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Foreword

Debbie Griffiths
Chair, South Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership

I am pleased to introduce the first South Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership Housing Strategy.

This Housing Strategy has been developed through the LSP framework, it explains how we as a partnership aim to bring about positive changes that will improve the lives of people who live in South Staffordshire. It also shows that the strategy is not just about housing but is recognition of the role housing plays and the contribution it makes to the partnership’s wider agenda.

The housing market has changed dramatically with the impact of the economic downturn and has posed us further challenges. This strategy will enable the partnership to plan to deal with short to medium term market changes, but allows us the flexibility to adapt it to new challenges as they may arise. As such I am confident the partnership has a key role to play in creating thriving villages and prosperous communities to make South Staffordshire a safe and healthy place to live.

The Housing Delivery Group of the South Staffordshire LSP has led on the production of this strategy. It brings together representatives from a range of organisations operating in the District, from the statutory through to the voluntary and community sectors. The Housing Delivery Group will also lead on the monitoring and review of the implementation of the strategy, reporting directly to the LSP Executive.
Introduction

South Staffordshire is the southernmost district in the county of Staffordshire and has a population of approximately 106,000. Of the 27 parishes that make up the District, 9 have a population of less than 1,000 and 7 have a population of between 1,000 and 3,000. There are 10 parishes with populations of 3,000 to 12,000 and the most populated parish, Wombourne, has 14,000 residents.

Much of South Staffordshire lies within the West Midlands Green Belt (80%); the remainder to the north of the Green Belt boundary is defined as 'Open Countryside'. The villages have proved attractive to people prepared to travel to work in the nearby urban areas and there is a balance to be maintained between conserving and enhancing the rural nature of the District and meeting the needs and demands for development.

There is no single dominant settlement and the District can be described as a "community of communities".

The population is fairly affluent and the District scores well in most socio-economic indicators. However, there are significant areas of deprivation, particularly in the north east of South Staffordshire.

The Housing Strategy is the culmination of research, needs identification, options analysis, prioritisation and target setting, all of which are ongoing activities. Some of the activities are carried out by the Council, some by our partners and some by other agencies or groups.

We gather the information we need to produce our strategy through a range of formal and informal mechanisms, always cross checking with other corporate documents, central government guidance, best practice and the strategies and plans of our partners. We double check that we have got it right by consulting and communicating with our residents and our partners, at liaison meetings, forums, face to face and through questionnaires and surveys.

Whilst the Housing Strategy is effectively an appendix to the South Staffordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy, it is in itself an overarching document for a number of Council policies, such as the Homelessness Strategy, the affordable housing policy, the Housing Assistance Policy (private sector grants) and the housing capital programme.
The Purpose of a Housing Strategy

The Government is determined that local authorities must become more strategic in their thinking; developing plans for the longer term to deliver real outcomes, not just outputs. In housing, the agenda has moved on from the requirement to produce a ‘fit for purpose’ housing strategy to having an excellent strategic approach – requiring us to be clear about our direction for housing and how we will enable delivery – and communicate this to the right people, in the right way, to the benefit of our communities.

This strategy provides an overview of the District’s priorities, the current state of the market, the objectives we wish to achieve and our proposed delivery plan.

It is no longer a statutory requirement to have a housing strategy document. However there are requirements which this strategy meets:

- To identify how housing contributes to the wider vision of the local authority and partners (contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy);
- To ensure that this is based on a clear and evidenced approach;
- For partners – to be committed to contributing to and delivering the plans, including the infrastructure required to support housing growth and meeting the needs of our residents.

Providing more and better homes in the District is a key strategic priority for the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership, not only to meet basic housing needs, but also because we believe that if people live in a good home it provides the solid foundation for a better quality of life and improved life chances, whilst maintaining the sustainability of our settlements.

Housing led initiatives can contribute to improving skills, education and employment chances, whilst ill health can be improved and alleviated by living in homes which are adaptable and located in safe and supportive environments. The affordability of homes in South Staffordshire for local people who are earning low and moderate incomes is also a key challenge to be tackled through this Housing Strategy, as is meeting the future housing needs of our rapidly ageing population.

