub-regional approach has been adopted in tackling homelessness, affordable housing, identifying and promoting good practice through a designated website and Fuel Poverty. Districts have also worked together to implement Choice Based Lettings and to carry out strategic housing market assessments. The Council is working to ensure that local and sub-regional priorities are aligned with national housing policy priorities to make the most effective use of local and national resources. Our housing strategy reflects the key national housing policy priorities of providing additional affordable housing to meet local need and to deliver on growth points; tackling affordability and improving access to housing; preventing homelessness; improving housing conditions; meeting the needs of vulnerable people and making efficient use of existing housing resources.

The Vision for the London Commuter Belt [LCB] is:

- 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.
- To make the best use of existing stock whilst improving its condition in both the public and private sectors.

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

- maximising the delivery of affordable housing;
- improve the condition and use of the housing stock in the private sector within the sub region;
- delivering outcomes through effective partnership working.

The key strategic aims of the National, Regional and Sub Regional Housing Strategies, which impact on our local housing strategy are illustrated below.

National	Regional & sub regional	Local
Bringing all social housing up to Decent Homes Standard by 2010	To ensure that everyone can live in a decent home at an affordable price by maximising the delivery of affordable housing	A programme to maintain Decent Homes Standard
Ensure that CBL lettings schemes are operating across all Local Authorities by 2010	To enable housing choice and transparency	Introduction of Choice Based Lettings scheme in May 2009
Implementing the Supporting People Programme	To contribute effectively to social inclusion within sustainable communities	An action plan to review the retirement housing stock . Completion of Social Inclusion Best Value Review.
Addressing anti-social behaviour	To contribute effectively to Social Inclusion within sustainable communities	Use of acceptable behaviour contracts and anti-social behaviour orders to tackle anti-social behaviour.
Environmental priorities such as increasing the use of Brownfield land, modern methods of construction.	To contribute to a sustainable environment	Improvements to both public and private sector housing stock in order to improve energy efficiency/reduce fuel poverty. Re-development on Brownfield sites well in excess of Government target

2.2.3 Hertfordshire County Council Context

Local Area Agreements (LAA) are three year agreements between Central Government, local authorities, LSP's and other key partners. They set out targets to deliver national outcome in a way that reflects local priorities. Hertfordshire County Council is our lead agency for developing LAA's.

The new LAA2 for Hertfordshire for 2009 onwards contains 30 improvement targets selected from the National Indicator set of 198, and 16 statutory targets as well as other local improvement targets agreed by Herts Forward. The 46 LAA indicators cover:-

Jobs, prosperity and skills
Safer and stronger communities
Children and Young People
Ageing Population
Health/Well Being
Transport and Access
Promoting Sustainable Development
Affordable Housing and Quality Neighbourhood
Sustaining Hert's unique character and Quality of Life.

The key LAA2 targets which relate to our Housing Strategy are:-

NI 17	Perceptions of anti-social behaviour
NI 125	Achieving independence for older people through rehabilitation/intermediate care
NI 141	% of vulnerable people achieving independent living
NI 154	Net additional homes provided
NI 155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
NI 186	Per capita reduction in CO ₂ emissions in the local authority area

Every Child Matters

The development of children's trust arrangements at District level in Hertfordshire is led by the ten District Children's Trust Partnerships (DCTPs) one for each District. The role of the St Albans Children's Trust Partnership is:-

- To promote effective partnership working to support children and young people in the District.
- To act as "children's champions" within the District by engaging partner organisations and local communities in the promotion of better outcomes for children and young people aged 0-19 and for transition arrangements up to age of 25 for care leavers and young people with learning disabilities.
- To support partner agencies working at District level in meeting their statutory responsibilities under the Children Act.
- To ensure that agreement has been secured from partner agencies to commit the necessary resources to deliver the objectives in the District Children and Young Peoples Plan.

2.2.4 Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy 2007-2012

Supporting People is a government programme that funds support relating to housing. This is known as housing-related support. Housing related support services aim to prevent homelessness and help people to live more independently. Within St Albans supported housing is available for various client groups for example young people, victims of domestic violence, older people, single homeless people with a range of support needs. In addition floating support is provided by a number of agencies. This includes floating support for young people, those with an alcohol or drug problem and a generic scheme provided across the County.

The Herts SP strategy sets out the priorities in relation to the provision of services to help a range of client groups to live more independently ie homeless households, older people, people with physical or mental health issues.

The Supporting People programme can also help people make the transition from living in an institution to living independently. Priorities within the strategy are as follows:

Year 1 (2007/08)	Older people, young people, people with mental health problems
Years 2 & 3 (2008/09) (2009/10)	Substance misuse, homelessness, domestic violence, physical disability, offenders
Years 4 & 5 (2010/11) (2011/12)	People with learning disabilities, gypsies and travellers

2.3 The Local Context

2.3.1 The Local Strategic Partnership

Shaping our district together for 2021

“We want to continue to be a progressive, unique and vibrant district, which values its environment, heritage and cares for the future: an outstanding place to live where everyone can flourish”

The Local Strategic Partnership [LSP] was set up in 2002 to produce the first Sustainable Community Strategy for the period from 2003 to 2007. The Sustainable Community Strategy is our vision of how St Albans district will look by 2021 and we have also produced accompanying project plans which set out the practical steps the LSP will take to fill gaps in existing work and help make this vision a reality. This strategy has been produced by St Albans and District Local Strategic Partnership – a group of key local public, business and voluntary/community sector organisations working together to improve the quality of life for everyone in the district – with considerable input from other members of the community. The strategy’s priorities for the district have been identified from residents’ surveys and other research and there has been extensive consultation on the development of the strategy with residents, community groups and other local organisations.

Since its launch in 2003 the landscape has shifted and as a consequence the Strategy has been refreshed to reflect emerging issues affecting the District. The Strategy includes a new priority on economic sustainability as well as an increased emphasis on caring for an ageing population and was approved by Council in June 2009. In addition there are plans to take specific partnership action on youth provision, supporting the voluntary sector, engaging the community, protecting the environment and reducing inequalities.

The priorities contained within the Community Strategy have a direct relationship with the Strategic housing role and therefore we recognise the need to align our Housing Strategy with this key corporate document to ensure that our services are fully engaged with the commitment to create sustainable communities within St Albans District.

Local Strategic Partnership: New Sustainable Community Strategy priorities 2009

Priority 1: Ensuring the district is a great place to be

Priority 2: Creating a diverse and sustainable economy for the 21st century

Priority 3: Keeping the District healthy

Priority 4: Supporting an active community that has pride in itself and cares for its future

In order to deliver the above priorities the LSP will tackle key areas not fully addressed by the activities of its members or other local organisation. These are: providing accessible facilities and activities for young people, helping to build capacity of the voluntary sector to provide preventative and support services, encouraging and promoting community engagement and participation, promoting sustainable local economic development, meeting needs of an ageing population and reducing our impact on the environment. Appendix 3 sets out the links between the Housing Strategy priorities and the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities.

You can learn more about the LSP priorities by visiting www.stalbanslsp.org.uk.

2.3.2 The Local Development Framework [LDF] and City Vision

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced major changes to the Planning System including the introduction of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) to replace the old system of Structure Plans (produced by County Councils) and Local Plans (produced by District Councils). The LDF comprises a series of documents which set out policies and proposals for future development within each local planning authority's area.

At present, the statutory Development Plan for St Albans District consists of:

- St Albans District Local Plan Review (adopted 1994)
- Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011 (adopted 1998)
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002 -2016 (adopted 2007)
- Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan 1995 –2005 (adopted 1999)
- East of England Plan (approved 2008)

However, the District Council is now working on the preparation of the following Development Plan Documents (DPDs) which together will form the new Statutory planning documents for the District:

- Core Strategy

- Site Allocations
- Development Policies
- East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan (being prepared by Dacorum Borough Council).

The Core Strategy is about place shaping and sustainability, retailing provision and employment generation, how the City and rural areas relate to the aspirations of the present and future population.

The Emerging Core Strategy Report was approved by Cabinet for consultation purposes in June 2009 and there is a period of public consultation from July to 28 September 2009. An over-riding priority of the Core Strategy is to protect the green belt for current and future generations, while balancing the need to provide housing, jobs and services for local residents. The Core Strategy will provide policy guidance on the mix of housing types and sizes required to meet the needs of people throughout their lifecycle. The policy will also refer to the housing needs of young people, families, older people including a commitment to lifetime homes, adapted properties and extra care housing and the needs of black and ethnic minority communities who make up about 10% of the District's population. The Council's provisional proposals on key affordable housing issues (subject to the consultation) are set out below:-

- An average of 100 affordable homes per annum.
- To set separate targets for social and intermediate housing.
- A range of sizes and types of affordable housing will be required.
- Either 35% or 40% to be the percentage target for affordable housing.
- A lower threshold of 10 or more dwellings to be the site size threshold for affordable housing due to high house prices and the amount of house building on small sites.
- Affordable housing on larger sites should be dispersed in small groups throughout the site.
- Sites for 10 or more dwellings should have affordable housing provided so developer contributions for offsite provision will not normally be required. All sites for 9 or fewer dwellings will be required to contribute to offsite provision of affordable housing.

The Council's conclusion on affordable housing will be informed by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (see section 5.1). As there is a requirement for a viability assessment, the Council has commissioned, jointly with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, a Development Economics Study (DES).

The Emerging Core Strategy Consultation document also includes proposed and possible strategic housing sites for 100 or more new homes. The pre-submission version of the Core Strategy, which will represent the Council's views on what the final Core Strategy should say, is due for publication in February 2010.

In relation to sustainable design and construction it is proposed that the Core Strategy policy should require all new homes to meet Code level 3 for Sustainable Homes. This may change in the Core Strategy Pre-submission version. In order to meet higher levels of the Code, new housing development should take into account

the potential to incorporate renewables. Housing schemes should also have the ability to be connected to a decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply.

Linked to the LDF is the City Vision Project. The aim of City Vision is to cover the social, cultural and economic development of the City over the coming decades along with a spatial framework to accommodate these developments. The draft vision has been encapsulated as 'Integrated living for 2030' a creative, sustainable and pioneering City for all which values the past and embraces the future. Under the Homes and Community section, the objective is to provide housing which support a sustainable and diverse community for St Albans and attracts young and older people to the area. A key proposal under this objective is to provide a greater range and type of housing for St Albans residents including affordable housing.

2.3.3 The Corporate Plan and its relationship with Housing Services

The Council's Vision:

The Council's vision is: Historic St Albans District: a premier community

Corporate Aims

The corporate plan helps us to look critically at our performance with a view to identifying how we can improve our service delivery and provision. It is designed to provide a simplified overview of our performance and plans.

In identifying our priorities we have looked at how our work can support the aims of other key plans, in particular the Sustainable Community Strategy, which is a plan for the whole district bringing together the work of many local organisations.

Each year the Council reconsiders its priorities and focus for the coming year. The corporate aims set out below take into account the findings of our key public consultation processes. In total the Council now has five strategic aims and which are listed below:

Aim 1: To safeguard the environment

Aim 2: To build a community that is open, fair and inclusive

Aim 3: To work in partnership for the health and well being of the community

Aim 4: To cherish and promote our heritage, arts and culture

Aim 5: To ensure the District is a desirable place in which to visit and in which to live, learn and work

The Corporate Priorities which are relevant to the Housing Strategy are set out below:-

- Producing the Local Development Framework including the City Vision and protecting the Green Belt and the environment to ensure a sustainable and greener community.
- Achieving value for money quality services, efficiencies and below retail price index (RPI) Council Tax rises.
- Enhancing the District by providing visible improvements to the street scene.

The Corporate priorities are supplemented by a number of supporting priorities. Those relevant to the Housing Strategy are set out below:-

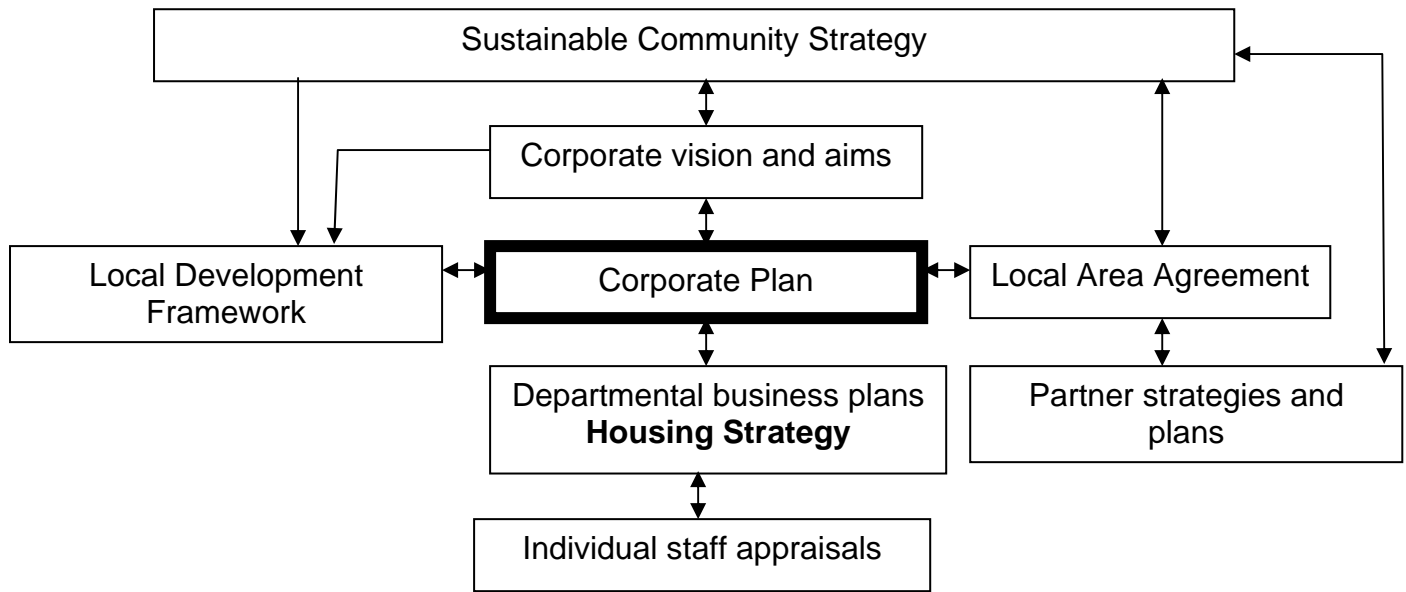
- Maintain the focus on affordable housing by seeking to build an average of at least 100 homes per year.
- Support businesses and individuals in St Albans District in dealing with the adverse impact of the economic recession.
- Promote the use of renewable energy by residents.
- Strengthen our communication with residents, and hone a clear, strong reputation of working for a premier community.

