



HOUSING STRATEGY 2008-2011

**Committing to
Excellence**

**Promoting Civic Pride
& an Active Community**

**Creating a Clean, Tidy
& Safe Environment**

**Providing Affordable
Housing while
Protecting Green Space**

**Ensuring a
Sustainable Local
Economy & Jobs**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

This Strategy is in three parts:

- The first part sets out the strategic priorities for housing at a national, regional, sub-regional and local level. It includes the strategic context within which Dacorum addresses local housing needs and shows how housing links to many other wider agendas.
- The second part of the Strategy sets out a summary of data and information we and our partners hold on housing need and demand and also present and future supply of housing in Dacorum. It identifies the interrelated factors that affect the availability and affordability of housing and the quality of life for all the residents living in Dacorum.
- The third and most important part details what we have done and what we intend to do, working with a range of partner agencies, to meet local housing issues and highlights the resources available to carry them out. These activities are grouped under three strategic objectives which have been developed with our London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Partners and will be embedded in the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy which is currently under review:
 1. Maximising Affordable Housing in the right places
 2. Improving the Condition of Both Private and Public Sector Housing in Dacorum
 3. Delivering Sustainable Communities Through Partnership Working

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

The Housing Strategy is inevitably broad in its scope and its implementation will depend on strong partnership working with a wide range of organisations. The priority actions are set out on an Action Plan (see Annex A).

The pace of change in national, regional and local policy frameworks means that specific content in the Strategy will be updated periodically. Updated versions of the Housing Strategy will be available on the Council's web site.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Dacorum Borough Council Housing Strategy sets out the strategic priorities for housing in the borough over the period 2008 to 2011. It takes account of national, regional and sub-regional priorities and is an overarching document that brings together other sub-strategies such as the Homelessness Strategy and Affordable Housing Strategy and complements the Council's Corporate Strategies and objectives.

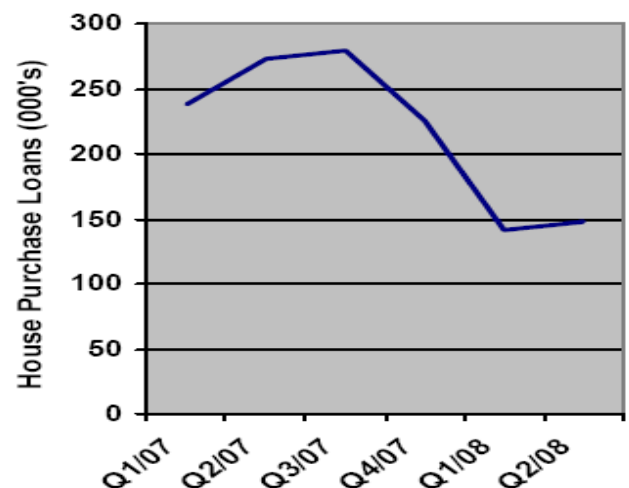
This strategy and those of our sub-regional partners will be used to inform and shape the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region (LCBSR) Housing Strategy, which will be delivered in early 2009. The LCBSR Housing Strategy will establish the key areas where joint working across administrative boundaries can deliver economic and effective solutions to commonly identified issues.

The Housing Strategy will be continually developed and reviewed, with performance on the delivery of the action plan monitored. Dacorum is currently undertaking an options appraisal to decide the future management of its Council housing, which has been reflected in this document.

1.1 The Economic Climate

The Council is aware that this Strategy has been written during an unpredictable time in the housing market. Figures from the Nationwide Building Society show that house prices fell by 1.7% in September 2008 and by 12.4% since this time last year (2007), the largest recorded annual fall in the history of the Nationwide index. This decline in prices is caused by the difficulties created for potential house purchasers by the rapid rise in house prices in the last few years, a squeeze on spending power and the reduction in credit availability.

Aside from house prices, one of the clearest indications of the effects of the 'Credit Crunch' has been the significant reduction in the number of mortgage approvals and property transactions. The graph opposite is based on figures from the Council of Mortgage Lenders and shows the downward movement in mortgage lending for house purchases across the UK. From quarter 2 of 2007 to quarter 2 of 2008 the number of loans for house purchase fell from 273,100 to 148,400 (a fall of 46%).



Focussing more specifically on the East of England, Hometrack data on the monthly numbers of house transactions shows a fall from 65,210 in July 2007 to 23,520 in July 2008 (a fall of 64%). This downward trend shows no signs of abating, with even the most recent months of June and July 2008 showing significant declines.

Statistics from the National House-Building Council (NHBC) show that applications to start new homes in August 2008 fell to the lowest since their accessible records began, as the effect of the credit crunch forces more builders to slow down activity on site. NHBC's figures show that there were 3,720 applications to start new homes in August 2008, 76 per cent lower than the same month a year ago (15,661).

Statistics for the three-month period from June to August 2008 also continued to reflect the tough housing market conditions. NHBC statistics reveal that there were 25,097 applications to start new homes in the UK in those three months - a 51 per cent decrease on the same three-month period in 2007 (51,730). Of the total, 14,665 related to private sector activity (i.e. excluding housing association), showing a 65 per cent decrease on the same three month period in 2007 (42,071).

The Housing Association Sector is showing more resilience to the downturn, with figures for the first eight months of 2008 totalling 24,825, only six per cent lower than the same period in 2007.

The current 'credit crunch' could have a significant impact on the amount of social housing on private developments in the Borough delivered through planning obligations. In their document Facing the Housing Challenge, Action Today Innovation for Tomorrow, published in July 2008, the Government outlines a series of measures and reforms designed to help alleviate the current challenges in the housing market and to support the vital delivery of more homes over the long term. Measures include more funding, beyond the £200 million already allocated, to buy unsold stock from house builders for affordable homes. The Council recognises that the credit crunch has created significant challenges, but is keen to explore all of these opportunities to work with RSLs, developers and house builders to maintain the delivery of affordable housing.

1.2 The Borough of Dacorum

Situated in west Hertfordshire, Dacorum is a mixture of strong urban and rural identities. The Borough includes the towns of Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring, the large villages of Bovington, Kings Langley and Markyate, and 12 smaller settlements. It borders St Albans City and District to the east, Buckinghamshire (Chiltern and Aylesbury Vale Districts) to the west, and Three Rivers to the south.

Hemel Hempstead was one of the first 'New Towns' built after the Second World War. Its development reflects the original concept of the new town as a series of integrated communities with individual identity and neighbourhood focus. The rapid growth of Hemel Hempstead is reflected in the large number of buildings of similar age and appearance.

Dacorum has an area of 212 square kilometres, 50% of which is Green Belt. There are excellent transport links via the motorway and railway network and Luton Airport is within easy reach. The Grand Union Canal also crosses the Borough.

There are 59,673 (2008 figure) dwellings, of which around 18% (10,630) are owned by the Council.

Dacorum is a Borough with significant contrasts. Hemel Hempstead contains some pockets of deprivation of regional significance, whereas parts of Berkhamsted and the more rural areas have very low claimant counts and enjoy much better health. Overall the borough ranks in the fourth quartile of English Local Authority Districts in terms of deprivation.

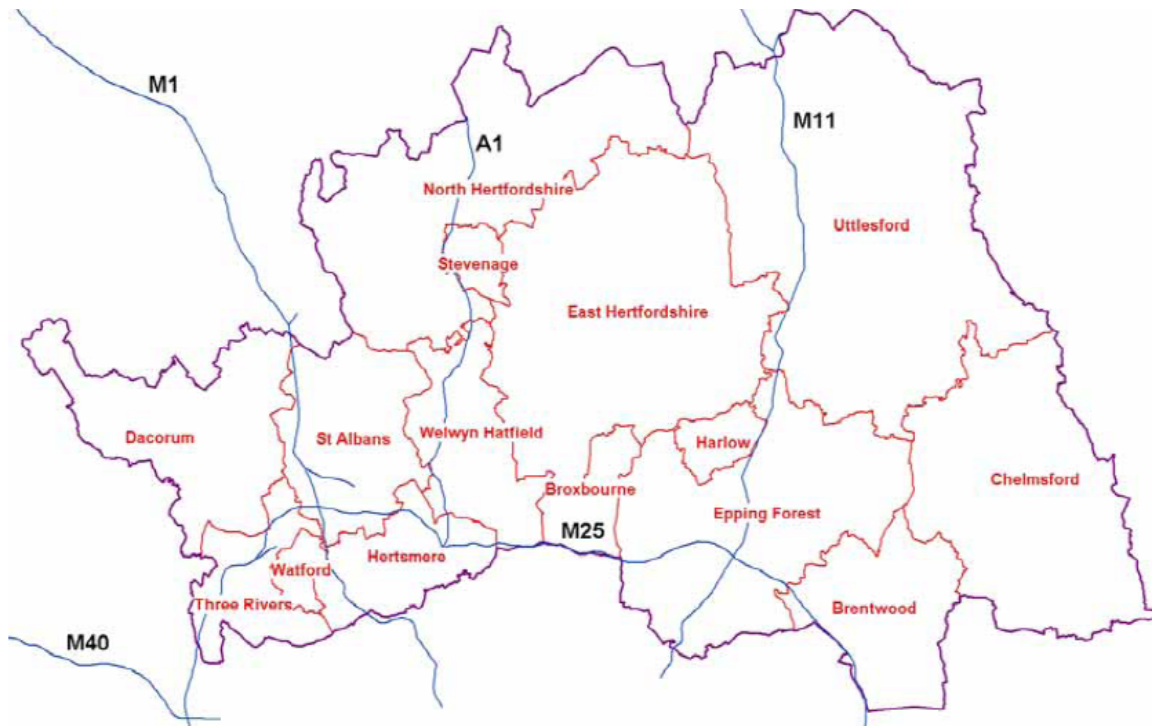
1.3 The London Commuter Belt Sub Region

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

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

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

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



1.4 Consultation and Partnerships

Consultation

In September 2008 around 25 stakeholders attended a Housing Strategy consultation event. The purpose of the event was to enable stakeholders to have their say about what they felt our key priorities should be at a local level and help shape the action plan.

Participants were given a short presentation to introduce the strategy and then split into smaller focus groups to identify local actions relevant to Dacorum for each of the three strategic objectives.

A range of partners and organisations were represented at the stakeholder day including the voluntary sector, Housing Associations, tenants and Members. The following groups/organisations attended:

- DENS (Dacorum Emergency Nightshelter)
- Tring Rural Parish Council
- Affinity Sutton Housing Association
- Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association
- Aldwyck Housing Association
- HAP (Housing Advisory Panel) representatives
- Turning Point
- Housing Department
- Planning Department
- Environmental Health Department
- Elected Members

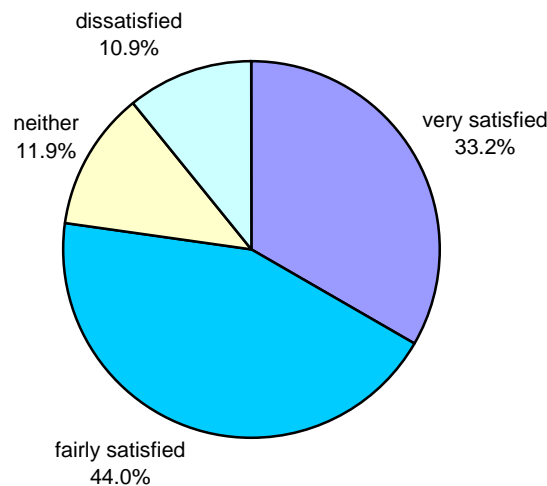
The feedback from the focus groups has helped to shape the objectives within this strategy.

STATUS Survey

In December 2007 the Council undertook a survey of a sample of our tenants and leaseholders using the STATUS (Standardised Tenant Satisfaction Survey) questionnaire. The purpose of the survey was to measure levels of customer satisfaction for all areas of the Housing Service to help identify areas for improvement. The standardised nature of the survey also enables us to benchmark with other social housing providers. The survey will be carried out on an annual basis.

