

Housing Strategy for Herefordshire

2005-2008



FOREWORD

**By Councillor O Barnett
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
and Strategic Housing**



I am pleased to introduce this Housing Strategy for Herefordshire 2005 – 2008.

The strategy describes the housing issues that affect Herefordshire and sets out the priorities for action that have been agreed in consultation with our stakeholders and partners.

Much has been achieved since the last Housing Strategy.

- The Council successfully transferred its housing stock to a new local housing company, Herefordshire Housing Limited, in November 2002
- Choice-based lettings went live in Herefordshire in October 2002 under a partnership between the Council and the five largest Registered Social Landlords in the County
- The Council has developed a new Housing Renewal Policy under the Regulatory Reform Act powers, providing a range of discretionary grant assistance to help tackle property conditions and promote independence
- The Supporting People Programme went live on 1st April 2003 and currently funds the provision of housing-related support services to over 4000 people in the County
- The Council was successful in bidding for £4.8 million grant funding from the Department of Health towards the development of Extra Care housing in Hereford City. Work to develop 99 units of Extra Care accommodation is due to start on site in autumn of 2005
- Strategic Housing Services retained its 'Excellent' rating under the Regular Performance Assessment conducted by the Audit Commission in 2004

We face even more challenges as we enter the period covered by this new Housing Strategy and our success in partnership working will continue to be central to achieving our shared priorities:

- Tackling the increasing levels of homelessness within our County is a high priority area and will be improved with the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy with a very strong focus on driving forward the prevention of homelessness
- The shortage of affordable housing in the County guides us to use every opportunity to deliver homes to meet local needs
- There is a need to protect vulnerable people through the provision of appropriate housing and to support solutions, identified under the Supporting People Strategy, at a time when the funding is under review nationally
- Tackling the challenge to improve conditions in the private sector

This strategy is set within a period of yet more significant change in National, Regional, Sub-Regional and local policy terms. The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005 enables Herefordshire to further develop its strategic and partnership approaches in dealing with housing issues within the identified West Housing Market Area.

The Housing Strategy for Herefordshire 2005 – 2008 has therefore identified key actions for the next three years which aim to prioritise local issues as they affect the residents of Herefordshire but which also contribute to the delivery of wider Regional and National Strategies.



This Housing Strategy will be made available upon request in Braille and on audio-tape. Anyone who would like an explanation of the strategy, or any part of the strategy in a language other than English will be invited to a meeting along with a Council Officer and an interpreter.

For further details of this service or any other information provided in this document, contact Richard Gabb, Head of Strategic Housing, 01432 261902

CONTENTS

	Page
1 Challenges and priorities	1
2 Strategic context	3
3 Consultation and partnerships	10
4 Housing needs, housing markets and housing conditions	12
5 Achieving a more balanced housing market	22
6 Improving housing conditions	29
7 Housing choice and housing support for vulnerable people	34
8 Resourcing the strategy	41
9 Action Plan	45
Appendix 1 Strategic Housing Services performance indicators	
Appendix 2 References and Supporting Documents	
Appendix 3 Housing Strategy Consultation – List of Delegates	
Appendix 4 Glossary	

SECTION ONE

CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

This Housing Strategy for Herefordshire sets out the key housing issues in the area that we aim to address over the three-year period from 2005 to 2008. It replaces the last Housing Strategy for 2003-2006, which was published in 2002. Sections 5-7 of this Strategy each contain reports on key achievements in the period 2003-2005.

Our strategies are based on detailed analysis of the housing market, housing need and housing conditions. Equally importantly, we have consulted widely with a range of organisations and have drawn on the public consultation undertaken to establish priorities for the Council's Corporate Plan. These consultation processes have influenced the priorities we have established and our options for addressing these issues.

This section of the Strategy provides an overview of the key challenges we face in seeking to improve the housing circumstances in Herefordshire and sets out the relative priority attached to addressing these different challenges. It is important to note that all the challenges identified will receive attention over the three year period.

Our top priority is ***to achieve a more balanced housing market***, as set out in **Section 5**. In recent years, house prices in Herefordshire have increased substantially and in the more rural parts of the area, many first time buyers are priced out of the market. Lettings of social housing are diminishing, while demand for social housing and homelessness has increased substantially. We will devote resources to providing a range of types of affordable housing, including rental and shared ownership, with a substantial proportion of the programme aiming to meet local needs in villages. These needs are to be supported by planning requirements for affordable housing and by the development of a mix of tenures including low cost housing for sale to assist local people now priced out of the market. We will need considerable funding from the Housing Corporation to complement the use of Council and Housing Associations' funding to achieve this programme.

Our second priority is ***to address the increasing levels of homelessness***, as set out in **Section 7**. The Homelessness Forum helped to develop our Homelessness Strategy and we are working in partnership with a range of organisations in implementing specific Strategy objectives, which are to be reviewed annually. We want to highlight two key issues in this Housing Strategy – firstly, the need to develop more high quality temporary accommodation for homeless people to avoid the use of bed and breakfast and secondly, the development of 'housing options' and homelessness prevention approaches to break the cycle of responding to homelessness only when crisis point is reached. The priorities outlined in Section 5 will also help address the issue of homelessness.

Our third priority is ***to ensure that vulnerable people needing housing linked to support have their needs met in all parts of the area*** - this is a particular challenge for a rural area with dispersed settlements like Herefordshire. In **Section 7** we set out the main priorities for additional supported housing, to be addressed in the Council's Capital Development Programme and the separate Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010. We will aim to build on our considerable success in attracting funding to support of our objectives, for example through Department of Health grants for the development of Extra Care schemes for older people. We also recognise that Herefordshire has a growing number of older people and that we need to develop appropriate housing options for this group.

Our final priority is ***to improve housing conditions in Herefordshire across all tenures***, as set out in **Section 6**. All social housing in the county is now owned and managed by housing associations and they have extensive programmes to bring their housing up to the decent homes standard in the next few years.

For private housing, we need to undertake a new house condition survey to ascertain progress since the last survey reported in 2001. The last survey pointed to relatively high levels of unfitness, with particular problems in remote rural areas and in the private rented sector. A range of strategies will be used to address this issue with substantial levels of Council funding directed to this activity.

SECTION TWO

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Strategies for addressing the key housing issues facing Herefordshire cannot be pursued in isolation. It is critically important that the Housing Strategy is linked to other local strategies and to regional and national strategies together with policy directions for housing and social inclusion. The purpose of this section of the Housing Strategy is to set out these linkages.

National Housing Policy

In February 2003, the Government published a programme of action, *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future*, which sets out the main national priorities and strategies for housing, linked to developing sustainable communities. In January 2005 the Government set out its Housing plans for the next five years in *Homes for All*. It is important that the Housing Strategy for Herefordshire fits in with these plans and contributes towards the achievement of national objectives. The links between national priorities and objectives in Herefordshire are set out in the table below.

National priorities	Herefordshire Housing Strategy
Increasing the supply of affordable housing in areas of shortage	A major priority in view of increasing demand and house price movements. Proposals for affordable rented, shared ownership, Homebuy and low cost market housing, supported by rigorous planning policies for affordable housing.
Ensuring that housing strategies contribute to sustainable communities, particularly at the neighbourhood level	Targeting resources to the most deprived neighbourhoods in the Housing Renewal Policy.
Achieving targets for decent homes in the social housing sector and for vulnerable households in the private sector	Housing Associations in Herefordshire have programmes to meet decent homes targets. Targets for the private sector will be implemented following the completion of the house condition survey and implementation of the new Health and Safety rating system.
Improved conditions and management in the private sector	Programme of work on housing conditions in the private sector, focus on private rented sector including HMO registration schemes and considering the potential for the licensing of private rented accommodation.
Greater choice for applicants for and tenants of social housing	Choice based lettings introduced for five main Housing Associations in 2002 in partnership with the Council. Improvements to these arrangements, expanded partnership and development of housing options approach proposed.
Tackling areas of low demand for housing	Not relevant in Herefordshire
Addressing the housing and support needs of vulnerable households	Proposals to increase supported housing capacity, using Supporting People funding and Council and Housing Corporation capital to build on our success to date. Proposals to increase high quality temporary accommodation to reduce the use of bed and breakfast for homeless families

National priorities	Herefordshire Housing Strategy
Sustainable development and meeting housing needs in rural communities	Programmes to identify needs in rural communities including parish surveys. A proportion of the Council's Capital development programme will be targeted to provide and develop housing to meet local needs of households living in rural areas.

Other recent developments in the national policy and legislative frameworks as listed below will effect strategic directions for housing in Herefordshire in the coming years.

Housing Act 2004

A range of new powers and responsibilities are included in this legislation:

- Local authorities will have new powers to selectively licence private landlords. These powers are primarily aimed at regulating the activities of private landlords in declining neighbourhoods and we do not expect that they will be used much in Herefordshire
- Introduction of mandatory licensing of larger houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) - Herefordshire already has a HMO registration scheme with a broader application which we will need to integrate with the new licensing scheme
- Tightening the criteria for the *Right to Buy* scheme for social housing. In Herefordshire, tenants of three stock transfer associations have the right to buy and there has been serious erosion of the social housing stock as a result. We anticipate that the new rules will have a limited effect on the levels of activity
- New powers for the Housing Corporation to provide grants for affordable housing to companies other than Registered Social Landlords. The extent to which such companies will seek to provide housing with such grant assistance and the Housing Corporation's investment and regulation framework for this area of activity will need to be clarified. Herefordshire is well positioned to support initiatives arising from this new policy direction. However, the Council will seek to ensure that any housing which results from this policy meets high standards of construction and design
- The introduction of Home Information Packs to make buying and selling homes easier. There is potential for the Council's Strategic Housing Service to offer energy efficiency audits under these proposals
- The requirement to take into account the needs of travellers and gypsies in housing needs surveys. This will require collaborative work in Herefordshire between Strategic Housing, Planning and Environmental Health
- A new housing health and safety rating system

Reform of the planning system

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduces a series of detailed policy changes to speed up the planning system and to assist with the Government's aspiration of creating sustainable communities:

- The requirement for each region to have a Regional Planning Board
- The requirement for each Regional Planning Board to produce a Regional Spatial Strategy
- The replacement of the principle of planning obligations as set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 with planning contributions that can be either prescribed according to a set formula or negotiated.

Herefordshire Council is closely engaged with developing the national and regional approach to planning policy through officer representation on key regional and sub-regional groups.

The Barker Review – Delivering Stability: securing our future housing needs

The Government set up an enquiry into the supply and demand for new housing, led by the economist Kate Barker, with a view to developing proposals for a more stable housing market in the UK. The report was published in March 2004 and key findings include:

- The UK has experienced a long-term upward trend in real house prices, averaging 2.4% per annum over the last 30 years. This has created problems of affordability, most recently manifested in the house-price boom of the last few years. In addition, the volatility of the housing market has contributed to economic instability and has impacted on economic growth.
- In order to deliver a trend in real house prices of 1.8% per annum, an additional 70,000 houses each year in England might be required
- Additional investment building up to £1.2 to £1.6 billion per annum will be required to deliver additional affordable housing to meet projected future needs
- Proposals to introduce a planning gain supplement to capture a proportion of development gains for community benefit
- Proposals to combine Regional Planning and Regional Housing agencies to achieve a greater focus on housing outcomes at the regional level - currently the subject of consultation
- Proposals that the release of additional land for housing in Local Development Frameworks should be explicitly triggered by housing market signals
- Establishment of a Community Infrastructure Fund to help unlock some of the barriers to development

The implications of the Barker Review for areas like Herefordshire require careful consideration. The Review focuses mainly on areas in London and the South East for growth in the housing supply. However, it is clear that Herefordshire suffers from affordability problems which are unlikely to be addressed through a general increase in housing supply, given the rural nature of the area and constraints on land supply. Furthermore, inward migration from older affluent households would impact on the capacity for growth to assist local housing needs. The strategy in Herefordshire should focus particularly on increasing the supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of local people.

Regional Housing Strategy

Herefordshire is located in the West Midlands Region for housing strategy purposes. In 2003 the Government established Regional Housing Boards in each of the regions, one of which is the West Midlands Regional Housing Board. This is supported by the Regional Housing Partnership comprising local authorities, Housing Associations and other stakeholders who provide advice to and influence the priorities of the Regional Housing Board. The role of the Board is to analyse the housing circumstances in different parts of the region and to develop a strategy and investment plan to address housing issues that is consistent with the national plan. This approach recognises that housing markets differ between and within regions and that a coherent approach to improving housing circumstances is best pursued at a regional level.

The initial West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy to guide housing investment in the region for 2004-05 and 2005-06 was published in July 2003. Herefordshire has been pursuing policies reflected in 2003 Strategy in the context of the regional objectives, in particular:

- Focussing on affordable housing options in rural areas in contributing to a rural renaissance
- Promoting affordable housing throughout the area in the light of severe house price pressures

- Improving the condition of the housing stock both in terms of affordable housing and addressing the high levels of unfitness evident in the more rural parts of the County
- Maximising opportunities for supported living in appropriate housing linked to support.

The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005 has now been published and it has developed five aims which reflect the extensive consultation and research undertaken throughout the region. The five aims are:

- Create mixed, balanced and inclusive communities
- Assist in the delivery of the Regional Spatial Strategy policies of Urban and Rural renaissance
- Influence the future development of new housing provision to facilitate and enhance the economic development of the region
- Address the variety of needs across a range of specific sectors of housing circumstances to see that the Government's Decent Homes standards are met in the municipal and social sectors and for those in vulnerable circumstances in the private sector
- Encourage development which improves the quality of the environment as a whole

The aims, which are consistent with the Regional Spatial Strategy, support a vision of creating a strong regional economy, which through the provision of pathways of housing choice enables people to live near their work in pleasant affordable homes to enhance diversity, address social inclusion and community cohesion, protect the vulnerable, whilst encouraging sustainable lifestyles.

To deliver against this vision, the Regional Housing Strategy has established a number of priorities for investment and strategic intent. Specifically, these are:

- Apply the principles of urban and rural renaissance
- Secure mixed and balanced communities
- Unite the efforts of the public and private sectors
- Facilitate economic change and development
- Secure decent homes and affordable homes
- Contribute to social inclusion
- Environmentally and technologically engaged

Herefordshire has been proactive in influencing and contributing to relevant research and policy development, not least through its membership and chairing of the Rural Housing Network. In particular, it is crucial that the housing circumstances of the remoter, rural parts of the region are fully recognised; that housing investment is directed towards those areas experiencing the most extreme affordability pressures.

A key aspect of the Regional Housing Strategy has been the establishment of 4 distinctive housing market areas which have resulted from specialist research into sub-regional housing markets. Herefordshire has been grouped within the West housing market area, alongside the rural authorities of Bridgnorth, Oswestry, Shrewsbury, North Shropshire and South Shropshire. Herefordshire is keen to work more closely with Shropshire authorities to explore common issues and is proposing to pilot a new approach to housing needs assessment as part of this process (see Page 17).

The significant issues for Herefordshire's Housing Strategy arising out of the Regional Housing Strategy relate to evidence of high demand and distinct affordability concerns. The strategy states that the principles of sustainability will lead to the majority of development focussing on larger market towns and larger rural settlements and that housing provision in more remote rural settlements may be appropriate as part of a broader range of initiatives and investments.