Further details of the Councils aims and objectives can be found on our website: www.Stalbans.gov.uk

As a District Council we are proud of our aims and objectives and committed to their effective delivery. Our business models are configured to ensure that we keep the above priorities at the heart of our activities.

St Albans Housing Services has a number of core priorities which will ensure that all composite services operate within a quality and continuous improvement framework. The success of our service is underpinned by our ability to align ourselves with the corporate centre of St Albans and a range of key strategic documents.

The diagram overleaf shows how our Housing Strategy fits with the Councils key/main strategic/corporate plans and partnership frameworks.



Appendix 3 sets out the links between the Housing Strategy priorities and the Council's Corporate Aims.

Chapter 3 : Consultation and partnership

We continue to place partnership working at the heart of our activities and have developed strong partnerships with a range of local statutory and non statutory agencies in St Albans including: Connexions, Community Safety Partnership, Youth talk, Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association, Aldwyck Housing Association and CAB/Money advice service.

The Health, Housing and Social Care Partnership is one of the three existing partnerships linked to the LSP and forms part of the delivery structure. Housing needs to be an integral part of this partnership in order to take forward the actions in the Sustainable Community Strategy related to meeting the needs of an ageing population. We are currently reviewing the partnership and delivery plan which will cover linkages to the Housing Strategy.

We remain committed to developing effective strategic and operational partnerships to ensure that joined up, holistic solutions are developed to tackle the major issues highlighted by local residents – good housing, clean and safe environment, economic opportunities, health and well-being. The Housing Needs service will act as a broker, advocate and lead agency, securing effective outcomes according to individual needs.

Examples of Positive Outcomes from Partnership Working

Activity/issue	Partnership	Outcome
Implementation of choice based lettings	Herts Choice Homes St Albans , Hertsmere , Watford, Welwyn and Hatfield , Three Rivers	CBL development and implemented in May 2009
Prevention of youth homelessness	Herts Young Homeless Group	Prevention of homelessness amongst 16-25 year olds. Mediation service
Prevention of tenancy breakdown/resettlement support	Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association	To ensure residents are able to remain in their homes
Delivery of supporting people services	Herts County Council and Local partners	Provision of housing related support services to support independent living and tenancy sustainment
Identification of need and demand across all tenures via the Strategic Housing Market assessment [SHMA]	St Albans, Watford, Hertsmere, Dacorum, Three Rivers, Welwyn and Hatfield	Identification of housing markets and housing needs
Delivery of affordable housing	Local RSL's and Homes and Communities Agency	Provision of affordable housing in the District
Implementation and monitoring of Homelessness Strategy	Homelessness Forum members from local voluntary and statutory agencies	Effective implementation of actions in the Homelessness Strategy

Details of the key partners that we work with are set out at Appendix 4.

Stakeholder Consultation

The Council is committed to stakeholder consultation to ensure that stakeholders and partners have an input in shaping and guiding the service delivery process.

Examples of Consultation with Stakeholders and Key Partners

- regular formal meetings with resident association representatives via Housing Consultation Forum
- annual residents conference
- focus groups to gauge user opinions
- conferences for stakeholders and other partners e.g. Homelessness Conference, Housing Strategy Conference
- newsletters for tenants and leaseholders
- a Mori district opinion poll
- commissioning a Tenant Satisfaction Survey
- district wide Tenant's Compact
- regular formal meetings with local housing associations and voluntary sector via Housing Consultative Forum
- regular meetings of the Local Strategic Partnership
- London Commuter Belt Quarterly meetings
- London Commuter Belt Development Officers & Strategy Officers meetings
- Supporting People Conference and Forums

During 2008 a St Albans District Council tenant satisfaction survey was carried out and the key results are set out below.

Results of Tenant satisfaction survey 2008-9

79%	of general needs tenants are satisfied with overall service provided by SADC
82%	Satisfied with the quality of their home
75%	say their rent represents good value for money
80%	satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service
79%	believe SADC good at keeping them informed
59%	satisfied that the Council are taking their views into account
38%	have heard of Tenant Participation Compacts
44%	found getting hold of the right person easy to report anti-social behaviour, 34% found it difficult, and 19% mentioned that staff were unhelpful

Homelessness Forum

In April 2009 we launched our new multi-agency Homelessness Forum which is Co-chaired by a senior officer from our preventions and options service and a representative from an external local agency. This will provide us with additional scope to engage and communicate with a range of organisations working with homeless clients and those in housing need.

Chapter 4: Energy Efficiency, Reducing Carbon Emissions and Tackling Climate Change

4.1. Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Climate Change is an urgent priority. St Albans City & District Council is taking a proactive role to tackle this issue, not only in terms of reducing its own carbon emissions, but also working with the wider community in addressing carbon emissions at a district level. These objectives are underpinned by the Sustainable Community Strategy which states that we must significantly reduce our resource use, in particular fossil fuels and water. Moreover, St Albans District council will have to report on the four national indicators on climate change as part of its LAA (NI 185, 186, 187, and 188).

- NI 185 - CO₂ reduction from Local Authority operations
- NI 186 - Per capita CO₂ emissions in the LA area
- NI 187 - Tackling fuel poverty
- NI 188 - Adapting to climate change

Hertfordshire has agreed, in consultation with GO East, to a 9.1% per capita reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2011 (between 2005 and 2011). Hertfordshire County Council has to report its progress annually against the national indicator 186 (NI186). The 9.1% target is considerably less than other County's in the East of England and is therefore likely to increase in subsequent agreements. Hertfordshire was set a lower target in the current LAA because of its high energy consumption levels.

While the Council has a significant contribution to make, residents can contribute by:

- reducing the amount of energy and water used in the home
- reducing waste and recycling more
- walking and cycling and using public transport including the school run; and
- shopping locally.

However, even if all the CO₂ emission were curbed tomorrow, a certain amount of climate change will still take place due to the level of emissions already emitted. It is therefore important to plan and adapt to those changes. The Council is currently developing a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to ensure that we are adequately prepared to deal with any predicted climatic changes. At this stage it is clear that housing stock will have to be considered. Increased temperatures will require adequate and carbon neutral cooling systems to be installed while increasing water scarcity will certainly influence the type and location of new dwellings. Water saving technologies will also have to be installed and retrofitted on the existing stock.

4.2. Housing and the Environment

Houses are responsible for a range of impacts on the environment throughout their lifespan. Resources use and waste generation during construction and demolition and ongoing waste production, water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions

from energy use when inhabited.

Carbon dioxide emissions from the domestic sector account for 29% of SADC carbon dioxide emissions. Whilst new legislation limits the emissions from new housing developments, the Council face a major challenge in terms of improving the efficiency of the existing stock.

The Code for Sustainable Homes (2006) ensures that new buildings have sustainability principles designed in from the start. In particular it sets increasing levels of energy efficiency standards for new homes through a progressive tightening of the Building Regulations. This will culminate in a requirement for all new homes to be zero carbon by 2016 and all new non-domestic buildings by 2019.

To achieve carbon neutrality, new developments will have to be built with higher levels of efficiency, achieve a minimum reduction through onsite renewable energy supply or directly connected low carbon or renewable heat sources and offset remaining emissions through 'allowable solutions'.

However, the main issue lies with the existing housing stock, much of which was built around the 1950's. The energy performance of these older buildings is generally poor. Improving the energy efficiency of those dwellings will require increasing insulation levels through refurbishment and retrofitting. This is crucial if St Albans is to achieve its target to reduce CO2 emissions.

4.3 Affordable Warmth and Energy Efficiency

As part of our Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) obligations, the Council continues to report annually to the Government on its progress towards improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty within the housing stock. The figures are as follows:

	Baseline Figures	Annual Improvement	Year on Year Improvement	Overall (Cumulative) Improvement	
	Gj	Percentage	GJ	GJ	%
Apr-96	5,630,016	0.85%	47,855	47,855	0.85%
Apr-97	5,582,161	3.94%	219,937	267,792	4.76%
Apr-98	5,362,224	3.25%	174,272	442,065	7.85%
Apr-99	5,187,951	1.83%	94,940	537,004	9.54%
Apr-00	5,093,012	1.35%	68,756	605,760	10.76%
Apr-01	5,024,256	1.14%	57,277	663,036	11.78%
Apr-02	4,966,980	1.61%	79,968	743,005	13.20%
Apr-03	4,887,011	2.56%	125,107	868,112	15.42%
Apr-04	4,761,904	3.93%	187,143	1,055,255	18.74%
Apr-05	4,574,761	4.93%	225,431	1,280,686	22.75%
Apr-06	4,349,330	5.34%	232,149	1,512,836	26.87%
Apr-07	4,117,180	5.94%	244,386	1,757,222	31.21%

GJ = Giga Joules

The target figure of a 30% overall improvement has now been achieved.

Affordable Warmth means being able to achieve sufficient warmth within the home at a reasonable cost. As a general rule households needing to spend more than 10% of their income to maintain an adequate level of warmth are described as living in 'fuel poverty' and will be at greater risk in terms of health and well-being. The main causes of fuel poverty are inadequate thermal insulation, inefficient heating systems, low household income and high fuel prices. A lack of access to capital also makes it more difficult to improve their situation through the installation of energy efficiency measures. DEFRA estimates that for every 1% increase in domestic fuel prices an additional 40,000 households nationally will fall into fuel poverty.

In 2004 the national average number of households living in fuel poverty was 10.5%, with a regional average of 12%. St Albans was significantly higher at 16%. This equates to approximately 7,500 of all households, most of which are likely to be widely dispersed throughout the District. The difficulty facing the Council therefore is identifying where these households are and identifying who may be in need of support and assistance.

To tackle this issue, and in support of the Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001, the Council has developed an Affordable Warmth strategy to improve the thermal warmth and socioeconomic circumstances of vulnerable households. St Albans also report on progress on this issue through the national indicator 187 (NI 187).

The Council last carried out a Private Sector House Condition Survey in 2001. The survey showed that there had been a significant improvement in the stock since the last survey which was carried out in 1993. In relation to unfitness, this had reduced from 9.6% to 3.1% (1,515 dwellings) of the stock. Despite these impressive figures, it is our objective to bring all dwellings, regardless of tenure, up to an excellent standard of energy efficiency. We must therefore look at targeted initiatives to improve the thermal efficiency of the District's privately owned and rented homes. In addition, the average SAP¹ rating was 47 in 2001, considerably lower than that of the Council's social housing stock.

The Council's Public Sector Stock Condition Survey (2009) gives an average efficiency rating of 66.3 for the whole stock. The range extends from 59.8 to 75.9 and is considered typical of a stock of our type which includes non-traditional housing.

The Council is working with a number of partners to promote energy efficiency and raise awareness of grants and subsidies that may be available in order to encourage the installation of insulation and energy efficiency measures. However it is clear that spontaneous improvements and repairs by some landlords cannot be relied upon alone to keep the stock in good condition and that a proactive programme will need to be implemented to improve this type of housing tenure.

¹ The SAP rating is the Standard Assessment Procedure for working out the energy efficiency of homes – the higher the rating, the more energy efficient the home.

Chapter 5: Housing Needs - Supply and Demand

5.1 Strategic Housing Market Assessment

We are currently undertaking a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) with five neighbouring local authorities - Dacorum, Hertsmere, Three Rivers, Watford and Welwyn Hatfield. The key outputs from the SHMA will include estimates of:

- future households requiring market housing and affordable housing
- sizes of housing required; and
- household groups who have particular housing requirements such as families, older people, black and minority ethnic group.

Based on the findings of the SHMA the LDF Core Strategy will provide policy guidance on the mix of housing types and sizes.

Our Housing Needs Survey update in 2006 showed that the "older" retirement group, those 80 and over, grows by 56.8% this amounts to 2,839 more people by 2021. This group represents 7,839 people in the area by 2021 who are much more likely to have care and support needs.

In terms of affordability the background work on Strategic Housing Market Assessment makes the following points, these are being reviewed to reflect current economic conditions:

- Between 2000 and 2007 house prices rose by 93% making houses in the area now 140% of the Eastern regional average, though prices are increasing slower than in the rest of the region.
- 2005 saw a levelling off of property prices in LCB West and also a sharp reduction in the number of properties selling. However prices and transaction both increased in 2006 and continued to do so into 2007, indicating a renewed confidence in the housing market.
- On the basis of household spending no more than the CLG guideline amounts for market housing
 - virtually no owner occupied or private rented housing within the LCB (West) area is affordable to households with incomes of less than £30,000 p.a. and only 8% of properties sold would be affordable to individual earners with incomes of less than £44,999 borrowing at the maximum 3.5 x ratio, assuming little or no equity.
 - There is a shortage of stock (other than social housing in theory) available to households who are not already owners with incomes in the £20,000 to £34,999 bands. As a consequence there is a high number of households registered on the waiting lists for social housing.
 - There was just enough market housing affordable to households in the £35,000 to £39,000 income band if market housing for sale and rent is added together.
 - The housing that is available to higher income bands will mostly be bought

by existing home owners using some combination of income and equity.