This Housing Strategy has been developed through the LSP framework and will be incorporated alongside the South Staffordshire Sustainable Community Strategy. It explains how, by working in partnership, we will bring about positive changes that will improve the lives of people who live in South Staffordshire. It builds on the successes of previous plans and actions and sets out a new strategic direction for the next three years.

The actions in the Delivery Plan are founded on sound and effective consultation, detailed research, analysis and intelligence about current and emerging needs in the District. The Delivery Plan sets clear targets and milestones for these actions to achieve real benefit.
In 2008 the South Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) published its Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2020. It sets out the long-term vision for the District based on what our residents and stakeholders told us, and what they want South Staffordshire to be like in the future. Our long-term vision is based firmly on local needs and the aspirations of those who live, work and visit the District. Our vision is:

“We will strive to make South Staffordshire a safe and healthy place to live, with prosperous villages and thriving communities, where everyone can develop their abilities to the full, and to pass on to future generations a better environment.”

A great deal of work with residents and stakeholders was undertaken in developing the Sustainable Community Strategy. By understanding these concerns and aspirations, we became aware that a number of housing issues were being raised as concerns, and in particular the need to provide more affordable housing. Based on what the consultation told us we restructured our LSP into 6 delivery groups based around the key priorities identified.
The LSP Housing Delivery Group is made up of representatives from a number of different and wide ranging organisations operating in the District ranging from the statutory through to voluntary and community sector, including:

The LSP Housing Delivery Group is ambitious in its aims and proposes a number of actions to meet the identified priorities. The reasoning behind these priorities and our proposed actions is clearly underpinned by a robust evidence base, which is outlined later in this document. What this evidence indicates is that we face a range of issues of varying degrees of severity, but that no single answer will deal with our issues. This range of issues indicates why we have developed a strong partnership approach to deliver the comprehensive solutions to meet the challenges faced by our residents and stakeholders.

Developing this strategy through the LSP also recognises that the strategy is not just about housing but is recognition of the role high quality, appropriate and affordable housing plays in the LSP’s wider agenda.

We are seeking to contribute to the LSP’s role in improving the health, wellbeing and the economic vibrancy of the District’s residents and the actions identified have been developed and agreed to support the Partnership’s key objectives. They also take account of the priorities identified in the Staffordshire Local Area Agreement and are also heavily influenced by national, regional, sub-regional and local priorities.

Our approach has been further strengthened by the publication in July 2008 of the Government White Paper on ‘Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities’, which envisaged that Sustainable Community Strategies should incorporate Housing and Homelessness Strategies and that they should:

- Fully reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners;
- Reflect a clear and evidenced approach;
- Provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments, including the infrastructure needed to support housing growth.
The profile of housing on the national agenda has increased significantly over recent years and housing has become a very active policy area for the Government with a number of plans, policies and legislation being introduced that have influenced our strategic thinking.

South Staffordshire Council is very clear about its overall strategic priorities and is determined to achieve its desired outcomes. South Staffordshire’s local priorities are:

**Aim 1:** To be a Council which protects and enhances South Staffordshire’s distinctive environment.

**Aim 2:** To be a healthy and safe district in which to live, work and visit.

**Aim 3:** To be a District of thriving and sustainable communities.

**Aim 4:** To be a District recognised for strong community leadership and partnership working.

**Aim 5:** To be a well managed Council.

The delivery of a successful and effective strategic and enabling housing role is fundamental to achieving these priorities and the strategy has been developed in this context. As a result there is strong and universal political and corporate organisational support for this comprehensive Housing Strategy.

A number of supporting and complementary strategies are linked to this strategy. They provide specific details in relation to particular issues and sections of the community. The Policy Framework, overleaf, gives a picture of the wide range of strategies, plans and reviews that have informed the production of this housing strategy.

South Staffordshire Council’s 2003-08 Housing Strategy met the Government’s ‘fit for purpose’ criteria and this strategy builds upon its previous successful interventions and initiatives.

