Northampton Borough Council

Housing Strategy 2005-10

First internal consultation draft

Updated 31.05.2005
Housing Strategy

Introduction

Chapter 1  The housing context in Northampton

1.1 The national context
1.2 The regional context
1.3 The sub-regional context
1.4 The local and corporate context
1.5 Community cohesion
1.6 Partnership Working
1.7 How residents & stakeholders have informed the strategy
1.8 Monitoring our progress
1.9 Development of the housing strategy 2005-10

Chapter 2  Understanding housing needs and (local housing markets)

2.1 The Context
2.2 Understanding the local housing market
2.3 Northampton’s housing markets: the detailed picture
2.4 People in Northampton
2.5 Affordability
2.6 Housing need and demand in the social rented sector
2.7 Housing need and demand in the private rented sector
2.8 Housing needs of black minority ethnic communities
2.9 Specialist housing need and supported housing needs
2.10 Key workers
2.11 Actions taken so far
2.12 Future priorities and information needs
2.13 Action plan to achieve objectives

Chapter 3  Meeting vulnerable people’s housing needs

3.1 The Context
3.2 Working in partnership to prevent homelessness in Northampton
3.3 Working in partnership to ensure vulnerable groups have access to suitable accommodation and related support
3.4 Older people
3.5 People with physical disability
3.6 Asylum seekers and refugees
3.7 Victims of domestic violence
3.8 Young people/Teenage parents
3.9 People with mental health problems
3.10 People with learning difficulties
Introduction

This document is the housing strategy for Northampton and covers the period 2005-2010. It has been produced during a period of significant change and the realisation of new opportunities for the town. These changes and opportunities have created enormous potential for housing to better meet the needs of current and future residents of Northampton.

In particular, the following issues will all impact on the future of housing in Northampton:

- The growth agenda and the need to produce more housing within Northampton and the South Midlands Study area.
- The requirement to raise the condition of homes to (at least) the decent homes standard and the outcome of the housing options appraisal process
- The recognition of the role of housing in providing sustainable communities and comprehensive regeneration programmes
- The rights of the customer to live independently and with appropriate support and high quality services
- (Add, if necessary)

The housing strategy for Northampton places the role of housing within the context of the overall development of Northampton. It specifies current and likely future supply of and demand for housing, and the opportunities that exist to address this housing need.

The document also outlines the role of Northampton Borough Council’s partners in developing and monitoring housing strategy – with a real emphasis on the strategy as a source document, existing to co-ordinate the future of housing.

If you have any queries about the housing strategy or would like to comment on the draft, then please contact the following:

Housing Strategy and Enabling
Etc….
Chapter One

Strategic Context for Northampton

Northampton Borough Council is the largest district council in Northamptonshire with a population of about 194,500, living in 85,000 households. 8.5 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic communities. The town is part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands area identified for economic and population growth as part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s (ODPM) Sustainable Communities Plan. There are now major opportunities for growth and development within Northampton and the surrounding area with 30,000 new units of housing planned between 2001 and 2021. The newly formed Urban Development Corporation (UDC) will deliver economic, social and housing growth in West Northamptonshire including Northampton. The council has a strong and influential role to play. We have the fastest growing population in the East Midlands with a 5.9% growth since 1991. The opportunities for growth will have a major impact on all our activities. Our joint work with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), the county council, and the UDC will ensure that we deliver this change agenda and the community strategy in consultation with the community.

The council’s overall budget for the year 2004/05 is £27 million and the council is seeking to meet a budget gap of three million pounds over the medium term. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is about £50 million with a working balance of £3.1 million.

The Council’s vision, as developed in the recently approved Corporate Plan is:

“We will work with, and for, the people of Northampton to build an increasingly prosperous, safe and attractive town of which we are all proud. We will strive to maximise and sustain opportunities for all”.

(Source: NBC Corporate Plan, 2005)

Within its Corporate Plan the council has identified eight priorities for action which are structured around our three key themes of:

- Citizen Focused Service
- Leadership
- How the council will change.

These three themes will be addressed

The eight priorities for action are:

- Working with partners to reduce crime and disorder across Northampton
- Improve the cleanliness of the street scene in Northampton and reduce environmental crime
- Continue to improve housing benefit and revenue services
- Reduce deprivation in Northampton working with our partners
- Ensure the availability of decent and affordable homes for all
- Invest in Neighbourhood Wardens
➢ Improve the overall political and managerial leadership and efficiency of Northampton Borough Council
➢ Create and sustain an attractive economic environment for inward investment and regeneration

The council is ranked 168 out of 354 local authorities in the Indices of Deprivation. No wards are in the worst ten per cent for deprivation but 33 per cent of Northampton’s wards are in the 25 per cent of most deprived wards in England - we are committed to tackling this. Unemployment is lower than the national average with lower than average take up of benefits by working age people.

The Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub Region is designated as one of the major growth areas in the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan and this forecasts significant growth of both jobs and dwellings in the county and surrounding areas. It suggests that the county could accommodate up to an additional 97,500 dwellings (30,000 in Northampton) and some 81,000 jobs between 2001 and 2021. This potential for growth makes it vitally important that investment in our public services and infrastructure, such as roads and transport, houses and community facilities, as well as the integration of new people and communities into the county. Investment in the present infrastructure is a prerequisite for well-managed growth. (Document additional investment opportunities afforded by this…)

Northampton currently faces many challenges in relation to housing particularly being situated in one of the four major growth areas of the county. There is rising demand for housing in the area. We are experiencing increasing house prices and subsequent affordability problems. We have over 7,000 people on our housing register awaiting allocation of social rented housing whilst our stock is dwindling due to the right to buy. We are achieving successes in the delivery of new affordable housing in partnership with housing associations, developers and the Housing Corporation; and we are increasingly having to recognise diversity and be innovative in finding alternative solutions to satisfy current and future residents housing needs. This Housing Strategy for Northampton sets our framework for addressing what we and our partners see as our seven long-term benefits. These are:

- Increased supply and delivery of affordable homes
- Sustainable development in Northampton
- Provide a decent home for all
- The delivery of the growth agenda in Northampton
- Improved homeless prevention and the key causes of homelessness tackled effectively
- Adequate provision of housing and support for all sectors of the community
- Improving the Housing Management service

(Source: NBC Recovery Plan)

**Strategic Context for Housing in Northampton**

The vision of Northampton in 2012 is:

“In 2012, Northampton will be a safe, clean and healthy town with an excellent environment, facilities and services. Its communities will be confident, educated, skilled and united. The town will be proud, prosperous and progressive, a place where history and innovation co-
exist. All will enjoy a high quality of life and decent home within a diverse and inclusive community”

(Source: Northampton Community Strategy, 2002)

The housing strategy has been produced to support this vision and that of the Corporate Plan to recognise the full and positive role that housing will make in transforming the future of Northampton.

Northampton’s Housing Strategy 2005-10 describes how we are working to make a lasting difference by ensuring the provision of viable, good quality housing for existing communities and new neighbourhoods. The aim is for sustainable housing in places where people want to live, which is of a decent quality and standard and which meets people’s needs and aspirations. A vibrant, healthy housing market across all housing tenures (owner occupied or rented) is critical to economic prosperity and social stability in an attractive and thriving town.

1.1 The national context

In February 2003, the government published Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future, known as the Communities Plan. It addresses a broad range of areas creating and maintaining sustainable communities and it is within this there is the identification of Northamptonshire being part of one of the major growth areas in the country.

It set out the long-term action plan for delivering sustainable communities by:

- the generation of deprived estates
- increasing housing supply in growth areas
- providing more affordable housing for low income households and key workers
- addressing low demand and abandonment
- bringing council homes up to a decent standard
- introducing a regional approach to housing policy

“Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work now and in the future. They meet diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

Sustainable communities embody the principles of sustainable development. They:

- Balance and integrate the social and economic and environmental components of their community
- Meet existing needs of existing and future generations
- Respect the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally also to make their communities sustainable”

(Source: Sustainable Communities – ODPM, 2003)

In response to the Communities Plan, the first Regional Housing Strategies have been produced (2004) and this is as part of the Integrated Regional Strategy sitting alongside the
Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy that has been developed from Regional Planning Guidance. The Regional Strategy aims to deliver the priorities set out in the ODPM SCP in a way that is appropriate to the East Midlands. It has been informed by stakeholders in the region.

In addition, the Government’s strategy for tackling and reducing homelessness is stated in the Community Plan and explained in more detail in the “Sustainable Communities: settled homes, changing lives” document (ODPM, March 2005). This strategy aims to halve the number of households living in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010.

**Relationships for delivering the Sustainable Communities Plan**

The Sustainable Communities Plan consists of several key elements (Appendix?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainable Communities Plan</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Addressing the housing shortage</strong></td>
<td>Accelerating the provision of housing. This includes: …accelerating growth in the four &quot;growth areas&quot; (Thames Gateway, London-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Addressing low demand and abandonment</strong></td>
<td>Around one million homes in parts of the North and Midlands are suffering from low demand and abandonment. Nine pathfinder schemes have been established in the areas worst affected to put in place action programmes to turn this problem around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decent homes</strong></td>
<td>The Plan sets out an action programme to ensure that all social housing is brought up to a decent standard by 2010, alongside targeted action to improve conditions for vulnerable people in private housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liveability</strong></td>
<td>The Plan sets out how the Government intends to intensify efforts to improve the local environment of all communities. This includes cleaner streets, improved parks and better public spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protecting the countryside</strong></td>
<td>The Plan outlines how land will be used more effectively. The majority of new housing will be on previously developed land, rather than on greenfield. The area of land designated as greenbelt land will be increased or maintained in each area. Developments not meeting density standards in the South East will be called in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The East Midlands Housing Board has been established to build on the existing Regional Housing Statement and has produced the East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy, which sets priorities for the allocation of the new single capital pot for housing resources which was introduced in 2004.
These Housing Boards were established following the publication of the SCP in recognition that many aspects of housing need to be planned on a regional or sub-regional basis as housing markets cross local housing boundaries and the need to deliver sustainable communities and make the best use of scarce resources.

NBC places immense importance on influencing and assisting national and regional developments. It has been working with the East Midlands Housing Board and with local housing providers in preparing the Regional Housing Strategy. Northampton is playing a leading role in developing better collaboration at both regional (East Midlands) and sub-regional (Southern of East Midlands) level. In the last few years the following regional and sub-regional housing groups have had Northampton’s full participation:

- East Midlands Home Energy Conservation Act Forum
- Northamptonshire Home Energy Efficiency Partnership
- East Midlands Empty Property Forum
- Chief Housing Officers Group
- County Strategy Officers Group
- Southern Sub-regional Development Group

1.2 The Regional Context

The Regional Housing Strategy supports the Integrated Regional Strategy’s vision for the East Midlands:

“The East Midlands will be recognised as a region with a high quality of life and sustainable communities that thrives because of its vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity and the way it addresses social inequalities and manages its resources”.

The objective for Housing is “to ensure that the existing and future housing stock is appropriate to meet the housing needs of all parts of the community.”