- There is insufficient owner-occupied housing available to those with incomes below £35,000.
- Intermediate housing could help provide an extended range of housing options to those households with incomes between £20,000 and £35,000.
- It is likely that if more social housing was to be provided many people would come forward to fill the properties.

The proportion of affordable housing provided on new sites should encompass more subsidized intermediate market housing than would have been the case four years ago when it was a more marginal element of affordable need. Targets will vary on individual sites to address local need having taken account of social unit turnover in the area.

The table below shows the number of applicants on the Housing Register/Transfer List.

	1 April 2006	1 April 2007	1 April 2008	1 April 2009
Housing Register	1,705	1,739	1,664	1,625
Transfer	798	833	753	766
TOTAL	2,503	2,572	2,417	2,391

Not everyone who is on the housing register is in housing need as they may be adequately housed and a breakdown of the list follows. At the beginning of June 2009 there were 2648 households on the housing list, of these 14 were in Band A, 87 in Band B, 383 in Band C, 849 in Band D and 1315 in Band E. The increase in households is associated with the implementation of Choice Based Lettings.

The main source of lettings into affordable housing comes from the Council's own housing stock and that owned by Registered Housing Landlords in the District. The table below provides a breakdown of lettings over the last 3 years.

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Lettings within Council's Housing Stock	269	247	224
Nominations to Registered Social Landlords	58	67	105
Mutual Exchanges	68	88	35
TOTAL	395	402	364

5.2 Homelessness

The main consequence of the affordability and supply crisis for housing in St Albans is homelessness. The Council has been working hard with its partners to prevent and reduce the impact of homelessness. This work has been delivered via the Council's Homelessness Strategy. The level of homelessness in the City has been reduced in certain key areas namely the reduction in acceptance rates and prevention activities as illustrated below.

Total Decisions	2003 - 2004	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009
Acceptances	166	141	125	105	135	85
Intentional	25	23	18	13	15	14
Non priority	51	34	26	10	20	5
Not Homeless	58	35	31	30	36	10
In eligible	1	3	2	1	2	0
Preventions	not recorded	not recorded	47	113	149	116

In order to manage the effects of the recession the Council has set up The Recession Response project Board who will strategically address the implications of the recession and identify actions required by the Housing Options Service to mitigate any increased levels of homelessness. The emphasis is on ensuring that people temporarily affected by the economic situation are able to sustain their current accommodation.

5.3 Older people – Quality of life housing for older people

Further to a commissioned study in 2005 the Council agreed to move from widespread provision of sheltered housing towards a more condensed model of high quality accommodation to meet the likely future demand for affordable housing by older people. The study looked at both current and projected trends and looked at void turnaround times for sheltered accommodation and found, amongst other things, that void rates stood at approx 6% plus. This study was built around an options appraisal which generated the following strands:

1. Understanding the nature of need and demand for older persons accommodation over the next 20 years including the views of current and future tenants.
2. An analysis of the supply of sheltered housing for older people in St Albans and the characteristics of current tenants.
3. A structured review of the viability of existing council accommodation using a toolkit developed by housing experts and DCLG.
4. Interviews with relevant staff groups, RSL's, Hertfordshire County Council, private developers and older people.

The options appraisal yielded some key proposal centred around a widespread

remodelling programme of the sheltered housing stock (see section 5.1), work in partnership to develop extra care housing and undertake a review of the housing support role to ensure appropriate levels of services are provided.

In addition Hertfordshire County Council have produced an Older People Accommodation and Support Strategy and local project boards have been established. A mapping and needs analysis exercise has been carried out at a district level. This has identified the need for 650 units of extra care housing across Hertfordshire with two sites identified in St Albans arising from the review of the Council's sheltered accommodation. This work has clear links to the Sustainable Community Strategy where there is now an increased emphasis on meeting the needs of an ageing population.

5.4 Gypsies and travellers

The Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation need Assessment [GTAA] covered the local authority planning areas of Decorum, Hertsmere, St. Albans, Three Rivers and Watford. The GTAA identified a need of an extra 125 residential pitches in the study area but did not carve up the need between the different local authority areas. This level of need has now been superseded by work being carried out by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA).

It was determined by EERA that the GTAA for south and west Hertfordshire overestimated the level of need required.

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) has produced the final revised policies to the East of England Plan, providing guidance on 'Accommodation for Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Show People'. The number of existing and proposed additional residential pitches in St Albans is shown below:-

Authorised pitches in 2006	Minimum additional pitches 2006-2011	Minimum additional pitches 2011-2021	Minimum pitches 2021
52	28	24	102

The Council considers that the targets for this District are disproportionately high and a legal challenge has recently been submitted.

5.5 Households with disabilities

There is a need to develop good quality accommodation for young disabled people within the District.

During 2005 a group of physically disabled young adults and their parents met with Adult Care Services (Hertfordshire County Council) and St Albans District Council, in order to identify the type of accommodation, care and support that these young adults would require in the future in order to live more independently from their families. This subsequently became known as the Castle Project.

A Project Group made up of representatives from St Albans District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, service users and their parents/carers, was set up to

actively seek a site where a scheme could be built.

The proposed scheme to deliver these units of affordable housing will assist the Council in meeting its statutory duties and high level of housing need, as identified in the Council's Housing Needs Survey and assist the Council in meeting one of its Corporate Aims as set out in the Corporate Plan. It was recognised there was no such accommodation, or provision for such, in the District. As such this was a client-driven, unique project.

On 20th November 2007 a planning application was made by Ability Housing Association for the demolition of existing garages and erection of one part single part two storey building comprising of 7 one-bedroom and 2 two-bedroom apartments. 3 of the one-bedroom ground floor units will be wheelchair accessible together with the 2 two bedroom flats, and 4 of the one-bedroom first storey flats are suitable for a wide range of needs, including those with sensory deprivation.

On 4th February 2008 full planning permission was granted for this development. The building is programmed to start in July 2009 and there will be a nominations panel to decide who moves into the new flats on completion.

In addition to the above the Council carries out disabled adaptations to its Council stock with expenditure of approximately £700,000 per annum. In addition Disabled Facilities Grants are available as a mandatory service in the private sector. The table below shows the level of expenditure on adaptations carried out across the District.

	2005/06	2006/07	2008/09	2009/10
Disabled Adaptations (Council Stock)	798,000	634,000	792,000	827,000
Disabled Facilities Grants (Private)	542,000	574,000	927,000	1,090,000

The Council has recently reviewed its adaptations policies to ensure that disabled people whether they live in private or public sector housing are dealt with in the same fair and equitable way.

5.6 Young people

A new homelessness prevention and support service was jointly commissioned by the local authorities in Hertfordshire and launched in July 2008 by Herts Young Homeless Group.

The Crash pad service provides short term emergency accommodation for homeless young people between the ages of 16-18 and for care leavers up to the age of 21. The main objective is to provide a safe environment for young people whilst longer term options are considered. A secondary objective is to reduce the risks that homelessness can cause. The service is managed by Herts. Young Homeless Group as part of the Homeless Prevention and Support integrated service who recruits "host families" to provide a room in their own home. The agency is expected to have 35 host families available by the end of 2008 and currently has 26 families across the county. From 1 July 2008, the scheme was opened up to care leavers,

and have longer-term placements to allow more time for mediation to take place and/or move arrangements to be made.

Herts. Young Homeless Group (HYHG) Offer advice and information on homeless prevention from a menu of options: this could include;

- make enquiries about the young person's current housing situation
- provide information for young people on their housing and homelessness rights and responsibilities.
- provide housing and homelessness information, in methods and formats accessible to young people with diverse needs, on local services provided.

As part of this service Herts Young Homeless Group:

- Carry out an assessment using the common assessment framework (CAF) and/or housing/homeless assessment form.
- This assessment of the accommodation and support needs of young people will be made available to all other parts of the service and other relevant agencies as appropriate.
- Ensure that the service user is registered on relevant housing lists from time of referral. (subject to assessment).
- Work with and assist in the delivery of support plans being undertaken by other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies involved in the service users' life. This will include working with the Youth Justice Service, i.e. assessing 16 and 17 year olds whilst in custody, prior to release and making arrangements for accommodation and or housing related support .

There are a number of other multi agency working arrangements which include

- The joint housing protocol between local authorities and Children, Schools and Families at Herts County Council which has been revised to take account of the Common Assessment Framework.
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which covers all aspects of a child's development and is a way for practioners to work together to meet the needs of children.

There is some specialist supported housing in St Albans in partnership with Aldwyck Housing Association. This includes 8 self contained units at High Oaks and 8 units at Artisan Crescent.

The LAA1 target for reducing the percentage of unplanned moves for young people was successfully met during 2008/09 with just 20.7% of individual moves across the County recorded as unplanned.

5.7 People with mental health issues

The Community Mental Health Team have recently completed an Adult Mental Health Accommodation Strategy 2009 - 2013.

The objective of this strategy is to ensure people with mental ill-health are able to appropriately access general needs housing but also have access to a range of specialist mental health accommodation when this is required.

Its vision acknowledges the wishes of people with mental health to be included in everyday life without being marginalised or excluded. In order to achieve the highest degree of independence and social inclusion the provision of affordable good quality adequately supported accommodation is the key factor.

In the strategy they have identified a need in St Albans for an annual increase of accommodation as shown in the table below.

Accommodation Need	Annual Increase
Residential/High Support	7.8
Low to Medium Supported Living	12.8
Rehabilitation	2.5

5.8 Offenders

A Countywide Adult Offenders Accommodation Board was set up during 2008/09 to review the range of existing supported housing that is available to offenders and the extent to which offenders are accessing this accommodation. This included access to night shelters, single homeless accommodation and supported housing for people with mental health problems. Over the next 12 months, further work will take place with supported housing providers to establish how access to the supported housing sector by offenders can be improved. The service provided by Stonham Housing Association which includes supported housing has been remodelled and move on arrangements involving all the District Councils have been agreed. Work is also in progress to develop an Adult Offenders' Accommodation Strategy.

5.9 Black and minority ethnic community

Since the 2001 Census the demographics of St Albans has shifted and we have seen increases in existing Black and Minority Ethnic communities as well as new and emerging communities. Whilst some extended families still desire to live together and would benefit from larger accommodation, there is an increasing trend to live independently for third generation children, often away from the elder Black Asian Minority Ethnic Community who are left in a housing crisis with no support for health or welfare needs. In response to these shifting trends we will be carrying out a needs assessment in order to produce a Black and Minority Ethnic Housing strategy which will supplement our Housing Strategy and identify the specific needs of the

different communities.

The Council engages with the Black and Minority Ethnic community in a number of ways in partnership with external statutory organisations. The fully established Asian Family Health Group provides a 'one stop shop' of service for residents ranging from health advice for families, pre-school activities for children 0-5 years, health visiting services, housing and welfare advice. The Asian Women's Self Help Project, the first in the District, empowers vulnerable Black Asian Minority Ethnic women to access vocational courses in the Sopwell Ward highlighted as one of the areas of deprivation in the District. The project enables women to enter higher education and gain employment. This group paved the way to the Hertfordshire Family Learning and the Sopwell and Verulam Partnership to deliver adult literacy and numeracy for Black Asian and Minority women and encouraging Eastern European residents to participate.

The Council was a runner up winner of the East of England Regional Assembly 2008 Equality Award for the replicated Sensory Garden project. This involved children and residents from the diverse communities with a physical, mental or sensory disability to contribute by designing their own garden in a park on their doorstep. This project was also a finalist in the Municipal Journal Awards 2009.

The Council also came first in the East of England Regional Assembly Equality Award 2009 with the Tiffin Club. This project fills a gap for Black Asian Minority Ethnic elder care services. The Council's housing department set up the project in partnership with a local voluntary organisation who manage the Tiffin Club. The services include literacy, physical activity such as gentle aerobics, preventative health advice related to diseases common to Black Asian Minority Ethnic communities and support for the older users of health services. With the package of services comes housing services in the form of advice on homelessness, tenancy, disabled adaptations and welfare benefits advice.

5.10 Health and Housing - PCT Homelessness Strategy June 2009

In 2009 Herts PCT commissioned the development of a Homelessness Strategy.

The five key outcomes identified in this strategy to improve the health of homeless people are set out below.

- i) Improving access to primary health care for homeless people
- ii) Improving health care for homeless families in temporary accommodation
- iii) Improving hospital discharge policies for homeless people
- iv) Improving substance misuse treatment for homeless people
- v) Improving mental health treatment for homeless people.

In line with our Homelessness Strategy 2008 - Hertfordshire PCTs recognise that homeless people have health needs and addressing this need is a key priority in the Health Inequalities action plan. We will continue to work with the PCT to address health inequalities especially amongst overcrowded households and households in temporary accommodation.

Chapter 6: Strategic Priorities

Introduction

The development of our Housing Strategy for 2009-12 has provided us with a unique opportunity to consider how best to maximize our resources and plan for the future?

Our strategy identifies 4 key 'priorities' on which this is based. These priorities were developed taking account of national, regional and local policy, key housing issues as well as emerging best practice. The key overarching priorities of our Housing Strategy are:

- 1. Making best use of existing stock - which includes reducing emissions and adapting to climate change.**
- 2. Increasing the supply of Affordable and Sustainable Homes.**
- 3. Preventing Homelessness and delivering holistic client services.**
- 4. Creating thriving and cohesive communities including resident involvement.**

The table at appendix 3 illustrates how these four priorities link to the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan.

We have identified some key factors which will help us to focus on our strategic objectives and priorities over the term of our strategy:

1. The need to Improve the overall performance of the Council.
2. The need to consider our relationship with Planning and the local economy.
3. Regional , sub-regional and local level strategic housing engagement.
4. Our relationship with the sustainable communities strategy and Local Area Agreement.
5. The need to reduce the District's housing stock carbon dioxide emissions
6. The need to increase the amount of renewable technology installations in the District.
7. The need to enable the District residents to save money from reduced fuel bills
8. To raise the condition of the District's housing stock to improve resident's health and reduce excess winter deaths in the District.
9. The need for us to improve and encourage resident involvement.