The Housing Strategy supports the Sustainable Community Strategy which aims to make South Staffordshire a safe and healthy place to live, with prosperous villages and thriving communities, where everyone can develop their abilities to the full, and pass on to future generations a better environment.

There are clear linkages between, and in alignment with, the aims of this Housing Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy itself. The actions and undertakings that arise from these will be performance managed, along with the commitments given in the Local Area Agreement, directly through the Local Strategic Partnership and the Housing sub group.
South Staffordshire Policy Framework

National


Regional

Regional Spatial Strategy (2008); Regional Housing Strategy (2005); Regional Economic Strategy (2007); Regional BME Housing Strategy (2005); Regional Homelessness Strategy (2005); Regional Supporting People Strategy (2005).

Sub-Regional


District

South Staffordshire Sustainable Community Strategy (2008); South Staffordshire Housing Market Assessment (2007); Emerging LDF Core Strategy; South Staffordshire Homelessness Strategy (2007); South Staffordshire Housing Assistance Policy (2007); Older Persons Strategy (2005); Climate Change Strategy (2008).

Local

Emerging LDF Core Strategy; Sustainable Community Strategy (2008); Community Safety Strategy (2005); Parish Housing Needs Surveys – Swindon, Brewood & Coven, Essington, Wheaton Aston; Locality Profiles and Locality Delivery Plans; Parish Plans.
**Staffordshire Local Area Agreement**

The Local Area Agreement for Staffordshire is a Government delivery mechanism which identifies local priorities, actions, and corresponding resources that will be committed to achieving a number of agreed outcomes. The LAA is for a three-year period, reviewed annually to account for changes in policy.

The LAA for 2008/11 is about increasing Staffordshire residents quality of life by improving local services and increasing economic prosperity. It is a three year agreement comprising priorities which have been agreed by local partners across Staffordshire and by central Government.

Across Staffordshire, partners have come together under the umbrella of the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership (SSP) to develop and negotiate the LAA. The SSP also has the responsibility for developing and agreeing the Sustainable Community Strategy for the County, while at a local level our District partners have developed a District level Sustainable Community Strategy. The strategy sets the long term vision for the area – the District Strategy sets the long term vision for South Staffordshire - while the County Strategy sets out the long term vision for Staffordshire.

This new LAA is rooted in the priorities of these Sustainable Community Strategies, and translates these priorities into targets which will in turn secure the improvements in service delivery and quality of life our local people want to see.

In some cases individual districts may have different priorities and there may be different ways of achieving the LAA outcomes. It has been generally agreed that detailed district delivery arrangements are to be dealt with by the district Local Strategic Partnerships and indeed South Staffordshire Council agreed some time ago that the Local Strategic Partnership for South Staffordshire would be our local LAA Delivery Board. The District LSP will carry out LAA functions within the District but will also be responsible for other aspects of partnership working, locally agreed, that fall outside LSP auspices. Within South Staffordshire we have developed a locality model which has been implemented to support this and is expanded upon later in the strategy. Locality delivery plans are currently being drawn up which focus on the five agreed areas and funding will be identified across the LSP to ensure priorities can be delivered.

To deliver our LAA priorities, 35 indicators have been chosen from the National Indicator set of 198 against which performance will be measured. The Housing Strategy cross cuts many of the 35 indicators but the ones most specific to this strategy and are either delivered or contribute to delivery through the Housing Delivery Plan are:

- **NI 32:** Repeat incidents of domestic violence
- **NI 136:** People supported to live independently through social services (all adults)
- **NI 154:** Net additional homes provided
- **NI 155:** Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
- **NI 156:** Number of households living in temporary accommodation
- **NI 186:** Per capita CO₂ emissions in LA area

South Staffordshire Council provides the County delivery leads for both NI 155 and NI 156, both of which are key indicators in the delivery plan for this strategy and both of whom are represented on the Housing Group, one being the Chair, who also sits on the LSP Executive.
A ‘Community of Communities’ is how South Staffordshire’s Sustainable Community Strategy describes the special nature of the District. The District’s twenty-seven parishes, which are made up of villages and small hamlets define the District’s communities.