The East Midlands Housing Strategy was agreed in (July 2004) with its 16 priorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority for the East Midlands</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Deliver Balance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Increasing the quantity and improving delivery of appropriate high quality housing for all communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Securing quality and choice for housing development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Recognising and responding to areas affected by low demand</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Providing options for unpopular unsuitable sheltered housing stock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Renewing and revitalising the private sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Decent homes in the Social Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Ensuring sustainable growth for the Milton Keynes South Midlands areas is delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Ensuring that the skills in the construction sector can be harnessed to increase output in the region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Deliver Inclusion

- Tackling the causes of homelessness
- Assisting people to maintain their independence for as long as they wish
- Promoting healthy, safe and eco-efficient homes
- Ensuring that in rural areas and market towns there is both an appropriate quality of housing to meet a range of housing needs and access to related services for vulnerable people of all ages
- Ensuring that all sub-regions understand and address the needs and aspiration of diverse sectors of their communities

3. Deliver Co-ordination

- Developing the role of the sub-regions
- Developing and integrating a common information data base
- Supporting economic growth in partnership

Northampton is key to the success of the delivery of these priorities and our priority areas or long-term benefits for action therefore reflect the regions priorities and these are:

**Priorities for Northampton**

- Increased supply and delivery of affordable homes
- Sustainable development in Northampton
- Provide a decent home for all
- The delivery of the growth agenda in Northampton

- Improved homeless prevention and the key causes of homelessness tackled effectively
- Adequate provision of housing and support for all sectors of the community
- Improving the Housing Management service

1.3 The Sub-Regional Context

At a sub-regional level Northampton has worked with stakeholders (including GOEM and the Housing Corporation) to develop a comprehensive sub-regional action plan that will target resources to enable the intervention in the housing market. It covers all tenures and majors on affordability.

Over recent years it has become increasingly important to take into account the national and regional housing agenda. The Regional Housing strategy is part of the integrated regional strategy, aligned with the regional economic strategy and the regional spatial strategy that is developed from Regional Planning Guidance. The aim is to deliver national housing priorities set out in the ODPM Sustainable Communities Plan on a local basis. This Housing strategy is Northampton’s response to these plans also taking into account on a more local level the
Northamptonshire Community Strategy, the Northampton Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan and the Council’s Performance Plan.

The aim of this Housing Strategy is to present progress that has been made since our last document and to present a strategic framework that demonstrates the local housing markets and addresses how we are delivering on the national and local priorities.

The vision for the sub region is to have more housing choice for people by providing homes that people can afford and are able to stay in. We aim to achieve this by broadening the provision of new homes in number and type within the planning framework and making the best use of what is already available. We will achieve this by the effective deployment of resources at our disposal (finance, land, policies and personnel) and improving our co-ordination and planning for the future.

Within the East Midlands region there a five sub-regions, Northampton features prominently in the Southern Sub region which consists of Northampton, South Northamptonshire, Daventry District, Corby, Wellingborough, Kettering, East Northamptonshire, and Market Harborough. Whilst the partnership of stakeholders in this sub-region is still developing, we have produced and action plan based on the 16 regional priorities.

The sub-regional role is increasing in importance and influence and must play an active part in the determining areas for investment through the Regional Investment Plan.

Significant work has been undertaken through the County Chief Housing Officers Group and Strategy Officers Group. Examples include:

- Countywide Black and Minority Housing Needs Survey – funded by the local authorities and 21 partners Registered Social Landlords
- Countywide Key-Worker Survey – funded by English Partnerships, Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council
- Northamptonshire Housing Training Group – Countywide procurement of housing related training for local authorities, registered social landlords and other related agencies.
- Exploration of a countywide homelessness strategy
- Development of countywide Section 106 legal agreements for affordable housing to present a more comprehensive and strategic approach.

1.4 The local and corporate context

Setting the Strategy in Context

The Strategy demonstrates how the council will progress to delivering its long-term aims in relation to housing and how well these aims integrate with other key objectives/aims etc. Our last Strategy was submitted in July 2002 and since that time we have made significant progress, evidenced by the recent Audit Commission Housing Inspection, which awarded the council’s housing service a “one star” rating. The outcome also included a second judgement of “uncertain prospects for improvement”, with this reflecting the changing management
arrangements that were developing at the time. The action plans reflect the findings of the
Audit Commission in order that we can improve still further and achieve our aim of a "two
star" service.

In particular we have been successful in:

- **Affordable housing provision** – mixed communities, shared ownership/rented/
  private. Revised SPG @ 35%
- **Private Landlords’ Forum** - we have established an active Landlords’ Forum which
  meets three times per year attracting 45-50 attendees. A Landlords’ Day is also
  arranged with exhibition stands and two evening workshops. The forum asks the
  relevant Overview and Scrutiny committee to consider any areas of concern.
- **Disabled Persons’ Housing Group** - as part of its approach to reflect diversity the
  council has established a Disabled Persons’ Housing Group consisting of officers and
  customers. This considers various aspects of the housing service including physical
  access issues, joint assessments of need with other services and planning applications
  for new housing developments commenting on issues such as space standards.
- **Housing Money and Advice Centre** – the Housing Money and Advice Centre
  (HMAC) provides a wide range of housing advice and debt counselling to customers
  of all tenures. The service is accredited through the Community Legal Service (CLS).
- **Resident Involvement** - to facilitate tenant involvement the council has introduced
  telephone link equipment, which allows a tenant who cannot attend a meeting to take
  part over the telephone.
- **Floating Support for Vulnerable People** - As part of its floating support
  arrangements, the council has dedicated ten places to provide floating support for
  older people in sheltered schemes with alcohol dependency problems.

Some areas where we have not been so successful and are continuing to develop are:

- Homeless prevention – achievement of governments B&B figure
- Tenant satisfaction?
- Capital spend?

1.5 Community cohesion

A cohesive community has a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities, in
which the diversity of people’s backgrounds and circumstances are valued and have similar
life opportunities. A cohesive community is one in which strong and positive relationships
are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools
and within neighbourhoods.

Northampton’s housing services have been successful in engaging the community in shaping
service delivery. We seek to find solutions to local problems by developing the capacity of
residents who work together to shape acceptable outcomes for all – for example, on the
CASPAR regeneration projects.

1.6 Partnership working

Partnership working is coordinated through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and has
continued to flourish throughout housing services. (Karina)
1.7 How residents and stakeholders have informed the strategy (include how we appraise options)

The contents of this strategy have been driven by stakeholders and customers. The aims and objectives have had customer influence and involvement.

The main mechanisms of consultation are:
- Northampton Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations
- Housing Strategy Tenant Focus Group
- RSL Housing Management Group
- Northamptonshire Supporting People Team
- NBC Members
- Local Strategic Partnership (and its sub-groups)
- Private Landlords and Developers

1.8 Monitoring our progress

The Housing Strategy and Capital programme are kept under review throughout the year. Officers and Members make sure that all proposals complement the council’s corporate capital strategy and the priorities of the corporate plan.

In terms of investment 6-weekly meetings are held with key officers across the council to review progress on projects and monitor spend. The councils’ senior management team review the overall capital spend bi-monthly and a subsequent report is received by Cabinet for approval and to report major variations.

To make sure that we continue to progress on our housing strategy overall we will monitor performance against the action plans. This monitoring will take place via:

- Government Monitoring Board
- Senior Management Team/IMPs
- Housing Strategy Group (re-launched to include officers across the council)
- The Housing Association Liaison Group (development and management)
- Tenants Forums
- Developers Forums
- LSP and Neighbourhood Renewal
- Executive/ Overview and Scrutiny

This careful monitoring and reporting will provide early indication of variations and enable action to be taken to correct if necessary.

Monitoring Our Performance

CPA
Housing Inspection
Include performance indicators – 2004/05 Dale Robertson

Customer Satisfaction

Mori surveys
Tenants Satisfaction surveys – status
Housing Inspection
Resident surveys
Area Partnerships

1.9 The development of the housing strategy 2005-10

A Housing Strategy Action Plan Improvement and Development Group will receive reports on progress from all lead officers and the housing partnerships. It will deal with issues and determine the future direction of the strategy. The Housing Strategy Services Team is now established to develop and further the strategy in partnership. The consultation for developing the strategy and action plan in future years will be developed further through the Improvement and Development Group. (Karina – we should discuss this one)

UDC

The Urban Development Corporation (UDC) for West Northamptonshire has been established to drive forward regeneration, improved infrastructure, investment and sustainable growth. Development control powers for strategic sites and schemes will be an important element in the UDC’s drive to maximise public and private investment in infrastructure and accelerate the regeneration of brownfield and town centre sites.

The main challenges for the West Northamptonshire UDC include creating an enhanced urban environment and improved public infrastructure through regeneration and high quality design focusing on a series of town centre and urban fringe sites. Successful regeneration of these centres will enhance the development of sustainable and viable local communities able to accommodate proposed levels of growth. It will also recognise the key sub-regional links between Northampton, South Northamptonshire and Daventry.

The UDC has begun work on its regeneration framework (business plan) and this will be the overarching strategic document within which the UDC will deliver for the sustainable development of the three towns in West Northamptonshire.

The UDC’s objective is to secure the regeneration of its area and this will be achieved in particular through:

- Bringing land and buildings into effective use
- Encouraging the development of existing and new industry and commerce
- Creating an attractive environment
- Ensuring that housing and social facilities are available to encourage people to live and work in the area.

The Milton Keynes/South Midlands growth area includes the sub-region of West Northamptonshire.

NCC and NBC have adopted a Spatial Strategy for the region and the sub-region (Regional Spatial Strategy 8)
The Core Spatial Strategy (Local Plan) for Northampton is currently being produced (target for completion November, 2005) and will be a document that covers the wider housing market area of West Northamptonshire.
Chapter 2

Understanding housing needs (and local housing markets)

Applicable long-term benefits:

- Increased supply and delivery of affordable homes
- Adequate provision of housing and support for all sectors of the community

Objectives

- Continuing partnership development of robust systems to analyse housing need
- Developing a housing strategy for BME communities

2.1 The context

There are a number of key issues which inform our understanding of local housing markets and needs. In particular, a lack of affordable housing is a problem across Northampton and throughout the sub-region.

The challenges presented by Northampton’s housing market are the product of major changes in the national and local housing systems and of wider economic and social trends as well as demographic changes.

The region…. explain…. Increased house prices, RTB, growing homelessness (highlight)

In the private sector, there are nearly 70,000 dwellings with 5,400 of these being private rented. The significant proportion of older housing and the associated costs in maintaining this stock present major challenges in terms of investment. Over 23,000 dwellings were built before 1944 and it is necessary to ensure that these homes – particularly those occupied by vulnerable households) meet the decent homes standard.

There does not appear to be a problem of low demand areas in the private rented sector in Northampton. The smaller terraced houses in the older parts of the town remain popular with first time buyers although house prices have meant that the private rented sector continues to play a vital role in providing accommodation to those who cannot afford to buy.

The 2002 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey suggest that there were nearly 4,300 private sector dwellings requiring adaptations for occupants with disabilities at a cost of £53 million – this results in an implied grant demand (for disabled facilities grants) of almost £46 million.

The stock condition survey suggested that there were approximately 9,000 households in the private sector in fuel poverty in 2002. Although much work has been done to target low-
income households with energy efficiency grants/measures etc since the study, the recent fuel price increases are potentially increasing the numbers falling into fuel poverty.

The South Midlands MK Study… explain

Issues for Northampton

LIST BULLET POINT

2.2 Understanding the local housing market

A range of factors have influenced the housing market over the past few decades making access to housing progressively more difficult for some groups. These factors include:

- Increasing pressure for owner occupation
- Changes in household structures
- A slow down in house building
- A sharp rise in house prices relative to incomes
- A diminishing pool of social housing

There is no one housing market in Northamptonshire. It is characterised by the three major tenure categories of owner occupation, shared ownership and social renting, with owner occupation easily the dominant tenure.

How do we predict housing trends? And what is happening? Do we use GIS? How do we update – through structured programme?

2.3 Northampton’s housing markets: the detailed picture

The Housing Needs Survey (December 2002) identified a number of institutional changes that have taken place in recent years. OUTLINE… GRAPHS… breakdown of tenure HEADLINE INFO…

As a whole, Northampton’s private housing market has been fairly buoyant over the past few years and there are high demand hotspots within the borough. The price of an average home has risen by X% during (YYYY) and compares (ZZZZ). Nominal prices within Northampton remain relatively high (at X% of the regional norm and X% of the national figure.)