Housing and the Council's Corporate Plan

Herefordshire Council gives considerable emphasis to strong corporate support for housing objectives. It recognises that having a healthy housing market with decent housing conditions, accessible to the whole community, is crucial to the well-being of Herefordshire residents and the future vitality of the area.

The Corporate Plan aligns the Council's key objectives and targets with the ten *ambitions* of the Herefordshire Partnership - see below. A new Corporate Plan for 2005-2008 has been agreed following extensive public consultation.

The Corporate Plan includes three key aims for housing for the period to 2008:

- Regularly identifying and responding to local accommodation needs
- Improving the condition of public and private housing
- Providing affordable and accessible accommodation

The Council has decided in this way to highlight those targets of the Herefordshire Partnership to which it, *as the Council*, has the greatest contribution to make. These targets are consistent with the proposals in this Housing Strategy. The Corporate Plan will be reviewed and updated annually for the following three years - it will be important to ensure that this process is consistent with the review process of the Housing Strategy Action Plan.

The Corporate Plan 2005–2008 sets out that the Council's top priorities include the objective to sustain vibrant and prosperous communities and one way to achieve this will be by providing more efficient, effective and customer-focussed services. The Annual Operating Plan sets out actions to be taken on a yearly basis and identifies the challenge of tackling, with partners, the growing problems of housing and homelessness.

The Herefordshire Plan

The Herefordshire Plan has been produced by the Herefordshire Partnership, which brings together a range of statutory, non-government and private sector organisations to co-ordinate services to the benefit of Herefordshire residents. The Plan was last revised in 2003 and is structured around 10 key ambitions, one of which is ***to meet Herefordshire's accommodation needs***.

Each of the 10 ambitions has a partnership group, called an ***ambition group*** which works towards achieving that ambition. The Housing Ambition Group has established the following aims:

- Regularly identifying and responding to local accommodation needs
- Improving the condition of public and private housing
- Providing affordable and accessible housing
- Providing the best housing advice when and where it's needed
- Providing housing that is more energy efficient and which involves the use of more locally produced and sustainable materials
- Making full use of the existing housing stock.

The Housing Ambition Group of the Herefordshire Partnership, along with Herefordshire Council, has adopted the Housing Strategy 2005-2008 as the basis for achieving the ambition ***to meet Herefordshire accommodation needs***. This will be reflected in the next revision of the Herefordshire Plan in 2005. The Housing Ambition Group was closely involved in developing the Housing Strategy and co-sponsored an essential consultation

event in March 2005 - see Section 3. During the consultation event, the Ambition Group identified the following themes to explore further during the strategy period:

- Developing connected solutions to anti-social behaviour
- Developing practice in homelessness prevention
- Developing research capacity to ensure best practice
- Strengthening partnership work
- Continue to emphasise the importance of ecological sustainability in housing
- Ensure affordable housing remains at the top of the agenda and that planning gain is the highest priority in the context of the Herefordshire partnership
- Within the Herefordshire Partnership, take a leading role in securing a partnership approach to addressing the needs and aspirations of both gypsies and travellers and migrant and seasonal workers

These themes will inform a review of the Housing Ambition Group's aims outlined above.

Diversity strategies

Linked to the development of the new Corporate Plan, the Council is developing strategies across services to address the needs of specific groups in the community. The Strategic Housing Service has been prioritised for year 1 of this process. Home Point undertook an Equality Impact Assessment in 2004 and similar reviews will be carried out by other sections of Strategic Housing in 2005.

Community Safety and Drugs Partnership

The Herefordshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership has strong links with Strategic Housing on both an operational and strategic level. The Partnership implements its Crime Reduction Strategy through a range of groups and forums including the Domestic Violence Forum, the Anti-Social Behaviour Implementation Group and the Prolific and Priority Offenders Scheme. Housing is a fundamental issue to many of these groups, particularly where emergency and temporary accommodation is required, for example for victims of domestic violence. Victims and offenders are often unable to access other basic services without a fixed address so the need for accommodation is a priority for service providers. A number of the implementation groups have representation from the Housing Associations in Herefordshire, particularly the Anti-Social Behaviour Implementation Group. Support for the drug aims of the Partnership is provided through the Supporting People Strategy and the Drugs Intervention Programme which both focus on enabling people with drug problems to overcome them and live healthy and crime-free lives. Housing issues are addressed at a strategic level through Strategy Group meetings. These are attended by a representative of the RSL forum and the Director of Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing who chairs the meeting.

Health and Social Care Strategies

As part of the Council's Directorate of Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing, Strategic Housing Services work closely with other parts of the Directorate to ensure strong links with other social care agendas such as health needs and older people and also with the newly formed Children's Services Directorate.

Other Local Strategies

A range of other local strategies are integral to the Housing Strategy and are included in other sections as follows:

Section 5	Unitary Development Plan Empty Property Strategy Market Towns strategies	Under development: Travellers and Gypsies Strategy Local Development Framework
Section 6	Housing Renewal Policy	
Section 7	Homelessness Strategy Supporting People Strategy Learning Disability Housing Plan Older Persons Business Case	Under development: Mental Health Housing Plan Older Persons Strategy

SECTION THREE

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The housing agenda for Herefordshire represents a massive challenge. A range of agencies will work together in close partnership to address this challenge. This is reflected in the joint sponsorship of this Housing Strategy by Herefordshire Council and by the Housing Ambition Group of the Herefordshire Partnership. Throughout this strategy we highlight the strong commitment to partnership working with key partners identified in each of the main strategic sections.

Partnerships must go beyond delivering services - important as this is. They will include working together to share information on housing needs, agree priorities and plan new services.

The various strands of this Housing Strategy have been strongly influenced by stakeholder consultation and development processes. Significant examples are:

- Work with other local authorities in the West Midlands and particularly through the Rural Housing Network
- The central role of the Housing Ambition Group of the Herefordshire Partnership, which has adopted the Strategy and which has been closely involved in the housing elements of the emerging Unitary Development Plan (UDP)
- The RSL forum will continue to be closely involved helping to establish the priorities for the Council's Capital development programme. Operational aspects are addressed through the Forum's Development and Housing Management sub-groups.
- The Landlords Forum is consulted on existing and developing services. The Empty Property Strategy was launched at the annual Landlords Fair with landlords having been involved on the editorial board
- Consultation with stakeholders in the development of the Housing Renewal Policy
- The Homelessness Forum and service users were involved in the development of the Homelessness Strategy
- The views of people with disabilities, family carers and housing/support providers assisted in the development of the Learning Disabilities Housing Plan 2003-2006 and will be involved in developing the Mental Health Housing Plan
- The Supported Housing Provider Forum contributes to the development of the Supporting People Strategy
- Cabinet Member briefings held weekly provide an opportunity for full consultation on emerging strategic and operational issues
- Briefing meetings with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee involve systematic monitoring of the delivery of the Housing Strategy. The Scrutiny Committee, which includes voluntary sector representation, has also established Special Interest Groups to investigate specific issues, for example accommodation for people with mental health problems.

In developing this Strategy, the Housing Ambition Group and Strategic Housing Service co-sponsored a stakeholder consultation event in March 2005. The conference gathered together Councillors, residents groups, service users and statutory, voluntary and private sector representatives to help establish key themes and priorities for housing and services in Herefordshire. Detailed presentations were delivered to identify the issues to be addressed and a series of workshops offered the opportunity to debate and explore themes in order to develop proposals to address these issues. A list of delegates is shown at Appendix 3. The proposals for action from the consultation event have been incorporated in sections 4 to 7 of this Strategy and in the Action Plan at Section 9.

Feedback mechanisms

Herefordshire Council adopts a range of mechanisms for obtaining feedback from customers of its housing services whether they are directly provided or contracted out. Examples are:

Private sector housing	HMO tenants satisfaction survey HMO landlords satisfaction survey Grants/renewal assistance customer satisfaction survey Feedback from users on the Registered Contractors list
Enabling and Housing Needs	Empty properties - feedback form with information pack Private Landlords Fair - annual survey Low cost home ownership - customer satisfaction survey Regular newsletter - feedback continually invited
Home Point	Annual customer satisfaction survey Annual stakeholder feedback survey
Homelessness and Housing Advice	LPSA target - % of homeless households satisfied with their temporary accommodation LPSA target - % of homeless households satisfied with their resettlement support

Feedback from stakeholders and service users contributes to service planning and delivery. Examples include:

- A resident's survey contributed to the development of the Housing Renewal Policy
- Private landlords were surveyed to improve our approaches to future engagement
- Landlords views on proposed national licencing shaped our approach to HMO licencing
- Homelessness Strategy development included a review of homelessness in Herefordshire and took on board the views of service users
- In July 2005 a workshop including stakeholders and service users was held to support the development of the Affordable Warmth Strategy

Performance

The Council collects and publishes information on the performance of its housing services, monitors trends and compares performance with other local authorities. Performance against indicators is reported to every Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee. Details of recent performance are set out in Appendix 1.

Monitoring and Review of this Strategy

Six-monthly reports will be made to the Council's Scrutiny Committee and to the Housing Ambition Group on progress in implementing this strategy.

In May 2006 and May 2007, strategy supplements will be issued. These will contain:

- Information on policy and funding developments which impact on the strategy
- Updated information on housing needs, housing markets and housing conditions
- An updated Action Plan for the remainder of the period of the strategy.

A summary version of these supplements will be made available to service users.

During 2007-08 a comprehensive process of consultation and development will be put in place to produce a new strategy for 2008 onwards.

SECTION FOUR

HOUSING NEEDS, MARKETS & CONDITIONS

A Housing Strategy must be based on the clear identification of needs, understanding of housing market trends and knowledge of housing conditions in all tenures.

The Strategic Housing Service of Herefordshire Council devotes considerable resources to research and analysis to inform the housing strategies of the Council and the Herefordshire Partnership. The Council employs a full-time Housing Market Research Officer and this has enabled us to develop an excellent understanding of the local and regional housing market. Home Point produces comprehensive data on homelessness trends and on applications and lettings. Additional research and analysis is undertaken by the Strategic Housing Service's dedicated Performance Improvement Officer.

A range of research and information has been assembled to inform this housing strategy and is summarised in this section. This data forms the basis of the analysis of key housing issues to be addressed over the three-year period of this Strategy.

1. Demographic Information

The current estimate for the resident population of Herefordshire is 176,900 (86,200 males and 90,700 females). This represents a 10.3% increase on 1991 compared to an overall increase for England and Wales of 4.0%. Herefordshire is relatively sparsely populated at 0.8 people per hectare compared to an average of 3.4 for England and Wales. In 2001, only two local authorities in England had a lower population density: Northumberland (0.61) and Cumbria (0.72)

The **age structure** of this population, as compared to England and Wales, was:

	Resident population (percentage)	
	Herefordshire	England and Wales
0 to 15	18.9	19.7
16 to 74	71.7	72.7
75 and over	9.4	7.6

Source: ONS

Herefordshire has a higher number of people aged over 65 than the national average – 19.7% compared to 16.0%. Nationally, the number of people aged over 65 is predicted to grow by 10% by 2010; in Herefordshire, the predicted growth is 27%.

In terms of **ethnic groups**, 99.1% of Herefordshire's population are White, compared to 91.3% for England and Wales. In reality, the largest ethnic minority group in the county is probably gypsies and travellers but this category was not offered as an option on the census form. A caravan count is carried out twice a year - although we recognise that not all gypsies and travellers live in caravans. The most recent figures available for July 2004 showed 84 caravans in Herefordshire compared to 119 in July 2003. 50 were on permanent Council sites, 9 were on private authorised sites and the remainder is thought to be on unauthorised sites. A report commissioned by Herefordshire Council from University College Chichester in September 2004 estimated 750 Romany travellers in the county.

The **economic activity** of the Herefordshire population, as compared to England and Wales, was:

	Resident population aged 16 to 74 (percentage)	
Employed	63.4	60.6
Unemployed	2.7	3.4
Economically active full time student	1.9	2.6
Retired	16.1	13.6
Economically inactive student	2.9	4.7
Looking after home/family	6.2	6.5
Permanently sick or disabled	4.3	5.5
Other inactive	2.5	3.1

Source: ONS

Herefordshire has a higher proportion of people in employment and of retired people and lower proportions of unemployed people and students.

In terms of **household composition**, Herefordshire had 28.6% one person households, 38.7% married couple households, 7.8% cohabiting couple households, 8.2% lone parent households and 16.6% all other households.

The Quarterly Economic Report for August 2004 summarises the latest population forecasts through to 2011:

- Herefordshire's population is expected to increase by around 6000, an increase of 3.4% over 9 years which is the same rate of growth as expected for the national population over that time. However, Herefordshire's growth is expected to be more rapid in the early years of the forecast before slowing to match the overall growth rate in England and Wales
- Herefordshire's population of 0 to 17 years olds is expected to fall by 12.5% as compared to a fall of 5.5% overall for England and Wales
- Herefordshire's population of people aged 18 to 59 is expected to fall by 1.0% as compared to an increase of 2.3% overall for England and Wales
- Herefordshire's population of over 60's is expected to rise by 26.3% as compared to a rise of 16.1% overall for England and Wales

Herefordshire Council's Research Team used modelling software to estimate the growth in households in the county over the period 2002 to 2011. Parameters fed into the model came from census data, population projections, prevailing birth and death rates, Health Authority data (useful for tracing moves into and out of the county) and the likely number of homes to be built as identified in the emerging UDP. The conclusion was that 2980 of the planned housing growth of 3290 homes (91%) should be affordable.

2. Deprivation

On the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, Herefordshire ranks between 192 and 209 out of 354 local authority areas in England (depending on the ranking method used), where 1 is the most deprived and 354 is the least. When Income Deprivation is considered, Herefordshire is the 114th most deprived local authority area. On the Employment Domain, the County ranks 120th. There are particular deprivation hot spots in parts of Hereford and Leominster.

3. Tenure

The tenure of households in the 2001 census was:

	% Households	
	Herefordshire	England & Wales
Owned outright	36	29
Owned with a mortgage or loan	35	39
Shared ownership	0.86	0.64
Social rented	15	19
Private rented or other	13	12

Source: ONS

Herefordshire has a higher proportion of owner-occupied housing and a lower proportion of socially rented housing, which impacts on our ability to respond to current affordability trends associated with market pressures.

In Herefordshire as a whole, 38% of properties are in **Council Tax bands A and B**, but there is a great variation between urban and rural areas. In Hereford City, 60% of properties are in bands A and B although across the five market towns the proportion is 50% and in the rural parishes only 26% of properties are in these bands.

According to the 2001 census Herefordshire had 2.6% of homes vacant compared with 3.2% for England and Wales and 0.9% as second or holiday homes compared to 0.7%.