However, we have found that the partnership’s landscape within the District has become increasingly complex. There was also concern that there was a plethora of groups, advisory boards and community networks being developed by partners to deliver their day-to-day work. We recognised that this could lead to potential duplication, confusion and limited buy-in from elected members, partners and the community.

Thus, in early 2007 the Council’s Executive, along with the Strategic Management Team at the Council, identified a need to review the delivery infrastructure to enable us to progress ways of working more effectively with our partners and to also maximise resources.

As a result, South Staffordshire Council took the lead role in co-ordinating a programme of work to tackle the issues identified above, by working closer together with its LSP partners and elected members. Officers linked with the IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency) and assisted the partnership to develop a locality-working model for the District. Following focused workshops and a recognition of what could and could not be achieved with existing delivery mechanisms in place, an agreed locality-working model was introduced.

Figure 4 (Right) illustrates the locality model for South Staffordshire.
The locality model was introduced with the following over-arching aims:

- Improve communication;
- Safeguard existing Parish boundaries;
- Engage Elected Members across all three tiers of local government;
- Develop local priorities that are intelligence led;
- Develop integrated service delivery through a District wide locality approach utilising the LSP infrastructure.

Over the last twelve months locality working has grown and developed. As a result four work strands have naturally emerged as a result of the Council’s leadership role.

1) Consultation

In order to embed a culture of engagement and empowerment within the five localities, it was important to consider information provision, consultation and involvement opportunities in each locality.

2) Member Forums

Member forums have been developed in order to engage Members at all three tiers (County, District and Parish) and to enable officers to communicate key and emerging issues and share key data relevant to their locality.

3) Collection of data

A key element of locality working is the collection of data, which allows us to build up intelligence within the individual localities and helps support the development of future priorities. All data about the District, where possible, is now broken down to locality level.

4) Shared Services

The success of the locality working concept to date is evidenced by the use of shared budgeting of projects and initiatives, utilising existing funds for specific projects.

Fully resourced Locality Delivery Plans were launched in April 2009, in each of the five localities, focusing on tackling local issues that have been raised during the locality Member forums and community consultation priority challenge exercises. These will be funded through a range of funding sources including the introduction of participatory budgets for each locality, following a decision by the Council’s Executive to utilise locality working to embed this new approach. Housing priorities feature in each of the 5 localities based on the differing priorities identified within each locality.
Demography is a key influence on the requirements for market and affordable housing, and can help to understand the current level of demand and identify the key housing demand pressures within South Staffordshire.

The population of South Staffordshire was 106,200 at the 2006 mid-year estimate, which account for less than 2% of the West Midlands population. The population of South Staffordshire has grown at a rate of 0.3% since 2001. The population is projected to further increase by approximately 3.5% over the period 2006-2026.

South Staffordshire has an increasingly ageing population, according to the ONS 2006 mid-year estimate 48% of the population were aged 45 years and over. 31,400 people were aged 45-64 and 19,600 people were aged 65 years and over, an increase of 15% during 2001-2006.

According to population projections, the over 65’s are going to increase massively over the 20 year period 2006-26, as can be seen in Figure 5. The 65-79 age group will increase by nearly 3,300 people, an increase of 34%, whilst the 80+ age group is set to increase by 108% (3,400 people). A 2008 report by the Audit Commission ‘Don’t stop me now – Preparing for an ageing population’, highlights that between 2009 – 2019 South Staffordshire will have the biggest increase in the proportion of people aged over 50 in England. The population increases in older age groups will have significant implications for housing, support, care and health services operating in the District.

According to the 2006 mid year estimate from ONS there are just over 43,000 households in South Staffordshire. The vast majority of households are either couples with children (34%) or couples without children (32%). Whilst, a quarter of households in the District are single person households, with the remainder being lone parent households (5%) and other multi person households (4%).