The Basic Need Assessment Model produces an estimate of the annual requirement for additional affordable housing. This is determined by adding the newly arising need to the backlog of existing need and subtracting the supply of affordable units. Using this ‘model’ it has been estimated that there is a requirement to provide an additional 736 affordable dwellings per annum if all housing needs are to be met (to 2007). Over the period to 2007 this represented an additional 3,680 dwellings.

It has been concluded that in light of the large requirement shown, the Council will need to maximise the availability of affordable housing from all available resources – including new-build, acquisitions and conversions. This therefore provides the justification for a 50% affordable housing requirement on all eligible sites. Northampton requires affordable
housing to make sure it can actually meet the needs identified in the Housing Needs Survey 2002.

The Private Sector House Condition survey (2002) estimates that approximately 3,550 dwellings in this sector are unfit, representing 5.1% of the private housing stock. However, nearly 15% of the oldest (pre-1919) housing stock is unfit and two areas of the town show higher incidences of unfitness when compared to the average (5.1%).

The level of investment needed to make all unfit properties meet the minimum fitness requirements is estimated at £13 million. However, to get these properties into reasonable repair as well as fit for occupation would cost £28.4 million.

The research looked at the implied grant demand on the council from owner-occupiers in unfit housing using a basic formula on the income of the owners in those dwellings. From a cost of approximately £22.3 million, the research suggested an implied grant demand of £15.3 million. This is important to the council in considering future renewal strategy and the possible use of appropriate equity release schemes to utilize capital locked up in dwellings needing repairs etc.

The research estimated that there were 5,500 private rented dwellings in Northampton with a higher average incidence of unfitness of 12% (compared to 5.1%). Although this shows a need for a continual enforcement role from the council, the rented sector is also recognised as providing a vital role in providing accommodation. Consequently the council continue to develop its forum with landlords and are introducing a Student property accreditation scheme in partnership with the college and landlords. This should help improve the condition of rented accommodation through the positive messages associated with being accredited.

Private renting…what is happening… is this at the lower end of the market…OK but Monitoring mechanisms… role of asylum seekers

2.4 People in Northampton

Northampton is home to X people, an increase of X% during YYYY

Population make up… e.g. older people…

During the next YY years, projections for Northampton suggest that the main population changes will be
LIST BULLET POINT

People living alone now account for almost X% of households in Northampton. In the past YY years, there has been a growth (?) in younger people living alone. This group accounts for over X% of the overall increase in households during YYYY.

In 2001, X% of the borough’s population considered themselves to be part of non-white ethnic groups. The largest of Northampton’s ethnic minority groups is that of ZZZZ background. (DETAIL THIS AND OTHER GROUPS).

In recent years Northampton has seen emerging communities settling in the borough as a consequence of the National Asylum Seekers and Refugees policies. OUTLINE
2.5 Affordability

Information on deprived wards.

Northampton’s economy has continued to grow over the past X years with registered unemployment falling from X to Y. Information from the New Earnings Survey shows that employees working in Northampton are (ANALYSE).

In some parts of the borough, house prices are rising faster than income levels (EVIDENCE) – breakdown into areas and trends.

2.6 Housing need and demand in the social rented sector

Northampton’s Social Housing Supply and Demand analysis indicates that Northampton has a shortfall of social housing stock. (What does HRA Business Plan say about this… is there any re-modelling to adjust to needs) Demand for property types…..

2.7 Housing need and demand in the private rented sector

There are no low demand areas in the private sector stock. Also, there are no areas that have substantially lower house prices or a significantly higher proportion of vacant dwellings. Nonetheless, this data will be reviewed in the 2007 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey. *Do you need info about the rented sector from HMAC? (YES- Marianne, please provide)*

There is an estimated student population of about 5,000 and an estimated 150 Asylum seekers supported by Social Services.

Of 60,000 owner/occupiers, 41,000 have mortgages.

The 2002 Private Sector House Condition survey presented information on the number of private properties requiring adaptations. It suggested that out of 7,100 private sector dwellings containing someone with special needs, there were nearly 4,300 of these households requiring adaptations for occupants with disabilities at a cost of approximately £57 million.

2.8 The housing needs of black minority ethnic communities

In 2002, 94.3% of Northampton households were White, with 2.0% Asian and 2.3% Black. The survey results show that Asian households were disproportionately living in private rented accommodation and Black households were more likely than the borough as a whole to be living in the social rented sector.

The survey also highlighted shortages of housing for all ethnic groups, most notably there appeared to be high needs relative to supply in the Asian category. Also, the survey showed that Asian households have a significantly larger average household size than other households, which may influence any building of affordable housing for this specific group.
Northampton is increasingly a diverse and multi-cultural town with 8.5% of the population from ethnic minority groups. In delivering the Community Strategy, Corporate plan and all other strategies, services work with a range of partners and communities to tackle issues of inequality and ensure equal access to services.

The Council has an Equal Opportunities Policy (1996) which forms the basis for its expectations and behaviours in respect of fair and equal access to services, employment and recruitment. A new Diversity and Equality Policy has recently been drawn up in full consultation with stakeholders and once implemented this will make the required links between policy and service issues as required by the Equality Standard for Local Government.

**Black and Minority Ethnic Population**

The ethnic minority population of Northamptonshire compared with the East Midlands and England and Wales is shown in Figure 3. As previously noted, the BME population (including White Non-British and Non-White residents) accounts for 8.0% of the total – compared with 8.7% for the East Midlands and 12.5% for England and Wales as a whole. The Non White population in Northamptonshire (4.9%) compares to 6.4% in the East Midlands as a whole, and 8.7% in England and Wales.

![Bar chart showing population percentages by ethnic group in different areas of Northamptonshire]

Partnership with the community is a key priority for Northampton Borough Council and a number of Community Forums (Race, Equality, Pensioners, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People’s, Disabled People’s, Youth and Women’s) enable anyone outside of the Council to raise issues with the authority and for officers to use for consultation on policy etc. There is a general awareness of diversity issues. Training has been delivered on Equalities Awareness and Disability and is a key competency within the newly introduced Managing for Results programme.
The Councils Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy was developed by the BME Housing Group consisting of representatives from a range of local community organisations, Northampton Borough Council and Northants County Council. Action Plans for delivering the Strategy focus on the 5 key themes of information, access to housing services, good practice and cultural diversity, housing needs and racial harassment. In recognition of the increasing black and minority ethnic population of Northampton, a major piece of work has been commissioned in the form of a Countywide Black and Minority Ethnic housing needs survey, which has been funded by the 7 local authorities in the county, 21 registered social landlords and the County Supporting People team. The survey has been undertaken with the following as a focus:

### Summary of Key Points of the Survey

- The project was undertaken on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council in partnership with the county’s constituent local authorities to better understand the housing and support needs of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Northamptonshire;
- Key issues for the studies included profiling the existing black and minority ethnic population, identifying the range of their housing aspirations, considering the wider issues that impact upon their housing choices and quality of life and providing an analysis of the need for specific support and housing services;
- Whilst many studies involve surveys of the BME population, there are serious doubts about the quality of information that could be obtained – therefore the study based the analysis on existing secondary data sources combined with a comprehensive qualitative research programme;
- The main element of the qualitative research involved forty one-to-one meetings between senior researchers and members of BME communities across the county. In recognising that the BME population is not homogeneous, the meetings were designed to reach a wide cross-section of the population in order to ensure that the views covered the many diverse perspectives; and
- Further qualitative input came from relevant community groups and other stakeholders both through initial contacts used to establish the one-to-one meetings and also through a detailed workshop where key conclusions from the analysis were discussed.

### Priorities for action

- Implement results of study
- Mainstream services for minority groups

#### 2.9 Specialist Housing Need and Supported Housing Needs

Much work has been done to identify specialist housing needs and supported housing needs. Details of this are given in Chapter 3 along with details of our aims and priorities in this area.
2.10  Key Workers

The current Key Worker Living policy excludes Northamptonshire though bounds the county on its southern and eastern flank and so misses out on all the financial and other benefits available to key workers living in the designated Key Worker Living area.

This is further exacerbated by the fact that much of southern Northamptonshire is included within the housing expansion proposed for the Milton Keynes/South Midlands region, yet there is no clear indication in the most recent statement (October 2004) as to either the amount and distribution of affordable housing or the geographical extension of any key worker strategy to incorporate the whole of the area. This makes little sense in terms of the overall strategy or the details of applying an affordable housing strategy.

There is a clear need for accommodation to meet the needs of key workers as evidenced by the Northamptonshire Key Worker Housing Needs survey (May, 2005). This report highlighted that the lack of a “one housing market” throughout the county has necessitated in district-level responses being required to address such need.

2.11  Action taken so far

The chapters that follow detail the action we have taken so far to address the issues outlined and the needs identified in this chapter.

2.12  Future priorities and information needs

We recognise the importance of up-to-date housing market information, which can be analysed to provide knowledge about people and about property and housing markets. The data used to assess supply, demand and need across all tenures is part of the data used within a local predictive model. Understanding the current and future customer profile and housing needs has been a challenge over recent years. In anticipation of the completion of the stock options appraisal process and the corporate restructure a Knowledge and Information Management Group has been established to produce a Knowledge and Information Strategy, and to analyse existing information, identify and fill gaps and review processes in order to better understand market dynamics.

It is vital that we continue to improve our understanding of emerging and future markets in the borough if we are to ensure future housing provision and service delivery meets the needs of existing and future customers. The Knowledge and Information Management Group will finalise work on a predictive housing model which will be used to assess more accurately the state of local housing markets. It indicates present and anticipates future housing requirements, and where and how best to invest resources. A new private sector stock condition survey will be commissioned in 2007 using updated housing standards for the private sector (the health and safety rating and decent homes). We are making use of the GIS systems available to map the data and aid our data analysis.

Much work has also been done to address gaps in our knowledge of existing and future customers.

Specifically our research priorities for the coming year will be to:
- Continue work on our housing market analysis of the private sector
- Continue and refine our supply and demand analysis of the social rented sector
- Improve our knowledge of the private rented sector
- Improve our knowledge of BME housing supply, demand and need
- Improve our knowledge of supported housing needs
- Improve our knowledge of affordable housing need

2.13 Action plan to achieve objectives

Continue partnership development of robust housing needs analysis systems to analyse housing need.

Develop a key worker living strategy for Northampton

LIST…

Collaborate with MKSM study

LIST…

Develop a Housing Strategy for Black Minority Ethnic Communities

LIST…

Priorities for action
Implement results of study
Mainstream services for minority groups
Chapter 3

Meeting vulnerable people’s housing needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicable long-term benefit(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved homeless prevention and the key causes of homelessness tackled effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate provision of housing and support for all sectors of the community</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Objectives**

- Working in partnership to prevent homelessness in Northampton
- Working in partnership to ensure vulnerable groups have access to suitable accommodation and housing related support
- Reducing the reliance on temporary accommodation in favour of more secure accommodation

3.1 The context

NBC and its partners are seeking to provide accommodation for those in severe housing need, and for those who are seen as vulnerable. We are working to meet these housing needs by developing a shared strategic approach and joint services with a range of partners. The strategy recognises that many vulnerable people would like to stay in their own homes with support services that promote well-being and independent living.

The agencies and partnerships including their accompanying strategies and contact details are presented as Appendix X (produce) to this document. The appraisal of options for delivery and the choice between competing options is always made in partnership, informed by need, the strategic fit and value for money.