4. Housing Conditions

Social housing

The largest Housing Associations operating in Herefordshire have provided information on the 'decent homes' standard in relation to their stock:

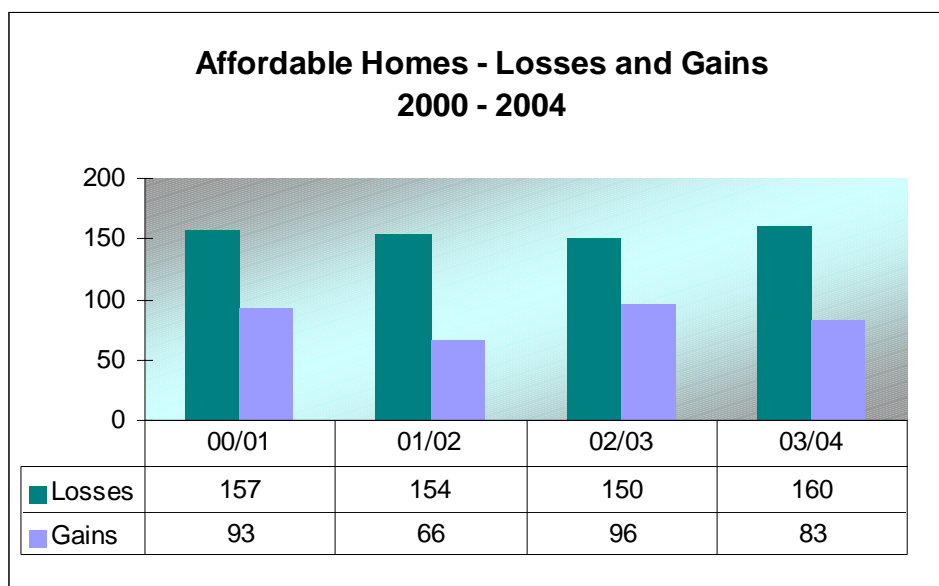
- South Shropshire Housing Association owns 37 homes in Herefordshire, of which only 1 fails to comply with the standard
- Wyedean Housing Association owns 29 homes in Herefordshire, of which 4 fail to comply with the standard
- Elgar Housing Association owns 1162 homes in Herefordshire, of which 141 fail to meet the standard
- Bromford Housing Group has indicated that 97% of its homes reach the standard, but is unable to provide data on properties in Herefordshire specifically
- Herefordshire Housing Ltd has indicated that around 8% of its properties may fail to meet the standard.
- Marches Housing Association owns 2015 homes in Herefordshire, of which 98% are estimated to meet the standard

Private housing

Herefordshire Council published a comprehensive sample Private Sector Stock Condition Survey in 2001. This highlighted that there were 3650 unfit properties within the district - 6% of the private sector stock. Another 3600 properties were borderline unfit and the study identified that a £7.6 million investment would be required to alleviate unfitness and bring unfit properties up to an acceptable standard with a 30 year lifespan.

The Council will commission a further survey during 2005 to monitor progress since 2001 and to gather information in relation to the new Health and Safety rating system and the decent homes targets for private housing. Following this survey, the Council intends to introduce a system of rolling sample surveys to ensure that information on housing conditions is updated annually. Preliminary calculations based on the 2001 House condition survey indicate that around 4900 vulnerable households were living in non-decent housing in the private sector at that time

5. Right to Buy



Source: HIP returns and data provided by RSLs

The Right-to-Buy legislation impacts upon the number of affordable homes in the county, reducing the total year by year. This chart shows the comparison between the number of homes lost through the Right-to-Buy scheme compared to the number of new affordable homes built or acquired during the same period. Since 2000, 283 homes in total have been sold under the scheme and this means that on average Herefordshire is losing 71 affordable homes per year.

6. Housing applicants

Herefordshire operates a choice-based lettings scheme and this is administered by Home Point which was launched in October 2002. The five largest housing associations in Herefordshire let their properties through the scheme: Bromford Housing Group, Elgar Housing Association, Herefordshire Housing Ltd, Marches Housing Association and St John Kemble Housing Association. Future direction on allocations policies and practices are set out in section 7.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of applicants registered with Home Point since its launch: 3200 in October 2002 to 7740 in March 2005. This has arisen partly from the increased transparency of the scheme and partly from the pressures on affordability from increasing house prices. The 7740 applications include 195 from under 18's and 1140 from over 60's.

The relative housing needs of applicants are assessed and they are allocated to one of three priority bands:

Gold applicants	(high need)	2111
Silver applicants	(medium need)	3197
Bronze applicants	(low need)	2432

In March 2005 there were 252 priority status applicants within the Gold band - mainly homeless people who have overriding priority for lettings.

Of the 7740 applicants, 7055 (91%) are White with 135 (2%) from minority ethnic groups. A further 550 applicants (7%) either had data missing or chose not to answer this question on their application form.

The size of properties required by applicants is as follows:

Minimum number of bedrooms required	16-17	18-25	26-40	41-60	Over 60	Total
1 bedroom	151	1031	1144	1025	917	4268
2 bedroom	38	485	1007	569	201	2300
3 bedroom	5	73	671	323	20	1092
4 plus bedroom	1	1	51	25	2	80
Total	195	1590	2873	1942	1140	7740

55% of applicants require a minimum of one bedroom. However, there is a shortage of this size of properties especially for those under 60.

The number of properties advertised between October 2003 and September 2004 in different parts of Herefordshire is as follows:

Region	Oct-Dec 2003	Jan-Mar 2004	Apr-Jun 2004	Jul-Sep 2004	Total
Bromyard	5	9	11	25	50
Central Herefordshire	17	13	12	19	61
Golden Valley	7	7	6	11	31
Hereford City	96	103	88	88	375
Kingstone	12	8	7	10	37
Kington	4	8	10	8	30
Ledbury	13	16	35	36	100
Leominster	42	29	32	43	146
Ross-on-Wye	11	13	16	9	49
Weobley	3	10	8	11	32
Wigmore	0	6	2	0	8
Unknown	2	0	0	0	2
Total	212	222	227	260	921

991 properties were advertised in 2004-05 compared to 1035 for the previous year, reflecting a reduction in re-lets in affordable housing as the market tightens.

7. Housing Needs

Herefordshire Council undertakes a rolling programme of housing needs surveys in its towns and villages. Since 2001, 22 such local needs surveys have been completed with a further 4 due for completion in 2005. Data from these surveys has been aggregated to provide an estimate of the distribution and levels of housing need in the County. The Herefordshire

Housing Needs Survey 2004 suggests an overall need for 3763 new affordable homes in the next five years based on household formation:

- 1567 households in the rural parishes are estimated to need affordable housing, of which 1198 in their home parish and 369 elsewhere in the county
- 2196 households in Hereford City and the market towns are estimated to need affordable housing

As stated previously, it is estimated that 91% of new housing due to be provided within the UDP should be affordable. Distribution of this affordable housing will be as given in the UDP. As local development frameworks progress, Strategic Housing will work closely with Planning colleagues to reflect this level of need within the emerging document.

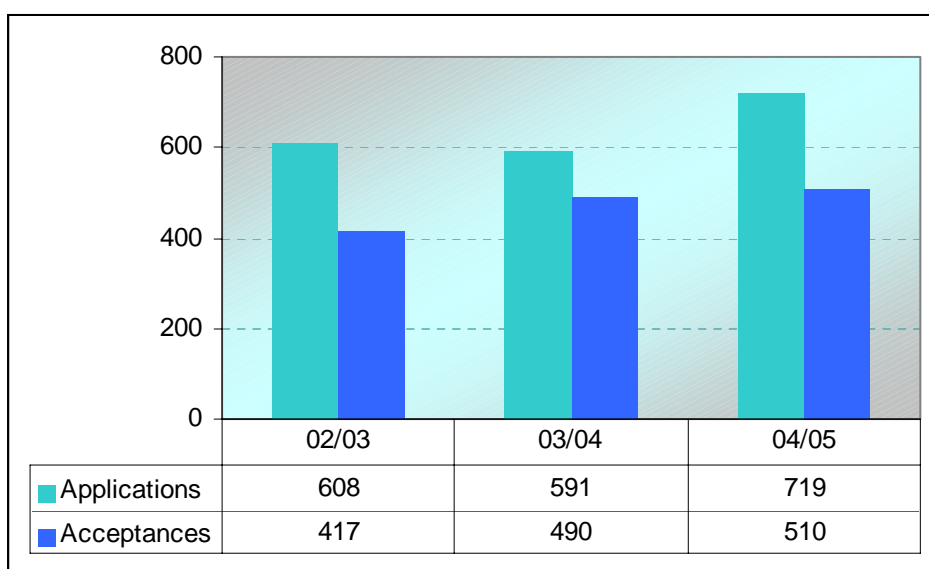
The Government has recently issued revised advice on housing needs research with an emphasis on an approach which allows data to be aggregated around housing markets rather than administrative boundaries. Herefordshire has proposed to develop and pilot a new approach, along with the other West Housing Market area authorities, for the West Midlands Rural Housing Network. Meetings with Planning staff will take place in 2005 following which the new approach will be piloted, reporting by March 2006.

The need for specialist and supported accommodation is considered within the Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010, but specific needs of people with learning disabilities will continue to be addressed within the update of the Learning Disabilities Housing Plan. The development of the Mental Health Housing Plan will more closely examine the housing needs of people experiencing mental health problems.

8. Homelessness

Local authorities have a duty to investigate the needs of homeless people and to provide temporary and permanent accommodation in certain circumstances. In Herefordshire, these services are currently contracted out to Herefordshire Housing Ltd although they will return to Council administration before 31 March 2006.

Homelessness in Herefordshire has been increasing dramatically in recent years:



Source: P1E quarterly return to ODPM

This graph shows that, in the last three years:

- homelessness applications have risen by 18%
- homelessness acceptances have risen by 22%

Compared to the whole of England and the West Midlands region, Herefordshire has a higher ratio of acceptances per 1000 households:

Total acceptances per 1000 households	
England	5.7
West Midlands	6.4
Herefordshire	6.8

Source: ODPM statistical release Jan – March 05

The three main causes of homelessness in Herefordshire are:

	England	West Mids	Herefordshire
Parents/relatives/friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	38%	36%	29%
Breakdown of relationship	20%	23%	30%
Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	13%	13%	19%

Source: ODPM statistical release Jan – March 05

Whilst Herefordshire echoes the national picture in terms of the three most common reasons for loss of last settled home, there is a very clear difference in the percentages within each of the three groups. Loss of accommodation with family or friends is lower than the regional and all-England figures, whereas breakdown of relationship and termination of private AST are significantly higher.

High house prices and low average incomes aligned with inward migration of older affluent households means a shortage of affordable housing and an according impact on homelessness. The inability to move homeless households into settled accommodation results in an increasing use of temporary accommodation.

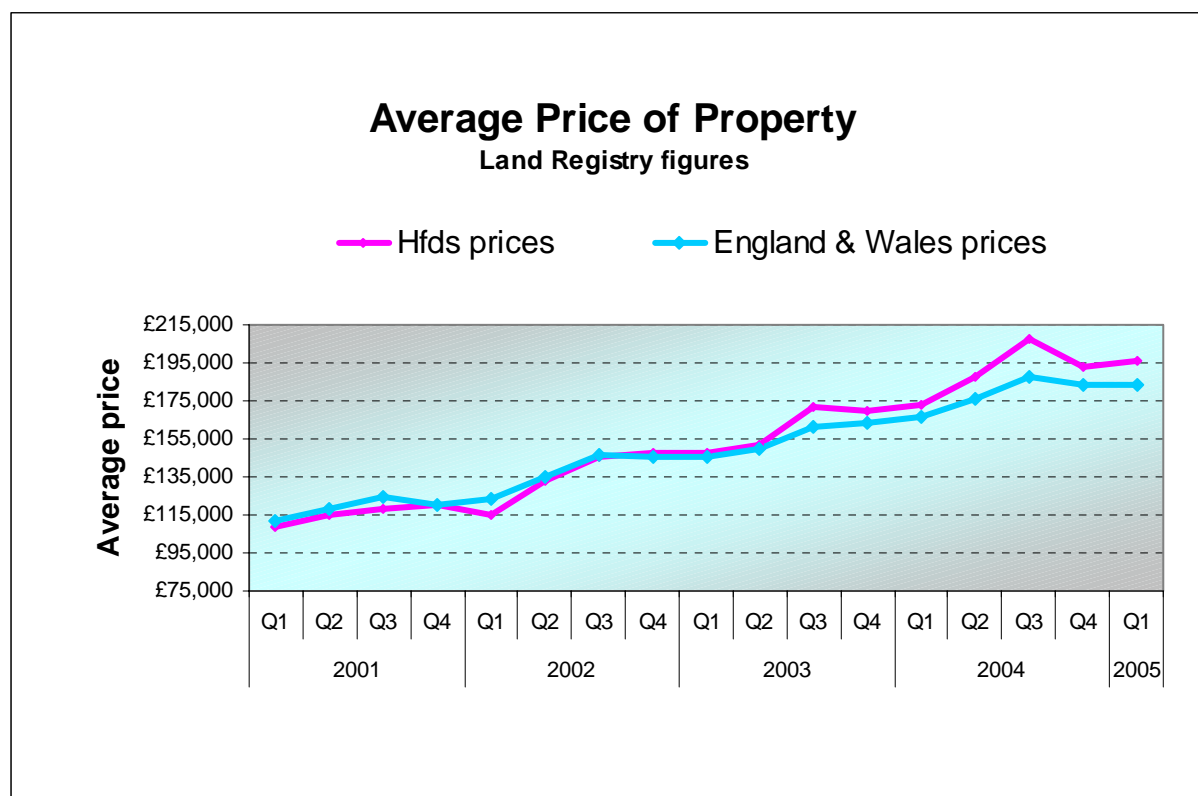
Herefordshire has invested in high quality temporary supported accommodation but also recognises the increasing role of the prevention agenda in tackling homelessness.

9. House prices

HM Land Registry collects data on house prices from all house sales in England and Wales and the data is published quarterly - the most recent figures were released on 11 May 2005 and cover the first quarter of 2005:

	Average house price	Annual % inflation
Herefordshire	£196,434	14%
West Midlands	£151,537	9.5%
England & Wales	£183,486	10%

This graph shows how Herefordshire house prices have changed over the last four years, with a second line showing the average for England and Wales as a comparison.



Average property prices March 2005

	Detached House	Semi-Detached House	Terraced House	Flat / Maisonette	Overall average price
Jan – Mar 04	£240,814	£147,477	£120,906	£92,694	£172,511
Oct - Dec 04	£269,882	£162,458	£135,154	£111,324	£193,095
Jan - Mar 05	£257,637	£174,837	£136,286	£114,428	£196,434
% change since previous quarter	-5%	7%	1%	3%	2%
Increase over the year	7%	19%	13%	23%	14%
Average for England & Wales Jan - Mar 2005	£288,791	£169,196	£141,728	£169,604	£183,486

All property types apart from detached houses showed some price rise since the previous quarter. This continues the recent trend where the slowing of price increases is more evident in expensive properties compared to cheaper properties.

10. Wages and incomes

Data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2004, conducted by the Office for National Statistics, show:

- The median gross annual earnings in Herefordshire for 2004 were **£18,521** compared to £20,523 for the West Midlands region and £22,187 for England and Wales
- The median gross weekly pay rose by 10.6% in Herefordshire between 2003 and 2004 compared with a rise of 5.1% for the West Midlands region and 4.9% nationally over the same period
- Median earnings in Herefordshire rose to 91% of the regional average and 84% of the national average.
- Herefordshire ranks 13 out of 14 unitary authorities for median earnings in the West Midlands region

In Herefordshire:

Average property price	=	£ 196,434
Median salary	=	£ 18,521
Ratio of house price to earnings	=	10 : 1

Key Action Points

- Pilot a new approach to housing need assessment based around housing market areas in partnership with West Housing Market Area authorities
- Commission private sector house condition survey and energy audit
- Develop rolling programme to update the house condition survey annually, with appropriate software
- Respond to the requirement to assess the housing needs of gypsies and travellers
- Continue rural housing needs assessments to inform opportunities through rural exception sites.
- Commission enhancements to Home Point reporting system to contribute to information on housing needs and demand
- Mapping of social housing supply and demand on the Geographic Information System (GIS)
- Explore potential partnerships linked to shared Housing Market Area opportunities

Key Partners

- West Housing Market area authorities
- Rural Housing Network
- Environmental Health & Trading Standards
- Planning Services
- Home Point
- Gypsy & Traveller Support Group

Further details of research and information sources are set out in Appendix 2.