We recognise that we have a number of challenges over the next few years. Some of our key concerns relate to: a lack of affordable housing, worklessness and employability, financial inclusion, youth homelessness, overcrowding and under-occupancy, climate change and reducing Green House Gases (GHG) emissions in our housing stock. We also recognise the need to respond to regional and national trends in relation to policy and practice improvement.

6.1 Making best use of existing stock

6.1.1 Public Sector Stock

The Council still retains its housing stock of 5,222 properties. A stock condition survey was carried out during December 2008 to February 2009 in relation to the Council's stock. The survey comprised a sample of 600 properties from the housing stock, inspections of a further 143 individual residential properties and a sample of 350 of the Council's street garages. This has identified some properties which have fallen into non-decency and works are programmed to address this by 2010. It is estimated from the survey findings that £38.6m is needed over the next five years to attend to necessary repairs. Over the next 30 years the figure is estimated to be £204.6m. Further details are covered in the HRA Business Plan.

Housing and neighbourhood design have a direct impact upon the built environment. The provision of green spaces, designing out crime through use of street lighting and urban planning coupled with providing family sized homes all help to create safer communities as well as community cohesion.

The Council is working with the Energy Saving Trust to develop an action plan to reduce carbon emissions from domestic properties. In line with Government guidance the Council has introduced energy efficiency certificates for tenants purchasing under the Right To Buy and for new Council tenants.

One of our key priorities is to make the best use of existing stock. We are aware that a number of tenants occupy accommodation which exceeds their needs. This is termed as "under occupancy". By the same token we continue to receive requests for transfers from households who are living in overcrowded conditions.

By addressing under-occupancy and encouraging tenants to move to smaller properties, we will increase the number of larger houses becoming available for letting and help to address the needs of those clients who are living in overcrowded homes.

The Review of Housing Management Services carried out in 2008, highlighted the need to increase family sized accommodation, encourage tenants to downsize, identify appropriate tenants incentives and the review of disabled adaptations.

The Council also seeks to increase the provision of affordable housing by redeveloping some unpopular garage sites and a Garage Strategy was approved by the Council in 2006.

Addressing overcrowding and under occupancy

Households living in overcrowded conditions face a number of daily challenges such as: Lack of sleeping space, affects on health, affects on family relationships, lack of privacy, effects on educational attainment and risk of homelessness for example.

Households who under-occupy also face an number of challenges including financial

impact, physical difficulties in maintaining the property and potential vulnerability.

There is scope to explore this important area further with a view to finding practical solutions for overcrowded and under-occupied social housing. Currently we offer a financial support package of £1,250 for Council tenants who are under-occupying to encourage moves to smaller dwellings], help with removal costs, day to day support and handholding, providing clear advice and information, addressing holistic needs such as referring to other support services etc, working in conjunction/collaborations with other services i.e. day centres , lunch clubs , aids and adaptation team, housing management teams etc.

HRA overcrowding snapshot...

Our current Allocations model allows us to capture core data relating to households lacking 1 or more bedrooms. We currently have 180 households on our housing register who have been awarded priority points for lacking space.

Under occupancy initiatives make a valuable contribution in areas where social landlords do not receive or have enough family sized accommodation for relet.

We also have 12 households on the housing register who under occupy their present home and require a transfer to a smaller dwelling. This figure does not however provide us with a true reflection of the extent to which households may be under-occupying in the District as we only have information about clients who have registered to move.

*Nationwide pilots show that there are **3** main reasons why under occupiers will pursue a move:

1. Tenant or other occupant is unable to cope with the size and layout of their current home.
2. Nuisance or annoyance from adjoining occupants / general environment i.e. estate based properties etc.
3. Property is not suitable for adaptation; aids and adaptation are too costly or impractical.

There are **3** Main reasons why under occupiers do not move

- a) unsure of options and practicalities
- b) cost implications
- c) unable to cope with disruption and stress.

Review of sheltered housing

In conjunction with our RSL partners, the aim of the sheltered housing review is to plan for an increasing number of elderly residents and to improve the quality and choice of accommodation to meet the needs of both current and future residents. The number of elderly people aged 85 and over is expected to increase by 69% by 2025. *Quality of Life Housing for Older People* which was adopted by the Council in July 2005 is a new strategy that will modernise provision for the 21st Century.

Following the Council's decision to develop this new provision, we have consulted residents and listened to their concerns on the size of accommodation and facilities, provided, the timetable for redevelopment, accessibility for those who are less mobile, and assurances about returning to the new housing provision. A programme has now been agreed to redevelop and remodel 10 schemes to provide modern accommodation for older people including extra care housing up to 2015.

Below is an example of redevelopment to provide alternative housing:

St Paul's Place...

"Transforming the built environment and improving housing for older people"

The past year has seen a Council owned block of 8 bedsits located in St Paul's Place, Hatfield Road, demolished and replaced with a brand new building containing 8x1-bedroom flats designated for elderly persons. This project was in partnership with Aldwyck Housing Association and the new building features the very latest in modern design and technology, including solar panels that help to reduce energy costs in heating hot water



St Paul's Place – **before**



St Paul's Place – **After**

Proposals

We are keen to explore some of the following options/areas:

1. Establish an overcrowding/under-occupancy project board to look at ways in which we can best create rehousing avenues for households affected by overcrowding which will include representatives from Repairs, Allocations, Prevention and Options, Housing Management and Housing Support Team.
2. Develop a more comprehensive data base which capture core information pertaining to overcrowded and under-occupied households.
3. Identify new ways in which we can market and promote an under-occupancy scheme to local tenants.
4. Develop specific casework packages for under-occupied and overcrowded households which provides one to one ongoing support and assistance including referrals and signposting to statutory and non statutory support services.
5. Focus on the *prevention of overcrowding* by adding information to tenancy

signup packs.

6. Develop a client survey relating to overcrowding and its impact on health and social wellbeing coupled with the built environment ie whether overcrowded households report a greater % of disrepair elements.

*Source material – Under occupancy Housing Research Summary Number141/2001CLG

Tackling overcrowding in England: Lessons learned from the London Pilot Scheme and sub regional coordination
June 2008

6.1.2 Private Sector Housing

The Council deal with a number of areas of private sector housing including fitness, houses in multiple occupation, empty properties, caravan sites and grant aid. Due to financial restrictions the Council has not carried out a private sector house condition survey since 2001 so there is no up to date accurate information on the state of the private sector. It is anticipated that there will have been an improvement over the last few years but this will not be confirmed until the next survey. This is also slightly complicated by the fact that the fitness standard has been replaced by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, so any data from the previous survey will be even further out of date.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

The Council's Environment and Regulatory Services Department recognises that houses in multiple occupation (HMO) can present some of the worst housing conditions in the private sector. Common types of HMO are bedsits, shared houses and hostels. There are approximately 340 in the district.

The Council has always acknowledged the importance of ensuring HMO's meet the required standard, particularly relating to management, fire safety and amenities as required by the Housing Act 2004. As a consequence, a risk based inspection programme was developed in the mid nineties essentially to ensure high risk properties receive more frequent checks. In 2004 more stringent legislation was introduced requiring all HMO's of three storeys or more with five or more occupants to be licensed. The Council has fifteen such properties all of which meet those requirements and as a consequence now have a licence. The Council have a programme of 50 inspections per year which also includes two storey properties. This target is always adhered to or exceeded.

Overcrowding in the Private Rented Sector

Overcrowding in the Private Rented sector is tackled by our Private sector team who work within the parameters of key pieces of legislation/guidance such as: Part 10 Housing Act 1985, Housing Act 2004, Housing Health and Safety Rating system 2006 [HHSRS] and the Statutory instrument 1904/2007. As a Department the response would be predominantly reactive rather than proactive, relying on the tenant or the occupier to make representations to the council. Subsequently the department could, if it was deemed necessary, serve a formal notice on the owner of the property to remedy the overcrowding problem. If the owner failed to comply, legal proceedings could be instigated for which a substantial fine could be imposed upon conviction.

Empty Properties

The Council's Environment and Regulatory Services Department is essentially charged with the task of identifying properties which have remained empty for 6 months or more, and ensuring they are brought back into use. Legislation is available in the Housing Act 2004 for local authorities to make Empty Property Management Orders so that the authority can bring the property back into residential use.

In the vast majority of cases, formal action is not required since most properties are subject to probate issues, refurbishment works or similar, and are therefore resolved with little or no Council intervention. Accordingly few properties are left empty for six months remain empty for more than twelve months. It is nevertheless important to ensure proactive measures, such as asking members of the public to contact the Council to particularly in identify empty homes continues, since homes which are left empty for years, can undermine communities and potentially act as a magnet for crime and anti social behaviour. They are also a waste of valuable housing resource. There were a number of long term empty properties which had been empty for many years and the majority of these have been brought back to residential use following Council intervention. In the three years from 2005 - 2008, 89 properties were returned to residential use.

Disabled Facilities Grants

The Council recognise that the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG`s) is an important area of private sector housing helping the disabled stay in their own homes. The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 is the main legislation applying to DFG`s although there are amendments in subsequent legislation The demand for DFG`s continues to increase as more people are expected to maintain their independence and particularly now that there is no means testing for adaptations for children.

A review of the policy in 2008 led to the Council changing its discretionary DFG grants policy from no restriction on discretionary grant aid to one of an approved loan for works above £30,000. It is anticipated that over time this will ensure that the Council will be able to recoup some of the money spend on funding DFG grants

Decent Homes Grants (Home Repair Assistance Grants)

The Council recognise that some residents are unable to carry out repairs to their home either for essential, small scale works or for larger scale works. Grant aid is available to a maximum of £5,000 for those residents over 60 years of age and in receipt of a number of specified benefits. Repairs that qualify include those necessary to carry out work to ensure the property meets the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS); to carry out essential repairs or remedy conditions that interfere materially with the personal comfort of the occupier or to prevent risk to health or the safety of residents. There were 28 applications in the year 2008-2009 with the majority being for less than £1,000. Leaflets to promote the service are available on the internet or at the council offices.

Caravan/Mobile Home Sites

The Council are responsible for regulating privately owned residential caravan (mobile home) sites within the district under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. By licensing and inspecting caravan sites, the Council aim to ensure the sites are safe and properly managed. We also provide owners and residents with useful advice and information on various caravan site issues.

Caravan (Mobile Home) sites excluding public sites should be licensed by the local authority. The site license identifies the site owners and their various site management and maintenance responsibilities. These include providing adequate amenities, site lighting, access, fire precautions, gas, water and electric mains supplies and drainage; and controlling the number and the positioning of caravans on the site. There are approximately 20 sites which will be risk assessed and inspected accordingly.

Anchor Home Improvement Agency

For many years, the Council provided direct funding to the Agency but this was withdrawn in 2007. The Agency has continued to operate, however, using money provided by Hertfordshire County Council Supporting People Unit and by charging a fee on each grant. In addition to the normal agency service of providing support for the elderly and disabled, the agency provides a handyman scheme to carry out minor repairs or help for a limited amount of time up to two hours and a "Safe" scheme to help those who have been burgled to carry out safety measures to improve the security of their home. This could include the fitting of security measures such as locks, door chains and spy holes. The service is free of charge to anyone who is an actual or potential victim of home burglary, aged 60 years or over, or a single parent. Leaflets to promote the service are available.

Objectives

The Private Sector Housing Policy has the following objectives:

- To secure the elimination of unfit or overcrowded housing.
- To secure the repair of private sector housing and the abatement of housing conditions which are prejudicial to health and safety.
- To secure proper standards of management, adequate means of escape from fire, fire precautions and amenities in houses in multiple occupation.
- To secure finance for the provision of grant aid to improve/repair housing.
- To secure the maintenance of proper standards at residential caravan sites.
- To enable improvements to private sector housing and in particular to ensure that disabled or frail, elderly people occupy homes which are suitable to their particular needs.
- To promote energy efficiency in accordance with the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 with particular emphasis on fuel poverty.

Key indicators – private sector 2007 - 2008

% privately owned dwellings	87.25%
% of homes in multiple occupation	0.64%
% Cat1 Health and Safety rating	1.41%
% homes vacant for more than 6 months	0.002%
Total HMO licences	15
% not meeting decent home standards	3.87%
Total improvement grants	
Disabled Facilities Grants	71
Home Repair Assistance Grants	45
Renovation Grants	1

Proposals

We are keen to explore some of the following options/areas:

1. An up to date private sector housing condition survey.
2. Explore further ways of returning empty properties into use including increasing the target.
3. Annual review of Disabled Facilities Grants.
4. We will be working in partnership with Pathmeads Housing Association to assess the feasibility of developing private sector leasing in the District.
5. We would like to explore ways of improving energy efficiency within the private sector.

6.1.3 Addressing the Climate Change Challenge

In 2005 a quarter of all UK CO₂ emissions were from heating, lighting and appliances in the home. The government has set out plans to reduce carbon emissions and increase energy efficiency and as previously stated the Council is working with the Energy Saving Trust to develop an action plan to reduce carbon emissions from domestic properties. Examples of the Council's work to date include:-

Improving the Energy and Water Efficiency of the Councils Housing stock

This includes the installation of external wall, loft and cavity wall insulation, PVC-u double glazing and replacement of condensing boilers to centrally heated homes. In 2006 we were able to report that all our local authority housing stock met the Decent Homes Standard. We are now looking at installing solar water heating at several locations.

Sustainable housing demonstration project

Refurbishment of a late-1940's Council home into a demonstration energy-efficient

eco-home. Tenanted by a family from the council's housing register, it continues to be used as a pilot study to monitor and measure the efficacy of the technologies installed in order to inform future refurbishment work to Council homes.