The primary arenas for establishing our strategic priorities for meeting vulnerable people’s needs, and for appraising delivery options are:

- Supporting People Commissioning Body
- Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group
- Supported Housing Needs Team

SP is the main funding stream for all supported housing schemes and the Council has worked with the SP Team to formulate the county-wide five year SP strategy and works within the Quality Assessment Framework to review services.

Supporting People Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Development Group is responsible for developing the Borough’s Supporting People Strategy which links homelessness strategy, the housing strategy and other related strategic bodies. It is underpinned by extensive participation from agencies and service users in the borough and is accompanied by a comprehensive programme of service reviews that will be complete by March 2006.
A new way of commissioning, funding and reviewing supported housing is set out in the government’s ‘Supporting People, Policy into Practice’ paper. Northamptonshire has agreed its Supporting People Strategy, which provides a baseline understanding of both supply and demand for supported housing and the development of the commissioning strategy. The new strategy has been developed in consultation with the multi-agency Core Strategy Development Group and Supporting People Commissioning Body.

We are also developing a provider Supported Housing Strategy setting out the priorities for meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people. These documents will influence and inform our future planning and capital investment decisions.

**Partnership working with RSLs and private developers**

The former joint commissioning arrangements in Northampton have been replaced by partnership working with traditional RSLs, private developers and other RSLs who are able to contribute to the development programme in Northampton. A review of partners is scheduled for August 2006. *(Sue – does this sound robust enough?)*

**Disabled Housing Group**

The Disabled Housing Group promotes the need for a range of housing and housing-related services for people with disabilities and considers the implications of new developments for disabled access. The Audit Commission has recognised the group as good practice. A range of legislation and guidance such as Agenda 21, the Lifetime Homes standards and the Aalborg commitments regarding sustainability and lifestyle choices informs the work of the group.

**Health, Housing and Well-Being Group**

Northampton’s Health, Housing and Well Being Partnership is a key part of Northampton’s Local Strategic Partnership and has overall responsibility for a managed network of health and social care services. Improving our housing stock is a main aim to help tackle inequalities in health and promote well-being. *(Sean – is this accurate? Anything else that can be said?)*

This chapter deals individually with the range of different groups of vulnerable people, setting out our policies and priorities for each.

**3.2 Working in partnership to prevent homelessness in Northampton (context/action taken so far/ priorities for action)**

**Context**

The Homelessness Strategy 2003-08 articulates the key issues surrounding homelessness in Northampton. Through this document we will:

- Strengthen and deliver effective homeless prevention services in partnership with Health, Education, Social Care and Health, and the voluntary sector.
- Improve the quality of assessments and advice ensuring mechanisms for information gathering and monitoring are developed.

- Reduce levels of rough sleeping

- Reduce the use of B&Bs as temporary accommodation for homeless households with children and specifically ensure that no homeless families are occupying B&B accommodation except on an emergency basis and then for no longer than six weeks

- Ensure there is good quality temporary accommodation available for all those that may need it

- Increase the availability of support to homeless families, single homeless applicants, and all those who may be at risk of homelessness

- Achieve greater co-ordination of service delivery and improve and develop multi-agency working to provide a seamless service for vulnerable and homeless people.

- Ensure homeless people are consulted and included in the planning and improvement of services for homeless people in Northampton.

In Northampton we know that:

- In 2003, all housing authorities were required to produce a homelessness strategy. Following a comprehensive review of homelessness we produced the “Homelessness Strategy 2003-08”. Northampton is pursuing many effective options to prevent homelessness, as outlined in the homelessness strategy.

- Homelessness is a particular issue in Northampton and has a significant impact upon the supply of social housing. In 2004/05:
  - X homeless applications were made;
  - Y (Z%) were considered to be homeless;
  - A (B%) were assessed as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need. (Kevin)

- The high level of homelessness has created pressure on the temporary accommodation that is available in the town, creating difficulties in meeting the national bed and breakfast target.

- The last count of rough sleepers, undertaken in January 2005, found seven individuals sleeping rough although the target for Northampton was four. (Kevin)

Action taken so far

- A variety of accommodation is used to offer suitable housing to prevent potential homelessness and to meet the needs of homeless households.

- Support services meet short and medium term resettlement needs, and enable successful longer-term arrangements
Community Legal Services (CLS) Quality Mark at specialist level for both housing and money advice

Provision of tenancy sustainment by using floating support as early as possible to support income management avoiding the need to go to court and possible eviction.

Case referral agreements have been made and are operational with CAN, YMCA, NAASH, the NCC Leaving Care Team and Mayday Housing Association

To take forward the homelessness strategy we have:

- Set up the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (and separate working groups for single, young and homelessness families)
- Produced a Bed and Breakfast Action Plan
- Introduced private sector leasing
- Produced plans to convert a SPA block into temporary accommodation (timescale…)
- Produced an access to housing report
- Provided a rent deposit guarantee scheme

The Housing Advice Service:

- Deals with over X (Marianne) enquiries a year, offering high quality advice and guidance to tenants, potential tenants and private landlords
- Provides homeless - and other housing - customers with access to information, advice, advocacy and representation
- Provides a court advice service for those at risk of eviction due to rent arrears – the Community LS quality mark at specialist level was awarded to the service
- Gives support to private landlords and assists, with partners, improving the quality of management and standard of accommodation in the private rented sector. The support is delivered through the Private Landlords’ Forum
- Offers money and income maximisation skills

Priorities for action

- Continuing to implement the homelessness strategy action plan and review it annually
- Redevelop the 4-acre St Edmunds site in the town centre which accommodated squatters and develop the rough sleepers strategy

3.3 Working in partnership to ensure vulnerable groups have access to suitable accommodation and related support (context/action taken/priorities for action)

Partnerships play an important role in achieving many of Housing’s key objectives. Partnership working has been strengthened through Supporting People to benefit a wide range of vulnerable groups. Housing is represented on the County Core Strategy Group, with the Chief Executive, Mairi McClean chairing the Commissioning Body and the Housing Portfolio Holder is a member of the Supporting People Members Forum.

The Supporting People programme in Northamptonshire was inspected in 2003/2004 and was assessed as providing a fair one-star service that has promising prospects for improvement.

The benefits of Supporting People include attracting funding for a scheme for teenage parents, joint working on a bid for health pilot funding to provide supported housing for sex
workers (nest project) a group who previously had not been catered for, and the development of a Countywide Older Persons Strategy which will ensure that the planning and commissioning of services across housing, social care and health services work together and continue to meet the needs and aspirations of older people in terms of options, information, and support, and support independence.

Priorities for the development of accommodation and support for vulnerable clients are currently being examined by the Supported Housing Group and will be fed into the Core Strategy Group for inclusion in the County Supporting People Strategy.

NBC has also developed partnerships with the voluntary sector and other statutory partners that have led to direct outcomes/outputs - for example, ODPM funding to CAN for rent deposit scheme and the rough sleepers’ initiative; work with the YMCA and NCC regarding young people; the work of HMAC on the probation protocol; the CHIP (Crisis Housing Intervention and Prevention) scheme for homeless families who face barriers to accessing housing (e.g. intentionally homeless households). (Marianne – check these examples)

**Option Appraisal for addressing priorities**

While Supporting People service reviews will rationalise the distribution of revenue support, we believe that it is imperative to plan the capital needs of proposed supported housing schemes jointly. We are therefore developing further clear protocols and processes for partnership working towards the effective prioritisation, bidding and commissioning of schemes. This will involve a Strategic Supported Housing Group of senior representatives of the lead strategic players in appraising potential schemes and agreeing supported housing development priorities.

**Action taken so far**

- We have successfully implemented the Supporting People process and are supporting a programme of service reviews.
- LIST - Susann

**Priorities for action**

- Undertake the programme of service reviews – all services are to be reviewed by March 2006.
- Deliver a service user involvement programme in conjunction with the supporting people team to inform commissioning strategy.
- NBC will develop and promote a Supported Housing Strategy which will identify need, provide the strategic framework for addressing gaps and priorities for provision and enable the delivery of timely, good quality schemes that meet the needs of service users. It will be a ‘live’ document, continuously updated and reviewed.
- Research into access to move-on facilities
- Development of the allocation policy to promote greater joined-up working

Clarify the different groups
3.4 Older people

**Context**

Just over a fifth of households contain only older persons, a further 4.7% contain both older and non-older persons. (source? Census?) Although many older person households are in the private sector, a high proportion are found in the social rented sector. An estimated 27.2% of older person only households contain someone with a special need.

The survey also suggests that there appears to be no particular shortage of affordable housing for older people. Older person only households are disproportionately constituted of only one person, which has implications for caring patterns. Additionally, a significant number of older person households have problems in maintaining their homes – these are mainly owner-occupiers. It is therefore suggested that there may be considerable scope for care and repair or staying put schemes in the borough as opposed to providing additional affordable housing specifically for this group of households – see Chapter 5 regarding investment needs for older people.

**Bullet point the trends**

The integration of Health and Social Care and supported housing services, alongside the implementation of the National Service Framework for Older People, involves looking at the way services are delivered for the client from hospital to independent living. The way services are planned and delivered needs to be adjusted to reflect changing needs. The needs of the older client groups are becoming more complex and more people want to be supported within their own homes. The lower demand for traditional sheltered housing provides evidence of this.

There is a shortage of properties that can be adapted to meet the needs of older people who have major mobility problems.

**Action taken so far**

A great deal has been achieved in Northampton in the development of effective housing provision and services for older people.

A Sheltered Housing Review is underway (to be complete by June 2005) to modernise the service so that sheltered housing will meet the needs of older people now and in the future with the emphasis on quality accommodation and support and value for money.

The best value inspection of supported housing said: “[NBC] provides a good level of care to older and vulnerable people through its warden and ‘call care’ services. There are effective partnerships with other agencies in providing services and meeting client needs… [NBC] recognises that the needs of the service are changing and is about to carry out a review of sheltered housing.”

The sheltered housing service achieved level C in the 2004 Supporting People review of the service which concluded that it was a good service provided at a relatively low cost. NBC is now implementing recommendations from the review including introducing care plans in a
three-stage process and reviewing the information and literature for the customer. The care plans are rolling-out and the literature has been amended.

**Priorities for action**

- Developing a multi-agency Supported Housing Strategy for future housing provision and housing services for all people requiring supported housing including older people.
- Assisting in the implementation of the Northamptonshire Older Persons Strategy
- Developing further the care and repair scheme
- (SP) Develop a Very Sheltered Housing scheme in Northampton (Shd this read further develop the Very Sheltered Housing Service in Northampton)
- (SP) Developing care services through continued progress on the Northampton ExtraCare village
- (SP) Reducing the number of sheltered housing units in Northampton; and continuing to meet the needs of current sheltered housing residents in planning the future development of the service
- (SP) Developing more community alarm services, including the development of SP funded community alarms
- (SP) Increasing the number of floating support (and dispersed wardens?) services within Northampton and implement the recommendations of the review
- Work with the SP Team who – through the SP Five-Year Strategy – are considering funding additional specific older people’s services in Northampton as part of the Council’s review of sheltered provision.

3.5 People with physical disability

**Context**

The demand for property adaptations to facilitate independent living has significantly increased in recent years from X in YYYY/YY to a projected Z in YYYY/YY. (Nick can we compare post-2002 survey?) There is currently an eighteen-month waiting list for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to undertake property adaptations. The Council has made over £500,000 available annually for DFGs and demand continues to outstrip available resources.

Some 13.7% of the Borough’s households (11,125) contain special needs members. ‘Physically disabled’ is the main category of special needs. Further information shows that over half of all special needs households currently live in owner-occupied accommodation. However, Council and Housing Association accommodation is more likely to contain special needs households than other tenure groups. An estimated 42.6% of special needs households are pensioner households. The pensioner groups are far more likely to contain special needs members than other household groups.