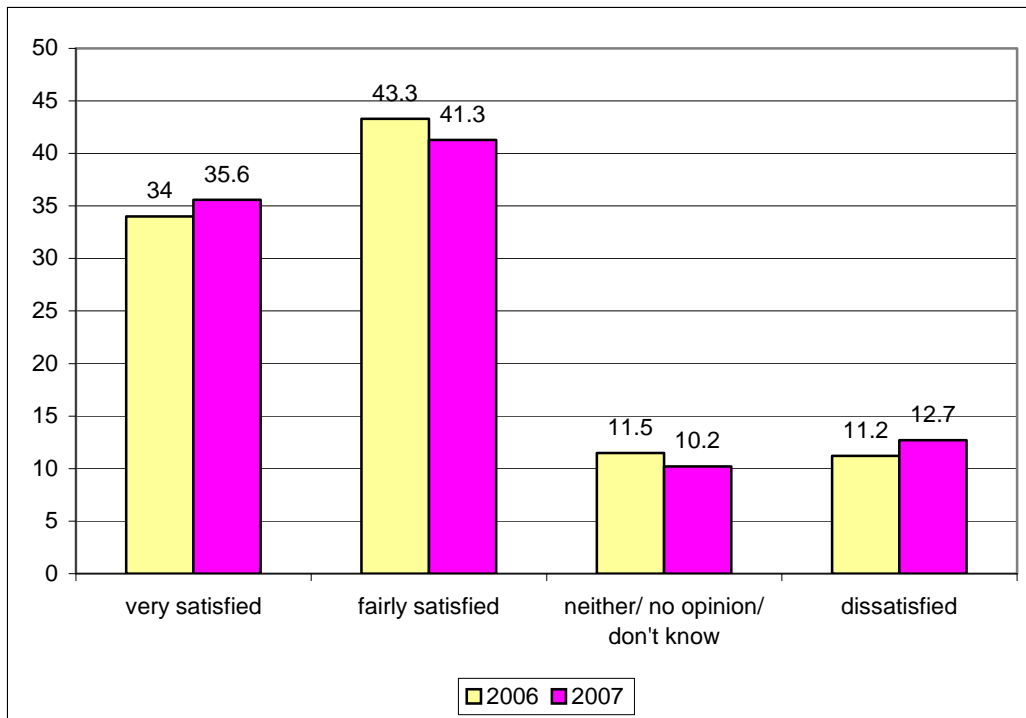
Overall service provided by the Council

- More than three quarters of respondents (77.2%), were either very satisfied (33.2%) or fairly satisfied (44.0%), with the overall service provided by the Council, whilst 11.9% were 'neither' satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 10.9% were 'dissatisfied'. Compared with the 2006 survey, there is a slight decrease in satisfaction (80% 'satisfied' in 2006) and an increase in dissatisfaction (8.3% 'dissatisfied' in 2006).



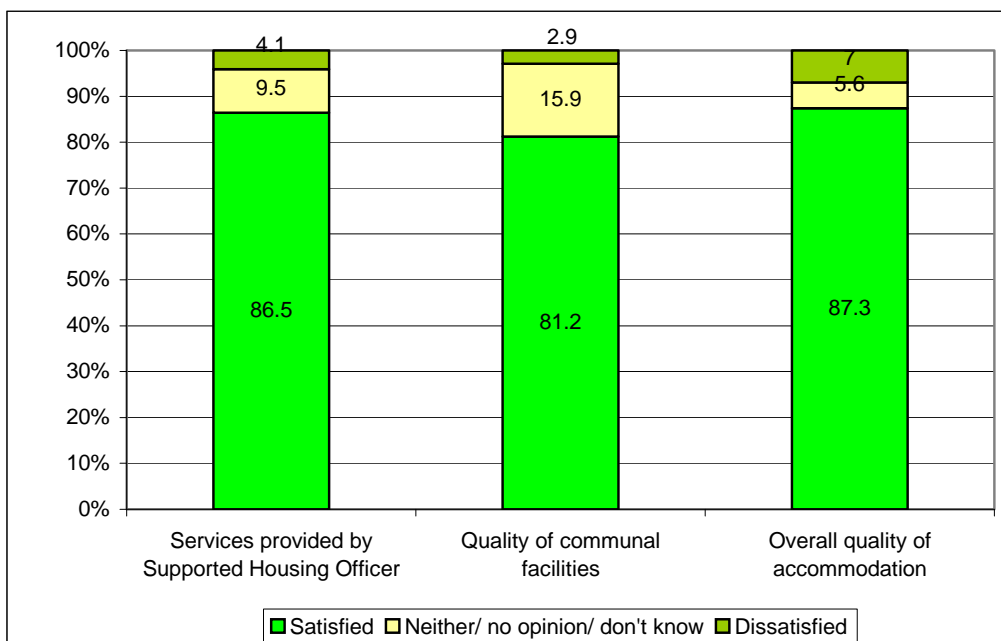
Repairs and Maintenance

- Overall, just over three quarters of all respondents (76.9%) were satisfied with the way in which the Council dealt with repairs and maintenance (35.6% 'very satisfied' and 41.3% 'fairly satisfied'), whilst 9.4% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', and 12.7% were dissatisfied (8.2% 'fairly dissatisfied'; 4.5% 'very dissatisfied'). (0.8% had 'no opinion/ didn't know'). There were similar figures in 2006, with 77.3% of respondents 'satisfied' and 11.2% 'dissatisfied'.



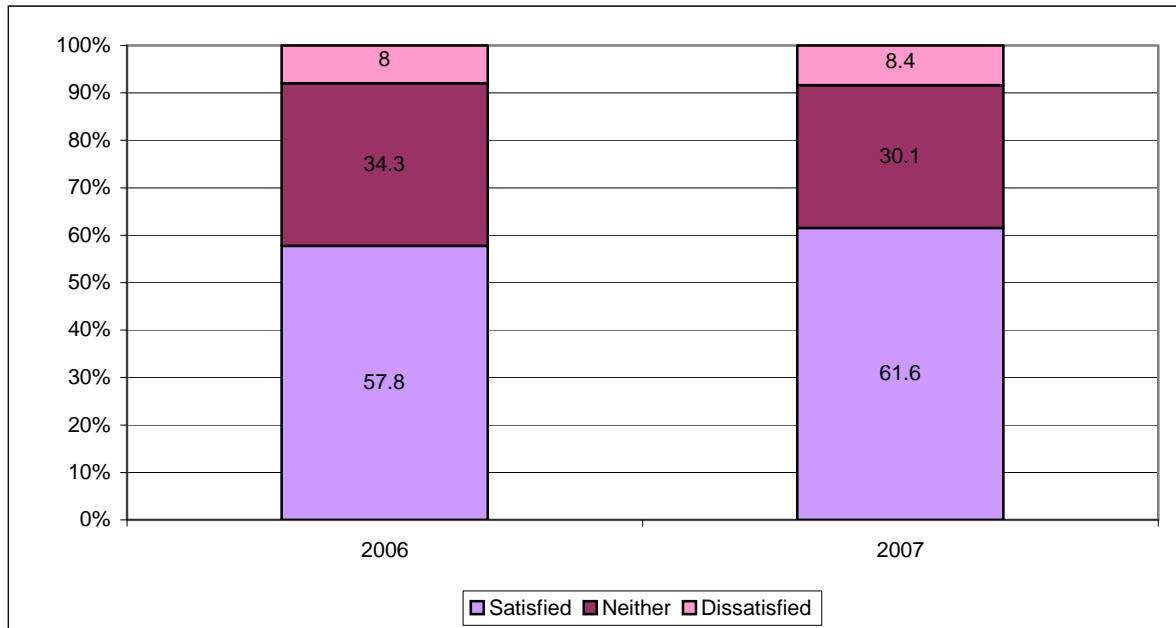
Sheltered Housing tenants

- Of the respondents who indicated that they live in 'sheltered accommodation', more than half (56.8%) were 'very satisfied' with the 'services provided by their Supported Housing Officer', whilst a further 29.7% were 'fairly satisfied'.
- Regarding the 'overall quality of the accommodation', the large majority of respondents in sheltered accommodation were, again, 'satisfied' (87.3%), with more than half (57.7%) 'very satisfied'.



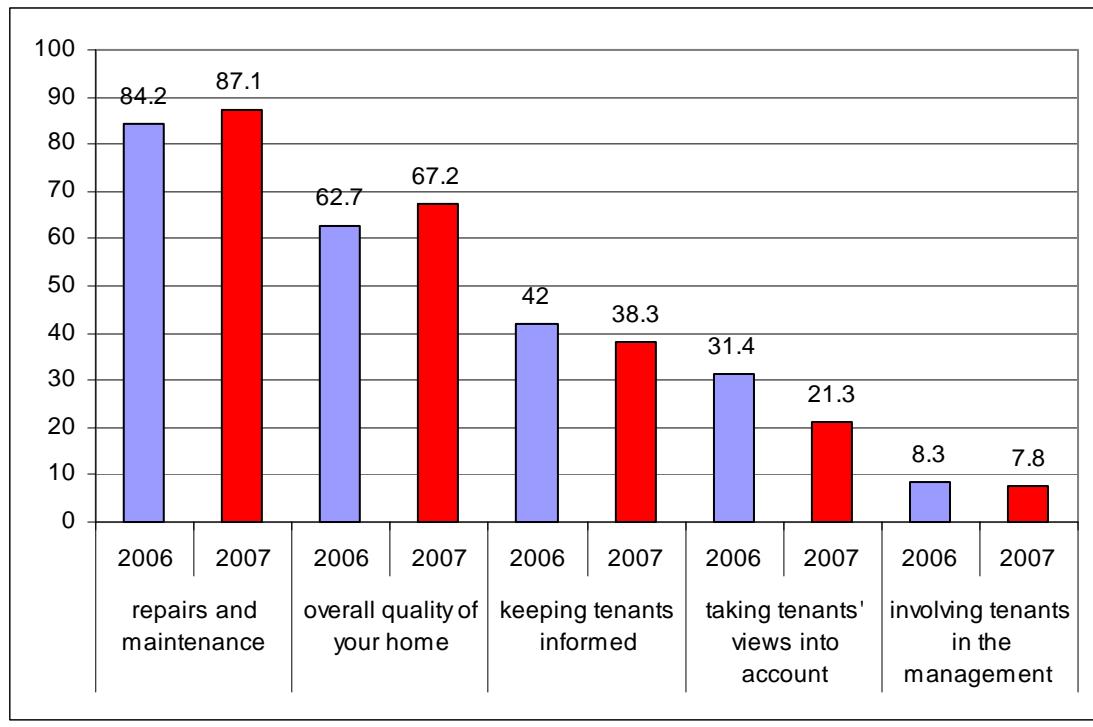
Opportunities for participation in management and decision making

- 17.8% of the total sample gave 'no opinion' responses and a further 4.1% did not respond. Of those who expressed an opinion, 19.4% said that they were 'very satisfied' and 42.2% that they were 'fairly satisfied' (61.6% satisfied in total). 30.1% were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', and 8.4% were 'dissatisfied' (6.1% 'fairly dissatisfied', 2.3% 'very dissatisfied').



Improving services – Top 3 most important services

- Respondents were asked which of a list of services they felt were the three most important. By far the most popular response was 'repairs and maintenance', 87.1% of respondents felt this should be included in the top. The majority of respondents also felt that 'overall quality of your home' (67.2%) was of high importance.



Partnerships

The Council is committed to partnership working, recognising that this is often the most effective way to deliver strategic outcomes, especially for housing issues. By working with partners we can ensure we contribute to and develop quicker, more efficient ways of delivering affordable, decent housing and other housing services.

Key partners in the delivery of the strategy include:

- Elected Members
- The Dacorum Partnership
- The London Commuter Belt Sub Region Partnership
- Town and Parish Councils
- Community and Residents Groups
- The Housing Corporation
- The East of England Development Agency
- GO East
- The Hertfordshire Supporting People Team
- Registered Social Landlords with housing stock in the Borough
- Developers operating within Dacorum
- Local Estate Agents and Private Landlords
- The Community Development Agency
- Voluntary Groups

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Our Corporate Priorities

The Council's overall Vision is based on five key ambitions for the community. These are:

- Committing to Excellence
- Promoting Civic Pride and an Active Community
- Creating a Clean, Tidy and Safe Environment
- Providing Affordable Housing while Protecting Green Space
- Ensuring a Sustainable Local Economy and Jobs

Improving Dacorum Programme

The Improving Dacorum programme comprises the key projects and initiatives that together will help position the Council for excellence and deliver financial savings. Following the May 2007 elections, Members identified four main priority areas for improvement, these were:

Hemel 2020 – making significant progress on this major programme to regenerate Hemel Hempstead

Balancing the Budget – ensuring that the authority achieves a balanced budget

Customer Services – improving customer satisfaction ratings and answering 80% of enquires and requests at the first point of contact.

Reputation – ensuring that the authority achieves an excellent reputation as a local authority. This includes improving our Use of Resources score as measured by the Audit Commission.

Housing Futures

Perhaps the most significant project being undertaken as part of the Improving Dacorum Programme is the Housing Futures Project.