SECTION FIVE

ACHIEVE A BALANCED HOUSING MARKET

The top priority of the Herefordshire Housing Strategy is to achieve a balanced housing market. A balanced housing market is characterised by:

- An overall balance between supply and demand for housing, with reasonably stable house prices
- Choices of products, prices and tenures in a range of locations, to suit different types of households at different stages in their lives
- An adequate supply of different types of affordable housing
- Housing which contributes to community cohesion
- Housing which meets decent homes standards across the market

This section of the Housing Strategy is concerned with the provision of new housing in Herefordshire. It is crucial that planning and housing policies work together to ensure that:

- new housing provision meets current and future housing needs
- housing provision contributes to the sustainability of Herefordshire's city, towns and villages
- An appropriate proportion of all new housing meets specific needs and is affordable to local households who are unable to access the market
- Opportunities are taken to diversify the housing market

Issues, options and directions for the next three years

Housing supply

When Herefordshire was established as a unitary authority in 1998, it inherited four district-wide local plans from outgoing district councils, the Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan and the Hereford and Worcester Minerals Local Plan. The Council has now drafted a Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which is currently the subject of a Public Inquiry and should then be adopted in 2006.

In line with Regional Planning Guidance, the emerging Plan makes provision for the construction of 11,700 dwellings over the period 1996-2011, on sites identified as follows:

1996 - 2001	Anticipated dwellings from	2001 - 2006	2006 - 2011	Total
	2001 commitments	875	342	
	Windfalls	1365	1464	
	UDP allocations	1367	1294	
4993	Total	3607	3100	11,700

It is anticipated that around 6100 of these dwellings will be constructed on previously developed land (brownfield sites).

A three-tier housing location strategy has been adopted. 57% of new housing is to be provided in Hereford and the market towns, distributed as follows:

Hereford	3381	Ledbury	956
Leominster	972	Bromyard	480
Ross-on-Wye	674	Kington	275

26% will be built in the main villages (3044 dwellings) and 17% for rural housing needs in other areas (1918 dwellings - mainly on infill sites). In the smaller settlements, housing will be limited in size in an attempt to ensure that it meets the needs of local people on moderate incomes.

Affordable housing

As set out in section 4, it is evident that there is substantial need for additional affordable housing in Herefordshire. Housing market analysis shows this need has increased in the last two years as increasing numbers of households are finding it impossible to afford to buy properties.

The emerging UDP seeks to consolidate policies for affordable housing and ensure that a substantial proportion of new development meets this need. It states that *the provision of affordable housing will be sought through negotiations with developers of both allocated and windfall housing sites. Such housing should, wherever possible, be provided as a mix of affordable housing types, having regard to local needs and contribute to a mixed and balanced scheme overall in terms of dwelling size, type and affordability.*

On allocated and windfall sites above a defined threshold, a 35% proportion of affordable housing will be sought to meet the emerging UDP target of 2300 new affordable homes during the plan period. These site thresholds within the emerging UDP are:

- In Hereford and the market towns (excluding Kington) and other settlements above 3000 population - sites for 15 or more dwellings or more than 0.5 hectares
- Elsewhere in the County and in the main villages with less than 3000 population (including Kington) - sites for 6 or more dwellings or more than 0.2 hectares.

On allocated sites we anticipate that 652 of the 2360 dwellings to be built in Hereford and the market towns between 2001 to 2011 will be affordable; for the main villages, 103 affordable dwellings are anticipated out of a total of 301. The affordable housing yield on windfall sites will depend on how many of these sites exceed the relevant thresholds.

There is also provision for affordable housing to be developed in rural areas on land within or adjacent to settlements which would not normally be released for development. These are called *rural exception sites*.

Design and environmental sustainability

Supplementary Planning Guidance on Design and Development Requirements has been developed through the Herefordshire Partnership Housing Ambition Group and adopted by the Council in July 2004. The purpose of the guidance is to help secure high standards of layout and design from sustainable new developments, appropriate to their vicinity. The guidance includes checklists of key issues to be addressed in design including local context, general layout, health and safety and conservation of resources.

Affordable housing supplementary planning guidance

In order to address the difficulties of operating a range of policies for affordable housing inherited from the former district councils, Herefordshire Council has adopted updated Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on the Provision of Affordable Housing. The Housing Ambition Group of Herefordshire Partnership was closely involved in developing this guidance. Affordable housing is defined as follows:

Affordable housing is housing provided for rent or sale, at a price level which can be sustained by local people in housing need, where households are unable to access existing markets.

Affordable housing can be categorised into two types:

- (a) Subsidised housing provided by an organisation allocating on the basis of need. While such dwellings will normally be made available for rent, they may also include subsidised home ownership, such as shared ownership, where an RSL retains a continuing interest.*
- (b) Low-cost market housing, helping to meet the needs of first time buyers, single people, older people and other low income households that cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market.*

As a result of current market trends, it is appropriate that we find a balance of these two types of affordable housing within the affordable yield of the emerging UDP, while specific priorities will apply to some individual sites and locations. The SPG includes delivery of affordable housing through the planning system and defines affordability for low cost market, rented and shared ownership housing.

Success through Planning Gain

- 15 affordable homes to be provided in partnership with Persimmon and West Mercia Housing Group at Pentland Gardens, Hereford. 6 will be for rent and 9 for shared ownership
- 12 homes for rent and 12 for shared ownership will be provided in partnership with Lovells and Elgar Housing Association at Vine Tree Farm, Ross
- 6 Low Cost Market homes for sale at 46% discount will be provided at Weston Under Penyard
- 6 homes for rent and 6 for shared ownership are being built at Withington in partnership with Jennings Homes and Marches Housing Association
- The Council is currently involved in negotiating a further 297 affordable homes across the county at 8 different locations



Market Towns Strategies

Strategies have been developed to address issues in the four market towns in Herefordshire - Leominster, Ledbury, Kington and Ross-on-Wye. These strategies include proposals for housing development and link to the Housing Strategy and the UDP.

Housing Association development programme

To supplement the provision of affordable housing through the Planning system, Herefordshire Council currently works closely with key Housing Associations as preferred development partners – Bromford Housing Group, Herefordshire Housing Ltd, Elgar, Marches, St John Kemble, Gloucestershire, Wyedean and South Shropshire Housing Associations. These RSLs work together with the Council through the Development Sub Group of the RSL Forum to plan and deliver a programme of rental, shared ownership and supported housing schemes to address the needs of the area. Between them, the Associations have expertise in the development and management of a range of housing schemes. The Council also works with specialist Housing Associations from time to time on

specific projects. These arrangements are to be reviewed in the light of the Housing Corporation's move towards long-term partnering with a limited number of Associations.

A provisional RSL development programme for 2004-05 to 2008-09 has been developed based on the priorities identified in the housing needs surveys, the Homelessness Strategy, the Supporting People Strategy and the Learning Disabilities Housing Plan. Details are as follows:

	NUMBERS OF DWELLINGS			
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
New build urban	35	10	36	30
New build (rural)	52	24	90*	42
Supported housing	12	115**	111	20+
Empty property	6	10	10	10
LCHO	40	54	54	50
Purchase and repair	5	0	0	5
Total	150	213	301	157

* includes regeneration proposals of 70 units

** includes 90 units of extra care housing for older people, funded by the Department of Health to be completed during 2007/08.

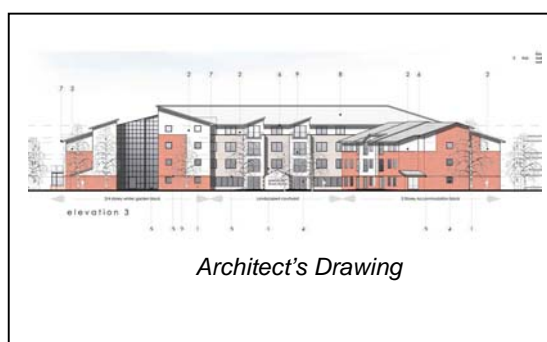
It should be stressed that the projects included in this programme are provisional and that funding sources have not been secured for the total programme. Anticipated funding sources are as follows:

	GRANT REQUIRED - £000s			
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Housing Corporation	4911	2566	6200	4910
Local authority	4168	3500	3500	3500
Department of Health	240	4600	2500	0
Total grant	9,319	10,666	12,200	8,410

Extra Care Housing Provision

Strategic Housing Services secured £4.6 million Department of Health funding to assist in the provision of a £14 million scheme to provide extra care housing in partnership with Elgar Housing Association and the Extra Care Charitable Trust.

The scheme is designed to help older people live more independently and to improve the health and well-being of the residents. It comprises a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom rented, shared ownership and market sale apartments and bungalows.



Affordable housing without grant

In addition to the grant-funded programme, the Council is increasingly negotiating affordable housing without grant. During 2003–2005, 22 units have been completed. For 2004-05, contributions totalling £731,160 have been agreed for offsite provision in relation to the development of three sites. Between 2005 and 2009, the number of units secured or being negotiated without grant and through the Planning system is:

Hereford City	278
Ross on Wye	77
Leominster	140
Rural	54
Total	549

Empty Property Strategy

The aim of the strategy is to highlight the issues of empty properties throughout the county and identify which mechanisms can be used to encourage owners to bring empty properties back into use to meet an identified housing need by:

- assessing the number and locality of empty properties
- understanding the causes of empty properties
- working in partnership with organisations and agencies to assist owners via housing schemes and grants
- promoting the options available to owners of empty properties
- monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Council's empty property service and schemes
- tackling weak areas of performance with detailed and specific targets

Gypsies and travellers

Herefordshire has a long tradition as one of the main areas of the country where gypsies and travellers live and work. The Council plans to develop a comprehensive strategy over the next 2-3 years to address the needs and aspirations of gypsies and travellers. This will involve the issue of sites for caravans and access to a range of services, particularly education. The proposed Strategy will respond to the new measures in the Housing Act 2004 which are to include gypsies and travellers in local housing needs assessment and the requirement to address their needs in Housing and Planning strategies.

Key achievements 2002-2004

- Secured over £4.8m Department of Health Funding for affordable housing for older people and those with learning disabilities living with older carers
- Provision of 21 self contained transitional units for single homeless people in Hereford City
- BVPI64 Top quartile 2003/4 for bringing empty properties back into use
- Utilised Home Point, choice based lettings in advertising Shared Ownership and low cost market housing options.
- Promoted Mortgage Rescue as a homelessness prevention measure
- Surveyed Private Rented landlords with regards to termination of tenancies in the private sector
- Provided transitional housing for people with mental health problems
- Implemented the SPG Provision of Affordable Housing 2001 (updated November 2004)
- Provided affordable housing through the planning system with no grant
- Expanded the Supported Housing for Young People Project (SHYPP) to Ross on Wye and Leominster
- Introduced Home Ownership options for those with Mental Health problems through Own Home (Advance)
- Introduced supported housing solutions and adapted properties through planning gain.
- Influenced the emerging UDP Housing Chapter

Key action points

- Work to promote affordable housing provision following adoption of Unitary Development Plan, following Public Inquiry
- Pursue affordable housing with Social Housing Grant for appropriate housing developments
- Pursue affordable housing without grant through planning gain
- Ensure that the housing association development programme is robust for the next three years
- Pursue funding bids to support the three-year housing associations development programme
- Investigate opportunities for home/work schemes, given high level of self-employment in Herefordshire
- Examine opportunities for projects involving Housing Corporation funding of private developers of social housing
- Review the Empty Property Strategy
- Provide a range of affordable housing options including rent/deposit scheme, private sector leasing scheme, key worker housing
- Develop strategy for affordable housing with other local authorities in the West housing market area
- Influence the Regional Housing Strategy to give priority to housing needs in areas with a shortage of affordable housing, like Herefordshire
- Identify a site for a demonstration project for Eco-homes/self build
- Investigate Housing Market Stress status
- Contribute housing perspective to the emerging Local Development Framework
- Investigate opportunities for intermediate market rental
- Develop annual reporting of the delivery of affordable housing against planning policy

- Investigate land banking in line with the development partnership arrangements
- Develop a strategy for improving the environment and tackling anti-social behaviour in social housing estates
- Develop Gypsies and Travellers Strategy in response to assessed needs
- Explore options for making the most efficient use of existing housing stock

Key partners

- Housing Corporation
- Housing Associations
- Private Developers/owners
- Private landlords
- Parish Councils
- Department of Health
- Supported housing providers
- Primary Care Trust
- Regional Housing Board and Regional Assembly
- Government Office for the West Midlands
- Environmental Health & Trading Standards
- Planning Services
- Home Point

SECTION SIX

IMPROVING HOUSING CONDITIONS

This section looks at actions by the Council and its partners to improve housing conditions in Herefordshire. As indicated in section 4, the 2001 House Condition Survey shows that Herefordshire has a relatively serious problem of unfitness in the private sector and especially in some properties in the remoter rural areas.

Issues, options and directions for the next three years

Decent homes for social housing tenants

Information on Housing Associations' performance against the decent homes standard is set out in Section 4. The position will be reviewed annually.

Housing Renewal Policy

Under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England & Wales) Order 2002, the Government required local authorities to develop and publish new housing renewal policies during 2003, in the light of greater flexibility around the use of grants and loans for housing improvement in the private sector. The Herefordshire Housing Renewal Policy 2003-2006 was published in April 2003. Parts I and II of the policy - the policy framework and priorities - will be reviewed in 2006 based on a three-year review cycle. Part III, concerned with the specific tools used to support housing renewal, is reviewed annually taking into account any changing local circumstances and feedback from users and stakeholders of the service.

The Policy identifies the key issues for private sector housing in Herefordshire as:

- an ageing population which will become more dependent upon local services
- rural isolation making it difficult for vulnerable groups to access services
- unfitness in rural areas
- a high level of borderline unfitness particularly in pre-1919 properties
- a high level of disrepair and a very high level of unfitness in the private rented sector
- low income levels and rising house prices making it difficult for young people to buy their home and for both young and old people to maintain sub-standard property
- fuel poverty, particularly amongst older people and low income households who tend to occupy the worst housing
- a large disparity in the ranking of wards in Herefordshire under the Multiple Deprivation Index
- an increasing pressure on budgets to provide adaptations for disabled people throughout all tenures to enable them to live independently in their own homes.

The Housing Renewal Policy proposes a range of actions to address these issues:

- Responding to complaints from private tenants, responding to referrals from agencies supporting vulnerable people and targeting a number of urban and rural wards which score highly on the deprivation index
- Helping homeowners take responsibility for the upkeep of their homes through inspections, the provision of advice and maintaining a list of approved contractors
- Ensuring that landlords keep privately rented housing in a reasonable state of repair and condition
- Providing financial assistance to homeowners who are least able to afford the upkeep of their properties and to stimulate investment from other sources
- Supporting the Home Improvement Agency Service in Herefordshire

- Reviewing the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy annually
- Targeting assistance to the most vulnerable in the community by providing urgent repairs and adaptations
- Improving the energy efficiency in residential property

Resources for private sector renewal

The Council's Renewal Budget for 2005/06 is £1.3 million and we intend to achieve 100% spend of this budget, as in previous years. A similar level of investment is planned for each of the three years of this strategy.