The survey showed that special needs households typically had much lower income levels than non-special needs households, although the gap was slightly bridged with the inclusion of benefits. Special needs households also showed lower levels of savings than non-special needs households. In terms of unsuitable housing the survey estimated that special needs households were more than four times as likely than non-special needs households to be living in unsuitable housing, and are likely to be living in unsuitable housing as a result of mobility or health problems.
Using the Basic Needs Assessment model for special needs households it is suggested that there is a shortage of affordable housing for households with special needs. Additionally, survey information about special need households suggests that there is also likely to be a need for schemes such as care and repair and staying put. Finally, the survey suggests there are a significant number of aids and adaptations required by special need households. This will have implications for disabled facilities grant.

Actions taken so far

- Closer liaison with Social Services and better collation of information

Priorities for action

- Meeting the demand for short term and long term supported accommodation
- Maximising disabled facilities grants and continuing our adaptations service to provide advice, help and guidance and physical improvements, and adaptations to the homes of disabled people living in Northampton.
- Ensuring all new build by registered social landlords or private developers conform to Part M of building regulations in relation to providing wheelchair access and ground floor toilet facilities.
- Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements (explore – Sue)
- (SP) Along with social care, part fund a new transitional support housing scheme in Northampton
- Reviewing the NBC register of adapted properties in the context of allocations

3.6 Asylum seekers and refugees

Context

In response to the Asylum and Immigration Act 2000, Northampton is (INSERT)

The number of private sector dwellings used to support asylum seekers fell from 375 in 2002 to approximately 40 in May 2005 (this needs expanding though – Kevin)

There are currently X people seeking asylum in Northampton. Asylum Seekers are accommodated and supported by a range of providers in the private sector (approximately 50 dwellings) and through {the County’s Asylum Support Team??}

NBC is developing links with the Maple Access Partnership (Marion – to do what…)

Action Taken so far
A programme of joint inspections has been agreed between NBC and the county council to ensure that the worst properties were identified or works undertaken. (Nick – is this specific to this group?)

- Project to ensure that asylum seekers becoming refugees do not face homelessness due to their change in status
- NBC has worked with Stonham Housing Association to provide ten floating support places for asylum seekers and refugees

**Priorities for action**

- Enforcement officers will investigate complaints of poor conditions
- Working with the County Council in the identification of suitable properties
  (Expand…)
- (SP) Develop floating support services to refugees through the generic low-level floating support services that the SP programme is seeking to make available across the county

### 3.7 Victims of domestic violence

**Context**

The total number of domestic violence incidents reported in the Borough between YY and YY was X of which X were repeat offences. Using the Home Office estimate that only 12% of actual domestic violence offences are reported to the police, it can be estimated that the actual number of domestic violence offences in Northampton may be approximately X annually. The Home Office has estimated that domestic violence accounts for 25% of violent crime, and the total cost to Northampton was £X, which equates to £X per person per annum in the borough.

Using the ODPM’s formula that adequate refuge provision is 1 unit per 10,000 people in a population, Northampton should have around X refuge units. There are currently X dedicated refuge units for women and children fleeing violence, and there are other hostels and supported housing projects which support women within their customer groups. In total there are between X and X units- which is above/below(?) expected provision.

**Action taken so far**

Debbie Ferguson --- work on safe rooms

**Priorities for action**

- (SP) Reshape existing refuge services to ensure that women with substance misuse and/or mental health needs are able to access provision in partnership with other agencies

- (SP response) Investigate the feasibility of Northampton accommodating the needs of men who are victims
3.8 Young people/ Teenage parents

Context

Young people in Northampton face particular problems accessing housing. These include limited availability of property for this group, reducing vacancies in the private rented sector, lack of references available to young people and perceived risks to landlords, housing benefit restrictions for under 25s, location and accessibility issues for young people, and the implications of this in terms of support. (List what we have in place)

Actions Taken so far

- Established a Young Homeless Working Group and a Single Homelessness Working Group to develop sections of the Homelessness Strategy
- TP actions taken so far

Priorities for action

- To develop a Single and Young Persons’ Housing Strategy to provide a comprehensive approach to re-housing 16-25 year olds in the borough
- Supporting all teenage parents to obtain a supported tenancy until they have turned 18 years of age to meet the national government target and maximising the life opportunities accessible to teenage parents
- (SP) Working with SP to apply to Northampton the objective of investing in medium-cost, medium support accommodation, with increased amounts of smaller units
- (SP) Ensure high quality supported housing in Northampton (expand)

3.9 People with mental health problems

Context

(Rates of mental health problems in Northampton). Those most vulnerable to mental ill health are highly likely to suffer multiple disadvantage, such as homelessness, drug, alcohol or other substance abuse, or domestic violence and abuse, and thereby experience social exclusion.

Actions taken so far

- NBC has established referral protocol with two mental health rehabilitation units and will extend this to all mental health supported housing.
- NBC has developed a system of personal re-housing plans to use with applicants who have complex needs
Priorities for action

- (SP) Work with SP Team to develop their objectives within Northampton – particularly around the reduction of medium level accommodation based services in Northampton and the availability of low level floating support
- Developing risk assessment and management for mental health supported housing

3.10 People with learning difficulties

The Context

Northamptonshire SP commissioned an accommodation needs survey jointly with social care services. The survey indicated that as many as X service users currently living with carers/parents or in residential care might wish to move to supported accommodation in the future.

The range of supported accommodation needed will include low level floating support services; adult placements; shared ownership; sheltered-housing style accommodation; groups of flats within a small distance from each other; shared housing; and extra care or intensive support accommodation.

Actions Taken so far

LIST

Priorities for action

- Produce a housing strategy for people with learning disabilities (?)
- Enable specific schemes to address the needs of people with learning difficulties and secure, where necessary, bids for capital funding (revisit this with Susann)

3.11 Offenders and people at risk of offending

The Context

There are large numbers of ex-offenders in services for a range of primary client groups (e.g. substance misuse, homeless, young people and mental health). However, there remains difficulty in finding appropriate accommodation for ex-offenders, especially those who leave custody after serving a short sentence. In some cases, this appears to be due to limited information about services being available to potential referrers.

There is a need for floating support, intensive and highly skilled, for risky offenders. Such people currently live across the county and receive coordinated services from a variety of agencies. However, stable accommodation is often a major problem, and intensive floating support, while unable to mitigate all risks, is an important contributing service to multi-agency working. Developing such a service would contribute to public protection.

(What we know…) Probations stats?
Action Taken so far

Probation protocol has been agreed between NPS and HMAC to assist ex-offenders to access accommodation and prevent homelessness.

NBC is a partner in developing a prison protocol to address ex-offenders’ housing needs that is being developed in the region.

NBC represent and give housing advice and assistance to MAPPA level 3 and is currently contributing to a county approach to MAPPA through CHOG (Chief Housing Officers’ Group).

Priorities for action

- (SP) Work through the development of a countywide floating support service to risky offenders within a tenancy compliance mode
- NBC will review its position and policies in conjunction with the MAPPA development work

3.12 Rough Sleepers

Context

Due to high levels of rough sleepers, a separate group (name-Marianne) has continued to monitor the situation.

Action Taken so far

Priorities for action

3.13 Single People

Context

Single people have a range of issues that need support such as partic ex-offenders, chaotic drug and alcohol users and people with mental health needs. Insufficient numbers of direct access accommodation with the ability to cope with these issues has been highlighted through the homeless strategy working groups.

Actions Taken so far

Priorities for action
3.14 Travellers

Context

Actions Taken so far

Priorities for action

3.15 Wider diversity issues

The Racial Harassment Policy was developed in conjunction with the BME Housing Group. Housing is a member of the Multi-Agency Group Against Racial Attack & Harassment (M.A.G.R.A.H) at both an operational and strategic level and employees have attended the inter-agency training on racist incidents. This group seeks to reduce the incidence of racist attack, support victims and encourage reporting of incidents through effective multi-agency responses.

With regards to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Council has established an Access Group. This group has provided information for managers on provision of accessible information and alternative formats. A programme of improvements to ensure that our premises are accessible for those with physical impairment is well advanced.

The Disabled Persons Housing Group is a user representative sub group of the Disabled People’s Forum. This Group jointly developed the Council’s Mobility Standard, considers all planning applications for all new housing developments to ensure the incorporation of wheelchair and mobility standards, lobbies on disability related issues e.g. Lifetimes homes, and is used as a reference group for policy development.

The Housing Services collate a range of information relating to diversity (ethnicity, age, vulnerability etc) which is used to deliver and develop appropriate service provision, for example the recent review of the Council’s housing register has provided a range of management information on clients needs which will be used use to develop new accommodation, target services more effectively and develop support planning agreements with partners for individual cases.

Information can be made available in a variety of language and formats and all services have access to translation, interpretation and signing facilities through the Community Access and Language Service and Language Line. Services are delivered in a variety of methods e.g. office appointments, telephone, home visit, drop in etc. and services are working in partnership with other agencies to improve access for the traditionally hard to reach groups.

Actions taken so far

➢ A county-wide BME survey will be complete in June 2005

Priorities for action

➢ Consider the outcome of the county-wide BME survey for the provision of supported housing – and additional BME need – in Northampton.
Chapter 4

Delivering quality and choice in the housing market

Applicable long-term benefits:

- Increased supply and delivery of affordable homes
- Improving the housing management service

(include HOAP)

Objectives

- Reducing the number of empty properties and maximising the number of empty properties brought back into use across all tenures
- Widening the choice of affordable housing
- Maximising inward investment to develop affordable housing across tenures
- Developing a quality assurance system for Northampton’s system. (Develop with Bob Sibley – new system in maintenance)

4.1 The context

Any attempt to widen the choice and quality of affordable housing in the borough must happen within the wider context of regeneration and neighbourhood renewal, and must address the housing market as a whole.

The targeting of renewal resources to areas of high unfitness rates is an important aspect of regenerating these areas. The work undertaken increases the life and quality of the housing in these areas.

Affordable housing in Northampton is defined as: “Housing of an adequate standard which is cheaper than that which is generally available in the local housing market. This can comprise a combination of subsidised rented housing and subsidised low cost home ownership (LCHO), including shared ownership”.

NBC’s Affordable Housing: Council Planning Policy Statement “Towards a Local Development Framework for Northampton” (December 2004) provides a framework for negotiations with developers for the provision of affordable housing.

Housing Corporation investment… other investment…

Ensuring that all new developments are sustainable is fundamental to delivering quality and choice in the housing market. Sustainable development involves building economically viable communities, maintaining and promoting community cohesion and delivering quality environmental design. The quality of design in crucial to the sustainability of our
In the context of Northampton’s housing market already outlined in chapter 2, the following points are critical for us to deliver quality and choice in the housing market. We need to:

- influence and be influenced by the regional housing strategy to maximise resources for housing development which meets local and sub-regional needs and regional priorities
- manage performance and resources effectively to achieve housing strategy objectives. To have a coherent and co-ordinated approach to housing development and housing improvement by NBC, registered social landlords (RSLs) and private developers
- Maximise the number of affordable homes negotiated with developers through the planning system
- increase low cost home ownership provided by private developers and RSLs in popular areas that have limited provision of this type, where local people with low incomes are prevented from becoming home owners
- reduce demand on greenfield sites by encouraging regeneration schemes on brownfield sites. We are seeking to achieve X% of all new residential development being on brownfield sites.
- increase our use of land assembly and master planning techniques to increase mixed tenure developments (Sue?)
- develop more comprehensive planning to stimulate market confidence
- encourage continued investment in the town centre (presumably?) through high quality mixed use developments for commercial, leisure and residential use, targeted at a wide age range for sustainability
- integrate housing development into other policy initiatives including neighbourhood management (?) and renewal, anti-social behaviour and environmental strategies
- continue bringing back into use empty properties in Northampton across all tenures (the number of long term empty properties in the borough fell from 730 in 2002 to 638 in 2004)

Choice Based Lettings Scheme

The Government is committed to taking forward the choice-based lettings (CBL) agenda. The statutory Code of Guidance on the allocation of accommodation states that:

“…allocation policies for social housing should provide choice wherever possible, while continuing to meet housing needs… this is the best way to ensure sustainable tenancies and to build settled and stable communities…”

All local authorities should have a CBL system in place by the end of 2010.