Installation of renewable technology to the Councils Housing stock

Project to refurbish 18 houses on Marford Road. Each household received double glazing, evacuator tube solar thermal, condensing boiler replacement, external wall and loft insulation. Thermal imaging monitoring showed energy efficiency rating increased from F to C. Monitoring of the fuel consumption has shown it to be beneficial to roll out across the stock but this will be subject to the availability of capital resources.

Energy efficiency improvements to private households

Over the 2008/09 period, 515 private householders in the District qualified for energy-efficiency improvements such as boiler improvement, insulation or new heating systems via the Warmfront grant.

As part of our Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) obligations, the Council continues to report annually to the Government on its progress towards improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty within the local housing stock. The target to improve energy efficiency by 30% of the existing housing stock has now been met, in advance of the 2011 deadline.

The LCB launched its fuel poverty scheme in August 2009 which will see the fifteen local authorities working together to bring their residents Government funding in order to provide either free or discounted energy efficiency measures through the Hertfordshire/Essex Energy Partnership (HEEP). This was the result of a joint bid for funding from Regional Housing Pot to tackle fuel poverty and in March 2009 the LCB Sub-region was awarded £6.7m by Central Government to take forward a 2 year project. The objective is to create 13,500 additional local authority backed interventions in private householders over the next 2 years in LCB. Measures will include insulation, heating systems, controls, low and zero carbon technologies and income maximisation. A fuel poverty management team has been set up to deliver the project on behalf of LCB and report to the wider partnership and Government agencies.

Building Futures website

Building Futures is an evolving web-based guide, designed to provide practical, user-friendly and up to date guidance for planning officers, developers and the general public on how to make development in Hertfordshire more sustainable and of a higher quality in design terms. More information can be found on the Building Futures website: <http://www.hertslink.org.building futures>.

Education and Advice

Householders require information, advice and support on a range of home efficiency issues. The Council will continue to deliver an extensive education and advice service accessible to all households in the District promoting energy and water efficiency, renewable technologies and waste reduction. This includes but is not

limited to:

- Regular road-shows are held across the district each year to promote energy efficiency and provide advice on financial assistance and grants.
- Leaflets on Warmfront and other grant schemes are distributed to doctor's surgeries, pharmacies, libraries and community centres.
- Provision of energy efficiency information to social housing tenants
- Electricity Monitors to enable householders to monitor their household energy usage and identify any wastage are available for free loan from the larger libraries in the district.
- Insulating Radiator Panel are provided free of charge on request to residents who live in hard to treat properties, such as pre-1930 house with solid walls.
- Free Energy Saving Light Bulbs and other energy and water efficiency devices are provided to residents at public events.
- Creating Partnerships with advisory organisations such as EAGA, National Energy Action (NEA), United Sustainable Energy Agency (USEA) and the Energy Saving Trust (EST) who are able to provide a range of services to residents on the Councils behalf including advice, Home Energy Checks, publicity mail-shots and signposting to available grants and funding.

Proposals

We are keen to explore some of the following options/areas:

1. To reduce the carbon footprint and improve the energy and water efficiency of all Council homes through a continued programme of refurbishment and upgrade to achieve a minimum rating of SAP 60.
2. Increase the quantity of localized energy supply generated from renewable sources. To achieve a minimum of 10% energy supply to the housing stock.
3. Continued programme of education, awareness raising and promotion of grants to reduce the carbon footprint and improve the energy and water efficiency of all private homes.
4. Eliminate fuel poverty in vulnerable households as far as reasonably practicable.
5. Working with the Housing associations to help them improve the efficiency of their housing stock
6. Ensure that the existing housing stock is resilient to future climate change.

6.2 Increasing the supply of Affordable and Sustainable Homes

Both the local and national picture continues to highlight the need for more affordable homes as more and more households are unable to gain a foothold onto the property and rental markets. The provision of suitable housing is also critical for the local economy and the need for affordable housing will be reflected in the LDF.

Property and rental market snapshot 2009:

The tables below provide local information on average property prices by property type and size.

Property Type	Average Property Price
Terraced	£264,017
Semi - Detached	£331,335
Detached	£489,029
Flat / Maisonette	£177,857
Overall Property Price	£310,090

Property Type By Size	Average Property Price
1 bed flat	£148,300
2 bed flat	£198,200
2 bed house	£248,200
3 bed house	£336,200
4 bed house	£516,900

(source Hometrack : May 2009)

The table below shows the weekly cost of renting

Property Size	Weekly Cost Private Rented	Weekly Cost Registered Social Landlord	Weekly Cost Council's HRA rent
One bed	£160	£68.60	£63.65
Two bed	£206	£82.70	£79.24
Three bed	£276	£92.40	£92.66

(source Hometrack : May 2009)

A lack of affordable homes has a direct impact upon community structures and levels of cohesion. Overcrowded conditions adversely impact both health and educational attainment levels and can dramatically impinge upon quality of life and wellbeing. High market rents coupled with a limited access to the property market directly impact neighbourhoods and communities, this is aptly illustrated by the plight of key workers such as nurses and teachers who are often unable to live in the area in which they work or propose to work. To address this a number of keyworker housing schemes have been developed in the District. The Council will continue to work with larger employers to ensure the right mix of housing is provided in the District.

We know that local residents are concerned about the lack of affordable housing in the District. We therefore view this as a priority area and will continue to take the necessary steps to improve the supply of affordable housing for households on a low income.

6.2.1 National Affordable Housing Programme

Homes and Communities- Grants into District

2006-2008

Total grant	£4.1m
City Station	107 units
Keswick Close	5 units
Sleapshyde Lane	3 units
Aubrey Avenue	10 units
Total	125 units

2008-2011

Total Housing Corporation grant including Kwiksave brought forward and funded via slippages from previous programme and funding for garage site Castle project	£6.4m
Castle project	9 units
Oakland's	86 units
St Paul's Place	8 units
Butterfield Road	24 units
Kwiksave	78 units
Total	205 units

Affordable Housing – completions

2008-2009 (Actual)

Userve [Redbourn]	7 units
Kwiksave [Park Street]	78 units
West Hall [London Colney]	13 units
Street purchase	9 units
Total	107 units

2009-2010 - Projections

Castle project [St Albans]	9 units
City station [St Albans]	107 units
Wheathampstead Garages	12 units
St Paul's Place [St Albans]	8 units (actual)
Total	136 units

2010 – 2011 - Projections

Oakland's Hatfield Road	84 units
Total	84 units

Phased/provisional development 2011/12 – 2014/15 - Projections

King Harry Lane	44 units [2011/12 – 2012/13]
Harperbury	134 units [2011/12 – 2014/15]
Total	178 units

6.2.2. Rent Deposit Scheme [RDS]

The Rent Deposit Scheme is designed to help landlords and tenants in the private rented sector. Under the scheme the Council encourages landlords to offer for rent properties from one bed flats to four bed properties. Properties are subject to inspections to ensure health and safety compliance and quality. All potential RDS tenants undergo a new comprehensive screening process to ensure suitability and ongoing support is provided to those tenants who may require tenancy support.

We have had a number of successes with our RDS and will continue to forge new working relationships with local private landlords in order to increase access to the private rented sector in St Albans.

RDS snapshot 2008-2009 [to March 2009]

Total RDS placements – 30

1 bed units	4
2 bed units	17
3 bed units	6
4 bed units	3

Tenancy length:

6 Months	9
12 Months	21

The RDS will continue throughout 2009 where we hope to house 30 households.

In addition to the above St Albans District Council and Dacorum have been identified as a pilot for single people move on accommodation from hostels into the private rented sector. This involves joint working with Dacorum Rent Aid and funding is being provided by Hertfordshire Supporting People for a scheme manager.

6.2.3. Strategic Housing Market Assessment

The Government requires that all Housing Sub-markets undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment [SHMA] in order to inform planning documents by better understanding how the local housing markets operate.

The SHMA report provides a framework for discussion on a range of policy choices relating to housing mix, type and affordability.

Proposals

We are keen to explore/progress some of the following options:

1. Continue to support the development of affordable housing and participate in the ongoing Homes and Communities Agency Single Conversation.
2. Provide grant funding and free or subsidised land.
3. Identifying further garage sites as part of the ongoing review into garage sites for development potential for affordable housing.
4. Cash incentive scheme-Annual programme of incentive payments for council tenants to purchase properties on open market.
5. Continue to work with partner RSL's to identify opportunities within the district to provide affordable housing.
6. Explore private sector leasing with Pathmeads Housing Association .
7. Utilise the final SHMA report to inform policy guidance on the mix of housing types and sizes within the LDF.
8. Develop housing to meet identified shortages.
9. Develop a RDS newsletter for tenants and landlords.
10. Develop a more detailed set of performance and equality indicators including landlord and tenant satisfaction.

6.3 Preventing homelessness and delivering holistic client services

The Government has set all local authorities a target to reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. Our target for 2010 is 62 households in temporary accommodation. In addition government policy on the management of

homelessness has changed from a reactive service to a preventative service. Alongside this, local authorities are expected to focus on a housing options approach which provides a comprehensive service to those people faced with homelessness, potentially homeless and those people in housing need. There is a strong emphasis on prevention and identifying which option is the most suitable. This could include enabling an applicant to remain in their property, finding private rented, advice regarding shared ownership schemes, home swapper, referrals to supported housing providers, and other hostels in the District. In some cases there will be a need to take a homeless application and allocate through the Council's allocation scheme but this needs to be assessed within the housing options approach.

We are committed to continuous improvement. Our Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2008-13 contains an overarching action plan which details specific commitments along with measurable deliverables. We have identified both human and other key resources such as revenue and capital which will help us achieve our targets. A restructure of the service will help us to improve service delivery and provision as well as meet our Homelessness Strategy action plan commitments in relation to Housing Options.

The demographics of St Albans continues to shift, we have seen new communities emerge and equally appreciate the need to ensure that all service users receive a comprehensive package of support and assistance. Our current business model, whilst efficient, does not fully allow us scope to provide outreach and holistic support to clients. We also recognise that we need to have a greater emphasis on project development and research and intelligence strands in order to explore new funding avenues and customer focused initiatives such as the Worklessness agenda and increased partnership working with the Voluntary and Community sectors in St Albans. The introduction of *Choice Based Lettings [CBL] in May 2009 has also provided us with a unique opportunity to reconfigure and improve our current business model

6.3 1 Preventing Homelessness

Prevention in action...

A client with a disabled child with Spina Bifida resided in a specially adapted property [previous adaptation grant of £50k provided by St Albans City and District Council]. The client's relationship with her husband broke down and he left the matrimonial home leaving the client with a hefty mortgage and the threat of repossession. One of our team managed to successfully negotiate with her mortgage company by persuading them to change the mortgage to an interest only mortgage thereby reducing the client's monthly payment in line with her budget.

This excellent example of homelessness prevention ensured that the client avoided homelessness and was able to continue to reside in her specially adapted home.

Our strong partnering relationship with Herts Young Homeless, CAB , Emmaus , Local RSL's and Shelter has allowed us to actively seek to prevent instances of

homelessness thereby ensuring that clients are not rendered homeless or roofless. We have had some measure of success in this area, however recognise that there is further scope to expand our prevention activities which are seen as the cornerstone of our front line housing options services.

Prevention snapshot...

2005 -2006	2006 -2007	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009
Homeless Prevention 47	Homeless Prevention 113	Homeless Prevention 149	Homeless Prevention 116

6.3.2 Meeting the holistic needs of clients in Temporary Accommodation

The CLG report the following *National Trends in relation to Temporary Accommodation : 74,690 households were in temporary accommodation on 30 June 2008, 4 per cent lower than at the end of the previous quarter, and 12 per cent lower than the same date last year. Temporary accommodation has now fallen for eleven consecutive quarters, and is 26 per cent lower than the peak during 2004. 87 per cent of households were in self-contained accommodation. 5 per cent were in bed and breakfast hotels

*National Trends in TA: Courtesy of Communities and Local Government [CLG]

Our aims are:

- To reduce time spent in temporary accommodation.
- To ensure support remains available to each household in temporary accommodation.
- To improve the quality of temporary accommodation.
- To address any temporary accommodation supply and demand imbalances.
- To achieve the CLG 2010 target.

We are committed to ensuring that vulnerable client can firstly access temporary accommodation and secondly receive the necessary support packages. We currently ensure that all temporary accommodation is fully furnished. We also provide taxis where necessary. Our frontline service support clients to access to welfare benefits including housing benefit and crisis loans as applicable. We have also set aside capital investment of £300,000 over the next 2 years to convert some of our units from shared to self-contained. We have also been working closely with Pathmeads Housing Association with a view to securing a pool of leased properties. We are pleased to say that we have met the Governments bed and breakfast target and have not used this form of temporary accommodation for families for several years now.

At the end of March 2009 we had 48 households in temporary accommodation throughout the District and 3 families homeless at home. All temporary accommodation clients complete a support needs assessment which is based upon

a standard assessment framework which takes into account the following sustainable communities composite outcomes:

1. achieving economic wellbeing
2. being healthy
3. enjoy and achieve
4. staying safe
5. making a positive contribution.

We recognise the need to improve the range and scope of support offered to clients in Temporary Accommodation and are committed to ensuring that these clients are involved in the design of any holistic service provided to them.

The Council agreed to the closure of Ridgeview from September 2009. A new model of re-provision using self contained accommodation and promoting pathways to housing was agreed by the Council's Cabinet in July 2009.

6.3.3 Worklessness and employability

Partnership working with the County Council secured funding to provide better support services for 20 homeless people at Martins Trust. In March 2008, the Council and Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association gained £525,000 from the Places for Change Programme to improve services and education and training to rough sleepers.