Changes in Government funding and rising repairs and maintenance costs have put the Council's Housing Revenue Account under significant pressure. The Council is therefore looking at the options for the future management of its council housing.

In May 2008 the Cabinet agreed that the Council's 10,630 tenants should be balloted on whether to transfer the housing stock to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). It is anticipated that the ballot will take place in autumn 2009.

A Tenants' Steering Group, consisting of both tenant and leaseholders has been established and will be actively involved throughout the process.

The outcome of the ballot will obviously have a major impact on the way in which the housing service is delivered in the future. Further details about the Housing budget can be found in the Resources section in Part 5 of this document.

Dacorum Borough Councils Comprehensive Performance Assessment

The Council was assessed as 'Good' with promising prospects for improvement in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment carried out in 2004.

2.2 The Dacorum Partnership

The Sustainable Community Strategy is our vision for the future of Dacorum - including an ambitious action plan for the next three years (2008-2011) targeting issues from health, housing and community safety to culture, business and the environment.

The strategy was compiled after extensive consultation with people across the Borough, combined with careful analysis of statistical data and social trends.

Further information about how we are working towards the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy can be found in Section 4 of this document, under Strategic Objective 3 – 'Delivering Sustainable Communities through Partnership Working'.

2.3 National Context

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

Summary of Key Policies

Sustainable Communities; Homes for all and Sustainable Communities; People Places and Prosperity (2005)

This publication sets out how the Government intends to offer everyone the opportunity of a decent home at the price they can afford. The key aims are:

- Increasing the supply of social rented properties
- Expanding choice based lettings
- Improving the quality of private rented accommodation
- Improving housing for vulnerable people
- Assist people to own their own homes

Housing Act (2004)

The Housing Act was introduced to help protect tenants, improve housing conditions in the private rented sector, and bring empty homes back into use. The majority of the changes took effect from April 2006.

- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) replaced the existing Housing Fitness Standard. The emphasis now rests on the health and safety of a property rather than the general condition.
- Introduction of Home Information Packs by CLG requiring all homes to produce a Home Condition Report and provide an Energy Performance Certificate from December 2007.
- Section 225 of the Housing Act requires all local housing authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers residing in their district.

Barker Review (2004)

The Barker Review highlighted the imbalances and problematic situation within the UK housing market. The review highlighted the;

- Upward trend in real house prices; 2.4% increase per annum over the 30 years previous
- Unpredictability within the market exacerbating macroeconomic stability
- Desire for lower house prices
- Increase in lack of affordability; in 1980 46% of new households could afford to buy a new house compared with 37% in 2002.

Planning & Compulsory Act (2004)

The Planning & Compulsory Act was passed by the Government in June 2004. This led to the introduction of:

- A Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for each region
- Housing Allocations will be settled at this strategic level
- Local Planning Authorities (LPA) will prepare Local Development Documents (LDD), replacing local plans, unitary development plans and structure plans

Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing' (PPS3) (2006)

Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing' (PPS3) was published in November 2006 as a direct response to the recommendations outline in the Barker review. It incorporates the;

- Change in housing delivery; via a more responsive approach to land supply at a local level
- Emphasis on identifying land that is suitable for development
- Requirement to undertake Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments

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 while highlighting a number of issues that needed to be tackled, including:

- Low resident satisfaction
- Poor estate environments
- Lack of tenant mobility
- High levels of unemployment within the sector
- Increasing social polarisation

'Every Tenant Matters' (2007)

'Every Tenant Matters' was published in June 2007. The report, written by Martin Cave established a new regulatory body for registered social landlords. Proposals included:

- New responsibilities for local housing authorities
- Working in partnership with other social housing providers to better meet the aspirations of tenants

Housing Green Paper – 'Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable' (2007)

The housing Green Paper – 'Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable' was published in July 2007 outlining proposals for addressing housing supply issues. The three main proposals outlined in the paper were:

- More homes to meet growing demand
- Well-designed and greener homes, linked to good schools, transport and healthcare
- More affordable homes to buy and rent

The publication proposed a significant increase in new homes:

- Build an additional two million new homes by 2016 and three million units by 2020
- Investment of at least £8 billion in the provision of affordable homes (2008-11)
- 70,000 more affordable homes by 2010/11; 45,000 to be social rented
- Introduced Housing and Planning delivery grant aimed at helping councils identify land for housing development to increase supply in their areas

Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods – A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society (2008)

This strategy outlines the plans for ensuring that there is enough appropriate housing available in future to address the needs of the ageing population. The

number of individuals aged 75 years and over is expected to increase by 4.4 million (95%) by 2031.

2.4 Regional Context

The Communities Plan introduced Regional Housing Boards in 2003 and the first East of England Regional Strategy was published in June 2003. The second Regional Housing Strategy for the East of England 2005-2010 sets out the strategic direction for the delivery of housing in the East of England. It aims to meet the challenges of growth and regeneration in the Region, and inform the recommendations for public investment in affordable housing.

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

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

- Growth
- Local Needs/Homelessness
- Regeneration
- Rural
- Key Workers
- Supported Housing
- Existing Stock
- Black and Minority Ethnic

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

2.5 Sub Regional Context

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

The Government is encouraging local authorities to undertake joint working on Local Development Frameworks. Dacorum Borough Council is currently working with Hertfordshire County Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans District Council, Three Rivers District Council, Watford Borough Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). SHMA's are a crucial part of the evidence base that informs policy and helps shape strategic thinking in housing and planning. In line with Government guidance, the SHMA will look at both housing need and demand across the study area.

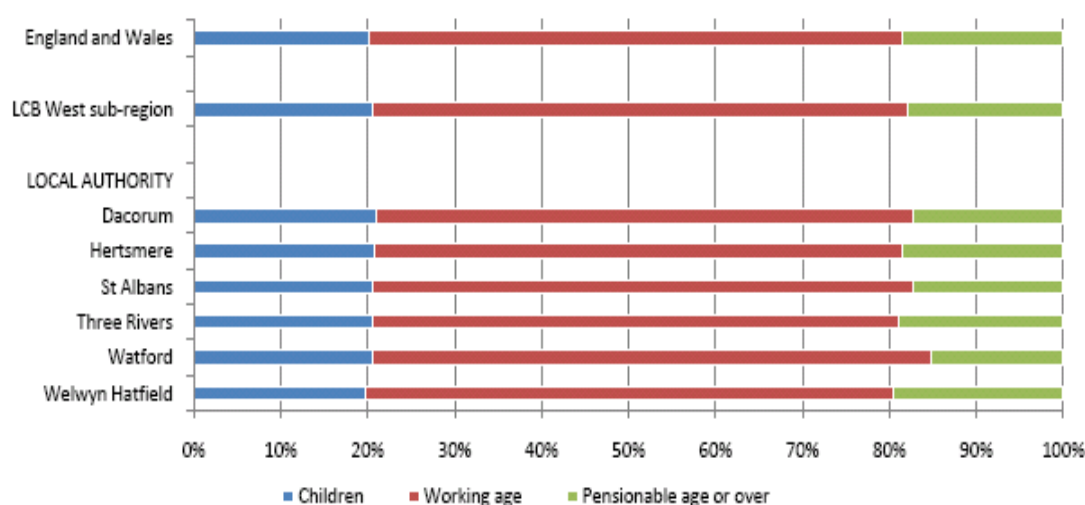
3 DACORUM - PROFILE AND NEED ANALYSIS

3.1 A Profile of the Borough

3.1.1 Population

With 138,400 residents, Dacorum has the highest population of all Hertfordshire's districts (Office of National Statistics 2006). 15.6% of residents are aged 65 or over and 18.6% are under 15.

The graph below illustrates the age profile by area (Source: UK Census of population 2001)



Population statistics for Dacorum were projected forward to give an estimate of possible population changes (NHS, Dacorum Primary Care Trust). It estimated that the over 75 age group would increase most considerably, increasing by 61.2% by 2028. Smaller increases can be seen in the 66-74 age group, which has a predicted growth of 28% by 2028. At the other end of the spectrum the 20-64-age group (expected to sustain our economy) is projected to change by a minor 0.7% by 2028. Further the 15-19 age group is expected to rise until 2010 then decrease by 3% by 2028. Similarly over the next 25 years, children under five and the 5-14 age groups are expected to show negative or no population changes. By the year 2028, these groups will have decreased by 0.1% and 5.7% respectively.

3.1.2 Employment and Salary

The average full time wage for people in employment who live in the Borough is £28,065 per person per annum, while the average full time wage for people who work in Dacorum (but may not necessarily live here) is £27,866 per person per annum. This implies that many residents travel outside of the Borough to higher paying jobs elsewhere in areas such as London.

Nationally the current economic climate has had a noticeable impact on unemployment rates. The unemployment rate was 5.7 per cent for the three months to August 2008, up 0.5% over the previous quarter and up 0.4% over the year. The number of unemployed people increased by 164,000 over the quarter and by 146,000 over the year, to reach 1.79 million. The last time there were larger quarterly increases in the unemployment rate and level was in the early 1990s.

The unemployment claimant count was 939,900 in September 2008, up 31,800 over the previous month and up 104,900 over the year.

The redundancy level for the three months to August 2008 was also up by 28,000 to 147,000, both over the quarter and over the year.

The Council recognises these factors are likely to lead to an increase in those seeking advice and assistance from the Housing Options Service.

3.1.3 The Housing Market

On the 1 April 2008 there were 59,673 residential properties in Dacorum. A dwelling is a self-contained unit of accommodation, as defined by the Census 2001. The tenure split of the dwelling stock across the Borough can be seen below. The table shows that the majority of dwellings (78%) were privately owned (including those being let).

Tenure	Number	Percentage
Local Authority	10,630	18%
Registered Social Landlord	2,376	4%
Other Public Sector	109	>1%
Private Sector	46,558	78%

House prices in Dacorum, largely due to its proximity to London, are amongst the highest in the county. Though house prices are currently falling, affordability continued to worsen in Dacorum during 2007, with house prices rising a further 11% to an average of £294,156. This has resulted in more and more people turning to our over-stretched social housing sector. The housing waiting list in Dacorum jumped 8% last year to over 4,500 households.

Information from the National Housing Federation shows that homes in the Borough now cost over 13 times more than the average income. This is the fourth highest ratio in Hertfordshire.

3.2 Housing Need and Demand

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

3.2.1 Housing Needs Survey

In August 2003 the Council commissioned a survey of housing need within the Borough, which was completed in January 2004. The key findings of the Survey were:

- Affordability is a major issue due to the local house price/income relationship, particularly to new forming households.
- The population is ageing, with considerable evidence of significant and growing support needs.
- There is a requirement to develop a more balanced housing stock with a need for more accommodation suitable for smaller households in both the private and affordable sectors.
- Annually 1,246 affordable housing units are needed, 788 more than existing stock supply.
- Access to home ownership is beyond the reach of 90% of the concealed households identified in the survey.

Based on the finding of the Housing Needs Survey, the table below illustrates the need and supply of affordable housing in the Borough. Even allowing for re-lets and new build there is an annual shortfall of 710 units which, projected over the seven-year period to 2011, would leave a shortfall of 4,670 units.

Backlog of Existing Need (eliminated over 5 years)	168
Net New Formation	627
Net Increase in Registered Need	433
In-Migrant Need	18
Total Annual Need	<u>1,246</u>
Total Supply from Re-Lets (458) + New Supply (78)	<u>536</u>
Net Annual Outstanding Need	<u>710</u>

Following the publication of Planning Policy Statement 3 by the Government in November 2006, Housing Needs Surveys are to be replaced by Strategic Housing Market Assessments in forming part of the evidence base to underpin the Council's Housing Strategy and planning policies. Strategic Housing Market Assessments have a wider remit than Housing Needs Surveys in that they look at how market areas operate in terms of both housing need and demand. Dacorum is currently working jointly with Hertfordshire County Council and five other Local Authorities (Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford and Welwyn Hatfield) to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The information from this study will be used to review the information in this section.

3.2.2 Housing Register

As well as the Housing Needs Study, we also use our register of households applying for social housing as a measure of need.

At 1 April 2008 there were 4,794 households on the Council's Housing Register. This figure has increased dramatically in recent years. Between 2006 and 2008 the number of households on the housing waiting list almost doubled rising from 2,398 households registered in 2006.