NBC believes those who need help with their housing should have a choice about where they live. We want to support people looking for homes to choose the option that is best for them, giving information on opportunities for shared ownership, low cost ownership, and social rented housing. We want to end the situation in which social tenants have to accept the accommodation that is allocated to them on a “take it or leave it” basis.
The overall findings from the evaluation of the pilots are also encouraging and highlight amongst other things:

- increased understanding of allocations and lettings by applicants;
- greater relative perceptions of fairness of CBL compared to points systems by applicants;
- applicant support for the transparency of CBL; and
- importance of proactive advice and support service on choice-based lettings; CBL systems are operating successfully in a wide range of local housing markets. A fundamental message from the evaluation study is that these schemes work in high demand as well as low demand areas. Although balancing 'need' and 'choice' is a challenging issue in high demand urban and rural locations, this can be resolved.

4.2 Action taken so far

- Produced an affordable housing policy statement (December 2004)
- Working with East Midlands Housing Association on the Homebuy Scheme which enabled 23 housing applicants to purchase a home in 2004/05

BOX

the main types of affordable housing that meet the Northampton definition of affordable housing are:

- affordable rented accommodation
- shared ownership provided with or without grant
- sub-market or intermediate rented housing
- shared or fixed equity housing

Have we done work on choice-based lettings?

4.3 Priority areas for action

Chapter 2 details Northampton’s housing markets in terms of need, and supply and demand. It also evidences our need to restructure markets in terms of:

A The Council is concerned to maximise the supply of new affordable homes in the town, but also needs to strike the right balance between the availability and price of different types of housing. It recognises that the market price of housing is now excluding an increasing number of people from being able to afford a suitable home. It is committed to creating a balanced social and economic community, and will seek to influence this by enabling the provision of housing to meet the various accommodation needs throughout the community.
B Continuing with the HomeBuy Scheme throughout 2005/06 and developing the initiative through the proposed new HomeBuy options of:

Social HomeBuy – buying a share of an existing social home at a discount, offering home ownership opportunities to social tenants who cannot afford or do not have the Right to Buy/Acquire

New Build HomeBuy - buying a share of a new home built for key workers, social tenants, those on the housing register and other priority first time buyers

Open Market HomeBuy – buying a share of a home on the open market, for key workers, social tenants, those on the housing register and other priority first time buyers

C List

4.4 What are options for addressing these priorities (reducing number of empty properties and maximising the number of properties brought back into use across all tenures/ widening choice of affordable housing/ maximising inward investment to develop affordable housing across all tenures/ developing quality assurance for N’s housing system
Chapter 5

Investing in Northampton’s housing

Applicable long-term benefits:

- Sustainable development in Northampton
- Provide a decent home for all

Objectives

- Bring all council homes to (at least) the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- Secure improvements to private sector dwellings which are unfit or in poor repair
- Develop initiatives to improve housing management in the private rented sector
- Enable vulnerable homeowners to remain in their homes
- Promote environmental sustainability and improve home energy across all tenures

5.1 The context

Northampton’s Community Strategy highlights the importance of housing to local people’s wellbeing. The strategy aims to provide local people access to good quality housing and a range of choice and to be able to walk through clean streets and localities. Quality, affordable and damp free housing is recognised as essential to people’s quality of life. This chapter covers our investment priorities for both the public and private sector and how we are coordinating these priorities through neighbourhood planning and local regeneration initiatives.

Recent stock condition surveys of the private sector (2002) and the public sector (2004) provide evidence of housing conditions and investment.

**Private Sector**

3,550 private sector dwellings unfit = 5.1%, lower than national %, due to high proportion of newer houses

But 15% of pre 1919 houses are unfit

Vacant houses – 24.5% unfit, can become damaged and deteriorate quickly

Disrepair is the main reason for unfitness, with the 2nd being inadequate food preparation facilities.
Area Committee 1 (around town centre) has 12.2% unfitness rate, mainly due to high no of pre 1919 terraced houses. This area contains nearly 38% of all unfit housing.

The two household groups with the highest proportion of unfit occupancy are Single pensioners (8.2%) and lone parents (9.3%). Both groups are likely to have low incomes.

Implied grant demand for Urgent repairs in all private housing is £18 million, the Grant budget is £1 million per year.

The number of non decent homes in the private sector has yet to be determined and will form the basis of a planned stock condition survey in 2007. The previous survey (2002) did look at households income and estimated that there were approximately 9,000 private households in fuel poverty. This followed an estimated figure of 15,000 households of all tenures in 1999.

The condition and cost of maintaining the older housing stock in the private sector with more than 23,000 dwellings built before 1944 also presents major challenges in addressing housing investment need, and there is growing demand from people with special needs for housing adaptations that will help them remain in their homes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table (Number) – Summary of private sector stock information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decent homes/fuel poverty figures… security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NBC housing stock**

NBC also undertook a Stock Condition Survey (February 2004) of its housing stock. The conclusions from the survey are summarised below and listed as Appendix ? to this document:

The stock is generally of good design and sound construction, and worthy of the investment necessary for effective on-going maintenance.

3,931 dwellings (30%) are considered to fail the ‘Decent Homes’ standard in terms of fitness, condition, amenity or thermal comfort. Whilst this figure is below the national average, it is estimated that a further 6,344 dwellings (48% of the stock) may fall below the decent home standard in the next decade.

A total expenditure of around £11.2 million is required to make the Council’s housing stock ‘fit’ and ‘decent’. The average cost for remedying non-decency is estimated at around £2,860.

In order to maintain the condition of the stock and prevent further dwellings from becoming non-decent within a ten-year period (as a result of the future deterioration of key elements) a further £31.9 million is required to ‘keep decent’.

It is estimated that a total expenditure of £139 million is required over the next ten years to both meet the Decent Homes target and to maintain and improve the stock to basic standards of condition and amenity – an average expenditure per dwelling of £10,605.
The total expenditure over a future 30-year period is estimated to amount to £283 million – approximately £21,600 per dwelling.

52% of the Borough’s stock is currently over 30 years old but, significantly, 95% of dwellings will reach this age over the next decade. Consequently, significant levels of investment are required in the stock over the next decade in order to prevent a growing number of life expired components and catch-up maintenance demands, and therefore rapidly escalating levels of non-decency.

The average energy efficiency SAP rating of 58 is higher than the national average in the UK – however, 37% of the stock falls short of the acceptable target of 55 and less than 18% of dwellings achieve the Preferred target of a SAP of 70+.

Table (Number) – Summary of issues raised in the NBC Stock Condition Survey

5.2 Action taken so far

- The council has worked in partnership with the Warm Front grant providers (Nick, can I be more specific?) to maximise take-up in Northampton – an average of 500 grants are provided each year
- The Council and British Gas have worked in partnership to promote 100% grants for insulation to all households in receipt of benefits through the Energy Efficiency Commitment scheme.
- The Council provides free home energy surveys to all residents to help them ascertain the most cost-effective improvements to their homes as well as establishing grant eligibility – 100 grants are made annually
- The Council’s renewal programme helps low income households exit fuel poverty where they may not be eligible under other schemes – an average of £100,000 is spent for the Council’s renewal programme on energy efficiency measures.

5.3 Priority area for action: investing in the public sector (investing in public sector/ bring all homes up to dhs by 2010)

- Investing in the public sector

In 2000, the government made a commitment to bring all public sector homes up to a decent standard, establishing a 10 year target and interim target to:

“Ensure that all social housing meets set standards of decency by 2010, by reducing the number of households living in social housing that does not meet these standards by a third between 2001 and 2004, with most of the improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas.”

- Bring all Council homes up to decent homes standard by 2010
What are the options for addressing this priority?

The Council has considered a range of options for meeting the government’s Decent Homes targets. (Outline in detail)

How much do we need? Outline…

NBC sees the most cost-effective way to deliver the capital programme is through partnering arrangements in line with the Egan principles of improvement. (Do we have partnering in private sector)

5.4 Investing in the private sector (improvements to private sector dwellings which are unfit or in poor repair/ develop initiatives to improve housing management in the private rented sector/ enable vulnerable homeowners to remain in their homes/ promoting environmental sustainability and improving home energy efficiency across all tenures

Investing in the private sector

The size of the problems of private sector housing disrepair in the borough far exceeds the level of public sector resources available to tackle them. The capital allocation for 2004/05 of £1 million enables the Private Sector Renewal Strategy to continue to deal with those customers in highest need. However, as in previous years, demand for support and intervention in emerging areas still outstrips the resources available. We have a strategy of targeting resources to areas of high unfitness. We are continuing to monitor the situation regarding private finance initiatives, in particular equity release schemes run by trust type organisations. All councils in Northamptonshire

(Edit these bullet points)

- The Private Sector House Condition survey (2002) estimates that approximately 3,550 dwellings in this sector are unfit, representing 5.1% of the private housing stock. However, nearly 15% of the oldest (pre1919) housing stock is unfit and two areas of the town show higher incidences of unfitness when compared to the average (5.1%).

- The level of investment needed to make all unfit properties meet the minimum fitness requirements is estimated at £13 million. However, to get these properties into reasonable repair as well as fit for occupation would cost £28.4 million.

- The research looked at the implied grant demand on the council from owner-occupiers in unfit housing using a basic formula on the income of the owners in those dwellings. From a cost of approximately £22.3 million, the research suggested an implied grant demand of £15.3 million. This is important to the council in considering future renewal strategy and the possible use of appropriate equity release schemes to utilize capital locked up in dwellings needing repairs etc.

- The research estimated that there were 5,500 private rented dwellings in Northampton with a higher average incidence of unfitness of 12% (compared to 5.1%). Although
this shows a need for a continual enforcement role from the council, the rented sector is also recognised as providing a vital role in providing accommodation. Consequently the council continue to develop its forum with landlords and are introducing a Student property accreditation scheme in partnership with the college and landlords. This should help improve the condition of rented accommodation through the positive messages associated with being accredited.

To support the {Community Strategy – check}, the greatest proportion of resources available for private sector housing will be directed to the areas of the borough with the highest level of unfit housing with assistance targeted at groups suffering the greatest social and economic disadvantage.

Northampton’s housing renewal policies are largely about protection rather than recovery as Northampton does not have private sector areas where the market has collapsed. However, it does have areas where social cohesion will be severely undermined without regeneration and some level of investment now.

Investment in the private sector has for many years concentrated on focusing our limited resources on areas and individuals with the most urgent needs.

In 2003, following extensive consultation with residents and partners, the Council adopted a Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy which focuses on the following key priorities:

LIST (NC) but will no doubt include….

- Tackling the worst disrepair in the private sector, primarily through targeting the disrepair of older houses in priority areas
- Concentrating on targeted local intervention to prevent systems of market collapse – particularly through reducing the number of unfit homes
- Targeting the majority of resources towards priority areas
- Tackling specific problems in the private rented sector such as the condition of houses in multiple occupation and poor energy efficiency
- Increasing support to home owners’ responsibilities to enable them to maintain their homes, through free home maintenance and home energy visits and advice
- Improving domestic energy efficiency – in particular by maximising external funding opportunities
- Reducing crime and fear of crime and providing support mechanisms to build sustainable communities. (Nick – we should develop this…)

What are the options for addressing this priority?