This public funding is considerably enhanced by the investment of property owners from their own savings, or through borrowing or equity release schemes, often facilitated by the Home Improvement Agency (HIA). The HIA also provides assistance in accessing charitable funding for some people, for example where extensive work is involved. The current provider of the Home improvement Agency has given notice to withdraw the service by September 2005. This has provided an opportunity to review and reshape the service to meet the changing needs of older and disabled people in maintaining independent living.

Herefordshire Council also works in partnership with The Home Improvement Trust to offer home improvement and repair loans to homeowners aged 60 or over, or households with a disabled person of any age, under a scheme called Houseproud. Three types of loans are offered to suit the individual household's circumstances: capital release loans; interest only loans; and capital and interest repayment loans. The Council is working with other local authorities and the Houseproud scheme to develop loan products which can assist non-disabled households aged under 60.

You @ Home Partnership

The You@Home scheme provides a service to vulnerable people in their homes by carrying out essential or urgent works that have been identified and referred by health or other key workers. The service carries out necessary repairs quickly and efficiently at no cost to the occupier.

Eligible works under the scheme include:

- Measures to improve safety and security in the home
- Measures to improve heating and insulation
- Essential repairs and improvements
- Fast track minor adaptations
- Works to assist hospital discharge and prevent hospital admission



Decent homes targets in the private sector

The Government has extended the decent homes targets for the social housing sector by introducing targets for vulnerable households in the private sector. Herefordshire's Housing Renewal Policy and range of housing renewal tools contained a significant element of targeting vulnerable people. Preliminary analysis indicates that in 2001, there were around 4900 vulnerable households in private sector non-decent housing. In the 2 years 2002 to 2004, the Council estimates that this number has been reduced by 3% through renewal activity. The Government has set a target of 65% of vulnerable households living in decent housing by 2006 and Herefordshire is currently at 63%. More up to date information will be collected in the new House Condition Survey planned for 2005, at which point specific targets will be set.

Neighbourhood renewal

Two of the lowest scoring wards under the index of multiple deprivation - Weobley and Belmont wards - have been selected for targeting of resources and a proportion of the housing renewal budget is set aside for this. Initiatives within these areas include special energy measures, environmental and security upgrading, maintenance advice and improving standards and tackling disrepair in a proactive way.

Area-based targeting was extended with the addition of two further wards in 2004/05 - Mortimer and Hereford Central.

Improving private rented housing

Although Herefordshire has a relatively small private rented sector, the evidence from the 2001 House Condition Survey indicates that there are high levels of unfitness and disrepair in that stock.

The Council is particularly active in working with private landlords to improve conditions with the use of enforcement action as necessary. The Council has published an enforcement policy framework which sets out clearly the standards expected. Customer surveys for 2002/03 indicated that 98% of tenants are satisfied with the enforcement service.

The Council estimates that there are around 300 houses in multiple occupation (HMO) in Herefordshire. The Council has run two HMO registration schemes since 1999 - one for Hereford City and one for other areas. These schemes involve regular inspections and enforcement of standards. The number of HMOs brought up to standard in recent years is:

2002-03	34
2003-04	38
2004-05	82

A new national licensing scheme for HMOs will be introduced as part of the implementation of the Housing Act 2004. The Council will align the existing HMO registration schemes with the licensing scheme, as well as taking on board the new Housing Health and Safety Rating system for assessing the impact of housing conditions on the occupiers or visitors to the property.

The Council is seeking to relaunch its accreditation scheme for private landlords to encourage good practice in management and maintenance of properties.

Energy efficiency

Improving the energy efficiency of housing is one of the central planks of the Housing Renewal Policy - for environmental reasons and to ensure that energy costs are minimised for householders, especially those on low incomes. Against a target of a 30% reduction in residential energy usage for the period 1996-2011, an actual reduction of 12.7% has been recorded after eight years - in line with average national performance. There is no standard methodology for calculating energy efficiency against the national target and all local authorities are using different methods to assess improvement, making true comparisons unreliable. A contractor based in Herefordshire installed basic energy efficiency measures in urban areas across all tenures, prior to the date from which baseline data was set under the Home Energy Conservation Act and against which all improvements are measured. The result is that rural properties now remain and these are more difficult and more expensive to improve. It is therefore increasingly difficult to demonstrate a significant improvement year on year. Through our success in attracting additional funding through the Energy Saving

Trust Innovation Project, we are now targeting the hard-to-heat housing sector, e.g. park homes and large detached rural properties.

Key elements of the strategy for energy efficiency in residential properties are:

- continue to implement the Special Energy Efficiency Scheme
- implement Energy Saving Trust Innovation Programme
- promoting and advising on Warm Front grants, Energy Saving Trust initiatives and supporting services provided by the Local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre
- incorporating energy efficiency works when other forms of assistance are provided
- implementing the fuel poverty strategy
- promoting the Health Through Warmth scheme in partnership with npower and the National Health Service.

Targeting Energy Efficiency

Since April 2002 Government has made it statutory for energy suppliers to invest in energy efficiency to meet a set energy saving target through their Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC) programme.

In collaboration with Scottish Power the Herefordshire Council's Private Sector Housing 'Energy Efficiency' team have facilitated grants to 3500 dwellings from April 2002 to March 2004 using £1.189 million from the Local Authority renewal funding, £382K from the EEC programme and £579K from home owners private investment, totalling £2.150 million.

For the period April 2004 to March 2005 the Team targeted its programme to four wards that are deemed to be in the greatest need from Governments Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. To date this has facilitated grants to over 500 dwellings using £75K of EEC funds.



Education and Energy Efficiency

One of the long-term goals is to set out a sustainable education package linking into the National Curriculum aimed at Key Stage Two children (7-11 year olds)

From inception to completion the project called 'MVM – EWISE' took two years to complete and involved collaboration between MVM Ltd, npower, Herefordshire Education Department and Environmental Sustainability Unit, Herefordshire Eco Schools, our Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and ourselves.

The initial capital cost of the project was £30K of which 10K was sought through sponsorship. Such was the success of the 'pilot' it has been decided that the project is to be rolled out to all 83 Primary Schools in the County.

Now every year each school and child receives free educational training from the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on environmental issues, climate change, energy efficiency and renewable energy with free software and resources.



Key achievements 2002-2004

- Launched You@Home “Repairs on Prescription Service” following award of Kick Start Funding
- Herefordshire’s HECA Officer awarded West Midlands HECA Officer of the Year
- Renewal Policy launched and updated following review
- Launched House Proud loan scheme in partnership with Home Improvement Trust
- Improved 82 HMOs to Registration standard
- Domestic energy efficiency grants to 4000 private sector houses including access to £513k from Energy Suppliers funds.
- npower Health Through Warmth rural pilot
- Schools education and software project with £10k sponsorship
- Two Energy Savings Trust (EST) Innovations Feasibility Studies for energy efficiency and renewable energy
- EST Innovations Implementation Award for energy efficiency and renewable energy
- Health Through Warmth Community Fund
- DEFRA grant to develop formal Fuel Poverty Strategy with NEA (Fuel Poverty charity)
- Interest free loan scheme for energy efficiency and renewable energy measures

Key action points

- Annual monitoring of Housing Associations’ progress in meeting decent homes targets
- Annual review of Part 3 of the housing assistance provided under the housing renewal policy
- Full review of Housing Renewal Policy (2006)
- Work with Home Improvement Trust to introduce loans for under 60's
- Set programme to achieve targets for decent homes for vulnerable people in the private sector following completion of the house condition survey
- Manage transition from the HMO registration schemes to HMO licensing
- Introduce Health and Safety rating system
- Re-launch landlords code of conduct (accreditation scheme)
- Continue to address energy efficiency targets
- Implement new Home Improvement Agency arrangements
- Develop Housing/Health links
- Develop a marketing and information strategy on home improvement and energy efficiency services
- Develop a register of adapted properties in all tenures

Key partners

- You @ home
- Health Through Warmth
- Energy agencies and Energy Advice Centre
- Occupational therapists and other health professionals
- Community Safety Partnership, Home safety Check and the Fire Service
- Home Improvement Trust
- Housing Associations
- Private landlords Forum
- Energy suppliers - npower, Scottish Power

SECTION SEVEN

HOUSING CHOICE AND HOUSING SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

The second priority of this Housing Strategy is to improve the range of choice of accommodation for people in housing need and the range of accommodation and quality of services for vulnerable people who may need support on a short term or long term basis. Herefordshire has a strong record of partnership working to meet the housing and support needs of vulnerable groups. In this area, the Housing Strategy links closely with the Homelessness Strategy and the Supporting People Strategy.

Issues, options and directions for the next three years

Home Point

As set out in section 4, Home Point is the choice-based lettings system for affordable housing in Herefordshire, operated through a partnership with the Council and with a Management Board comprising representatives of the Council and the five participating Housing Associations. Launched as one of the national pilot schemes in October 2002, Home Point has been highly successful in clearly showing what affordable homes are available and enabling applicants to apply for the home they prefer. The number of applicants on Home Point's register has risen from 3200 at the start to nearly 7740 in March 2005.

There are a range of issues and related policy and operational initiatives planned for the next three years:

- One of the concerns with choice-based lettings is that vulnerable households may be disadvantaged in that applicants need to check properties being advertised and bid for them with some understanding of their chances of success. Home Point proposes to strengthen procedures in this area by contacting applicants who have not made any bids during the year. Home Point will continue to explore options for employing an Advocate worker who will liaise with vulnerable people and their support workers and/or relatives.
- Home Point wishes to extend its operations to take in lettings of all Housing Associations in Herefordshire. Depending on the national directions for choice-based lettings, Herefordshire would also be keen to explore the possibility of joining up with adjacent local authority areas in a sub-regional scheme.
- There is some concern from key partners about the number of homeless people with priority status being housed through the scheme. From October 2002 to September 2003, 296 priority card holders accepted offers out of a total of 756 acceptances (39%). For the twelve months to September 2004, the equivalent figures were 381 out of 770 (49%). This reflects the increase in the number of homeless people being accepted for rehousing and is in line with the experience of neighbouring rural authorities. However, Home Point partners recognise that giving priority card holders an unlimited period of time in which to bid for their preferred property gives them an unfair advantage and this also adds to pressures on temporary accommodation. Home Point partners now propose to limit the period in which priority status applicants are able to bid to 16 weeks. After this period, the Council may discharge its duty through the allocation of a property without a choice.
- The data retrieval systems are to be improved. Home Point already provides a comprehensive and informative set of data in its quarterly monitoring statistics, but the enhancements will include analysis of current tenure of applicants, current area

of residence and information on income levels. There will also be greater analysis of applicants and lettings trends by ethnic origin.

- Home Point has developed the range of housing schemes it advertises to include shared ownership and low cost market sales and will further investigate opportunities to market other Council initiatives including rent deposit/guarantee schemes. The Home Point approach may also be used for lettings in the new Extra Care schemes currently being constructed, which will be a significant innovation.
- There is some concern that different Housing Associations operate different policies on the size of properties (number of bedrooms) that particular households qualify for. This can lead to confusion for applicants and policies need to be aligned.
- A further concern is that single people and childless couples under 60, who make up the largest group of applicants, have access to a relatively small pool of lettings. Consideration will be given to a more flexible approach to lettings to give these groups access to a larger range of options.
- Given the increasing number of applicants, there are large numbers of households on the register who have no realistic chance of obtaining affordable housing for a lengthy period. Home Point would like to develop its advisory services to help such households explore other options. This housing options approach is increasingly prevalent: development in Herefordshire will align Home Point and the homelessness prevention activities operated by Herefordshire Housing Ltd on behalf of the Council.

Homelessness

Herefordshire has a strong reputation for the quality and scope of its homelessness and housing advice services, with these services getting a 3 star rating from the Audit Commission in 2002. Since 2002 the services have been contracted out to Herefordshire Housing Ltd although they will return to Council administration before March 2006. In May 2005, Herefordshire Council's Cabinet considered a report on future arrangements for the Homelessness and Housing Advice Service. Key issues for the future of the service were:

- The need for more temporary accommodation in the short term to reduce the unacceptable reliance on B&B
- To meet the Government's target of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010
- To restructure the service to allow staff to concentrate more effectively on homelessness prevention

Cabinet considered three options:

1. to operate the services in-house
2. to undertake a more comprehensive options appraisal
3. to contract out services to another provider through a formal tendering process

In the light of recent research on the provision of these services in stock-transfer authorities and given the urgency of addressing the issues set out above, Cabinet approved the option of operating the services in-house. A project plan has been established to achieve this by April 2006.

There are increasing pressures which require responses in both this Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy (see below). Herefordshire is seeing increasing numbers of applications and acceptances of homeless people associated with:

- less stable family circumstances and relationships leading to homelessness
- 16 and 17 year olds have been added to the priority needs groups
- increasing house prices forcing newly-forming households to live with friends/relatives or rent privately and become exposed to homelessness when these arrangements come to an end

- to a limited extent the transparency of the Home Point scheme may lead people to conclude that their only hope of being housed in a reasonable property in a reasonable time to present as homeless.

As required by the Homelessness Act 2002, Herefordshire Council in partnership with the Herefordshire Homelessness Forum undertook a Homelessness Review and published a Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008. The priorities for action in the Homelessness Strategy are:

- Reduce the numbers of young people becoming homeless from the parental home
- Reduce the numbers of repeat homeless households
- Ensure young people leaving care do not become homeless
- Ensure that women and their children with more complex issues arising from exposure to domestic violence have access to appropriate housing and support
- Implement prevention measures to reduce terminations of Assured Shorthold Tenancies
- Ensure that the housing management practices of Housing Associations work to prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness
- Ensure there is sufficient support available for people who are, or who may be, homeless
- Identify and reduce the numbers of rough sleepers in the county and *hidden homeless* households
- Ensure the provision of high quality homeless advice and more effective promotion of services aimed at homelessness prevention
- Address the employment and training needs of homeless people
- Reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation through the provision of alternative supported temporary accommodation
- Encourage agencies to work together more effectively

The Homelessness Strategy has a comprehensive Action Plan, which is to be monitored and reviewed annually by the Homelessness Forum.

There are two key issues which should be specifically highlighted in this Housing Strategy:

- There is an immediate and pressing need to develop alternative forms of temporary accommodation not just for families with children but for all households. Young single people are especially vulnerable in bed and breakfast. Agencies in Herefordshire have made significant progress in this direction. However, with increased levels of applications and increasing lengths of stay in temporary accommodation, there is an urgent need to develop more private leasing capacity.
- The *Homes for All* Plan from the Government sets a target of reducing the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. This will be particularly challenging in Herefordshire in view of the distinct shortage of affordable housing unless large reductions in homelessness acceptances are achieved through prevention activities. Herefordshire needs to combine its acknowledged high quality services to homeless people with equally effective activities to prevent homelessness and encourage households to consider other housing options. At present this type of work is swamped by the reactive casework associated with high levels of homeless applications. More emphasis must be given to homelessness prevention and other housing options work.

Pomona Place

Pomona Place opened in August 2004 and is one of the Council's key initiatives to address the growing problem of homelessness in Herefordshire.