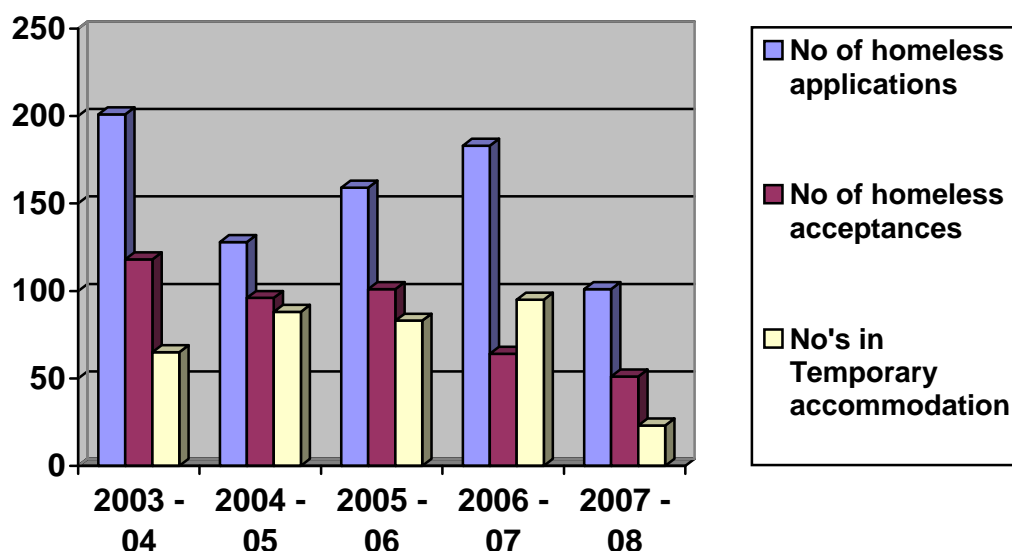
It should be noted that not all of the applicants on the housing register are categorised as being in legislative priority need or in housing need as defined in the Housing Needs Survey. Some are adequately housed in their current accommodation.

However, we are also aware that the potential demand is far higher than the numbers indicated by the housing register. A national study carried out for the Housing Corporation found that approximately one third of people who state in surveys that they would like to live in social housing have actually put their names on waiting lists. Overall, 34% of private renting households say they would like to live in social housing if they could get it.

3.2.3 Homelessness

Since 2007 the Council has operated a Housing Options Service that merged and reconfigured the previous housing advice, housing register and homelessness services. The main objective of the service is to provide a comprehensive options service for people with housing needs. The ethos is that the specialist homelessness element of the service is very much a last resort - with the front line customer contact being first and foremost about prevention.

The levels of homelessness in Dacorum have in the last five years, reduced year on year and the Council has already met the Government's target on the use of temporary accommodation before the 2010 deadline. This reduction is the direct result on the implementation of the homeless prevention and housing options measures. The graph below shows the number of approaches to the Council's Homeless Service, the number of households, that after investigation, have been accepted as homeless and the number of households in temporary accommodation.



For people accepted by the Council as homeless, eligible and in priority need, the main causes of homelessness are given below:

Causes of Statutory Homelessness	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Parental Eviction	40%	36%	24%	17%	15%
Relative/Friend Eviction	9%	13%	12%	11%	5%
Partnership Breakdown: Non-violent	3%	4%	6%	2%	3%
Partnership Breakdown: Violent	9%	16%	14%	12%	15%
Mortgage Arrears	1%	2%	2%	3%	8%
Rent Arrears	1%	1%	-	-	-
Loss of Assured Shorthold	29%	14%	28%	27%	28%
Loss of Other Rented	2%	4%	7%	14%	15%
Leaving Institutional Care	2%	2%	3%	3%	5%
Other	4%	7%	5%	12%	7%

The four main reasons recorded for homelessness in 2007/08 were loss of assured shorthold tenancies, loss of other rented accommodation, parental eviction and

partnership breakdown (violent), accounting for 73% of the total homeless acceptances.

Mortgage Rescue Schemes

The Council is working closely with Registered Social Landlords to reduce the increasing levels of repossessions occurring in response to the current economic climate.

3.2.4 Young People

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

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

Services and accommodation available include:

- The Swan Foyer in Berkhamsted, and George Street Young People's Housing Service in Hemel Hempstead are two schemes which the Council can refer young people to that provide supported accommodation. The schemes help equip young people with living skills and lead them towards independent living. Once this is completed, referrals can be made to either the Council for move-on accommodation or help is given to find accommodation in the private rented sector. The young people are also helped into further education, training or employment and are therefore less likely to rely on national benefits.
- A new homelessness prevention and support service launched in July 2008 by Herts Young Homeless Group and Aldwyck Housing Association. This includes:
 - Advice, information and mediation for 16-25 year olds.
 - Floating support, which is support with housing related issues available to young people in their own homes.
 - Crisis intervention (Crash Pad) to enable young people to access emergency accommodation whilst they seek further advice.
- Multi-agency joint working arrangements including:
 - Integrated practice networks for practitioners to share good practice.
 - The Common Assessment Framework which covers all aspects of a child's development is a way for practitioners to work together to meet the needs of children.

- The joint housing protocol between all ten local authorities in Hertfordshire and Children Schools and Families at Hertfordshire County Council has been revised to take into account the Common Assessment Framework.
- Team Around the Child which brings together relevant and appropriate practitioners with the family to agree a multi-agency plan to meet the child's or young person's additional needs.
- Multi-agency support teams who are responsible for providing a collective multi-agency management response that ensure the effective co-ordination, management and provision of support for children and young people.

It is important that young people most at risk of becoming homeless have increased knowledge and awareness of the impact that homelessness can have on their life chances. Work has commenced on a preventative education toolkit, which is to be launched in 2008 for use across local schools, youth groups and other relevant agencies on issues surrounding homelessness. Herts Young Homeless Group has been commissioned to develop the toolkit in conjunction with service users.

Other work being taken forward is reflected in the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013, copies of which are available on our website.

3.2.5 Key Workers

House price inflation over the last five years has caused significant difficulties in achieving access to the housing market for many households. It has also created difficulties for employers in both recruiting and retaining personnel, with a particular emphasis on key workers in service industries in both public and private sectors.

In 2003 David Couttie Associates were commissioned by the County Council to undertake a Key Worker Housing Needs Study across Hertfordshire. It aimed to:

- Understand the impact of current house prices and housing provision on recruitment and retention within the public sector;
- Provide evidence of the need for additional affordable housing for Key Workers (i.e. size, tenure, purchase or rental); and
- Provide evidence to support recommendations and implications for the implementation of a Key Worker Strategy.

The report was published in June 2004 and comprised surveys of both employers and employees. The key findings of the Survey were:

Employees:

- Cost is the primary area of concern, although there are reasonable levels of satisfaction among Key Workers with both the location and quality of housing.
- There is perceived to be a high turnover of staff within Key Worker professions, and a high level of staff intending to leave Hertfordshire due to housing difficulties.
- A high proportion of Key Workers live outside Hertfordshire because it is cheaper to do so.
- There is a predominant aspiration for family sized accommodation expressed by Key Workers, even though the actual need is for smaller housing.

Employers:

- The high cost of housing is seen as a major barrier to the recruitment and retention of Key Worker staff.
- Few employers offer Key Worker staff the opportunity to work from home and most employers consider it an impractical option because of the type of work involved.
- While many employers now offer relocation packages to Key Workers on professional or management grades, few currently do much more than this.
- Employers believe low cost market housing represents the most desirable solution to overcome the housing problems faced by Key Workers.

3.2.6 Older People

The 2003 Housing Needs Survey indicated a significant growth of the population in the over 65 age group between 2001 and 2021 with an increase of 5,742 more individuals (27%) over the forecast period. The largest rise is projected to occur between 2011 and 2016 (2,393 - 11%). The 'Older' retirement group, those 80 and over, grows by 35% up to 2021, with 1,867 more people. This group represents 7,162 people in the Borough by 2021.

The Government's Strategy *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods - A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society* (25th February 2008) has five themes or priorities for change which are:

- A new national housing advice and information service with strengthened local housing information services.
- More widespread rapid repair and adaptation services including the provision of Handyperson Schemes and Home Improvement Agencies.

- Modernisation of the Disabled Facilities Grant process.
- All homes to be built to Lifetime Homes standard by 2011 in the public sector and 2013 in the private sector.
- Strengthened relationships between housing, health and care services.

The Council recognises that housing has a key role to play in maintaining independent living for older people for as long as is feasible and in helping to prevent unnecessary admission to residential care or hospital. For individuals, living at home is usually the preferred choice. The Council can assist with a range of measures from low level intervention such as the provision of a community alarm or a Disabled Facilities Grant, to high level interventions such as a transfer to more suitable independent housing or assistance in a sheltered scheme.

The Council has a significant supply of elderly persons' accommodation, 32 sheltered housing schemes and a further 551 dispersed sheltered dwellings. One Scheme in Hemel Hempstead is an 'extra care' scheme. These currently form the basis of the Council's long term provision for elderly people in housing need. However, there is a continuing need to examine the possibilities of refurbishment, remodelling or re-provision of these existing sheltered schemes where a scheme may be suitable for extra care, or no longer satisfy modern standards or customer expectations.

The County Council's Adult Care Service is leading on a major project across the County regarding the formulation and implementation of an integrated strategy for developing accommodation services for older people where extra care can be provided. Dacorum Borough Council has agreed, as one strand of this strategy, to consider grouping of sheltered housing schemes together and reviewing care, housing related support and technology. They have set up four Accommodation Services for Older People Project Boards with local partners to lead and manage the process.

We will continue to work with our partners to research initiatives, develop services and accommodation to improve and extend housing options available to meet the needs and aspirations of the growing older population of Dacorum.

3.2.7 Supporting People

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

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

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

The Hertfordshire Supporting People Programme is administered and managed by Hertfordshire County Council but there are strong local links between the County Council and the ten Local Authorities to both monitor and profile demand and provide appropriate accommodation at a local level.

The Supporting People Strategy 2007-2012 sets out a programme to review current provision and ensure that resources are targeted and used effectively. By remodelling existing services it is envisaged that sustainable savings can be made to commission alternative services that better meet the current needs of vulnerable people. The Council works closely with the Supporting People Commissioning Body and support providers to improve the fit between the provision and demand for housing support.

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

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

3.2.8 People with Disabilities

The 2003 Housing Needs Survey reported that 16% of households in Dacorum contain somebody with a special need. These needs could be a walking disability, wheelchair use, those residents requiring some type of disabled adaptation to their property or residents with a learning difficulty.

The main implication for housing is the need to promote independent living, mobility, choice and control by people with disabilities and to secure access to mainstream housing provision. There is a need to work with affordable housing providers to deliver specialist housing schemes, lifetime homes and ensure the best use of adapted properties.

The Council offers support to elderly and disabled householders in the private and public sectors assisting them to access grants for adaptations to enable them to remain safe in their own home.

3.2.9 Gypsies and Travellers

There is an urgent need to address the shortage of sites for Gypsies and Travellers and the problems that flow from it in terms of Gypsy and Traveller families not being able to gain access to housing, education, health, employment and other opportunities enjoyed by other members of society, as well as the conflicts at local level over unauthorised encampment and use of sites without planning permission.

An assessment of the Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in South and West Hertfordshire was completed in April 2005. The study was jointly undertaken with neighbouring local authorities and Hertfordshire County Council. Following this, the authorities commissioned a second study to look at the "Identification of Potential Gypsy and Traveller Sites" to assist discussion on how their needs could be met. This study was published in March 2007.

In February 2008 the East of England Regional Assembly submitted a single issue revision to the East of England Plan, which sets out the strategic framework to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and the additional pitch numbers required at a district level. Consultation on potential sites is currently underway. An Examination in Public has been held and a panel will report to the Government in early 2009.

3.2.10 Rural Communities

According to the 2001 Census approximately 19% of Dacorum's population live outside of the three main towns. Such a significant and dispersed rural population has significant impacts on the provision of housing services.

The Council works with the Rural Housing Enabler, Parish Councils and Housing Associations to provide new affordable housing within rural communities. In the period 2004-2007 Registered Social Landlords built 23 new affordable homes in rural villages in Dacorum.

3.2.11 Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

The Black and Minority Ethnic population accounts for only 8% of the population of Dacorum, compared with 9% for the Eastern Region and 13% for England as a whole.

Generally, BME households appear to have access to a wide range of facilities and income levels are similar to those in the whole population. According to the 2003 Housing Needs Survey, 84% of those BME households who said their home was inadequate, cited 'too small' as the reason for inadequacy. 89.2% of the BME households who wished to move but could not, said they could not afford to move compared to 70.5% for the whole population.