Places for Change

One of our key partners - Hightown Praetorian Churches Housing Association[HPCHA] were awarded £500,000 funding through the Places for Change programme towards a re-development project costing approximately £900,000. The remainder of the money will be raised through fundraising activities and applications to charitable trusts by the Open Door Trust etc. Open Door night shelter currently has dormitory style accommodation which will be changed to 12 individual rooms with on suite facilities. In addition the night shelter will offer training and education facilities to clients including basic literacy, IT, budgeting, staying healthy etc. The refurbishment of Open Door Night Shelter started in July 2009.

In addition to this project HPCHA have introduced the Broadway 'its your move - pre tenancy training' in both Kent House and Martin House hostels in St Albans. There are about 12 modules for tenants to complete and they receive a certificate at the end of each module if it is successfully completed. The modules are delivered in group settings which are facilitated by front line staff and began in April 2009. The aim of providing this to tenants is to ensure they have the skills necessary to maintain independent tenancies in the hope to break the cycle of homelessness.

Although there is high employment levels within the District and high levels of qualification, 17% of our population still have no qualifications. We recognise that a significant % of homeless service users are unemployed and as such there is a need for us to extend our current service delivery model to take into account assisting these clients to access employment and skills pathways. The Government has

placed a greater degree of emphasis on this key area and as such we recognise the need to adopt a fresh approach to our activities in relation to this client group.

Proposals

We are keen to explore some of the following options/areas:

A. Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 11

1. Develop early intervention protocols with RSL and Supported Housing partners operating within the St Albans locality.
2. In conjunction with Supporting People Ensure that floating support and move on packages are accessible and available to clients across all sectors.
3. Implementation of Sanctuary Scheme for Domestic Violence.
4. Ensure formalised links are in place with Herts Young Homeless Group/Aldwyck Housing Association regarding mediation and crash pad services for young people.
5. LAA1 target met for young people who sustain their own tenancy for over six months.
6. LAA1 target met to reduce the number of young people aged 16-25 who leave supporting people funded accommodation schemes in an unplanned way.
7. Increase levels of home visits undertaken by Housing Options staff with a view to early intervention, signposting and promotion of housing options.
8. Identify total number of households classified as overcrowded with a view to targeting client group in relation to options available ie Private Rented Sector , splitting households where appropriate to the needs and wishes of household.

B Temporary Accommodation.

9. Test routes out of inactivity and Worklessness (we have purchased the CIH homelessness and Worklessness toolkit).
10. Provide innovative and individual options to address inactivity or Worklessness.
11. Empower service users to direct and shape the support they receive.
12. Develop innovative approaches based on the local labour market in St Albans.
13. Build links and referral routes across thematic services - such as those targeted BME groups, ensuring that people get the support that best meets their particular needs.
14. Develop holistic customer care standards for service users.
15. Encourage, through our Homelessness Forum, the homeless and social exclusion sectors in St Albans to create work experience or full employment to clients in temporary accommodation and in so doing help service users to contribute to these sectors.

C Worklessness

16. Improved homeless people's awareness of in-work benefits entitlement.
17. Increase access to in-work benefits calculations, with linked preventative

- financial literacy support.
18. Improve promotion of employment support services to Homeless clients
 19. Improve links to specialist employment support for homeless refugees/people from New Communities in hostel accommodation, including recognition of overseas experience and qualifications.
 20. Develop joint training and homeless case conferencing with Job Centre Plus officers.
 21. Utilise the Chartered Institute of Housing toolkit on Worklessness and homelessness.

6.4 Creating thriving and cohesive communities including resident involvement [Sustainable Communities]

The Sustainable Community Strategy vision is stated on page 5.

The strategy focuses on priorities for the district rather than aiming to cover every issue. It seeks to build on and co-ordinate the good work that is already going on in the district and recognises that many of the individual organisations involved already have their own plans to deliver quality services. It also aims to identify and fill any gaps addressing the needs of the district as whole or specific communities within it.

6.4.1 Promoting client choice through Choice Based Lettings

"Individuals are individualistic: a house that suits one person may well not suit another, even if the two people appear to others to be similar. That is why choice based lettings is so important. Far from being an "optional extra", it is an essential part of ensuring that people are properly housed. Choice based lettings are about dignity as well as opportunity".

By kind courtesy of: Dr Tim Leunig Department of Economic History London School of Economics

Choice based lettings or CBL replaces the traditional way of allocating housing .The traditional route involved Lettings/Allocations Officers matching applicants to available properties. CBL allows the applicant to bid and apply for properties being advertised as part of the CBL cycle provided they are within the correct banding or priority group and the property meets the correct size and type for the household. Bandings or priority groups are based upon an assessment of needs which takes into account the applicants circumstances i.e. homeless, living with friends/relatives, affected by medical problems etc.

In January 2005 Communities and Local Government [CLG] produced a five year housing plan: *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* The plan sets out the Government's strategy for taking forward its CBL policy. The Government has set out its aim to have CBL in place nationwide by 2010. The wider aim is to ensure that CBL covers, not only local authority and RSL properties, but also low cost home ownership and properties to rent from private landlords. CBL has proved popular amongst Local Authorities as it affords applicants a greater degree of choice and flexibility. CBL is seen as a positive initiative which helps to create diverse and sustainable communities. The longer term Government objective is to ensure the development of regional and sub regional CBL scheme to help to break down Local Authority boundaries.

We introduced Choice Based Lettings in May 2009 through Herts Choice Homes - a consortium of 5 local authorities (Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford and Welwyn Hatfield) and housing associations working in the consortium's area.

A review of the procedures and policies together with analysis of client participation in the scheme will take place at the end of 2009.

You can read more about our Choice Based Lettings scheme on our website: www.stalbans.gov.uk

6.4.2 Safer and Stronger Communities

At the heart of Sustainable communities are the following key strands /outcomes:

1. achieving economic wellbeing
2. being healthy
3. enjoy and achieve
4. staying safe
5. making a positive contribution.

Good quality affordable housing is at the heart of sustainable communities. Creating an environment where people choose to live and work remains a key corporate priority for St Albans. Local amenities, green spaces, access to primary and secondary health care, outdoor play areas, good transport links and a thriving local economy each play a part in creating community cohesion. We recognise that St Albans, whilst largely affluent, has pockets of deprivation and Worklessness/unemployment. Like many local authority areas we are affected by anti social behaviour and crime, both of which destabilise some communities and in many instances communities become disengaged from local politics and grassroots issues. The Government wants local authorities to work with their partners to develop communities where people want to live and this sentiment is echoed within our Corporate Vision.

Tackling social inclusion and community safety remain key priorities for the LSP and is addressed within the Community Strategy. The Council is part of the St Albans and District Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, which was set up to achieve the national targets for crime reduction set by the Government. The partnership includes Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Constabulary, St Albans City and District Council and Hertfordshire Police Authority. The partnership updates and delivers a Community Safety Strategy for the district.

The Community Safety Plan aims to build a safer St Albans through addressing these four key aims:

- preventing and reducing crime
- tackling anti-social behaviour and alcohol-related disorder
- protecting vulnerable people

- promoting the work of the partnership and increasing feelings of community safety.

The Council signed up to the Government's Respect Standard for Housing Management in March 2007. This emphasizes the importance of tackling problems early, supporting witnesses and providing intervention to try and tackle the causes of the anti social behaviour, for example, mediation and parenting support. The Council works to improve outcomes for young people at risk of anti social behaviour. A football coaching scheme was launched in May 2007 offered to young people aged 8 to 18 in partnership with local housing associations and Watford Football Club who provide professional coaches.

It is important that the Community Safety Plan reflects the District's needs and contributes to local and county strategies to have the maximum effect. For this reason it not only contributes to but also reflects the priorities of the Local Strategic Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy, the wider Hertfordshire Community Strategy and the Hertfordshire Police Authority Policing Plan.

The Partnership will be undertaking activity to help a wide range of vulnerable people. Victims of domestic violence will be helped to find sources of help and advice and we will investigate the possibility of introducing a Sanctuary scheme in the District to enable victims to stay in their own homes. In addition, perpetrators will also be told how they can seek help for stopping their abusive behaviour

6.4.3 Equalities and Access

Our commitment to equality and diversity underpins all our actions and ensures that we provide equal access to our services on the basis of need. We aim to provide good quality services that benefit all our residents in a manner that is sensitive to the individual, whatever their background.

As part of our commitment to Equalities we will ensure that the functions and policies of service delivery areas [and service arms – where applicable] are subject to Equality Impact Assessments [EIA's] We recognise that we need to encourage service access and take-up to ensure that client groups benefit from the service provided by the Housing Options Service including direct access to the private rented sector, RSL, Supported Housing and HRA tenancies.

The Council has an Equalities Officer who has been promoting good practice throughout the Council. His work is complemented in the Housing Department by the Housing and Communities Advisory Officer who works very closely with the ethnic minority community.

Proposals

As a social housing provider we have a number of key responsibilities towards our tenants, many of whom are ageing or have other vulnerabilities. We recognise that the current economic climate both regionally and national will impact on the economic wellbeing of our tenants and residents. For those clients faced with homelessness and those residing in temporary accommodation we feel that it

important to try to help clients to access employment and training pathways which will enhance both their self confidence levels and employability.

We are keen to explore some of the following options/areas:

1. Scope development of stakeholder consultation group.
2. Ensure website provides practical up to date information to tenants and residents in relation to crime prevention and anti-social behaviour including performance indicators.
3. Support the reduction of the fear of crime particularly amongst older tenants in St Albans by ensuring that Local Housing Teams and marketing material provides practical tips for crime prevention.
4. Extending Choice Based Lettings to include low cost home ownership/ intermediate and private rentals.
5. To identify and support Equalities and Diversity Champions in key service areas within Strategy and Enabling .
6. To clarify expectations of housing management and Housing Needs partners [inc. in-house providers such as Shelter] and to establish arrangement for monitoring and reporting equalities performance.
7. Improved client profiling in relation to RDS clients and our prevention activities.
8. To improve the analysis of data including CBL activities.
9. To improve the way analysed data is used.
10. To research ways in which different groups wish to be involved in shaping the services we provide.
11. To ensure that support packages are in place for vulnerable households customers ie: visually impaired, customers accessing our services through voluntary organisations, customers who require translated information, Customers with literacy problems.
12. Through existing marketing and promotional material such as CBL newsletter, promote stakeholder involvement for BME and hard to reach residents to encourage user engagement and involvement.
13. To develop a BME Housing Strategy.
14. To use a greater variety of mechanisms to involve people ie
 - face to face Surveys
 - postal surveys
 - interviews
 - focus groups
 - use of text via mobile phone
 - use of websites
 - use of e-mail
 - litmus test groups.

6.5 Action Plan

In order to deliver the priorities set out in this chapter an Action Plan has been developed which sets out the actions under each of the priorities. This is attached at Appendix 3.

Chapter 7: Resources

7.1 Revenue Expenditure - General Fund

The day to day revenue costs of meeting the strategic role fall into the General Fund. This covers homelessness, affordable housing, private sector housing and leased properties. Resources to manage and maintain the Council's Housing Stock are incorporated within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Housing Investment Programme.

A summary of the relevant budgets are set out in the table below.

DESCRIPTION	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
	FORECAST	BUDGET	BUDGET	BUDGET
	£	£	£	£
Homelessness	226,420	177,590	181,780	186,250
Home Renovation Grants	126,910	129,000	135,400	138,870
Housing Aid Centre	53,500	54,840	56,210	57,620
Leased Properties	82,660	68,100	66,640	69,350
Affordable Housing	29,930	47,190	48,220	49,280
	519,420	476,720	488,250	501,370

7.2 Expenditure on Housing within HRA and Housing Investment Programme HIP)

Financial Year	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Total	23,400,000	23,802,000	24,551,000	25,508,000
Overall HIP Expenditure	10,074,000	11,387,000	7,774,000	7,367,000

Breakdown of Housing Investment Programme Expenditure

	2008/9 £	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £
Improvements to Council Housing Stock	7,150,000	7,778,000	5,966,000	5,806,000
Housing Association Schemes	1,903,000	2,283,000	750,000	500,000
Private Sector Housing - DFGs & Grants	1,021,000	1,326,000	1,058,000	1,061,000
Total	10,074,000	11,387	7,774,000	7,367,000

The level of resources available to support affordable housing in later years reflects the decline in Right To Buy capital receipts. The number of Right To Buy sales has fallen from 52 in 2004/05 to 7 in 2008/09.

The Department of Communities and Local Government has announced that St Albans City and District Council will receive a sum of **£2.63 million** over the two financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11 to help fund housing and other growth related projects in the district.

This is a substantial increase on the £348,000 received from Government for the same purpose in the current financial year. The new figure is made up of £2.5M of capital funding and £111K of revenue funding.

In addition to the above the Council will receive £46,050 in 2009/10 and 2010/2011 from DCLG as a Homelessness Grant to support preventative initiatives in the District. This is supported by the sum of £53,500 in 2009/10 allocated for preventing repossessions.

The resources also include those allocated to RSL's in the District under the National Affordable Housing Programme with £6.4m allocated to date for the period 2008-2011 and those under the Supporting People Programme which equates to £21m per year for Hertfordshire.

Chapter 8: Monitoring the Housing Strategy

Progress will be monitored in the following ways.