The scheme was developed in partnership with Stonham Housing Association on the site of the former Wooldridge Court Hostel. There are 21 units of self-contained, furnished accommodation a communal lounge, IT training suite and laundry facilities.

The building is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Low level, housing-related support services provided by Stonham Project Workers are available to all tenants.

Stonham staff work with the Homeless Agency and Home Point to support tenants to move on to settled accommodation in a planned way.

Since the scheme opened, 50 homeless people have been provided with accommodation at Pomona Place. Over 20 people have been supported to move into settled housing.



Shelter "Homeless to Home"

Homeless to Home is one of the Council's key initiatives to address the growing problem of homelessness in Herefordshire.

Three Homeless to Home pilot schemes developed and provided by Shelter have achieved national recognition for their success in tenancy sustainment.

The efficacy of Shelter's approach has resulted in tenancy sustainment being achieved within an average of 9 months.

Homeless to Home will support approximately 70 homeless families per year in Herefordshire.

A local manager was recently appointed and the service will commence in Summer 2005.



Rough Sleepers

The need for a rough sleepers count was identified in the Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008. Following extensive consultation with parish councils, local police and homelessness support agencies, 33 potential locations were identified where rough sleepers may be found. The count was undertaken in April 2004. Despite Herefordshire having significant homelessness problems, no rough sleepers were officially found during the count although there was evidence to suggest that potentially three people were sleeping rough on that night.

Supporting People

In April 2003, the Government introduced the Supporting People scheme to plan and fund housing linked to support services for vulnerable people. In Herefordshire, the Supporting People Partnership comprises the Council, the NHS Primary Care Trust and West Mercia Probation Service. The scheme is administered by Herefordshire Council.

The funding for Supporting People in Herefordshire is currently £7.4 million annually, which funds the delivery of services under 97 contracts through 43 providers. There are currently 2500 people in receipt of Supporting People services. Funding for 2005–06 was announced in November 2004 and amounts to £6.8 million. However, the announcement of the ODPM's Distribution Formula for Supporting People Grant in December 2004 has created severe difficulties for the local partnership. If implemented as it stands, the Distribution Formula will mean that Herefordshire will be the seventh most adversely affected authority in England, facing a loss of 25% of grant (£1.85 million) between 2005 and 2010 and over the long term a loss of at least 58% (£4.2 million). Herefordshire has pursued a robust approach to obtaining value for money from providers alongside rigorous service standards. The programme has set clear strategic priorities and revenue funding released through the Review process will be invested in priority services. However, the proposals in respect of the Distribution Formula mean that the local Supporting People Partnership will face very hard decisions over the coming years. Representations are being made through appropriate channels about the extreme nature of the redistribution proposed. The ODPM will also be asked for guidance on how Herefordshire can achieve national targets in a climate of drastically reduced funding and significant service contraction.

The Supporting People Strategy for 2005 to 2010 has been completed. Strategic priorities for 2005-06 - subject to funding - are:

- Single homeless people - intensively managed, temporary supported housing
- Young people leaving care - transitional supported accommodation
- People with a learning disability - move-on accommodation for people needing to live independently from older carers; shared ownership schemes, remodelling of a registered home to provide self-contained units of supported housing
- Older people - housing-related support service
- People with mental health problems - shared ownership housing
- Homeless people - pilot floating support scheme to prevent homelessness
- Travellers and gypsies - further development of Traveller Liaison scheme
- Young offenders - pilot supported lodgings scheme
- Future priorities for development include the expansion of services to victims of domestic violence

Older People

As indicated in Section 4, Herefordshire has a population with a higher proportion of older people than the national average and an increase in the numbers and proportion of older people is predicted for the future. This has implications for housing strategy and some of the key responses are:

- Commissioning 100 extra care units to be completed in 2007 developed through a combination of private, charitable, local authority and Department of Health funding
- A review of the range of sheltered housing capacity in Herefordshire operated by housing associations and other providers with a view to modernising provision
- Considerable focus on the needs of older people in private sector renewal
- Participation of Strategic Housing services in the development of the Older Persons Strategy

Learning Disability Housing Plan 2003-06

A specific plan has been developed to address the housing needs of people with learning disabilities. In this Housing Strategy, the plan is reflected through the Supporting People priorities and some of the projects in the Housing Associations' development programme.

The Plan proposes a series of actions structured around six key objectives:

- Increase opportunities for supported living arrangements
- Reduce the proportion of people living in residential care
- Meet the needs of people living with older carers
- Ensure accommodation needs of young people are fed into the planning system
- Provide information and advice for service users and families
- Ensure the quality of services is monitored and address where needed

Other plans

We will develop a Mental Health Housing Strategy and an Offenders Housing Strategy during 2005-06.

Key achievements 2002-2004

- Launch of Home Point in October 2002
- Development of Pomona Place - supported temporary accommodation for homeless people
- Commissioning Shelter Homeless to Home scheme
- Six units of transitional accommodation for people with mental health difficulties at Etnam Street, Leominster
- Secured funding for the Extra Care housing scheme
- Robust review process for Supporting People schemes releasing funding for new priorities
- 2500 people assisted in Supporting People schemes
- Learning Disability Housing Plan

Key action points

- Introduce policy and operational changes to the Home Point scheme
- Implement the revised allocations policy
- Implement the Action Plan of the Homelessness Strategy
- Conduct review of the Homelessness Strategy
- Review temporary accommodation capacity for homeless people
- Develop specification and implement new homelessness and housing advice service, including *housing options* approach for housing advice and homelessness prevention
- Introduce Homelessness Prevention workers as part of the new service
- Implement the priorities from the Supporting People Strategy
- Implement the Action Plan from the Learning Disability Housing Plan
- Develop the Mental Health Housing Plan
- Review Sheltered Housing in Herefordshire and implement the outcomes of the Review
- Investigate the introduction of an education programme for homelessness prevention
- Develop the capacity for independent housing advice
- Develop additional crisis accommodation and sanctuary schemes for domestic violence victims
- Develop incentives for households in social housing to release larger homes
- Develop joint protocols for people leaving supported housing

Key partners

- ODPM
- Supporting People (Commissioning Body, Providers & Core Strategy Group)
- Home Point Partnership
- RSLs
- Homelessness Forum
- Shelter
- Women's Aid
- Extra Care Charitable Trust
- PCT
- Social Care (Adults)

SECTION EIGHT

RESOURCING THE STRATEGY

Addressing the housing needs of the area is a major priority for Herefordshire Council and for the agencies involved in the Herefordshire Partnership. It is recognised that the scale of the housing problems to be addressed exceeds the Council's own financial capacity - hence the strong emphasis on partnerships which generate additional resources evidenced throughout this Strategy.

Outside the Council's own resources, key funding sources to address housing issues include:

- Central Government funding for the region, with recommendations developed by the West Midlands Regional Housing Board - these have been determined for 2005/06; priorities for 2006/07 onwards will be determined in the light of the new Regional Housing Strategy to be published in 2005
- Housing Corporation funding for housing associations and (following the Housing Act 2004) private developers delivering affordable housing. The Council's Capital development programme in Section 5 includes a substantial level of funding by the Housing Corporation and the Department of Health.
- Affordable housing achieved without grant funding through planning gain agreements (Section 5)
- Financial contributions in lieu of on site provision of affordable housing - currently standing at £567,000, with a further £164,000 anticipated
- Housing association funding invested in their housing stock to achieve the decent homes standard (Section 6)
- Personal savings and loans for home improvement invested by homeowners and private landlords, including loans secured through Houseproud (Section 6)
- Supporting People revenue funding for supported housing projects; linked to capital funds for these projects from the Council, Housing Corporation and Department of Health (Section 7)
- Partnership funding with energy suppliers for energy efficiency and affordable warmth initiatives. (Section 6)

Revenue spending

Whilst the revenue budget is a matter of determination locally by elected members, the budget is influenced significantly by central government. At a local level, the Council undertakes, through Cabinet, Budget Panel and Strategic Monitoring Committee, a rigorous examination of the Council's spending needs prior to the budget setting meeting of full Council in March of each year.

As part of the 2005/06 budget process, the Council carried out various consultation exercises with tax payers, including

- Council Tax Roadshows held in each market town and Hereford city
- Countywide Council Tax survey distributed to all households
- Direct consultation with a representative sample of over 500 households.

The total Strategic Housing budget for 2005/06 was set at £1,432,000. In June 2005 Cabinet also agreed to redirect £300,000 into the homelessness revenue budget. Furthermore, an improvement plan for homelessness was approved by Cabinet in July 2005 which incorporates Invest to Save options of £120,000.

The Revenue budget and projections for the three years of the Strategy is shown below.

Strategic Housing Service Area	2003-04		2004-05		2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET	PROPOSED BUDGET	PROPOSED BUDGET
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
ENABLING ACTIVITIES	207	222	285	294	279	282	287
PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING	326	411	322	212	274	279	283
HEAD OF STRATEGIC HOUSING	429	243	428	339	211	214	217
HOMELESSNESS	398	390	383	838	817	403	408
HOMEPOINT	-2	-3	0	-3	0	0	0
SUPPORTING PEOPLE	129	129	122	95	156	158	161
Total	1,487	1,392	1,540	1,775	1,737	1,336	1,356
<p>1. Homelessness includes increase in Bed and Breakfast cost. 2. The overspend in 2004-05 was due to higher than expected Homelessness costs. 3. 2005-06 Homelessness Budget includes a one-off budget increase of £420,000 4. Strategic Housing contribution to Homepoint included within Homelessness. 5. Figures above exclude deferred charges.</p>							

Capital spending

The Corporate Capital Strategy sets out the framework and mechanisms for the Councils allocation and use of capital funding. It is designed to maximise the use of resources to meet legal obligations and drive service improvements by reference to a number of strategies including the Herefordshire Plan, the Corporate Plan and the strategic plans for Education, Transport and Housing.

The Council has a Corporate Capital Strategy Group (CSG) responsible for strategic capital issues. Elected Members are involved at various stages of the capital strategy process, having input when assessing internal bids for prudential funding and reports are submitted to Cabinet, Strategic Monitoring Committee (SMC) and service-related Programme Panels at planning and monitoring stages. The CSG reports to Chief Executives Management Team and receives strategic guidance on an ongoing basis.

The Assistant County Treasurer chairs the CSG. The Head of ICT and the Head of Business Services (Social Care and Strategic Housing) together with the Property Services Manager are the members of the group. The group is supported by the Principal Financial Policy Manager and the Capital Accountant. The working group currently meets bi-monthly and is responsible to the Chief Executives Management Team for: -

- Developing and maintaining the Council's medium term corporate Capital Strategy.
- Developing the Council's annual capital programme including resource allocation, project selection and monitoring arrangements.

- Developing and maintaining the Council's medium term corporate Asset Management Plan.
- Developing and maintaining the Council's corporate property acquisitions and disposals policy.
- Promoting capital strategy and asset management issues throughout the Council

The Capital Strategy Group is specifically responsible for developing strategic recommendations to both the Chief Executives Management Team and to Cabinet on the allocation of capital resources to projects and service areas, including housing.

The Capital Programme for the three years covered by this strategy is shown below.

	Outturn	Outturn	Budget	Estimate	Estimate	
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Budgets:						
Private Sector Housing	1,544	1,411	1,305	1,160	1,160	
Disabled Facilities Grants - Discretionary	5	15	175	20	140	
Disabled Facilities Grants - Mandatory	375	482	525	525	525	
Rent allowance capitalisation	370					
Affordable Housing Grants	1,639	1,191	3,500	3,500	3,500	
Extra Care Housing Development			4,600	2,500		
Total Budget to be Financed	3,933	3,099	10,105	7,705	5,325	
Financed By:	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Supported Capital Expenditure - Revenue	1,533	2,072	2,080	774	581	1
Prudential Borrowing			180			2
Department of Health			4,600	2,500		3
Capital Receipts Reserve	2,202	461	2,690	4,116	4,429	4
Learning Disability Development Fund			240			
Disabled Facilities Grant	198	564	315	315	315	5
Total Financing	3,933	3,097	10,105	7,705	5,325	
Capital Receipts Reserve Position:	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
B/Fwd as at 1 April	(15,779)	(11,735)	(12,241)	(11,085)	(8,155)	
Capital Receipts expected - RTB		(1,358)	(698)	(668)	(638)	6
Capital Receipts applied	2,202	461	2,690	4,116	4,429	
Internal Transfers	1,842	391	-	-	-	
C/Fwd as at 31 March	(11,735)	(12,241)	(10,249)	(6,801)	(3,010)	

In addition, £567,160 financial contributions have been received from developers in lieu of on-site affordable housing, with a further £164,000 anticipated.

Assumptions made for the funding of Strategic Housing Capital Programme (corresponding with the numbers in the final column of the above table)

1. The West Midlands Regional Housing Board's *Strategy for allocating Single Regional Housing Pot* sets out the strategy for allocating housing funds in the future. Each authority will have to bid for funding and could in theory receive no allocation. A safety net is therefore provided to guarantee a minimum SCE of 40% in 2006-07 and 30% in 2007-08 of the 2005-06 HIP SCE allocation for each Authority. The minimum figure is shown in the table above. It is a significant risk to the viability of a longer term Strategic Housing capital programme should funding not be allocated to Herefordshire above these minimum levels.

2. Strategic Housing may bid for internal funding from Herefordshire Council via the unsupported Prudential Borrowing mechanism. However Herefordshire Council's Capital Strategy is to use such funding for areas other than Housing, Transport and Education. It is therefore unlikely that Prudential Borrowing would be used to support Strategic Housing.
3. The Department of Health has committed to providing significant funding towards the development of Extra Care Housing. Only the sums committed are shown above.
4. The Strategic Housing capital programme is heavily reliant on using capital reserves. These capital reserves have resulted from historical Right to Buy receipts together with the significant receipt from the disposal of the housing stock and a share of on-going Right to Buy receipts. The Corporate Capital Strategy is to ringfence these receipts for use by Strategic Housing.
5. It is assumed that a similar level of Disabled Facilities Grant will be provided in future years. If this is not the case this will be funded from Strategic Housing capital reserves.
6. As part of the transfer of the Housing Stock to Herefordshire Housing Limited it was agreed that a share of future Right to Buy receipts would be paid to the Council each year until 2032. The receipts from this are subject to a formula based on the sale price and number of properties sold. Although property values are forecast to increase, the number of properties sold is expected to decrease and therefore the expected receipt will diminish over time.