3.2.12 Ex Offenders

National research shows that housing is the key to reducing crime and re-offending and we recognise that many ex-offenders do not have access to housing or support upon their release. Stable housing is therefore vital in the prevention of homelessness. The Government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) reported evidence that having stable accommodation reduces the risk of re-offending by a fifth.

Dacorum has recognised the need to provide housing advice and support to prisoners and in October 2007 formulated a programme with HMP the Mount in Bovingdon to address this. We currently conduct monthly surgeries and interview prisoners who are to be released within three months offering advice and resettlement options to prevent their homelessness or the risk of repeat incidence.

3.2.13 Victims of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a significant cause of homelessness within Dacorum and over the last five years, relationship breakdowns have been in the top three causes for people seeking housing advice.

Temporary accommodation for victims is limited to spaces available at Women's Aid Refuges at any given time. In some cases, women are unwilling to leave the area of support in order to take up a place of safety and this often leads to victims electing to remain at home and at risk. They are given advice, legal remedies and additional security measures to help them do so.

We work closely with Women's Aid and the Sunflower Project to assist victims of domestic violence by carrying out joint interviews and conducting regular surgeries to ensure that they have full access to the services available to them.

3.2.14 Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Misuse

It is recognised that a high number of homeless people are experiencing mental health or drug and alcohol problems when approaching the Council for assistance. We will continue to take a multi-agency approach to support these clients to access appropriate services, encourage them to address their addiction and consider their long term housing options.

Hertfordshire County Council is currently developing a Mental Health Accommodation Strategy 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. Early findings suggest that demand for supported accommodation for mental health issues is primarily from single people. The Mental Health Accommodation Strategy will include work towards providing more appropriate and fit for purpose accommodation than is currently available and will link closely to the Supporting People Strategy.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

In collaboration with the London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Housing Group we have identified three strategic objectives that are relevant to all the partners. The Action Plan is at Annex A and contains both the Sub-Regional actions that contribute to these objectives and the local actions relevant to Dacorum.

The Action Plan is a working document and may need to be adapted or amended once the outcomes of the SHMA are known or when the options appraisal has been concluded or if external drivers, such as significant changes in the national economy emerge.

4.1 Strategic Objective One

Maximising Affordable Housing in the right places

It is evident from the consultation carried out with key stakeholders across the Borough that as well as a national agenda for housing, increasing the provision of affordable housing for local people is viewed as being of key importance. At Dacorum we seek to maximise the provision of good quality affordable housing in partnership with a range of stakeholders and providers.

New Affordable Housing Provision

Policy H1 of the East of England Plan sets out a minimum housing provision for Dacorum of 12,000 new homes between 2001 and 2021 (10,140 of which remained to be built as at March 2006). This figure includes provision, the amount to be determined through Development Plan Documents (DPDs), for any expansion of Hemel Hempstead within St Albans District. Due to the need to take into account the requirement to plan Green Belt releases to accommodate new development to 2031, the actual level of new homes required within the Borough is likely to be about 17,000 (2006-2031).

Within this overall housing requirement, local Development Plan Documents should set appropriate targets for affordable housing taking into account:

- The objectives of the RSS;
- Local assessments of affordable housing need, as part of Strategic Housing Market Assessments;
- The need where appropriate to set specific, separate targets for social rented and intermediate housing;
- Evidence of affordability pressures; and
- The Regional Housing Strategy.

The overall regional target against which affordable housing delivery will be monitored is 35%.

Dacorum Borough Council began work on its Local Development Framework following adoption of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan in 2004. The current timetable is for the Core Strategy DPD to be adopted in mid 2011, with other DPDs, including those relating to Site Allocations and Development Control policies following. Until these DPDs are adopted, the Dacorum Borough Local Plan remains the statutory planning document for the Borough (together with the East of England Plan and any 'saved' Structure Plan policies). The Local Plan sets a challenging target of 1,250 new affordable dwellings between 2001 and 2011, at a rate of 125 per annum.

Achievement of affordable housing is to a large extent dependent on the activities and funding of Housing Associations and the ability with which the property market can take account of affordable housing needs in land transactions. It also depends on the size and nature of housing sites that come forward. The Council will continue to work with key partners to develop innovative solutions to maximise opportunities for new affordable housing within Dacorum.

As well as increasing the number of new affordable homes provided, the Dacorum Partnership is driving to push up the environmental quality of new homes. The Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy includes a target to increase the percentage of new homes that meet the Government's recommended sustainable code levels to 100% at Level 3 by 2011 and 100% at Level 6 by 2021.

Making Better Use of Existing Affordable Housing

Meeting housing need is not only about the supply of new affordable housing, it is also about the quality and choice we are able to offer to the community, making better use of existing affordable housing and improving accessibility to the private sector.

Housing Allocations Policy

Dacorum Borough Council is obliged by Central Government to provide a policy on how it allocates its housing stock and works with the partner Housing Associations that provide social housing for people in the Dacorum area. This policy is currently under review.

The revised Housing Allocation Policy will show how properties are allocated in a fair and transparent manner. It will take into regard the legal duty to house those with the highest housing need as well as offering choice to applicants and helping build sustainable communities.

Dacorum Borough Council is aware of the detrimental effect that homelessness and inadequate housing can have and will work with our customers in making every effort to prevent this. As well as providing social housing the Council will ensure that the needs and aspirations of those that seek housing advice and help from us are met in every possible way.

Choice Based Lettings Scheme

The Council successfully operated a pilot choice based lettings scheme for a period of three years, which was extended to cover the whole Borough in June 2006. The scheme gives both Housing Register applicants, homeless households and existing tenants wishing to transfer to alternative accommodation, an opportunity to bid for a vacant property, which is advertised in the Gazette newspaper, on the Council's Website and at Council offices, on a weekly basis.

The scheme attracts approximately 250 bids per week, which equates to about 33 bids per property for the eight or so properties that are offered each week. Some highly desirable homes, such as two and three bedroom houses, receive greater interest dependent on their location within the Borough.

The overall number of bids is low in comparison to the number of applicants on the Housing Register who are eligible to bid for these properties. There may be a number of factors for this although the Council is keen to address this issue by increasing the means of accessibility to the bidding system and giving greater flexibility to individuals.

Under Occupation

The Council has operated the Tenants' Removal Scheme for many years. This is an incentive scheme for older people living in general needs accommodation that has two bedrooms or more and who wish to move to sheltered housing. It provides both financial and practical assistance. Removal and other major costs are paid for directly by the Council.

In March 2007 the Council introduced an Under Occupation Scheme in order to encourage younger tenants living in properties larger than their needs to move into smaller accommodation. A tenant moving under this scheme is given a financial payment per bedroom released when moving to smaller accommodation. For those tenants who cannot afford to move until they are in receipt of the allowance, the Council may arrange their removals and deduct the cost of this from the allowance they would receive.

By releasing more family sized accommodation for re-letting, it is possible for homeless families or tenants living in temporary or overcrowded accommodation to be re-housed, making better use of the size of property.

Deposit Guarantee Scheme

The Council is keen to increase the availability of private rented accommodation locally to meet the rising levels of housing need and avert the threat of homelessness where possible. Our deposit guarantee scheme, DIGS (Dacorum Initiative Guarantee Scheme), has been operating since 2002 and currently has 140 families housed in the area. Dacorum Rent Aid (DRA) operates a similar scheme for single people and currently supports 60 tenancies. We have managed to forge close links with local letting agents and deliver Landlord Forums and

regular newsletters with the help of the National Association of Small Landlords, Dacorum Rent Aid, Housing Benefit and Environmental Health.

Dacorum Borough Council wants to ensure that all customers are fully aware of the private rented sector as a housing option and what it means to them for the long-term. Support is made available to help them sustain their tenancies with floating support arrangements in place. We also want to increase the numbers of properties available by working closely with letting agents and private landlords. We will work closely with Environmental Health to ensure the accreditation of properties in the private rented sector and raise the standard as a whole.

Summary of achievements 2004-2007 and beyond

- 295 new affordable homes provided between 2004 and 2007.
- Affordable Housing Strategy completed in 2005.
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment commissioned in November 2007.
- Funding of over £15 million received from the National Affordable Housing Programme 2006-08, to provide over 500 new homes.
- Social Housing Grant for 17 new affordable homes obtained in the 2008-2010 bidding round, with further bids expected.
- Six Council owned garage sites in Bennetts End redeveloped by Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association to provide 34 homes for social rent and 16 homes for low cost home ownership.
- Former Council owned Depot redeveloped by William Sutton Homes to provide twelve new affordable homes for social rent.
- Chilterns Hostel redeveloped by Aldwyck Housing Association to provide a new temporary housing facility and eight new one and two bedroom apartments for social rent.
- Increased the numbers of families helped into the private rented sector through DIGS - currently 140 families housed.
- Forged stronger links with the private rented sector and delivered regular Landlords Forums.
- Choice Based Lettings Scheme extended to cover the whole Borough in June 2006.

Objectives for 2008/11

Details of how we plan to deliver these objectives can be found in the Action Plan in Annex A

- Maximise use of existing housing stock by encouraging take up of under occupation incentive scheme to free up larger properties
- Work with partners to increase the supply of affordable housing, including affordable rented and shared ownership
- Ensure best use of existing resources to maximise delivery of affordable housing
- Improve accessibility to private sector housing

4.2 Strategic Objective Two

Improving the condition of both Private and Public Sector housing in Dacorum

It is evident from the consultation carried out with our stakeholders that as well as Government policy, decent housing is an essential element of overall health and well being.

The Government acknowledged the importance of quality housing with the introduction of the Decent Homes Standard in 2000. The Green Paper 'Quality and Choice: a Decent Home for All' required all social housing providers to reach a minimum standard by 2010.

To meet the DHS homes needed to be "warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities" (Department of Communities and Local Government).

Decent Homes criteria

- Meet the current HHSRS Standard (be free of Category 1 hazards)
- Key components to be in a reasonable state of repair (external walls, roof structure, etc)
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services (kitchens, bathrooms, etc)
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (insulation, heating systems, etc)

Since 2001 the number of non-decent properties has fallen nationally by over 50%.

Some local authorities have however found it extremely difficult to meet the standard, due to the poor state of their housing stock and lack of financial resources. The Government now expects 95% of social housing landlords to meet the standard by 2010.

The target was extended in 2002 to vulnerable households in the private sector with the aim that 65% of homes occupied by vulnerable households are decent by 2006/07, 70% by 2010 and 75% by 2020. The Government recently abandoned these targets for decent homes in the private sector, following the introduction of new National Indicators.

Improving the condition of housing in the Private Sector

The condition of properties in the private sector is primarily the owner's responsibility. The Council does however recognise that not all owners are in a position to adequately maintain and make the necessary improvements to their homes. It is particularly important to consider the needs of Dacorum's growing older population, who may not have the funds or may require assistance to carry out improvements, or maintain their homes.

Privately owned homes make up the majority of housing in Dacorum, with a figure of around 26,500 households in April 2008. Historic survey data shows low levels of unfit homes or homes in serious disrepair. However, the Council will be commissioning a Private Sector House Conditions Survey during 2008/09. This will identify current standards of housing within the private sector, which will be measured against the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (see below), as well as other relevant indicators. The findings of the survey will be used to help inform future decisions regarding targeting of assistance and other initiatives that may be identified to help improve living conditions in the private sector, particularly for vulnerable households.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

The Government has made changes to the way in which the Council measures the condition of standards of homes, by introducing a mechanism to assess faults or hazards found in them. The process assesses how dangerous these hazards are to the health and safety of someone living in the home, visiting it, neighbours or people passing by it. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), gives each home a hazard score, which is based on the likelihood of the hazard occurring and how serious it would be if the hazard did occur, so predicting the resulting risk to health and safety. The higher the score the greater the hazard to health and safety.

Providing Assistance

The Council has a Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, which sets out the circumstances in which assistance may be available to address poor housing issues and what form the assistance will take. This policy can be viewed at <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/HP001.pdf>.

Assistance has been, and will continue to be, given in appropriate cases under this policy. However, with the changes in the way that housing conditions are assessed and other changes introduced by the latest Housing Act including new duties and powers relating to private sector housing bringing significant changes for local authorities and private landlords, this policy is under review. It is intended that the results of the house conditions survey will also be available to feed in to this review, leading to the publishing of a new Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.

The Council is currently involved, as a partner, in two bid applications for funding from the Regional Housing Pot of the East of England. These are both as a part of the London Commuter Belt Private Sector Housing Group, for projects aimed at assisting vulnerable households by bringing their properties up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard. One bid for which Dacorum is the Lead Authority is for updating and repairing homes to help meet the standard. The other is to provide measures that increase affordable warmth and reduce carbon emissions. A formal decision on the funding of these projects is expected in early 2009.