The average household size in the District is 2.48, which is projected to decrease, with the number of single person households and couples without children households projected to increase by 4,700 and 2,000 respectively. Meanwhile couples with children households are projected to decrease by 3,400 during the period 2006-2026.
The importance of an up to date research base is vital and therefore we look at the most recent information available to us in order to provide a picture of the housing market in the District. Trends in homelessness and other such indicators of supply and demand of accommodation will also be examined.

Tenure and Type

South Staffordshire has a significantly larger proportion of owner occupied dwellings than regional and national averages, with 79.1% of dwellings under owner occupied tenure as opposed to 68.9% and 68.1% for the West Midlands and England respectively.

As a result of the larger proportion of owner occupied dwellings, South Staffordshire has smaller proportions of social rented and private rented dwellings. Social rented stock accounts for nearly 14% of the total dwelling stock as compared with approximately 20% for both regional and national social stock levels.

The majority of property in South Staffordshire is either detached or semi-detached. Detached properties account for 39.5% of stock, considerably higher than regional (24.1%) and national (22.6%) proportions. Semi-detached properties account for a further 40.7% of the District’s stock, again higher than both regional and national levels.

Due to over 80% of the stock being either detached or semi-detached, South Staffordshire has smaller numbers of flats and terraced properties. Terraced properties account for 10.4% of the stock, which is less than half the share regionally (23.8%) and nationally (25.9%). The proportion of flats is also around half the amount nationally and regionally at just 7.6% of the District’s total stock.

Whilst we recognise that in the current economic climate house prices are decreasing it is not solving the affordability problems that affect many people in South Staffordshire, as house prices are still well out of reach of many people on low to medium level income. Due to the economic recession there has been significant reluctance and a lack of ability by banks to lend credit and this has affected the many people on lower incomes and first time buyers who cannot afford to purchase on the open market in the District, further increasing the need to increase the provision of affordable housing.
House Prices

During the period 2002-2008 South Staffordshire experienced an overall house price increase of 59%, this is higher than both the national increase of 31% and the regional increase of 39%.

To put the District’s house prices into context, the average house price is considerably higher than neighbouring authorities, as well as the regional and national averages (see Table 1 below).

| South Staffordshire | £215,100 |
| Stafford           | £188,046 |
| Dudley             | £152,981 |
| Cannock            | £146,077 |
| Walsall            | £149,488 |
| Wolverhampton      | £135,093 |
| West Midlands      | £179,761 |
| UK                | £224,064 |

Table 1 – Regional Average House Prices. Source: RealDemand, June 2009.

South Staffordshire is an area of high demand for owner occupied housing, both from local people and from the pressure of in-migration. However, as we have seen from the above table, house prices are higher than average compared to neighbouring authorities, the West Midlands and the UK, resulting in many local people on low and average incomes being unable to afford to purchase homes.

When analysing the local market using an online Housing Market Intelligence System, it reveals:

- The average house price for South Staffordshire, as at October 2009, was £215,100;
- The average price for a detached house stood at £277,951, whilst a semi-detached house cost £163,200 on average;
- Terrace properties cost on average £152,052 and flats cost £103,831;
- Lower quartile property prices average £140,000.

Figure 8 (Right) illustrates the level of house prices across the District at ward level. The higher prices can be found in the south of the District in the wards of Kinver, Trosull & Seisdon, Himley & Swindon and Wombourne North & Lower Penn; and in the North West wards of Brewood and Coven and Wheaton Aston, Bishopwood and Lapley. High house prices are also experienced in Central and North sub-areas.

The cheapest house prices can be found in the North East area in the wards of Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley, Featherstone and Huntington and also in parts of the Central area such as Perton.

Source: Hometrack
Affordability

In the period between 2001-2008 the average house price has more than doubled. Table 2 shows the average house price for 2001-2008. There has been a steady increase year upon year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average (£)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>111,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>140,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>163,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>180,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>192,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>205,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>221,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>223,400</td>
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Table 2 – Average House Price 2001-2008

According to the 2008 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, the average annual income of residents in the District stood at £29,052. This is slightly above the average in West Midlands, of £27,710. In England, however, the average is higher at £32,203 per annum.