The key elements and actions of the renewal strategy were based primarily on the findings of the 2002 stock condition survey research. The strategy contains 21 approved policy actions that form the basis of the service provided by the council. Each policy action was subject to the consultation exercise with partners, members, and customers (through the People’s Panel).

Secure improvements to private sector dwellings which are unfit

Actions to achieve this objective
There are new mechanisms aimed at helping more people in those areas, such as the non means tested 25% grant for new owners and landlords of unfit dwellings.

Vacant properties have the highest incidence of unfitness so a 25% grant is also available for owners wishing to bring long term empty homes back into use, thus increasing the availability of good quality rented accommodation.

Develop initiatives to improve housing management in the private rented sector

The growth of the private rented sector, and the responsibilities which landlords have in maintaining and managing their homes satisfactorily presents a major challenge. Developing policies towards the private rented sector is a central part of the private sector renewal policy.

Actions to achieve this objective

Improving information on private landlords and mapping of private rented properties (HMAC?)

- The strategy states a commitment to undertake a pro-active enforcement of the Council’s HMO standards in Partnership Area 1, the area with the highest incidence of houses in multiple occupation. The programme of inspections will begin in known streets with high HMO concentrations and will tie in with preparations for mandatory licensing of HMOs.

- The continued development of the Landlords Forum and consultation with private landlords is a major aspect of improving relations with landlords.

- The council will be launching a Student Property accreditation scheme in association with University College Northampton, the Landlords’ Association and Student Union in Early Summer 2005 and this will help improve the management of the 1,500 or so student properties in the town.

- The council will continue to respond so requests for action from private tenants and landlords as part of the enforcement team and Housing and Money advice centre service. Enforcement action is taken against landlords of dwellings failing to meet satisfactory standards, but working together with HMAC can help ensure that where possible landlords undertake improvements on an agreed basis for the benefit of themselves and tenants.

Enable vulnerable homeowners to remain in their homes

The Council and its partners recognise the value of advice to tenants and homeowners on how to improve and maintain their homes with or without grant assistance.
Actions to achieve this objective

- To improve the advice and support we provide to vulnerable homeowners we will continue to provide and promote the Home Maintenance Advice service, offering free home surveys. These also include a home energy rating so that homeowners can see where cost effective improvements can be made. Where applicable advice on appropriate local and national grants is also given.

- Where a case of a seriously Unfit dwelling occupied by a vulnerable person (for example older people, supported by Social Care and Health services) outside the priority area is brought to the attention of the Council, renovation grant assistance will be considered to help enable that person to remain in their homes without their health being affected.

- The council continue to provide assistance to those most in need for the repair of essential items under the home repair assistance (HRA) grant. This grant is also provided to eligible clients of Care and Repair under a joint working programme. The HRA grant can also be used for minor adaptations to assist a disabled person use their home better. However, where more major adaptations are required the council will award Disabled Facilities Grants to eligible individuals in need throughout the borough in partnership with the Occupational Therapy Service and the County Council. In cases where an application for a mandatory DFG would be approved but for the work not being “reasonable and practicable”, the Council will consider an “Adapted Alternative Home Grant”. The grant would be to a maximum of £25,000 and would be paid where the provision of suitable alternative accommodation represents a better benefit than adapting the existing property.

- Council officers are continuing to look at the potential of equity release schemes as an additional tool to assist people carry out essential repairs and improvements. Initial discussions have taken place with the Home Improvement Trust regarding the possibility of joining and using the House Proud Scheme. However, this scheme will be more cost effective if we work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities and this will be progressed during 2005/06 through the countywide private sector housing group.

- Our partner organisations (Care and Repair, Age Concern) have been approached about the possibility of providing loans/equity release and we will continue to monitor schemes nationally through support networks.

Promoting environmental sustainability and improving home energy efficiency across all tenures

The Council and its partners are committed to tackling fuel poverty and delivering a 30% improvement in domestic energy efficiency under the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995. Recent year’s have shown good results following the increase in activity by this and other authorities, and increasing awareness by households. We work in close partnership through the Northants Home Energy Efficiency Partnership (NHEEP), which consists of the 7 local borough and district council's of Northants, and private sector representatives. These include Powergen, British Gas, Ideal Boilers, Plumb Centre, Warm
Front, Leics/Northants EAC, and others associated with the various schemes. Several schemes have been very successful and received regional and national recognition. The insulation grant scheme “Chillout” (a British Gas) has achieved more than 10,000 completions since it was formed approximately 2 years ago. “Boiler Magic” has resulted in more than 2,000 high efficiency condensing boilers being installed working in partnership with manufacturers, wholesalers and local installers.

The Council is committed (where?) to influencing all housing providers to incorporate environmental implications with their business operations and investment plans.

Actions to achieve this objective

- A priority for the council has been the need to improve the energy efficiency of the private rented sector. The Hot Property scheme has been operating since 1997 in partnership with landlords, and external funding providers and has achieved good results. More than £673,000 has been spent on 1,170 improvements to private rented dwellings.

- The council have been active in trying to reduce fuel poverty in the borough. We work closely with Powergen Warmfront to promote this grant. A targeted mail out in the summer of 2004 was very successful. We also introduced a Heatstreets scheme during 2004/05 to one of the most deprived areas of the town in partnership with Powergen. A £10,000 input achieved more than £22,000 worth of improvements.

- The council are always looking to utilize external funding and since the introduction of HECA 1995, more than £1,170,000 has been obtained for various sources to help achieve HECA and fuel poverty aims.

- The Council is committed (where?) to influencing all housing providers to incorporate environmental implications with their business operations and investment plans. You might need planning’s input into their involvement in new housing. We have had some input into discussions with partner Housing Associations, through Susan and Karina, but unclear as to results as yet. Influencing private landlords has been done through the landlords forum and in particular the Hot Property scheme, see above. (SUE)
Chapter 6

Promoting sustainable communities and neighbourhoods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicable long-term benefits:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable development in Northampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The delivery of the growth agenda in Northampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the housing management service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objectives

- Supporting the council’s regeneration initiatives
- Reducing crime and the fear of crime
- Improving the quality of the local environment
- Involving people in the renewal process and enhancing opportunities
- Maximising the role of registered social landlords in developing communities

6.1 The context

(Roger Mendes – CX – UDC – regeneration framework) (Include RSLs)

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and stay. Sustainability can be adversely affected by a number of factors, such as high rates of crime or anti-social behaviour, poor environmental standards, poverty and social inclusion. The council and its partners are committed, under Northampton’s Community Strategy (2002), to the regeneration of our communities. We are working to help achieve the government’s aim of ensuring that, in 10-20 years time, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged because of where they live. Housing has a vital role to play in achieving this by ensuring that all people have the opportunity to live in decent homes within secure, vibrant neighbourhoods.

Northampton’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy now being produced by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), sets out ways in which the Council and its partners are working to narrow the gap between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the borough. NBC is seeking to influence the consultation on the current consultation round of Neighbourhood Renewal funds given the current exemption from recent funding (Linda – shd we be more specific?)

The overriding aim of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is to ensure that the regeneration is ‘mainstreamed’, that it becomes part of the core activity of the council and its partners. Housing services have played a pivotal role in regeneration in Northampton through the Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Partnership (CASPAR) projects.

In particular, Northampton’s housing services are helping to deliver the following aspects of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy:
- Reducing anti-social behaviour and domestic violence
- Integrating asylum seekers into the local community
- Supporting private sector landlords
- Providing money skills advice and related financial services
- Environmental improvements determined by the priorities of the community

In addition, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy targets a number of estates where we aim to reduce the numbers of people who feel the need to leave because of the housing conditions in that area. The LSP approach to neighbourhood renewal aims to join together residents, housing officers and partner agencies through our established Area Partnerships to set the agenda for tackling problems and improving services at the local level. (What resources are available?)

6.2 Actions taken so far

LIST (Resources)

Not only finances (resources from other agencies/ Linkages into SRB1 Delapre, KH, Spencer, Sure Start activity

In addition, we have sought to promote sustainable regeneration through initiatives such as:

- Housing Options Appraisal Process

6.3 Priority areas for action

Under the Community Strategy and the council’s Best Value Performance Plan (Dale), there are four priorities in achieving sustainable regeneration:

- Increasing the number of older people in Northamptonshire helped to live at home
- Achieving the government’s decent home for all by 2010, on all public sector housing stock
- Reducing to nil the number of wards in Northampton in the most 10% of wards in the country as indicated by the housing element of the deprivation indices
- Developing and publishing a homelessness strategy

(Possibly change above, speak to Sean Silver) – look at four headings below, which make much more sense)

6.4 What are the options for addressing these priorities (supporting the council’s area regeneration initiatives/ reducing crime and the fear of crime/ improving the quality of the local environment/ involving people in the renewal process and promoting social inclusion

The ways in which we will address these priorities are determined by the Community Strategy and Northampton’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. Both these documents are
the result of extensive consultation with Northampton residents and the council’s partner organisations. The housing service will be co-ordinating their activities with those of other Council departments and partner agencies to help deliver solutions that have already been identified.

Supporting the Council’s area regeneration initiatives

While Northampton’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy sets out our approach to regeneration for the whole of the borough, area-initiatives allow us to pilot innovative strategies and techniques, or have a big impact where there are a number of areas of deprivation close to one another such as Area Committee 1 (is this SB?)

Reducing crime and the fear of crime

The Council has a duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in Northampton. Overcoming the problems associated with crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) id therefore of primary importance to all of Northampton’s housing providers.

Actions to achieve this objective:
LIST

Improving the local environment and the quality of Northampton’s housing stock

The quality of the local environment is a crucial factor in making our neighbourhoods attractive, desirable places to live. The Council is committed to improving the quality of its housing stock and is working with partners to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home. We are also working to improve the appearance of Northampton’s neighbourhoods.

Actions to achieve this objective:
➢ Providing good quality, affordable and resource-efficient homes
LIST

Involving people in the renewal process and enhancing opportunities

The council and its partners are intending to place residents at the heart of the neighbourhood renewal process so that communities can decide for themselves how their areas are developed. We are also working to enhance employment, learning, cultural and leisure opportunities for people in Northampton by co-ordinating our activities with those of other agencies and partnerships working in the borough.

The successful CASPAR initiatives have provided the Council with useful experience of developing community-led models in estate regeneration. These practices can be adapted to suit wider community involvement in Northampton.

Actions to achieve this objective:
LIST
Chapter 7

Resource Planning

Context

The Housing Strategy sets an ambitious vision for significant impacts on house conditions within the borough. It has to be based on sound financial planning and realistic assessment of resource availability. The following principles are adopted in our forward planning:

- Financial planning is based on realistic assumptions of future funding provided and secured by the council and our other partners
- The housing strategy supports and is informed by the council’s [Asset Management Strategy or Capital Investment Strategy], the framework for the allocation of resources through the council’s corporate business planning process
- Prioritisation of investment planning corresponds to priorities of key funding providers notably the government, the Housing Corporation, council departments and partners
- Decisions have been strongly influenced by service users, residents and other stakeholders
- An approved procedure to maximising inward investment for housing via the Housing Corporation and other sources (K – is this ok?)
- Bringing council housing up to decent homes standards
- Targeting key priority areas in private and public sector housing areas experiencing the highest levels of deprivation
- Disabled facility adaptations for the elderly/other vulnerable people
- Other targeted regeneration areas including Caspar areas

7.1 Meeting the decent homes standard

A key priority is to ensure council housing meets the Decent Homes Standard. The Housing Options Appraisal indicated that the HRA Business Plan will enable all council houses to be brought up to this standard by 2010 – however, this does not address the benchmark standard or Northampton Standards that will provide sustainable developments and, in the case of the Northampton Standard, a greater reflection of tenants’ aspirations. The council’s strategic housing and corporate objectives set the framework and performance targets in the HRA Business Plan. These will be determined annually and reviewed by the council throughout the year.