HMO's and Licensing

House prices are relatively high in Dacorum, so a well maintained and managed private rented sector, including its houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), is essential to the well being of those who cannot, or do not wish to, access the owner occupied or social housing sectors.

The Housing Act also introduced mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation with three or more storeys and five or more occupiers, with some limited exemptions. A licence is issued where the house is reasonably suitable for occupation as a HMO, the management arrangements are satisfactory, and the licensee and manager are fit and proper persons. Operating a licensable HMO without holding a license could result in prosecution of the owner and a fine of up to £20,000.

There is a requirement for a HHSRS assessment to be carried out within five years of a HMO Licence being issued. The Council aims to do this as soon as possible after issuing a licence, or before issuing the licence where possible.

Empty Homes

Dacorum has relatively few long-term empty private sector homes. As at 1 April 2008 Council Tax records showed 673 private sector dwellings in Dacorum had been vacant for more than six months.

The Council is however working to try to return these properties in to use where possible. The Council's Empty Homes Strategy is being reviewed as a part of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, to ensure it reflects the current position. As well as making better use of existing dwellings, these activities can help contribute to targets for decent homes.

Summary of achievements 2004-2007 and beyond

- Last year 67 homes were improved or adapted for the benefit of disabled residents and a further 24 were improved or repaired for vulnerable occupiers.
- The full impact of the changes introduced by the Housing Act 2004 are now fully understood, although areas were not actually introduced by the Government until 2006. Relevant computer/IT systems have been updated as necessary to account for these changes.

- All relevant staff have been trained in the use of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and have been certified as being competent in its use.
- A HMO Licensing Scheme has been introduced and 9 Licences were issued last year

Objectives for 2008/11

Details of how we plan to deliver these objectives can be found in the Action Plan in Annex A

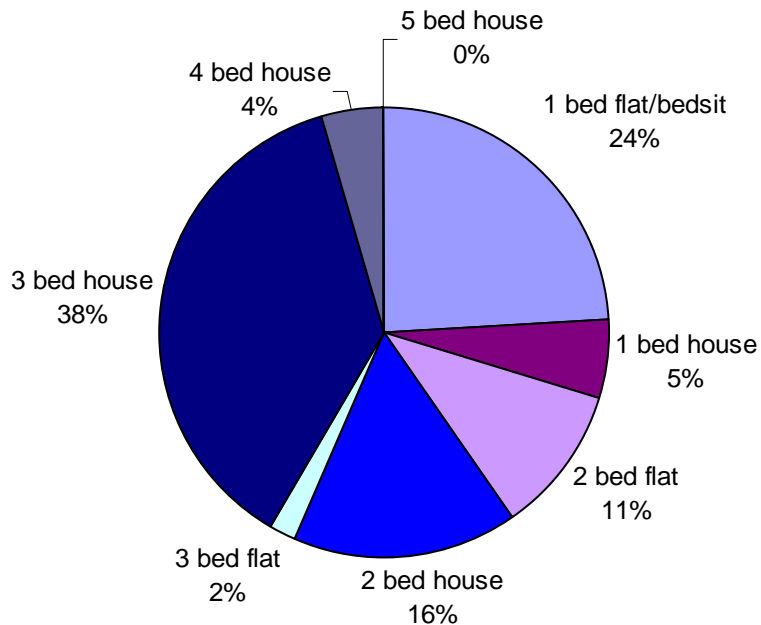
- Determine current housing conditions within the private sector
- Maximise the use of existing housing stock and minimise empty homes
- Improve energy efficiency to reduce fuel costs and minimise environmental damage
- Improve the housing conditions of vulnerable people

Improving the condition of housing in the Public Sector

Housing stock overview

The Council has a significant housing stock of 10,630 dwellings, accounting for 18% of the total number of homes in the Borough. The properties are generally traditionally built low-rise flats and houses, with a small number of non-traditional properties such as timber frame and pre-cast reinforced concrete dwellings.

Housing Stock by type



Meeting the Decent Homes Standard

Recent Stock Condition Surveys show that the Council has a very low number of dwellings that fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Of the total housing stock of 10,630, just 83 properties are classified as non-decent. The majority of these properties failed on the thermal comfort component. This is largely due to the reluctance of some tenants to have central heating installed in their properties.

The low number of non-decent homes reflects the generally good condition of the housing stock and the considerable investment that has been made in recent years.

It is however important to bear in mind that the Decent Homes Standard is not a constant. Properties that currently meet the standard will later fail if they are not adequately maintained.

On the basis of the most recent stock condition data, it is estimated that some £536 million will be required over the next thirty years to maintain the Council's housing Stock and to meet the aspirations of the residents, Members and Council Officers.

The current budget provision within the Capital budget and Housing Revenue Account is insufficient to cover the volume of work necessary in order to maintain the level of non-decent homes at the current value of less than 1.00%.

The table below shows the required investment to prevent possible failures under decent homes over the next three years.

	Main roof (£000's)	2 nd roof Gutters/ chimneys	Windows (£000's)	Kitchen (£000's)	Bathroom (£000's)	Boilers (£000's)	Electrics (£000's)
2009	1,315	188	387	6,713	1,673	1,082	774
2010	1,244	171	991	9,193	1,183	1,799	1,382
2011	956	65.5	749	766	285	761	553
Total	3,515	425	2,127	16,672	3,141	3,642	2,709
Budget	318	168	2,127	5,550	2,850	3,294	1,320
Deficit	3,197	257	0	11,122	291	348	1,389

The present financial situation will not enable the Housing Repairs Service to continue to deliver at the current level of investment over the next three years. The thirty-year plan identified that the next four-year period requires a higher level of investment in order to maintain the stock in its current condition (see table below).

Year	Expenditure Capital and Revenue Repairs (£000)	Year	Expenditure Capital and Revenue Repairs (£000)
1. 2008/09	22236	17. 2024/25	15394
2. 2009/10	22236	18. 2025/26	15394
3. 2010/11	22236	19. 2026/27	15394
4. 2011/12	22236	20. 2027/28	15395
5. 2012/13	22236	21. 2028/29	16277
6. 2013/14	20077	22. 2029/30	16277
7. 2014/15	20077	23. 2030/31	16277
8. 2015/16	20077	24. 2031/32	16277
9. 2016/17	20077	25. 2032/33	16277
10. 2017/18	20077	26. 2033/34	15859
11. 2018/19	17522	27. 2034/35	15859
12. 2019/20	17522	28. 2035/36	15859
13. 2020/21	17522	29. 2036/37	15859
14. 2021/22	17522	30. 2037/38	15859
15. 2022/23	17523	30 year total	£536,827
16. 2023/24	15394		

The impact of the reduced investment in programmed works will be an increase in the number of responsive repairs that are required and a progressive increase in the proportion of stock falling out of the Decent Homes status.

Responsive Repairs and Voids

The Council completed a review of the 'in-house' Housing Repairs Service and to meet with the objectives in the Business Plan to ensure best value the Responsive Repairs and Voids work was subject to a competitive tender.

Following the tender evaluation in January 2008 the Direct Labour Housing Repairs Service was transferred to Mitie Property Services.

The contract is subject to continuous monitoring of Key Performance Indicators against both historic performance and benchmarked against other Local Authorities and social landlords.

Areas of process improvement have been identified and are subject to ongoing implementation by the Contractor, in order to maximise the efficiency of the repair service and to improve customer satisfaction.

Decent Homes Planned Partnering Agreement

The recommendation has been made to extend the Planned Partnering Agreement with Apollo London Limited, for a further year, in order to continue the delivery of the main work strands of the Decent Homes programme.

The contract can be extended further subject to budget availability and ongoing satisfactory performance.

The current performance indicators provide favourable information regarding the continued level of service and the extension of the financial framework enables savings to be shared by the contractor and Council.

Decent Homes Plus

The Council is preparing details of an enhanced Decent Home Plus schedule of works, which reflect the priorities and aspirations of residents, Members and Council Officers.

Priority areas for investment include additional insulation to improve the fuel efficiency of our stock, replacement door programme, additional sound insulation between properties and off street parking and landscaping of communal areas.

Currently there is no obligation to deliver a Decent Homes Plus standard, however these improvements would only become viable if the available budgets exceeded the cost of those works identified as essential from the stock condition survey.

Summary of achievements 2004-2007 and beyond:

- Value for Money Review of Repairs and Maintenance carried out 2005. Action plan for improvement implemented.
- Reduction in % of non-decent homes.
- Improved energy efficiency (SAP) rating of stock.
- PRC repair and modernisation programme completed.
- Major re-roofing project completed in Adeyfield.
- External wall insulation systems replaced on two tower blocks.
- Strategic Partnerships entered into for delivery of planned maintenance and repairs.
- Asbestos management system commissioned.
- Refurbishment of Lagley House elderly persons scheme.
- Commencement of Fire Risk Assessment works and continuation of the asbestos surveys of the communal parts of flat blocks.

Objectives for 2008-11

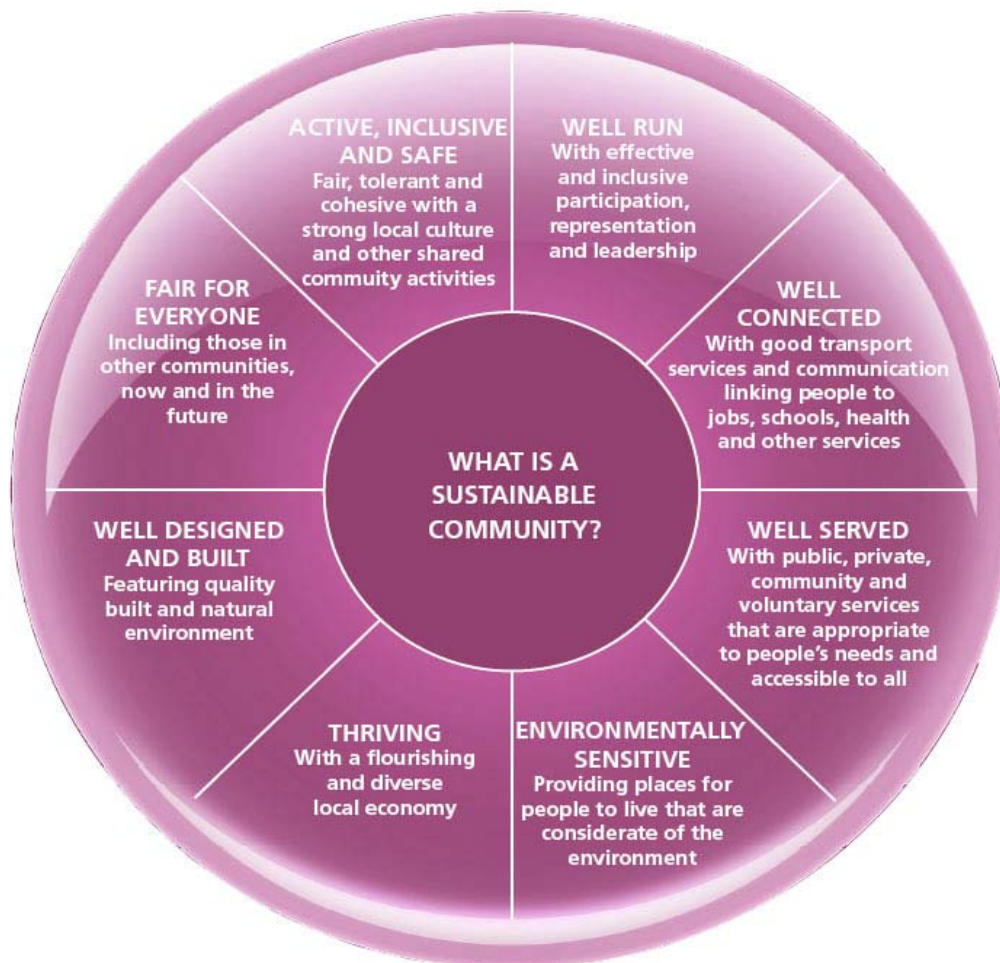
Details of how we plan to deliver these objectives can be found in the Action Plan in Annex A

- Improve the condition of the Council's housing stock
- To procure cost effective planned programmes of work
- To involve the tenants to a greater extent in the decisions effecting the repairs and maintenance of their homes
- Develop and implement the Housing Energy Strategy

4.3 Strategic Objective Three

Delivering Sustainable Communities through Partnership Working

Place shaping is a term frequently used in relation to the building and delivery of sustainable communities. “Place-shaping is about creating attractive, prosperous, vibrant, safe and strong communities where people want to live, work and do business” (IDeA).