SECTION NINE: ACTION PLAN



Priority 1: Achieve a more balanced housing market					
	Priority	Action	Target	Lead Officer	Resources
1	High	Influence the Regional Housing Board to give priority to housing needs in areas with shortages of affordable housing such as Herefordshire	On-going	Head of Strategic Housing	Staff resources
2	High	Pursue affordable housing with Social Housing Grant appropriate housing developments	100 dwellings per year	Enabling Manager	Capital Reserves £10.5m over 3 years
3	High	Pursue affordable housing without grant through planning gain	05/06:40 dwellings 06/07 61 dwellings 07/08 231 dwellings	Enabling Manager	Developers funds
4	High	Ensure that the housing association development programme is robust for the next three years	Next programme April 2006, then review annually	Enabling Manager	Staff resources
5	High	Pursue funding bids to support the three-year housing associations development programme	Bids in November 2005 for 2006/08	Enabling Manager	ADP / Housing Corporation plus Capital reserves as identified in Action Point 2 above
6	High	Adopt Unitary Development Plan, including housing policies, following Public Inquiry	2006	Forward Planning Manager	Staff resources
7	Medium	Contribute housing perspective to the emerging Local Development Framework	2007/08	Head of Strategic Housing Enabling Manager	Staff resources
8	Medium	Develop strategy for affordable housing with other local authorities in the West housing market area	March 2006	Head of Strategic Housing	Revenue budget Staff resources
9	Medium	Seek to pilot new approach to housing need assessment in partnership with the West Housing Market Area Authorities	Pilot by March 2006 Implement in new housing needs assessments from April 2006 onwards	Enabling Manager	Revenue budget – Enabling
10	Medium	Investigate opportunities for intermediate market rental and increase role of private rented sector	2007/08	Enabling Manager	Staff resources

Priority 1: Achieve a more balanced housing market					
	Priority	Action	Target	Lead Officer	Resources
11	Medium	Examine opportunities for projects involving Housing Corporation funding of private developers of social housing	Investigate options with Housing Corporation and developers for November 2005 bids	Housing Ambition Group Head of Strategic Housing	ADP / Housing Corporation
12	Medium	Investigate land banking by housing associations, in line with the development partnership arrangements	Strategic directions by March 2006	Enabling Manager Development sub-group	Staff
13	Medium	Continue rural housing needs assessments to inform opportunities through rural exception sites.	5 per year	Enabling Manager	Revenue budget – Enabling
14	Medium	Investigate opportunities for home/work schemes, given high level of self-employment in Herefordshire	2006/07	Enabling Manager	
15	Medium	Commission enhancements to Home Point reporting system to contribute to information on housing needs and demand	November 2005	Home Point Manager	Capital Reserves
16	Medium	Investigate Housing Market Stress status	October 05	Head of Strategic Housing	Staff resources
17	Medium	Develop annual reporting of the delivery of affordable housing against planning policy	By April 2006 for report on 2005/06	Head of Strategic Housing Forward Planning Manager	Staff resources
18	Medium	Identify a site for a demonstration project for Eco-homes/self build	Start on site 2007/08	Enabling Manager	Staff resources
19	Low	Review the Empty Property Strategy	March 2006	Empty Property Officer	Revenue – Enabling Staff resources
20	Low	Map social housing supply and demand on GIS	Fully operational by March 2006	Enabling Manager	Revenue budget – Enabling
21	Low	Develop a strategy for improving the environment and tackling anti-social behaviour in social housing estates	Strategy directions and good practice guidance by March 2006	RSL Forum Housing Management sub-group	Staff resources

Priority 2: Address increasing levels of homelessness

	Priority	Action	Target	Lead Officer	Resources
22	High	Develop specification and implement new in-house homelessness and housing advice service, including 'housing options' approach for housing advice and homelessness prevention	New service in place April 2006	Head of Strategic Housing Project Manager	Revenue budget – Homelessness (Net of Housing Benefit) 05/06 £420,000 06/07 £309,000 07/08 £318,270 Staff resources
23	High	Introduce new homelessness prevention workers as part of new service	April 2006	Head of Strategic Housing Project Manager	Revenue budget – Homelessness Prevention Fund included in Action Point 22 above
24	High	Implement the Action Plan of the Homelessness Strategy	Ongoing	Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator	Revenue budget – Homelessness Staff resources £28,000
25	High	Conduct review of the Homelessness Strategy	by March 2006	Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator	Staff resources as above
26	High	Introduce policy and operational changes to the Home Point scheme	November 2005	Home Point Manager	Staff resources
27	High	Implement the revised allocations policy	November 2005	Home Point Manager	Revenue budget – Home Point Capital Budget £40,000 Staff resources
28	High	Review temporary accommodation capacity for homeless people	by March 2006	Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator	Staff resources
29	High	Reduce use of B&B for families with children to nil	March 2006	Head of Strategic Housing	Revenue budget – Homelessness Capital budget – Enabling: See Action Point 2.
30	High	Reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 10% per annum	30% by March 2008	Head of Strategic Housing	Staff resources Capital budget – development – see Action Point 2 Supporting People RSL capital Housing Corporation / ADP
31	Medium	Develop additional crisis accommodation and sanctuary schemes for domestic violence victims	with DV Forum by March 2006	Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator	Supporting People Housing Capital development budget Capital budget – Private Sector
32	Medium	Support development of Housing Market Area joint working on homelessness	June 2006	Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator	Staff resources
33	Medium	Develop the capacity for independent housing advice	Part of options appraisal for new service	Head of Strategic Housing Project Manager	Revenue budget – Homelessness

Priority 2: Address increasing levels of homelessness

	Priority	Action	Target	Lead Officer	Resources
34	Medium	Develop incentives for households in social housing to release larger homes	March 2006	Enabling Manager	Capital budget – Enabling Staff resources
35	Medium	Investigate the introduction of an education programme for homelessness prevention	December 2005	Head of Strategic Housing	Revenue budget – Homelessness Staff resources

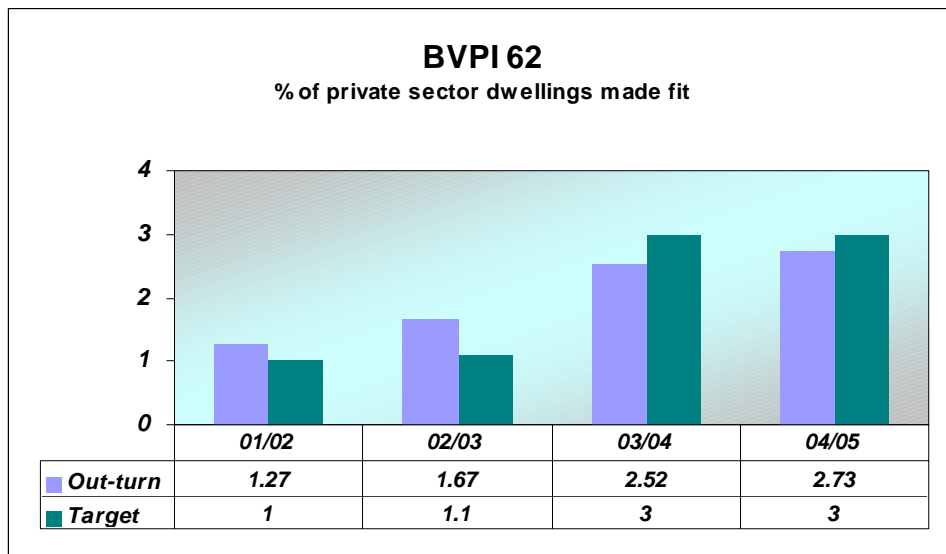
Priority 3: Ensure vulnerable people have their housing support needs met

	Priority	Action	Target	Lead Officer	Resources
36	High	Implement the priorities from the Supporting People Strategy	ongoing	Supporting People Manager	Supporting People Grant* Capital budget – development – See Action Point 2
37	High	Continue to support opportunities for cross-authority co-operation under the Supporting People Framework	Common Service Development Plan in place by 2006	Supporting People Manager	Staff resources
38	High	Respond to the requirement to assess the housing needs of gypsies and travellers	Commission research by December 2005 Strategy in place by August 2006	Head of Strategic Housing & Enabling Manager	Revenue budget – Enabling 06/07 £15,000
39	Medium	Implement the Action Plan from the Learning Disability Housing Plan	ongoing	Development Officer – Learning Disability Services	Supporting People Capital budget – development Staff resources
40	Medium	Develop the Mental Health Housing Plan	December 2005	Service Manager – Mental Health	Supporting People Capital budget – development Staff resources
41	Medium	Review Sheltered Housing in Herefordshire and implement the outcomes of the Review	July 2005 onwards	Enabling Manager	Staff resources Capital budget – development Supporting People RSL capital Housing Corporation / ADP
42	Medium	Develop joint protocols for people leaving supported housing	March 2007	Supporting People Manager	Staff resources
43	Medium	Develop Housing/Health links	2005/06	Housing Ambition Group	Staff resources
44	Medium	Develop a register of adapted properties in all tenures	2006/07	Private Sector Housing Manager	Staff resources RSL staff resources

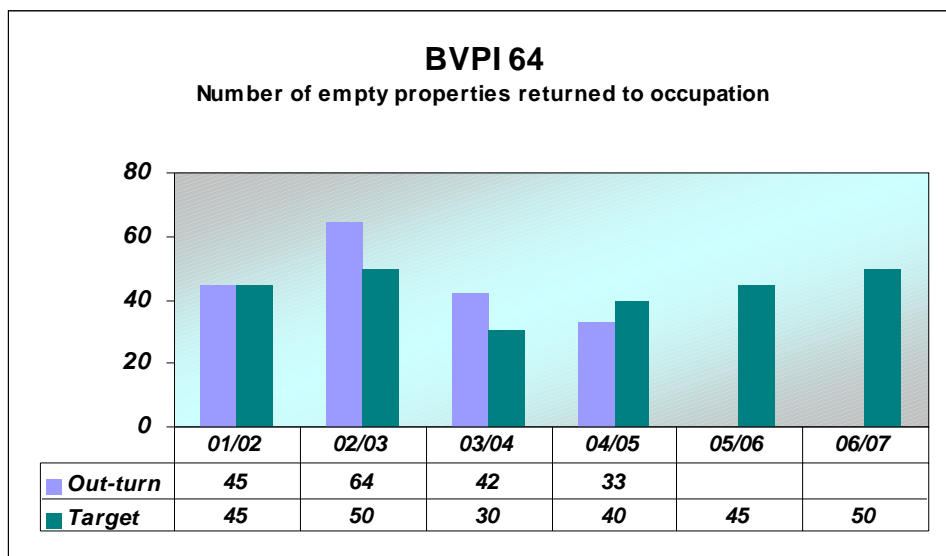
*see Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010

Priority 4: Improve housing conditions across all tenures					
	Priority	Action	Target	Lead Officer	Resources
45	High	Set programme to achieve targets for decent homes for vulnerable people in the private sector	Annual targets set following completion of House Condition Survey	Private Sector Housing Manager	Regional Housing Board Capital budget – Private Sector £3.6m over 3 years
46	High	Manage transition from the HMO registration schemes to HMO licensing	Depends on commencement order	Private Sector Housing Manager	Revenue budget – Private Sector Housing Staff resources HMO Licence Fees
47	High	Introduce Health and Safety rating system	Depends on commencement order	Private Sector Housing Manager	Revenue budget – Private Sector Housing
48	High	Continue to address energy efficiency targets	Ongoing	HECA Officer	Revenue budget £25,000 pa Capital budget £400,000 pa
49	High	Implement new Home Improvement Agency arrangements	September 2005	Private Sector Housing Manager	Revenue budget – Private Sector Supporting People Grant Fee income
50	High	Commission private sector house condition survey and energy audit	Report available September 2005	Private Sector Housing Manager	Capital budget – Private Sector Housing £60,000
51	Medium	Monitor RSL's progress in meeting decent homes targets	April 2006 then annually	Performance Improvement Officer	Staff resources
52	Medium	Annual review of Part 3 of the housing assistance provided under the housing renewal policy	October 2005	Private Sector Housing Manager	Staff resources
53	Medium	Full review of Housing Renewal Policy (2006)	May 2006	Private Sector Housing Manager	Staff resources Revenue budget – Private Sector Housing
54	Medium	Work with Home Improvement Trust to introduce loans for under 60's	2006/07	Private Sector Housing Manager	Revenue budget – Private Sector Housing Home Improvement Trust Loans
55	Medium	Re-launch landlords code of conduct (accreditation scheme)	April 2006	Principal HMO & Enforcement Officer	Revenue budget – Private Sector Housing Staff resources
56	Medium	Develop rolling programme to update the house condition survey annually, with appropriate software		Private Sector Housing Manager	Capital and Revenue budgets – Private Sector Housing
57	Low	Develop a marketing strategy on home improvement and energy efficiency services	March 2006	Private Sector Housing Manager	Staff resources

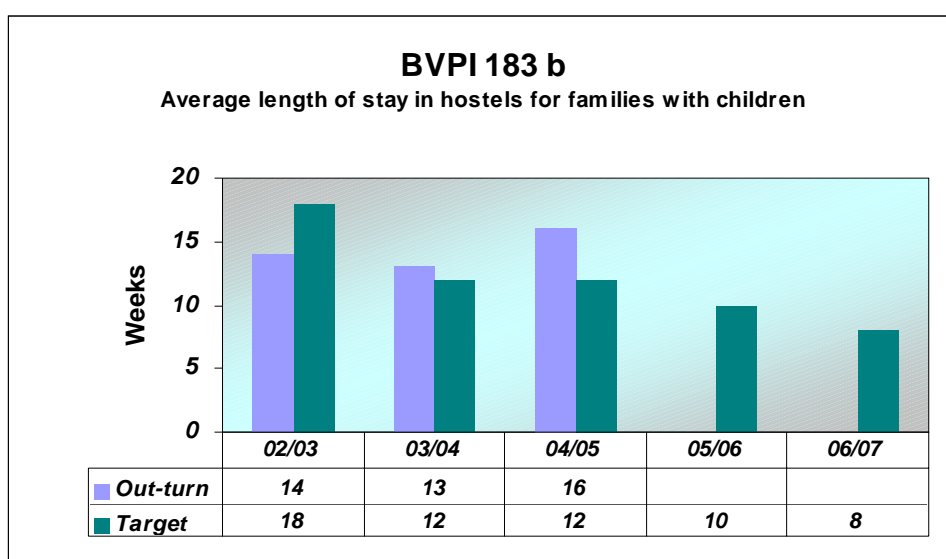
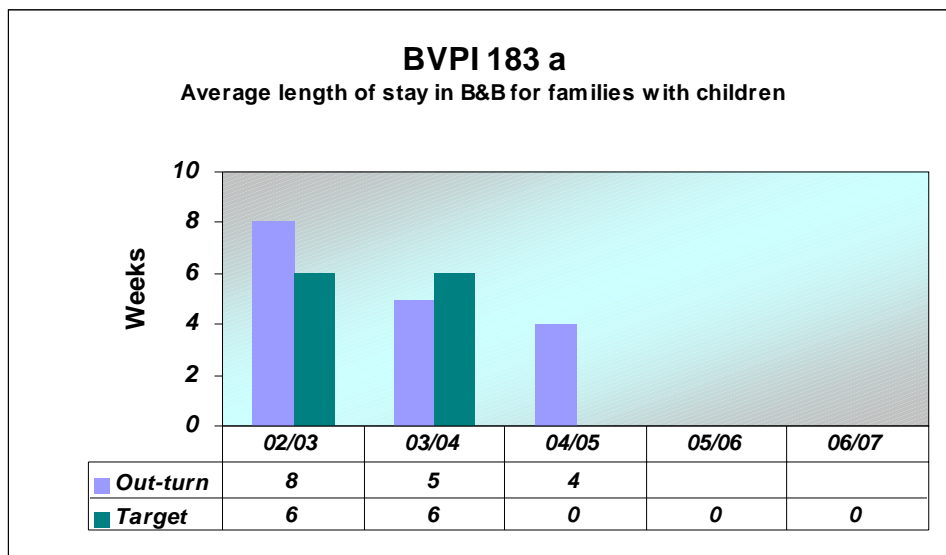
STRATEGIC HOUSING SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



The Authority has shown continuous improvement in this area of activity. Following the introduction of the Housing Act 2004 and the changes to the regulation of the private housing sector, this BVPI will be discontinued from April 2005. However, the Private Sector team will continue to monitor the improvements in activity here as a local performance indicator.