In addition, the housing strategy includes private sector renewal investment reflecting the responsibilities of NBC in delivering this service.

7.2 Inward investment

Karina – we need to work through this
### Options for inward investment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Corporation Approved Development Programme</th>
<th>Housing Corporation’s investment priorities: (Validate list before inserting)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy Single Capital Pot</td>
<td>Regional Housing Strategy Priorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Provision of land for affordable housing development including releasing land for housing purposes and securing Section 106 agreements | Housing Corporation priorities
Local priorities that would not receive Housing Corporation support… |
| Maximise number of private sector empty properties brought back into use | Support priorities in Council’s Empty Homes Strategy? |
| Reduce council and RSL voids and re-let times | Choice-based letting? |
| Borrowing by RSLs | New residential sites with on-site affordable provision secured through the planning system in areas the Housing Corporation would not support (?) |
| Investment funding in local authority stock through use of MRA, HRA, capital receipts and the single capital pot. | Improving local authority stock and bringing empty properties back into use |

### 7.3 Investment in regeneration

Regeneration funding through…[list] complements strategic housing objectives and housing programmes. In order to maximise resources for housing we support bids for capital funds which meet both government criteria and the priorities set out in the council’s [Asset Management Strategy/Housing Strategy] and the Borough Housing Strategy.

### 7.4 Monitoring of the capital programmes

A new performance management system is in place to monitor and review performance against targets both at officer and member levels. Monitoring revenue expenditure and service delivery will be achieved by (DALE –reports) and a suite of the performance indicators included in the HRA Business Plan. Monitoring systems are in place for RSL activity, and these will be developed through our partnership arrangements.

### 7.5 Gershon Review

As set out in the Spending Review 2004, each local authority is expected to achieve 2.5% per annum efficiency gains compared to their 2004/05 baseline, over the next three years. Local authorities will report gains made through an Annual Efficiency Statement, and this document will also include an outline of expected efficiency gains and the strategy for achieving them.

NBC has established a Monitoring Group – which includes representation by housing employees - to develop efficiency programmes and monitoring the delivery of identified efficiencies.
From K – needs working through

HOW WE WILL FUND THE WORK OF THE HOUSING STRATEGY

The AFS sets out in this document to improve Housing and related services in Northampton require significant resources. The efficient and effective use of any resources include and Asset Management is key to enabling people to live in communities that are places where they want to live and work now and in the future. Communities that meet diverse needs of existing and future residents are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life…..

WHERE THE FUNDING COMES FROM

The Council is able to use two main sources of funding i.e. capital and revenue.

Capital is from the Government in the form of grants and borrowing (supported and unsupported) and receipts from the sale of assets e.g. Council properties to existing tenants under the Right to Buy scheme. The main source of revenue is from rents paid by the tenants of our Council owned homes. The tables below clearly set out the current and future use of all of these funds to improve Housing and related services.

Karen/Alison to supply

CAPITAL

We have developed over (x) years, a Corporate Capital Strategy which is one of the Council’s main policy documents that details our approach to capital investment. Under this policy the Council is able to target investment towards the aims and objectives of the Community Strategy, focusing on priorities identified through extensive consultation with local residents. Priority is given to capital investment in Housing which meets the following:-

- Legislative – i.e. service is mandatory/statutory
- Health and Safety – addresses strategic needs of existing assets
- Self-financing
- Spend to save ) Assists in maintaining existing service provision ) and maximises the availability of external funding
- Social Impact ) for priority issues to enhance value for money
- Corporate Plan – is consistent with the Council’s medium/long term objectives
- CPA Push
- Divisional Service Plan
- IT Push.
A rigorous evaluation process is carried out on all proposed capital schemes by Members and Officers. Proposals must identify how the project will:

- Meet the objectives of the Community Strategy
- Complies with Government initiatives
- Meets recommendations from Best Value reviews
- Secures funding from outside the single capital pot
- Impacts on the physical and social environment.

The schemes highlighted in this Housing Strategy correspond with these policies and complement the objectives of the Corporate Capital Strategy i.e.

- Provide a framework for the Council's Asset Management Plan
- Ensures efficient and effective use of resources and assets
- Supports the development of partnership working and cross-cutting issues
- Targets resources at neighbourhoods in the highest need
- Achievement of the Decent Home Standard
- Provision of Affordable Housing.

(Table of Figures to be included)

Revenue
Capital Receipts
The council receives capital receipts from the sale of assets for examples council rented properties (£x million in 2004/2005), 25% of which is usable and can be re-invested and general fund land and property (£x million in 2004/2005) 50% of which is usable. The council funds some major neighbourhood schemes with these receipts – in particular, the Caspar projects have benefited targeted estates in the context of housing, crime and other regeneration elements.

Major Repairs Allowance
The Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) is a revenue subsidy paid by the Government to enable councils to invest in their rented housing stock to bring it up to the Decent Homes standard by 2010. The amount received is based on . Northampton receives approximately £ per annum to fund these works ie x% of the capital programme.

Revenue
The Housing Revenue Account is funded from tenants rents, service charges, Government grants and other income. Spending in this area focuses on the work on council homes and surrounding estates.

The General Fund is money from the Government grants and council tax payments. This funds the council spending on homelessness, our work with RSLs, improving Private Sector Housing, general environmental works.

Borrowing

Assets
The council has a range of non-housing assets, for example Shops, garages, land and industrial units. The Asset Management Plan, Property Strategy and Best Value reviews will identify any potential for the generation for additional income through sales and/or investment.

Approved Housing Programme
The Housing Corporation makes grants to Registered Social Landlords to enable them to build new homes and refurbish existing properties sometimes bringing empty properties back into use. Northampton having been identified as a growth are with increasing problems with affordability has a major programme of AHP funding of around £24million for 2004 –2006. This funding will enable the provision of 592 units of new housing. Reference appendix X for a breakdown of the properties provide and related funding over a period of years.

Section 106 Contributions
The increase in population has resulted in an increase on demand for all types of housing. The rise in house prices in the past 10 years has shown the price of an average small terraced property from around £50,000 to £130,000 (GOEM web site). The increase has priced many new and emerging households out of the owner-occupier market. As part of our enabling work we negotiate 35% affordable housing units on all housing developments over 15 units (previously 22% over 24 units). Our aim is to develop truly integrated communities with a range of tenures, therefore our
policy is to develop affordable housing on site rather than seek financial contributions. To enable this on site provision the developers must provide a subsidy, due to land prices and the restricted funding available by the Housing Corporation – this subsidy is in the form of free or reduced land to the Registered Social Landlords. Table x shows the numbers of units provided on section 106 sites over a period of x years and the plans for the future.

As referred to the council in exceptional circumstances negotiates a financial contribution for the development of affordable housing. This may be in the form of off-site provision, bringing back into use empty properties or specific project work.

**Additional Sources of Funding**

Increasingly the council works in partnership with other stakeholders to provide services and in doing so attracts a range of additional funding, this includes:

- £ Supporting People funding to support x people
- £ Homelessness Directorate funding to tackle the increasing incidences of homelessness for a variety of reasons.
- Match- funding from fuel suppliers to improve the energy efficiency of dwellings (x in 2004/2005).
- Owners and landlords contributions for grant assisted works in the private sector.
- Funding from NCC, RSLs and English Partnerships to fund Countywide research projects into the housing needs of Key workers and Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

**ODPM growth funding**

**WHAT WE SPENT AND ON WHAT**

The figures in the table show that we have targeted spending at:

**Decent Homes – private and public**

There has been major investment in replacement wiring, heating, kitchens and bathrooms of council properties. The majority of these works were funded by the MRA which is granted for these purposes.

We have continued with our Improvement Grant programme based on our Private Sector Renewal Strategy and have targeted neighbourhoods in the most need.

**Disabled Adaptations (Public and Private)**
We continue our programme of disabled adaptations demonstrating the council’s commitment to equality and diversity. This programme of works in partnership with Social Care and Health enables people to remain in their own homes regardless of the tenure.

**Single Regeneration Budget**

**Local Authority Social Housing Grant**

In the recent past councils would provide grants direct to registered social landlords to enable the provision of new affordable housing. This system was changed as from 1st April 200x and all grants are now allocated through the Housing Corporation based on the Regional Housing Investment Plan – reference Annual Development Programme. The expenditure referred to here is for residual schemes. The council at this stage has taken the decision not to fund schemes directly.

**Housing Management Service**

Improved service delivery

Tenant Participation

FISH
Future Spending Priorities …
| **Delivery of the Housing Strategy and the Growth agenda** | • Bid for Housing Corporation funding to development XXX new homes  
• Use section 106 agreements to negotiate a minimum of XXX units  
• Consider investing council capital resources to fund RSLs  
• Bid for ODPM growth monies to fund needs studies, and feasibility studies into regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods  
• Appoint additional employees to work in housing strategy and enabling to extend the work that we are unable to undertake with RSLs  
• Housing Market Assessment/Housing Needs Studies  
• Neighbourhood renewal strategy |
| **Implementation of the Private Sector Renewal Strategy** | • Continue to provide grants to fund the renovation of private homes under the Council’s Private Sector Renewal Policy.  
• Consider loans?  
• Link into neighbourhood renewal strategy  
• Private Sector Stock Condition Survey |
| **Meeting the Accommodation and support needs of vulnerable people** | • Work with the County wide Supporting People team, NCC and neighbouring councils to identify housing and support needs.  
• Develop joint capital/revenue schemes and bid for funding via the Housing Corporation and the Supporting People team.  
• Disabled adaptations  
• Redevelopment of existing schemes |
| **Achievement of the Decent Homes standard in the council stock** | • Asset management plan  
• Northampton Standard |
| **Improving the Housing Management Service** | • Options Appraisal |
### APPENDIX A

**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

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### APPENDIX B

#### HOUSING GENERAL FUND

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#### SUMMARY INTO CIPFA SEA DIVISIONS

| HOMELESSNESS                      | 312 | 719 | 666 | 771 | 1,123 | 795 | 877 |
| WELFARE                           | 37  | 94  | 117 | 77  | 91    | 116 | 74  |
| HOUSING ADVANCES                  | -2  | 0   | -3  | -2  | -3    | 0   | -2  |
| HOUSING ADVANCE                   | 463 | 411 | 408 | 457 | 415   | 511 | 470 |
| HOUSING BENEFIT ADMINISTRATION    | 1,275 | 1,156 | 1,324 | 1,259 | 1,075 | 1,376 | 1,320 |
| HOUSING BENEFIT PAYMENTS          | 518 | 348 | 470 | 729 | 897   | -420 | -238 |
| HOUSING STRATEGY                  | 198 | 209 | 259 | 176 | 201   | 213 | 244 |
| OTHER COUNCIL PROPERTY            | 0   | 46  | 13  | -1  | 1     | 1   | 0   |
| PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING            | 683 | 324 | 2,066 | 2,045 | 1,674 | 1,496 | 1,892 |
| REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORDS       | 46  | 39  | 225 | 632 | 546   | 307 | 158 |
| OTHER                             | -600 | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0     | 0   | 0   |
| NET EXPENDITURE                   | 2,930 | 3,346 | 5,545 | 6,143 | 6,020 | 4,395 | 4,795 |
## HOUSING GENERAL FUND

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