- Business Plan which is monitored by the Portfolio Holder in quarterly reviews with the Head of Housing.
- National and local performance indicators linked to housing which are monitored monthly and presented to the Council's Cabinet via a Corporate Performance Report.
- Actions linked to Homelessness Strategy will be monitored by Homelessness Forum.
- Herts Heads of Housing Group monitors the strategic issues that affect a number of local authorities.
- The LCB Housing Strategy Officers Group monitors progress on housing strategies and key issues.
- An Annual Monitoring Report will be published on the Council's website.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Housing strategy 2004-2007 Progress against target [highlights]

Appendix 2:

Local Authority performance review

Appendix 3:

Housing Strategy Action planning framework 2009-12

Appendix 4:

Links to other strategies and partnering agencies

Glossary

Housing Strategy Contact Details

Appendix 1

Housing Strategy 2004-7 Progress against targets

We have made a number of progressive and exciting steps since the production of our last Housing Strategy. We are very pleased to report the following key highlight:

- We successfully met the HRA Decent Homes standard in 2006
- We have successfully met the DCLG 2010 bed and breakfast target where families with children are not placed in this type of accommodation.
- We have created 281 affordable housing units
- Successful bid via a consortium for funding from DCLG to implement Choice Based Lettings
- We implemented new temporary accommodation support plans as per supporting people review held in March 09
- CCTV installed at High Oaks, Abbots Avenue West and Telford Court.
- Development of a supported housing scheme for 8 young single people 16-23 at High Oaks which was completed in 2007. We have successfully developed a support service for 16/17 year olds in partnership with a local housing association Work in partnership with Aldwyck Housing Association at Artisan Crescent and High Oaks, St Albans
- We successfully completed a Housing Options Appraisal
- Commenced work on an Older Persons Housing Strategy which will transform affordable housing for older people across the District.
- Supplementary Planning Guidance adopted 2004 advising 35% affordable housing on all qualifying sites would be requested
- We have Improved energy efficiency within the private and public sector housing stock
- A winner of the 2007 Green Apple Environment Award for refurbishing an existing property into an "Eco House"
- £15m on improvements/maintenance to the Council's housing stock.
- £2m of expenditure for disabled adaptations in the public sector and £3.5 on Disabled Facilities Grants in the private sector.

Appendix 2

Local Authority Performance Review

Table 1: Best Value indicators 2007-2008

BV Indicators	Result	Target
BV066a-% of housing rent collected	98.27	99%
BV066b-% of tenants owing more than 7 weeks rent	3	3.3
BV066c-% of tenants in arrears with possession notices served-	14.22	26
BV066d-% of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	0.17	0.15
BV183a-Length of stay in B&B accommodation of the unintentionally homeless and in priority need	0	0
BV183b- Length of stay in hostel accommodation of the unintentionally homeless and in priority need (weeks)-	4	13
BV184a-The proportion of council homes which were non-decent at 1 April 2005	0	(0-Decent home target met 2006)
BV184b-The percentage change in proportion of non-decent council homes between 1 April 2005 and 1 April 2006	0	(0-Decent home target met 2006)
BV202-the number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the district	0	0
BV203-% change in the average number of families, which include dependent children or pregnant woman, placed in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous years-	0.7	(-4.0)
BV212-Average time taken to re-let council housing (days)-	29.75 (Excluding retirement accommodation(24))	32
BV213- No. of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the Council's housing advice service and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation (per 1000 households)	0.5 (0.35
BV63 SAP rating	71	67

(Source: St Albans City and District council Performance Plan 2008/09 Performance 2007/0

Table 2: St Albans City and District Housing Revenue Account [HRA] dwellings

Total stock	5204
Total flats [Purpose built and Conversions]	2270
Total houses	2934

Table 3: Expenditure: Disabled adapted HRA properties [DFG's]:

2004/05	£584,000.00
2005/06	£798,191.25
2006/07	£633,783.52
2007/08	£623,227.08
2008/09	£792,000.00

Table 4: Right to buy completions

2003/04	91
2004/05	52
2005/06	28
2006/07	27
2007/08	19
2008 – 09	7
2009 - date	2

Table 5: Housing Development Completions in the District**Housing development completions**

2003/04	255
2004/05	527
2005/06	329
2006/07	377
2007/08	298
2008/09	398

Table 6: Total Housing New Build Projections

2008/09	443
2009/10	528
2010/11	795

(Source: St Albans Housing Monitoring Report April 2008)

Table 7: Total new build affordable homes 2004-2008

2003/04	7
2004/05	243
2005/06	28
2006/07	10
2007/08	36

Appendix 3

Housing Strategy 2009-12 Action planning framework

Links Between Housing Strategy Objectives, Corporate Aims and Sustainable Community Priorities

<u>Housing Strategy Priority</u>	<u>Corporate Aim</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Priority</u>
Making best use of existing stock	To safeguard the environment To ensure the District is a desirable place in which to visit and which to live, learn and work	Ensuring the District is a great place to be Keeping the District healthy
Creating thriving and cohesive communities including resident involvement	To build a community that is open, fair and inclusive	Supporting an active community that has pride in itself and cares for its future
Preventing homelessness and delivering holistic client services	To build a community that is open, fair and inclusive To work in partnership for the health and wellbeing of the community	Keeping the District healthy
Increasing the supply of affordable and sustainable homes	To ensure the District is a desirable place in which to visit and which to live, learn and work	Ensuring the District is a great place to be Keeping the District healthy

Housing Strategy Consultation and scrutiny

Prior to publication, our Housing Strategy and Action plan will be subject to consultation and to ensure scrutiny, our Housing Strategy action plan will be subject to executive level signoff/ratification. A draft of this document will be circulated to key internal and external stakeholders and we will be holding a half day consultation event, Our Housing strategy will be published in September 2009 and links will be available via our website

Monitoring and implementation of the Housing Strategy

Our action plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the senior management team within Housing Services.

Our progress against actions will be reviewed and publicised on an annual basis, details of which will appear on our website. We welcome feedback from our customers, partners and stakeholders

Housing Strategy Action plan 2009 – 2012

Committed to tackling the medium and long term housing supply and demand imbalances and offering choice to our residents...

PRIORITY 1: MAKING BEST USE OF EXISTING STOCK

Rationale: In line with Corporate Plan, LCB Housing Strategy, Sustainable Community Strategy, Value added element of Housing Service that contributes to social inclusion

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>Reduced Overcrowding and Under Occupation</u></p> <p>Develop a more comprehensive data base which capture core information pertaining to overcrowded and under-occupied households in HRA and RSL sectors</p>	<p>Draft comprehensive client survey which captures core data relating to the holistic needs of Overcrowded and Under occupied households</p> <p>Identify ways in which allocation scheme can be updated/amended to allow for additional bedroom for clients willing to downsize [incentive]</p> <p>Complete comprehensive client survey directed at under-occupied households on the housing register.</p>	2010	Potential IT and software costs plus consultation costs
<p>Establish an overcrowding/under-occupancy project board to look at ways in which we can best create rehousing avenues for households affected by overcrowding [representatives from voids team, Allocations, Prevention and Options, Independent living</p>	<p>Draft Terms of Reference produced</p> <p>Membership agreed including representatives from Registered Social Landlords</p> <p>Develop new set of performance indicators relating to Overcrowded/under occupied households</p> <p>Identify any new funding streams and partnership opportunities</p>	2011	Possible resource implications if incentives used.

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTION REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
Develop a client survey relating to overcrowding and its impact on health and social wellbeing coupled with the built environment ie whether overcrowded households report a greater % of disrepair elements	Agree survey strands Draft Survey completed	2010	Cost of survey
Identify new ways in which we can market and promote an under-occupancy scheme to local tenants	Develop marketing and communication plan relating to under occupancy Complete benchmarking exercise	2011	Potential cost if incentives offered Consultation costs Survey costs May require some financial support from the Council

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTION REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
Develop specific casework packages for under-occupied and overcrowded households which provides one2one ongoing support and assistance including referrals and signposting to statutory and non statutory support services	<p>Case file management systems in place</p> <p>Database of clients in place</p> <p>Signposting and referral mechanisms agreed and in place</p>	2011	None
Focus on the <i>prevention of overcrowding</i> by adding information to tenancy signup packs	<p>Complete benchmarking exercise</p> <p>Draft proposal in place including agreed contents</p> <p>Complete consultation with local tenants via Housing Consultative Forum</p>	2011	None

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>Business Planning Update</u></p> <p>Update HRA Business Plan Following Stock Condition Survey</p>	<p>Reconvene Housing Consultative Group</p> <p>Review outcome of the Consultation Paper on the Reform of Council Housing Finance</p> <p>Report to Cabinet</p> <p>Report to Overview and Scrutiny (Public Services)</p>	<p>2009 - 2010</p>	<p>Consultant Costs</p>
<p><u>Improve the Condition of the Council's Housing Stock</u></p> <p>Ensure the Decent Homes Standard is maintained</p>	<p>Carry out planned maintenance programmes to reflect resources available in the HRA Business Plan</p> <p>Review and update a 5 year maintenance programme</p> <p>Complete an Asset Management Strategy for the Council's housing stock</p>	<p>Annual</p> <p>2010</p> <p>2010</p>	<p>Housing Investment Programme</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>Improve Quality of Accommodation in Private Sector</u></p> <p>Assess the current levels of fitness and decent homes, and energy efficiency in the private sector housing stock</p>	<p>Carry out a private sector housing and energy survey and analyse findings with a view to developing action plan</p>	<p>2010 - 2011</p>	<p>Cost of survey</p>
<p>Implement the recommendations of the private sector housing and energy efficiency survey</p>	<p>On completion of the private sector housing survey, assess the results and develop a new private sector housing policy.</p>	<p>2011 - 2012</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Ensure that Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) meet required housing standards</p>	<p>Annual inspection of targeted number of HMO`s on a risk based inspection process including licensed HMO`s</p>	<p>Annual</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>That long term empty properties are returned to residential use</p>	<p>Annual review of number of properties remaining empty/ returned to use.</p>	<p>Annual</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Promote the help and support available for private sector rented tenants, with particular reference to HMO tenants</p>	<p>To improve the targeting of information to tenants including the provision of advice leaflets and information on the web</p>	<p>2010</p>	<p>None</p>

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
Promote the importance of reducing the number of long term empty properties in the district to help cope with housing demand	Publicise and promote the need to reduce long term empty houses including requesting residents to notify details of perceived long term empty houses. Liaise with the communications team to develop strategy for publicity	2010	None
Ensure that mobile homes meet the required standards to ensure compliance,	To continue to provide both advice leaflets and information on the web to residents. Also to carry out regular inspections of sites based on a risk based assessment system	2010	None
Work to help the elderly and disabled to stay in their own home.	To continue to work with Anchor Trust to promote home maintenance	2010	None
To promote the importance of the decent home standard	Ensure the continued availability of funding for repairing/improving homes by the provision of Home Repair Assistance Grants (Decent Homes Grants) to help the elderly and disabled stay in their own home. Ensure targeted promotion/publicity to ensure the elderly and vulnerable are aware of aid available.	2010	Part of the HIP

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
Raise the energy efficiency of Housing Association owned stock	<p>To work with Housing Associations to assess the feasibility of delivering joint schemes to improve energy efficiency standards across all social housing.</p> <p>Encourage Housing Associations to specify integrated packages of improvement measures where possible and ensure opportunistic energy work is included in repair and maintenance programmes where practicable.</p>	<p>2012</p> <p>2010</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p>
Improve the energy efficiency of private households	<p>Explore how to incentivise private owners and landlords to install energy efficiency and low carbon measures</p> <p>Undertake a programme of marketing sustainable energy measures to private households</p>	<p>Annual</p> <p>Annual</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p>

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
	Investigate the means available for offering interest free loans for householders wishing to install renewable technologies	2012	Funding to be identified as part of the investigation process
Ensure that the District's Housing Stock is resilient to future climate changes	Ensure that the recommendation of the Climate Change Adaptation (NI 188) working group are taken into account for future developments and refurbishments	2011	Resources to be identified as part of action plan
Increase awareness of energy efficiency solutions through an extensive programme of education and advice	Hold regular road shows across the District to promote energy efficiency and renewable technologies.	Annual	None
	Provide energy efficiency training to all frontline staff.	2011/12	General Fund/HRA Budget
	To provide social housing tenants with an information pack on home energy efficiency when taking up new tenancies	2011	None
	Make electricity monitors available at all libraries to enable households to monitor their energy usage and identify any wastage.	2010	General Fund existing budgets
	To provide free energy saving light bulbs and other energy and water efficiency devices to residents at public events.	Annual	None

PRIORITY 2: INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE AND SUSTAINABLE HOMES

Rationale: In line with Corporate Plan, LCB Housing Strategy, Sustainable Community Plan, Local Strategic Partnership [LSP] Value added element of Housing Service that contributes to social inclusion

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>Maximise Affordable Housing Development</u></p> <p>Continue to support the development of affordable housing</p>	To develop an average of 100 new affordable homes annually, the affordable housing target for the Core Strategy will not be finalised until the Development Economic Study has been completed	Annual	Homes and Communities Agency
	Bring forward at least one garage site per annum	Annual	Homes and Communities Agency
	Publicise and promote opportunities for home ownership including cash incentive scheme, Government home ownership initiatives	Annual	None
	To work with Registered Social Landlord partners to identify land for residential development	Annual	None
	To continue to work with local authority and Registered Social Landlord partners in the London Commuter Belt to maximise resources into the sub region	Annual	None
	To work with the Chamber of Commerce and Lea Valley Homes to assess housing issues identified by employers	2010	None

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME	
	Continue with the sheltered housing redevelopment and remodelling programme	2015	Homes and Communities Agency/Partner Registered Social Landlords funding Housing Investment Programme/capital receipt following sale of Ridgeview	
	To purchase 25 one bedroomed flats for reprovision of Ridgeview	2012		
	Ensure Local Development Framework reflects housing mix and quality required to provide balanced communities.	2009/10		None
	Work with Homes and Communities Agency to respond to the current economic situation on the development of affordable housing	2009/10		None
	To actively participate in the Homes and Communities Agency Single Conversation	2011		None
	Encourage a greater % of mixed tenure developments including Section 106's	2011/12		None
	Identify new opportunities for land acquisition including use of garden spaces where legally compliant and feasible	2010		None
	Maintain up to date supporting information on housing needs and demands in the District	Annual		Renewal of Hometrack contract

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>Increase Access to Private Sector Housing</u></p> <p>To extend the Rent Deposit Scheme</p>	<p>Complete review of Rent Deposit Scheme including setting up a landlord forum</p> <p>To participate in a pilot Rent Deposit Scheme to single people in partnership with Dacorum Rent Aid</p> <p>To assess the feasibility of establishing a landlord's forum with lettings agents in partnership with neighbouring local authorities</p> <p>Designate webpage targeted to local landlords in conjunction with Private Sector Housing Team to promote good practice and encourage take-up of Rent Deposit Scheme</p> <p>Identify opportunities for joint partnerships with Registered Social Landlords relating to the development of Private Sector Leasing Scheme</p>	<p>2010</p> <p>2009</p> <p>2010</p> <p>2010</p> <p>2009</p>	<p>Publicity costs</p> <p>Consultation costs</p> <p>Support from General Fund</p> <p>Supporting People Funding</p> <p>Cost implications beyond pilot year</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>

PRIORITY 3: PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND DELIVERING HOLISTIC CLIENT SERVICE

Rationale: In line with Corporate Plan, Sustainable Community Plan, Homelessness Strategy 2008, Herts Supporting People Strategy 2007-12, Local Strategic Partnership [LSP] Value added element of Housing Service that contributes to social inclusion

*The prevention of homelessness remains at the heart of our activities.