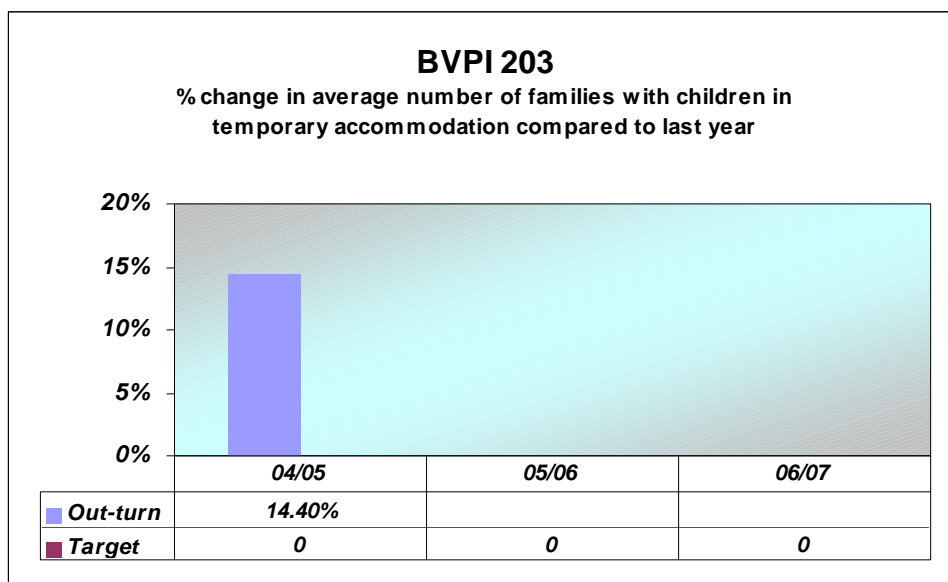


This indicator has been subject to changes in definition and denominator which prohibits year on year comparison of progress. However, we can see that in 2001-02 the Authority met its target and in 2002-03 a more challenging target was set which was exceeded by 28%. During 2002-03, the authority comfortably achieved performance that ranked within the top quartile of all English Authorities. During 2003-04 we introduced the Empty Property Strategy which focussed on targeting long-term empty properties back into habitable use. More complex and lengthy procedures to achieve results suggested a lower target would be appropriate, although this again was exceeded. A slow-down in progress is evident in 2004-05 as the implications of targeting long-term empty properties takes effect. Staff time has also been absorbed on developing alternative initiatives to improve the supply of affordable homes.



These two indicators were introduced in 2002-03, the year in which our LSVT stock transfer took place and our statutory homelessness responsibilities were contracted out to the new company on an Agency basis. In view of the on-going and extreme shortage of affordable housing, there are real barriers to our ability to move homeless households into settled accommodation. This has presented a significant challenge in respect of our obligations to reduce the use of B&B accommodation. To facilitate necessary improvements, the Council has begun to implement a package of measures including:

- Review and redesign of homelessness services following their transfer back into Council administration
- A review of allocation procedures has been undertaken to enable the Council to discharge its duty by encouraging homeless households to access permanent accommodation pro-actively through Home Point.
- Commissioning a new *Homeless to Home* service in partnership with Shelter which will enable early intervention in the prevention of homelessness
- Commissioning a temporary supported housing scheme for single homeless people
- The re-modelling of the Staying Put agency service
- Improving the supply of settled accommodation for all homeless applicants by introducing Rent Deposit and Private Sector Leasing Schemes
- Appointment of a Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator planned for 2005-06



This indicator was introduced in April 2004, reflecting the Government's determination to focus on improving the situation for families with children or a pregnant woman living in temporary accommodation. Set against rising levels of homelessness combined with a significant shortage of settled accommodation in the county, the Authority has been unable to meet its challenging target of a 0% increase in the use of temporary accommodation for this group.

BVPI 202

The number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the authority

This indicator was also introduced in April 2004. Strategic Housing Services carried out a 'rough sleepers' count in accordance with strict criteria defined by the ODPM and was pleased to find that there was no admissible evidence of rough sleeping in the County.

LPSA TARGET

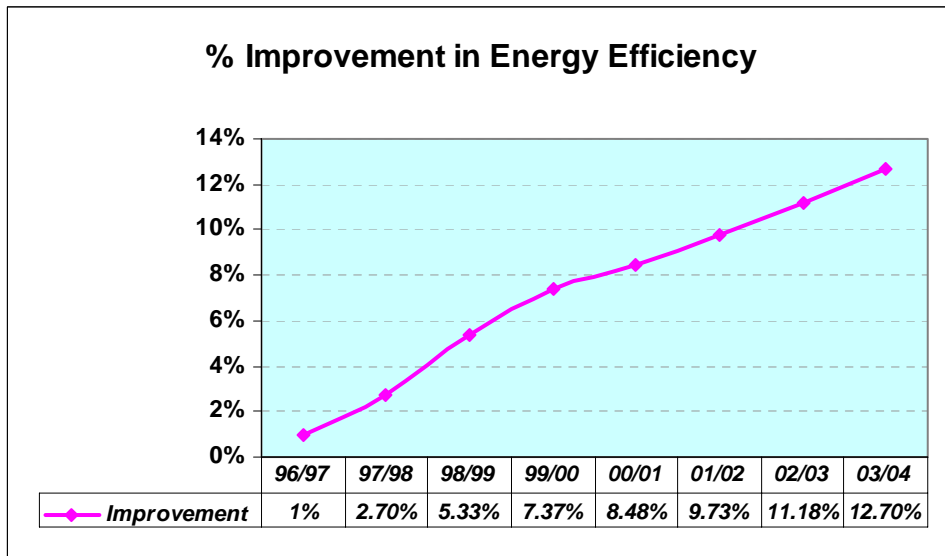
1% or less of households will require repeat re-housing within a six month period, plus four special conditions:

1. **No households in B&B during the period 1 April 04 – 31 March 05**
2. **100% temporary accommodation units used during 1 April 04 – 31 March 05 meet the standards required under Part XI of the Housing Act 1985**
3. **95% of homeless households housed during the period express satisfaction with the accommodation**
4. **100% of homeless households housed during the period express satisfaction with resettlement support**

The Council entered into this challenging Local Public Services Agreement (LPSA) target for 04/05 which focused on repeat homelessness. From a baseline of 3.3% repeat homelessness in July 2003, there has been a dramatic reduction and the outturn for 04/05 is 0.4% - well within the target of not more than 1%. However the targets for the special conditions have not been met.

HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT

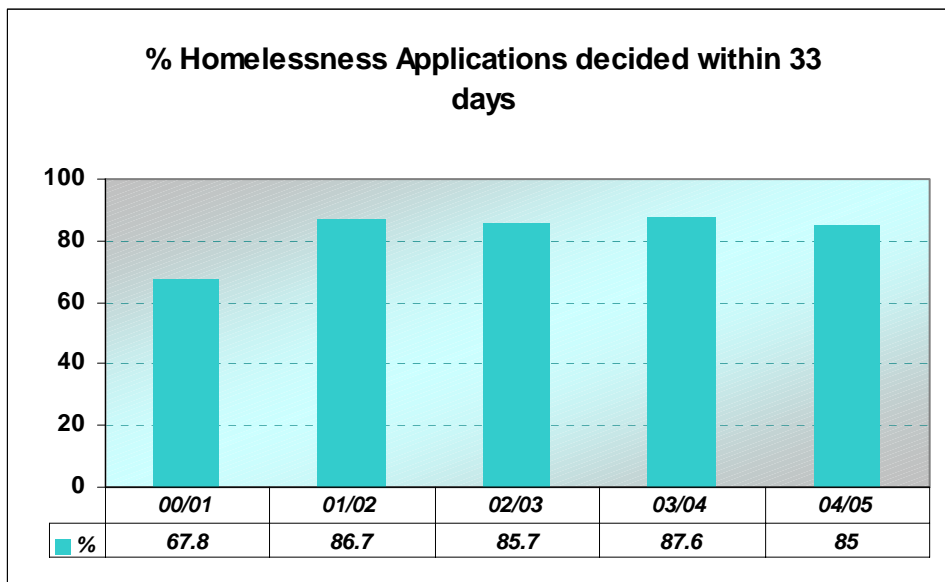
Under the Home Energy Conservation Act, the goal is to achieve an overall 30% reduction in domestic energy consumption between 1996 and 2011.



The rate of energy efficiency improvements across all sectors has increased steadily since the baseline was established in 1996.

HOMELESSNESS DETERMINATIONS

We have continued to use the former BVPI 67 as a local indicator for the purpose of monitoring the Homelessness Agency’s performance on homelessness determinations – the % of homelessness applications processed within 33 working days.

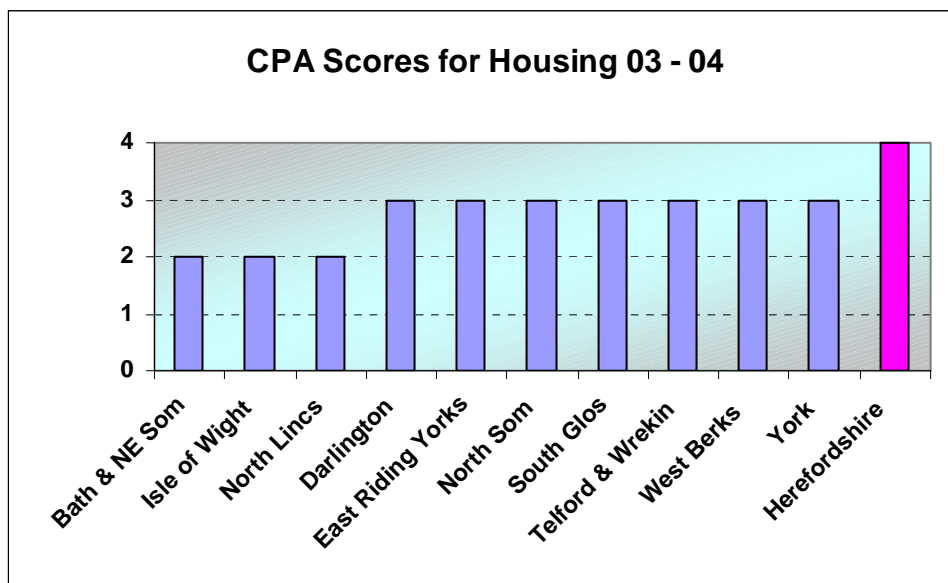


Despite a continuing upward trend in homelessness presentations, the Agency is currently processing 85% of applications within 33 days which reflects consistently good processing performance within a challenging area.

Corporate Performance Assessment

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high quality local and national services for the public. They also act as a driving force for improvement in those services. During 2002, 03 and 04 Herefordshire has received a 'good' rating (on a scale of excellent/good/fair/weak/poor) for our overall performance when inspected by the Audit Commission.

Regular Performance Assessments of individual service areas are part of the inspection process and are used to build up a scorecard (graded from 1 – mainly weaknesses to 4 – mainly strengths) that contributes to the overall rating. In May 2004, Strategic Housing scored 4 (mainly strengths) for demonstrated improvement, strategic capacity to improve and quality of service. Housing performance scores amongst our New Unitaries Benchmark colleagues are good with Herefordshire being the highest-scoring authority.



REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Barker Review – Delivering Stability: securing our future housing needs

Community Safety and Drugs Partnership Strategy

Gaine, Chris, University College Chichester, “Minority Ethnic People’s Experiences in Herefordshire” September 2004, commissioned by Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire Council: Corporate Plan 2005 – 08
Draft Unitary Development Plan
Empty Property Strategy
Herefordshire Housing Needs Survey 2004
Homelessness Strategy 2003
Housing Renewal Policy
Learning Disability Housing Plan
Market Towns Strategy
Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2001
Supporting People Strategy 2005 – 2010

Herefordshire Plan 2003

Home Energy Conservation Act

Homes for All – ODPM 2005

P1E Quarterly Homelessness Returns to ODPM

Quarterly Economic Report, published by The Herefordshire Partnership, produced in February, May, August and November every year

Statistical Release - ODPM

Supplementary Planning Guidance – Design and Development Requirements

Supplementary Planning Guidance – Providing Affordable Housing

Sustainable Communities – Building for the Future, ODPM 2003

West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005 – 2021

Housing Strategy Consultation Event 31 March 2005**Delegates**

Cllr Roger Phillips	Leader of the Council
Cllr Marcelle Lloyd-Hayes	Chair of Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Polly Andrews	Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committee
Mark Banks	Herefordshire Council
Chris Benjamin	Gloucestershire Housing Association
Chris Boote	Marches Housing Association
Jackie Boys	Diocese of Hereford
Jamie Burns	Home Point Herefordshire
Dave Carr	Anchor 'Staying Put'
John Cooper	Lifebuoy Charitable Trust
Stuart Davies	Herefordshire Council
Jenny Dereham	West Midlands Business Council
Pat Devereaux	Advance Housing & Support Ltd
Sgt Phil Edwards	West Mercia Police
Lorraine Fewtrell	Herefordshire Housing Ltd
Steve Forrest	West Midlands Regional Assembly
Margy Fowler	Hereford Primary Care Trust
Jan Frances	Herefordshire Women's Aid
Richard Gabb	Herefordshire Council
Ian Gardner	Herefordshire Council
John Gaynor	Herefordshire Council
Jo Hart	Herefordshire Council
Andrew Hasler	Herefordshire Council
Martin Heuter Russell	Herefordshire Council
Dave Hider	SHYPP
Sunita Hopkins	Shelter
Kay Hughes	Herefordshire Council
Claire Huyton	Elgar Housing Association
Julian Kent	Bromford Housing Group
Robert King	Herefordshire Council
Emma Kiteley	West Midlands Regional Assembly
Andrew Larkin	Consultant
Pauline Munday	Stonham Housing Association
PC Charles Naylor	West Mercia Police
Pam Pimpernell	West Mercia Probation Service
Steve Price	South Shropshire District Council
Claire Rawlings	Herefordshire Council
Sandy Rogers	Herefordshire Housing Ltd
Jim Russell	Herefordshire Housing Ltd
Anne Silley	Herefordshire Council
Adrian Soble	Herefordshire Council
John Sutton	Bromford Housing Group
Claire Thomas	West Mercia Housing Group
Jane Thomas	Herefordshire Council
Dorrell Townsend	Stonham Housing Association
John Walker	Shelter
Greg Warwick	Herefordshire Council
Bob Widdowson	CPRE Partnership and Chair of Housing Ambition Group

A full report on the Housing Strategy Consultation Event is available by contacting Richard Gabb, Head of Strategic Housing on 01432 261902

GLOSSARY

AST	Assured Shorthold Tenancy
CSG	Capital Strategy Group
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
EEC	European Economic Community
EST	Energy Savings Trust
GIS	Geographic Information System
HMA	Housing Market Area
HECA	Home Energy Conservation Act
HIA	Home Improvement Agency
HMOs	Houses in Multiple Occupation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LPSA	Local Public Services Agreement
NHS	National Health Service
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SCE	Supported Capital Expenditure
SMC	Strategic Monitoring Committee
SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance
UDP	Unitary Development Plan