Dacorum Partnership

'Towards 2021', the Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy, has been produced by the Dacorum Partnership, an alliance between Dacorum Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Constabulary, Community Action Dacorum, West Hertfordshire Primary Care Trust and other statutory and voluntary organisations. The strategy sets out the Partnership's commitment to achieving sustainable communities in Dacorum.

Through our consultation we identified ten 'quality of life' ambitions. These are:

1. Reducing crime and creating a safer Dacorum
2. Creating a cleaner and healthier environment
3. Delivering lifelong Learning
4. Encouraging business and local employment
5. Meeting housing need
6. Promoting culture, arts, leisure and tourism
7. Encouraging community involvement
8. Meeting the needs of children and young people
9. Improving social care and health
10. Meeting the needs of older people

Each of the quality of life themes has a forum dedicated to progressing it. The Housing Forum meets on a quarterly basis and is made up of Registered Social Landlords, Parish Councils, Voluntary Sector organisations, Council Officers and other groups related to housing issues. The Forum will be consulted on the draft Housing Strategy.

Growth

The East of England Plan outlines the scale of housing development in the region and for each local authority. It reflects the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan 2003, which brought a step change in housing delivery and has identified a number of growth areas, including Dacorum.

The Council has pledged to manage the imposed growth in the most sustainable way and to secure community benefits through the development process, whilst minimising its environmental impact as far as possible.

Growth Area Funding

The Council submitted a bid for £22.7 million over a three-year period but was only allocated £6.5 million, less than a third of what had previously been applied for. This was due to an over subscription of funds. A reassessment of fund allocation will now be carried out in an attempt to give Dacorum the best outcome with the funds available.

New Local Development Framework (LDF)

The Council will manage the growth via the new Local Development Framework that will be used to guide new development proposals within Dacorum. It will also be the apparatus for ensuring that developments reflect community needs for affordable housing, public transport provision, health care and educational facilities and making sure that development is as 'green' as possible.

Developer contributions help ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place to help support and enhance new developments. Dacorum will be working alongside

other service providers such as the Local Education Authority, Highway Authority and Primary Care Trusts to specify exactly what is needed.

Local Housing Companies

The Housing Green Paper, Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable, introduced the concept of Local Housing Companies as an incentive for Councils to bring forward their land for new housing. More broadly the initiative is one of the ways in which the Government aims to speed up the supply and quality of new homes.

In its simplest form a Local Housing Company is a joint venture company formed by the Council and a Private Sector Partner to build new homes. The Council invests land into the company matched by an equal cash investment by the private sector partner. These Local Housing Companies will develop new mixed communities and meet specific needs such as affordable and family housing, and will be able to include at least 50% affordable housing.

Ikon Consultancy Ltd is Project Manager for English Partnerships for the introduction of Local Housing Companies nationally, and has been asked to support Dacorum Borough Council as one of the 14 pilot local authorities. Ikon has recently concluded a piece of research work around examining the potential for major redevelopment at three neighbourhood centres within Hemel Hempstead. Funded by English Partnerships, ikon will now be taking the research further to see what potential there is for other public sector land in Dacorum to be included within a potential portfolio of sites.

Mobility and Choice

Dacorum Borough Council piloted its Choice Based Letting Scheme in Highfield, Woodhall Farm and Grovehill in April 2003. A review of policy occurred in April 2005, which prompted a restructuring process. The current Choice Based Letting Scheme, 'Moving with Dacorum', was launched in June 2006 allowing people on the housing list or wishing to transfer to apply for available properties.

The scheme is intended to introduce more choice in the process. Details of vacant council and Housing Association properties are advertised each week online and in The Gazette newspaper. Eligible applicants who are interested in a property can apply, providing a more open and transparent allocations system. The main benefit for current and future social housing tenants is that the scheme enables them to register their interest for a home they want to live in rather than the Council choosing the property for them.

Safer Communities

Respect Agenda

The Respect Agenda is the latest in a prolonged search for methods of tackling anti-social behaviour. The respect campaign encourages us all to work together to create a society in which we can respect one another and live in peace together. The Council is working towards achieving this by:

- Supporting and challenging anti-social households
- Tackling truancy and anti-social behaviour in schools
- Providing activities for younger people
- Strengthening local communities
- Developing stronger measures to tackle anti-social behaviour

Dacorum Borough Council is committed to the RESPECT agenda developing its services to adhere to:

- Dealing with the street scene – under age drinking and drug distribution
- Nuisance neighbours – intimidation and harassment; noise, rowdy and nuisance behaviour
- Environmental Crime – criminal damage/vandalism and graffiti

Dacorum continues to work in partnership with voluntary sectors and other agencies to enable the delivery of co-ordinated projects across the Borough.

Anti Social Behaviour

Dacorum Borough Council works in partnership with the Police and Hertfordshire County Council. The objectives of the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy are to address incidents of nuisance, harassment and anti social behaviour.

Statistically Hertfordshire remains one of the safest places in the country to live and work. Dacorum in particular has a lower crime rate for most crime types when compared against the County average, the Eastern Region and the Country. The exceptions being fraud, forgery and vehicle theft.

Local Area Agreement (LAA): Safer and Stronger Communities

In May and June 2006 the residents of Hertfordshire were surveyed regarding their views on anti-social behaviour, quality of life, participating in democracy and extent of volunteering. The results concluded that 38% of people considered vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles to be a big or fairly big problem. Similarly 43% of people considered teenagers hanging around on the streets to be a big or fairly big problem. A slightly lower statistic was evident with regards to people being drunk or rowdy in public spaces, 27% considered this issue problematic. Further positive results were evident- 70% of people surveyed said they felt very or fairly safe when outside in their local area after dark.

Sustainable Homes

The Government has a long-term goal to reduce carbon emissions by 60% by 2050. Communities and Local Government published 'Building a Greener Future: policy statement' in July 2007. This policy statement confirms the Government's intention for all new homes to be zero carbon by 2016 with a major progressive tightening of the energy efficiency building regulations - by 25 per cent in 2010 and 44 per cent in 2013 - up to the zero carbon target in 2016.

Moreover, the commitment to protecting and enhancing the environment is demonstrated in other areas. For example:

- Looking at ways of improving the energy and water efficiency of existing homes;
- Looking for opportunities to include exemplars of sustainable development in our housing;
- Making sure that developments include important green spaces, which are vital to people's health and wellbeing.

The code for Sustainable Homes was introduced in April 2007; the 'whole home' is sub-divided into nine design categories within the code:

- Energy and CO2 Emissions
- Pollution
- Water
- Health and Wellbeing
- Materials
- Management
- Surface Water Run-off
- Ecology
- Waste

At present compliance with the code is voluntary with the exception of developments of affordable housing that receive public subsidy where the schemes are expected to meet Code Level 3 from April 2008 onwards. Current Building regulations require lower levels of energy efficiency than those contained within the Code for Sustainable Homes, however they will become increasingly stringent so that all new housing of the future will be of a sustainable construction type.

Providing assistance to vulnerable groups

Fuel Poverty

Fuel Poverty, where a household cannot afford to keep warm - damages the health of those living in cold homes and affects their quality of life. The old, children, and those who are disabled or have a long-term illness are especially vulnerable. With the escalating cost of fuel, the Council recognises the importance of an energy efficient housing stock.

The Council has recently launched a new Housing Energy Strategy, which sets out its commitment to improving the energy efficiency of the housing stock. This helps

to ensure that tenants are able to afford to keep their homes warm and minimise the negative impact on the environment.

Copies of the Housing Energy Strategy are available from our Home Energy Conservation Officer or on our website www.dacorum.gov.uk.

Floating Support

Not all vulnerable people require supported housing schemes, with some older people benefiting from floating support services (housing related support not tied to specific buildings).

Hertfordshire County Council, the ten Local Authorities and the Primary Care Trust have agreed an integrated strategy for developing accommodation services for frail older people. The Borough will continue to work in partnership to increase capacity and choice for older people.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Grant aid is available within Dacorum for adaptations for people with disabilities. The grants are 'means-tested' to ensure that public funding goes to those in the most financial need. In addition to the mandatory grant aid, further discretionary grant aid is also available to assist where the mandatory grant is either insufficient or is not available for the necessary works.

Equalities

It is essential that services are accessible to all. All new Council policies and strategies, including the Housing Strategy, are subject to Equality Impact Assessments.

This is a new Housing Strategy objective so there are no previous achievements to date.

Objectives for 2008/11

Details of how we plan to deliver these objectives can be found in the Action Plan in Annex A

- Improve sustainability of new homes
- Enhance employment opportunities for vulnerable groups
- Encourage community involvement
- Maximise access to health care and encourage healthy living
- Maximise affordable housing for local people in housing need
- Support delivery of the Meeting Housing Need theme of Sustainable Communities Strategy
- Build mixed communities as appropriate
- Enhance housing choice

5. RESOURCES

5.1 Council and Other Funding Opportunities

To highlight resources and funding opportunities it is important to understand the revenue streams linked to housing through local government.

5.2 Capital Funds

Spending which gives benefits over many years, e.g. on improving homes, is known as capital expenditure. Council capital spending on housing, both for its own housing stock, and on grants to help disabled people adapt their homes etc. have to compete with demands for capital expenditure from other areas of Council services, such as leisure, information technology etc.

The Council prioritises its capital expenditure in accordance with its agreed priorities. It also has a Medium Term Financial Strategy, which sets out the Council's overall financial plans for the next three years. This is available on www.dacorum.gov.uk

The demands for capital expenditure on housing are:

- Providing grants for adaptations of properties to help people with disabilities and grants to help private residents maintain their homes
- Improvements and modernisation of the Council's housing stock

The funding of the HRA Capital Programme, most of which relates to decent homes, is dependent upon a number of sources of finance. This includes Major Repairs Allowance and Right to Buy capital receipts.

Housing Capital Summary Programme 2008/09 - 2010/11			
£000's			
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
	Programme	Programme	Programme
Disabled Facilities Grants	450	375	375
MRR - Decent Homes	7,200	7,200	7,200
Improvement Grants	195	270	270
Capital Receipts - Decent Homes	550	550	550
Total	8,395	8,395	8,395

5.3 Housing Revenue Account

The funds for this account can only be used on the Council's activities as a landlord, such as day to day repairs, rent collection, tenant participation etc.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
INCOME	Outturn Projection	Projection	Projection
Dwelling Rents Net of Voids	-40,260,000	-43,278,114	-46,215,618
Non Dwelling Rents	-184,000	-187,720	-191,552
Leaseholder Charges (ground rents and insurance)	-215,484	-215,699	-216,320
Sale of Houses - Mortgage Interest	-29,630	-30,416	-31,328
Other Items of Income (Mainly Commission on Water charges)	-202,889	-205,073	-211,225
Housing Subsidy - Major Repairs allowance	-7,602,410	-7,931,494	-8,304,371
Housing Defects Act Subsidy	0	0	0
Transfer from Major Repairs Reserve to Finance Transitional Measures General Fund (1/3)	-420,000	-280,000	-140,000
	-48,914,413	-52,128,516	-55,310,415
EXPENDITURE			
Housing Repairs (includes recovery of leaseholders repairs)	9,216,483	9,547,710	9,799,419
Supervision & Management			
General Expenses	4,956,866	4,928,963	5,011,004
Special Expenses	2,735,001	3,433,948	3,614,551
Housing Futures -HRA	140,000	235,000	0
Supporting People	150,000	148,000	146,000
Rent. Rates, Taxes & Other Charges	48,719	46,669	48,069
Provision for Bad Debts	253,000	250,000	250,000
Housing Rev A/C Subsidy:			
Subsidy to Major Repairs Reserve - Gross of transition	7,602,410	7,931,494	8,304,371
Negative Subsidy- Payments to Secretary of State	18,104,520	18,087,142	20,021,596
Transitional Measures: Transfer to General Fund (2/3)	840,000	560,000	280,000
Resource Accounting:			
Capital Asset Charges	0	0	0
Depreciation	7,614,410	7,943,494	8,316,371
	51,661,409	53,112,420	55,791,381
Net Cost of HRA Services as included in the whole authority Income and Expenditure Account	2,746,997	983,904	480,967
Resource Accounting:			
Capital Asset Charges for Dwellings	0		
Capital Asset Charges for Other Assets	0		
HRA services share of corporate and democratic core	318,800	328,364	338,215
Net Cost of HRA Services	3,065,797	1,312,268	819,182
Appropriations			
Interest and Investment Income	-732,749	-684,089	-684,089
Resource Accounting:			
Further Depreciation on Dwellings from MRR	0		
Transitional Measures: Transfer to General Fund (1/3 from MRR)	420,000	280,000	140,000
Depreciation on Other Assets	-12,000	-12,360	-12,731
Housing Revenue Account - Deficit / (Surplus)	2,741,048	895,819	262,362

Housing Revenue Account Balance			
Opening Balance at 1 April	4,311,820	1,570,772	674,954
Deficit for year	-2,741,048	-895,819	-262,362
Transfer from Housing Reserves			
Closing Balance at 31 March	1,570,772	674,954	412,592

This table shows a deteriorating financial position for the Housing Service up to 2010/11. The Council has been forced to take urgent measures to increase income and reduce expenditure in order to bridge the operating deficit. Expenditure reductions have fallen very heavily on the planned maintenance programme, which will reduce by £1.2 million between 2008/09 and 2010/11.