Our Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 covered this area in greater detail of which can be found on our website

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>To Develop the Housing Options Service</u></p> <p>Reconfigure and improve our business models to create a greater focus on quality holistic client services and policy and development</p>	Draft business model produced including introduction of new Special Projects team with Policy and Development remit/portfolio	2009	None
	Draft staffing structure produced		
	Draft job descriptions completed		
	Staff consultation completed and report finalised		
	Implement revised structure	2010	None
	Develop draft quality assurance framework for Housing Options Service	2010	None
	E-Gov : Ensure that web-pages provide comprehensive details of service provision and standards – revise as necessary and consult with stakeholders	2010	None

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>Delivery of the Homelessness Strategy</u></p> <p>Ensure that Homelessness Forum provides a platform for local cross sector practitioners to explore homelessness trends and prevention initiatives</p>	<p>Terms of reference for Homelessness Forum drawn up and agreed by members</p> <p>Prevention of homelessness, including statutory performance indicators, forms part of standard agenda items</p> <p>Raise awareness of cross sector activities and partnerships relating to the prevention of homelessness</p> <p>Identify through Homelessness Forum new partnership opportunities relating to the prevention of homelessness including joint training exercises and joint funding avenues</p> <p>Implement Homelessness Strategy Action Plan</p> <p>Identify new partnership arrangements with Registered Social Landlords in relation to the provision of additional supported housing for young mothers</p> <p>Increase levels of financial capability amongst homeless clients in conjunction with Money Advice /Citizens Advice Bureau</p>	<p>2009</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Annually to 2013</p> <p>2010</p> <p>2010</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>General Fund Budget Homelessness Grant Funding</p> <p>Supporting People Funding</p> <p>Grant required for training</p>

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>Plan and Commission Homelessness Prevention and Housing Support Services</u></p> <p>To maintain an active role in the Hertfordshire Supporting People Programme</p>	<p>Continue to represent St Albans District Council on the Supporting People Joint Commissioning Body</p> <p>Maintain strong links with the Supporting People Programme to ensure effective provision of floating support services enabling prevention of homelessness.</p>	<p>Annual</p> <p>Annual</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p>
<p><u>Response to the Recession</u></p> <p>Explore mortgage rescue packages for clients with mortgage arrears</p>	<p>Table discussion at Homelessness Forum</p> <p>Identify any new/emerging trends</p> <p>Arrange meeting with CABx</p>	<p>2009</p> <p>2009</p> <p>2009</p>	<p>Government funding from DCLG</p>

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
	Ensure all Housing Options Staff are briefed about Mortgage rescue packages	2009	
	To introduce pre tenancy training to help clients maintain tenancies	2009	Government funding DCLG £6,000
	To proactively respond to emerging issues e.g. small loans, tenancy sustainment assistance.	2009/10	Government funding DCLG £47,500
	Improve access to money advice and assistance with fuel poverty and support for clients	2010	Grant may be required to improve access

PRIORITY 4: CREATING THRIVING AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES INCLUDING RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Rationale: In line with Corporate Plan, Sustainable Community Plan, Herts Supporting People Strategy 2007-12, Local Strategic Partnership [LSP] Value added element of Housing Service that contributes to social inclusion

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>To Promote Choice</u></p> <p>Develop enhancements to Choice Based Lettings Scheme</p>	<p>Complete 6 month review of Choice Based Lettings and document findings including assessment of bidding process and any improvements required to scheme</p> <p>Work with partners across the Consortium to increase mobility through the further development of Choice Based Lettings</p> <p>Review levels of public computer access points throughout St Albans i.e. within area , libraries and customer centres</p>	<p>2009</p> <p>2010/11</p> <p>2010</p>	<p>HRA budget 30k</p> <p>Cost of providing additional computers</p>
<p><u>To Increase Employability</u></p> <p>Test routes out of inactivity and Worklessness</p>	<p>Arrange meeting with Job Centre Plus to discuss ways in which we can collaborate</p> <p>Produce client survey focusing on employment/employability</p>	<p>2010</p> <p>2010</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p>

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
Provide innovative and individual options to address inactivity or Worklessness	<p>Work with partners to identify suitable programmes for clients</p> <p>Identify skills and education gaps amongst clients in temporary accommodation</p> <p>In conjunction with local colleges and skills agencies promote and encourage take up of education and training amongst clients in temporary accommodation as well as general service users</p>	<p>2009</p> <p>2010/2011</p> <p>2010/2011</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>Homelessness Grant Funding</p>
<p><u>To Develop a BME Housing Strategy</u></p> <p>To identify the housing needs of the Black Minority Ethnic Community</p>	<p>Establish focus groups/survey of Black Minority Ethnic Residents and complete strategy</p> <p>To identify and support Equalities and Diversity Champions in key service areas within Strategy and Enabling</p>	<p>2011</p> <p>2011</p>	<p>None</p> <p>Training costs for delegated staff</p>

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<u>To Improve the Analysis of Equalities Information</u>	Complete equality assessments for Housing Options Service	2011	None
	Actively monitor access to housing	Annual	None
<u>To Enhance Customer and Stakeholder Engagement in Developing Services</u> Improving communication	Draft Stakeholder communication matrix produced	2010	None
	Improve marketing material directed to clients and stakeholders i.e.” Homing In “ magazine	2009	None
	Stakeholder involvement mechanisms agreed i.e.: face to face , litmus testing groups etc	2010	None
	Benchmark with local organisations in relation to improving tenant involvement	2010	None
	Provide local residents with a greater level of information relating to building developments and land acquisition in St Albans	2010	None

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<u>To Improve the Health of Residents in the District</u>	Attend consultation events relating to the Primary Care Trust's Homelessness Strategy	2010	Publicity costs
	To participate in the Health, Housing and Social Care Partnership	Annual	None.
	Work in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust's specialist nurse for the homeless to identify any gaps in primary health care access for service users	Annual	None
	Through poster campaigns etc Promote health eating and healthy lifestyle including smoking cessation amongst clients in temporary accommodation	Annual	Homelessness Grant Funding
	Identify ways in which we can bring the older and younger generations together through <i>"Healthy cooking/eating workshops"</i>	Annual	None
	Work in conjunction with Specialist Nurse PCT to identify the health needs of overcrowded households within the private and public sector	Annual	None

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>Help to Reduce Fuel Poverty Within the District</u></p> <p>Eliminate fuel poverty to vulnerable households as far as reasonably practicable</p>	Work in conjunction with money advice service and homelessness forum to develop and promote money advice service to hard to reach groups and vulnerable clients	Annual	None
	Provide tips and practical advice to council tenants through the tenants newsletter	Annual	None
	To promote take up of the LCB fuel poverty scheme in the private sector through Hertfordshire/Essex Energy Partnership (HEEP)	2011	Regional Housing Pot Allocation to LCB £6.7m over 2 yers
	Provide advice to vulnerable households and signpost to national grant schemes such as Warm Front	Annual	Government Grant funding
	Offer benefit checks to vulnerable households to ensure they are obtaining all the assistance that may be available to them	Annual	None
	Consider fuel poverty when allocating Council properties	2010	None

CORPORATE AIM/OBJECTIVE	MILESTONES /KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED This is not an exhaustive list	TARGET DATE	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND STAFF AND TIME
<p><u>Reduce Crime and Anti Social Behaviour</u></p> <p>In conjunction with Community safety team identify new ways in which stakeholders can help to shape actions relating to the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour</p>	<p>Scope development of stakeholder consultation group</p> <p>Ensure website provides practical up to date information to tenants and residents in relation to crime prevention and anti-social behaviour including performance indicators</p> <p>Explore with Homelessness Forum the development and joint funding of personal development programme for young people which raises levels of self-esteem, anti-crime and citizenship skills</p> <p>Support the reduction of the fear of crime particularly amongst older tenants in St Albans by ensuring that Local Housing Teams and marketing material provides practical tips for crime prevention</p>	<p>2012</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>

Appendix 4

Links to other partners and strategies

Strategies

SADC Sustainable Community Strategy
SADC Corporate Plan 2009-2012
SADC Local Development Plan Framework
SADC Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013
SADC Private Sector Renewal Strategy
SADC Community Safety Strategy
SADC Affordable Warmth Strategy

Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2010
LCB – Sub Regional strategy 2009

HCC Supporting People Strategy
HCC Local Area Agreement
HCC Mental Health Accommodation Strategy 2009-2013

RSL's

Hightown Praetorian Churches Housing Association
Aldwyck Housing Association
North Herts Homes
Cherry Tree Housing Association

Voluntary and Community sector/others

CAB
Shelter
Herts Young Homeless Group
Emmaus Community
Womens Refuge
Primary Care Trust
Hertfordshire County Council

National and Regional Links

Homes and Communities Agency
Tenancy Service Authority
Go-East
East of England Regional Assembly
London Commuter Belt

GLOSSARY

Affordable Housing	A general term for housing - social rented, shared ownership or other tenures - provided using public subsidy.
Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	A system of letting social housing that gives applicants greater choice over where they live.
CLG Department	Communities and Local Government department responsible for housing, planning and local government issues.
Decent Homes Standard	The governments targets to ensure that homes in all sectors meet a minimum standard; a reasonable state of repair, reasonably modern facilities; and a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's)	Funding that is available to help provide specialist adaptations for disabled people.
East of England Plan	Sets out the regional strategy for planning and development in East of England to 2021.
EERA	East of England Regional Assembly
Equality Impact Assessments	An equality impact assessment (EqIA) is a tool for identifying the potential impact of a council's policies, services and functions on its residents and staff. It can help provide and deliver excellent services to residents by making sure that these reflect the needs of the community.
Extra Care Housing	A form of housing for older people that provides a higher level of personal care whilst retaining independence.

Fuel Poverty	A household in fuel poverty is one where more than 10% of the household income has to be used to heat the home to an average level of warmth.
HIP	Housing Investment Programme - records capital expenditure on the Council's housing stock, private sector housing and grants to housing associations.
HMO	Houses in Multiple Occupation. A property that is divided and let to separate households but with shared facilities.
Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)	Replaces old definitions of housing disrepair/unfitness.
Homes and Communities Agency	Newly created body replacing Housing Corporation and English Partnerships. Responsible for regenerating communities and delivering decent homes.
Housing Association (see also RSL)	A non-profit organisation providing affordable housing.
HRA	Housing Revenue Account - records revenue, income and expenditure in relation to the Council's housing stock
Intermediate Rent	Submarket housing which is above target rents but below open market levels
LAA	Local Area Agreement
Local Strategic Partnership	A range of public, private, voluntary and community organisations responsible for producing the Community Strategy.
LCB	London Commuter Belt - one of the sub regions in East of England.
LDF	Local Development Framework.
NAHP	National Affordable Housing Programme.

Nomination Agreement	An agreement between the Council and a Housing Association to rehouse people from the housing register.
Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS)	Scheme designed to improve access to private rented sector.
RSL	Registered Social Landlord (see also Housing Association)
Section 106 agreement	Agreements between the Council and developers made as part of the planning process, that are beneficial to Council and Community.
Sustainable Communities	Encouraging improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area.
Supported Housing	A form of housing that provides specialist support for residents to enable them to maintain independence or to prepare them for independent living.
Supporting People	Programme that determines/ funds/ commissions housing related support services in Hertfordshire led by Hertfordshire County Council.
Temporary Accommodation	Hostel or self contained accommodation used by local authorities to house people temporarily.
TSA	Tenant Services Authority - newly created body that acts as the regulator for social housing tenants.

HOUSING STRATEGY CONTACT DETAILS

Karen Dragovic

Head of Housing

Telephone

01727 819400

E-mail

karen.dragovic@stalbans.gov.uk

Linda Middleton

Strategy and Enabling Manager

Telephone

01727 819401

E-mail

linda.middleton@stalbans.gov.uk

Andrew Robertson

Head of Environment and Regulatory Services

Telephone

01727 819436

E-mail

andrew.robertson@stalbans.gov.uk

Stephen Hide

Principal Environmental Health Officer

Telephone

01727 819461

E-mail

[**Stephen.hide@stalbans.gov.uk**](mailto:Stephen.hide@stalbans.gov.uk)

Address

St Albans District Council
Civic Centre
St Peters Street
St Albans
Herts AL1 3JE

Website Address

[**www.stalbans.gov.uk**](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk)

The information in this document can be obtained on request in alternative Formats, e.g. in Braille, large print, on audiotape, on computer disc or email, by contacting

The District Council Office's **text phone** number is 01727 819570. This service is for people with a hearing impairment