Financial projections show a continuing deterioration in the HRA and the Council must take action to resolve the problem. In the short term the operating deficits can be met by expenditure reductions, in the long term this is not a viable solution.

The Council's long term strategy for the housing service is the transfer of the housing stock to a newly formed Registered Social Landlord. This process is well under way and any stock transfer will be completed by the summer of 2010.

5.4 The General Fund

This account is funded from the Council tax collected from all residents in the borough and from Government grants. It is used to fund all of the Council's other activities, including housing activity that does not relate to a landlord function, e.g. homelessness, working with RSL's and providing advice to people in private homes.

5.5 Value for Money & Efficiency Gains

The Council is committed to continuously improving the efficiency of its housing services to ensure value for money is maximised. This work will include ensuring that housing services run efficiently, income is maximised, services are delivered in partnership where possible and continuing savings are made to reduce overall expenditure.

The Housing service will continue to develop its performance monitoring framework to provide evidence of improvements, and will improve its use of benchmarking tools to increase our understanding of the relative costs of services provided in relation to other Councils.

6. MONITORING THE STRATEGY

Our last Housing Strategy contained a number of objectives and targets for 2004-7. A summary of our key achievements in this period can be found at the end of each objective in Section 4 of this document.

6.1 Delivering our Housing Strategy 2008-2011

An action plan (see Annex A) for this strategy has been developed which sets out how we will work towards delivering the objectives detailed in Section 4 of this Strategy. Progress on meeting the targets will be communicated through the Council's performance reporting procedures.

ANNEXES

- A. Action plan
- B. Contact details for further information
- C. Web links to other documents
- D. Glossary of terms

Annex A Housing Strategy Action Plan

Strategic Priority 1 Maximising Affordable Housing in the right places			
Objective	Key actions	Target completion date	Responsible Officer/Team/Partners
Maximise use of existing housing stock by encouraging take up of under occupation incentive scheme to free up larger properties	Promote Under Occupation Scheme	Ongoing	Tenant Services Team
Work with partners to increase the supply of affordable housing, including affordable rented and shared ownership	Continue to negotiate on site provision of the maximum amount of affordable housing by private developers as directed by planning policy	Ongoing	Housing Enabling Manager, Planning and Regeneration
	Look at feasibility of developing a Local Housing Company to deliver new affordable housing	Ongoing	Housing Enabling Manager, Planning and Regeneration, Ikon Consultancy
	Develop additional 25 units of affordable housing through Dacorum Partnership	October 2010	Housing Enabling Manager, Dacorum Partnership

Strategic Priority 1 Maximising Affordable Housing in the right places (continued)

Objective	Key actions	Target completion date	Responsible Officer/Team/Partners
Ensure best use of existing resources to maximise delivery of affordable housing	Develop new Affordable Housing Strategy	TBC – subject to SHMA	Housing Enabling Manager, Affordable Housing Working Group
	Continue to pursue opportunities for development on Council owned land	Ongoing	Housing Enabling Manager/Affordable Housing Working Group/Corporate Assets Group
	Maintain a sound evidence base for the development of affordable housing through use of findings of Strategic Housing Market Assessment	January 2009	Housing Enabling Manager, Senior Project Officer, Planning and Regeneration, LCB West, HCC
Improve accessibility to private sector housing	Increase publicity on Dacorum Initiative Guarantee Scheme	January 2009	Housing Options Service, Letting Agencies, Association of small landlords, Voluntary Sector Partners
	Improve understanding of the housing benefit system	February 2009	Housing Options Service, Housing Benefit Dept, HAND reps, CAB
	Create a Private Rented Sector Support Officer	December 2008	Housing Options Service, CAB, DENS, Dacorum Rent Aid, Environmental Health

Strategic Priority 2 Improving the condition of housing in the Private Sector

Objective	Key actions	Target completion date	Responsible Officer/Team/ Partners
Determine current housing conditions within the private sector	Commission the Private Sector House Conditions Survey.	2008/09	Environmental Health
	Assess the results of the Private Sector House Conditions Survey to inform the production of the revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.	2008/09	Environmental Health
Maximise use of existing housing stock and minimise empty homes	Offer advice and assistance to owners of empty homes to try and bring them back into use.	Ongoing	Environmental Health
	Explore feasibility of RSL's purchasing properties that owners are unable to afford to maintain. Property to be refurbished by RSL, owner will then be offered opportunity to rent back.	April 2009	Environmental Health, Housing Enabling Manager, Local Registered Social Landlords
Improve energy efficiency to reduce fuel costs and minimise environmental damage.	Offer referral service to assist the public in improving the energy efficiency of their homes. Working together with other Herts LA's.	Ongoing	Environmental Health, Herts Local Authorities, Warm Front, Warmer Homes Greener Herts

Strategic Priority 2 Improving the condition of housing in the Private Sector (continued)

Objective	Key actions	Target completion date	Responsible Officer/Team/Partners
Improve the housing conditions of vulnerable people	Use existing Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy to give assistance in appropriate cases, until new policy is introduced.	Ongoing	Environmental Health
	Explore feasibility of using social enterprise organisations to carry out home improvements.	Spring 2009	Environmental Health
	Develop new partnerships with Age Concern, West Herts PCT and other agencies linked to care, to take forward a programme of targeted works aimed specifically at vulnerable groups at risk of fuel poverty.	Ongoing	Environmental Health, Age Concern, PCT, Housing Strategy and Partnerships, Independent Living Services
	Obtain funding from the Regional Housing Pot for the East of England to enable improvements to be made to non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households. <i>On receipt of the outcomes of joint applications for funding for;</i> i) Project aimed at assisting vulnerable households in bringing their properties up to the governments Decent Home Standard ii) Project to provide measures that increase affordable warmth and reduce carbon emissions	2009-11	London Commuter Belt Private Sector Housing Group & Environmental Health

Strategic Priority 2 Improving the condition of housing in the Public Sector

Objective	Key actions	Target completion date	Responsible Officer/Team/Partners
Improve the condition of the Council's housing stock	Commission a supplementary 2008-9 Stock Condition Survey to accurately assess the key priority areas for inclusion in the major repair programmes.	March 2009	Client Housing Maintenance Manager/Housing Asset Manager
	Carry out Planned Maintenance programmes as identified in the Stock Condition Survey (programmes reduced to reflect the budget constraints)	March 2010	
	Carry out an ongoing programme of works	Ongoing	
	Review and update 10 and 30 year maintenance programmes	September 2009	Client Housing Maintenance Manager
To promote cost effective planned programme of work	Review the operation of existing servicing contracts, apply current best practice and legislative requirements within the tendering framework	April 2009	Housing Asset Manager
To involve tenants to a greater extent in the decisions effecting the repairs and maintenance of their homes	Review Status Survey results and continue to hold regular tenants' Maintenance Focus Group meetings. Involve tenant representatives at operational meetings with the responsive repairs contractor	Ongoing	Client Housing Maintenance Manager/Housing Asset Manager

Strategic Priority 2 Improving the condition of housing in the Public Sector (continued)

Objective	Key actions	Target completion date	Responsible Officer/Team/Partners
To involve tenants to a greater extent in the decisions effecting the repairs and maintenance of their homes	Identify and programme improvement works to meet aspirations of stakeholders: arrange focus groups to consult on priorities to help develop 'Dacorum Standard'	March 2010	Client Housing Maintenance Manager/Housing Asset Manager
Develop and implement Housing Energy Strategy	Identify and obtain external funding from energy providers. Carry out works identified subject to available funding	Ongoing	Client Housing Maintenance Manager/Housing Asset Manager/Home Energy Conservation Officer

Strategic Priority 3 Delivering Sustainable Communities through Partnership Working

Objective	Key actions	Target completion date	Responsible Officer/Team/Partners
Improve sustainability of new homes	Maximise percentage of Lifetime Homes on new developments	Ongoing	Housing Enabling Manager, Planning and Regeneration
Enhance employment opportunities for vulnerable groups	Link employment and training services with housing providers	March 2009	Housing Options Service, Paradise Furniture Project, Cementaprise, Local Job Centre Plus, Learning Partnerships
Encourage community involvement	Support and develop Tenant and Residents Associations, Street/Block/Village Voice	Ongoing	Resident Involvement Officers
Maximise access to health care and encourage healthy living	Ensure GP registration is available to all vulnerable and homeless families	Sept 2008	Housing Options Service, Local Primary Care Trust, GP Surgeries
	Publicise and encourage healthy eating options	Feb 2009	Housing Options Service, Primary Care Trust

Strategic Priority 3 Delivering Sustainable Communities through Partnership Working (continued)

Objective	Key actions	Target completion date	Responsible Officer/Team/Partners
Maximise affordable housing for local people in housing need	Give preference to those with local connection to villages in allocations policy	Ongoing	Housing Options Team
	Undertake consultation with Parish Councils on need for affordable housing in rural areas	TBC	Housing Enabling Manager, Planning and Regeneration
	Implement revised allocations policy	2009	Housing Options Service
Support delivery of Meeting Housing Need theme of Sustainable Communities Strategy	Increase the percentage of all new homes that are affordable by 25%	2011	Housing Forum, Dacorum Partnership
	Reduce the use of temporary accommodation by half	2010	Housing Forum, Dacorum Partnership
	Increase the percentage of new homes that meet the Governments recommended sustainable code levels	2011	Dacorum Partnership
Build mixed communities as appropriate	Examine feasibility of creating mixed communities on new affordable housing schemes through allocations	April 2009	Housing Options Service
Enhance housing choice	Improve and implement a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for Dacorum	January 2009	Housing Options Service, Arbiters

Annex B

Contact List

Further information on the issues discussed in this Housing Strategy is available by contacting the relevant Officer from the list below:

Strategic Objective One: Maximising Affordable Housing	Kate Bowles – Housing Enabling Manager Tel: 01442 228526 kate.bowles@dacorum.gov.uk
Strategic Objective Two: Improving the Condition of housing in the Private Sector	Tim Button – Senior Manager, Environmental Health Tel: 01442 228624 tim.button@dacorum.gov.uk
Improving the Condition of housing in the Public Sector	Fiona Williamson – Client Housing Maintenance Manager Tel: 01442 228855 fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk
Strategic Priority Three: Delivering Sustainable Communities through Partnership Working	Suzy Donaldson – Senior Project Officer Tel: 01442 228586 suzy.donaldson@dacorum.gov.uk
Resources	Simon Smith – Senior Accountant Tel: 01442 228464 simon.smith@dacorum.gov.uk

Annex C

Web Links to relevant papers associated with this document

Document	Link
Barker K 2003 Review of Housing Supply: Securing out Future Housing Needs	http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/E/4/barker
Communities and Local Government (2007) Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable – Housing Green Paper	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homesforfuture
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Annex D

Glossary of Terms

CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
CLG	Communities & Local Government
DENS	Dacorum Emergency Nightshelter
DIGS	Dacorum Initiative Guarantee Scheme
DPD	Development Plan Documents
GO-East	Government Office for East of England
HAND	Homeless Agencies Networking in Dacorum
HAP	Housing Advisory Panel
HCC	Hertfordshire County Council
HHSRS	Housing Health & Safety Rating System
HMO	Houses in Multiple Occupation
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
LCB	London Commuter Belt
LDD	Local Development Documents
LPA	Local Planning Authorities
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PI	Performance Indicators
PPS3	Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing'
PRC	Pre-Cast Reinforced Concrete
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure (measure of energy efficiency)
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SP	Supporting People
STATUS	Standardised Tenant Satisfaction Survey