House prices were increasing at faster rates than local incomes; subsequently the affordability of buying a home in the District has become a major problem.

Using the current average house price and average annual income it can be seen that the average house price in the District costs nearly 8 times the average annual income, which in the present economic climate is unaffordable for many people, as indeed it was prior to the recession.

Affordability can be measured using a ratio of lower quartile property price against the lower quartile income figure. The affordability ratio for South Staffordshire is 7.7, whereby a lower quartile priced property would cost over seven times the average lower quartile annual income. Figure 9 illustrates the affordability ratio at ward level for the District. It follows a similar geographic pattern to that of property price, as would be expected, as generally the higher the property price the less affordable it will be.

The less affordable parts of the District tend to be in the Southern wards of Himley and Swindon, Trysull and Seisdon and Wombourne North and Lower Penn. Penkridge West and Brewood and Coven also experience high levels of unaffordability. The most affordable parts of the District generally exist in the areas with lower house prices, these being in the North East in the wards of Cheslyn Hay and Great Wyrley, Essington and the Central wards of Perton.

Source: Hometrack
Housing Needs

In 2007 South Staffordshire Council commissioned David Couttie Associates to carry out a Housing Market Assessment. The main findings of the assessment indicate:

- The total annual level of outstanding affordable need is 737 units, after allowing for current re-let supply;
- The social rented stock in the District is 14.4% of the stock total which is below the national average and provides 330 units annually from the flow of the existing affordable stock;
- Based on the average new unit supply of around 30 units over the 3 years to 2007, this level of annual need is nearly 25 times the number of units able to be provided from new delivery and conversions resulting in growing levels of unmet need each year;
- There are deficits in all unit sizes from 1 bed to 4+ bed. The largest shortfalls being in 2 bed accommodation across all areas;
- The North East had the largest shortfalls in smaller sized accommodation of 1 and 2 beds, whilst the Central area had the biggest shortfalls in larger 3 and 4+ bed accommodation;
- In total, a combined requirement for sheltered accommodation for older people currently living in the District (130 households) and those who may in-migrate to be near their family (1,046 households) is 1,176 units, 714 in the affordable sector and 462 in the private sector;
- A need for 599 units of extra care accommodation over the next three years, wholly from elderly relatives moving into South Staffordshire;
- Market housing requirements follow the general pattern of affordable need, with shortfalls in smaller 1 and 2 bed accommodation and surpluses in larger 3 and 4 bed properties.

The Sub-regional Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) undertaken by Ecotec in 2008 also produced similar findings to the local HMA. Although the SHMA used a different methodology to the local HMA approach, the general thrust of its findings were the same:

- A large annual shortfall 547 units of affordable housing across the District, and whereby supply can only currently meet 40% of the present housing need;
- Shortages in smaller sized units of 1 and 2 bed flats were found to be most severe, along with a significant shortage of 3 bed houses;
- With regard to market housing, there is an under supply of cheaper flats and houses under £150,000, i.e. smaller 1 and 2 bed properties.

Both studies made recommendations as to how to balance the housing market and try to meet need in the District. They agree that there is huge unmet need for more affordable housing, a mix of house types in both market and social sectors is needed, particularly to meet the needs for smaller units from new and existing households, whilst addressing stock imbalance and the impact of demographic change as a result of increasing elderly populations and decreases in the average household size.

The studies are available at www.sstaffs.gov.uk/housing

Whilst an over supply of flats and houses at the top end of the market exists i.e. larger more expensive properties.
The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 revision sets out the target for housing completions in South Staffordshire during the period 2006-26 as 3,500 units, the equivalent of 175 units per annum. This figure falls short of the level of affordable housing need identified in the local and sub-regional HMA’s, at 737 and 547 respectively. The two HMA’s therefore, provide evidence for a robust planning policy approach to delivering affordable housing if there is to be any chance of meeting the identified housing need in South Staffordshire. The partnership will also be investigating other options for delivering affordable housing in addition to using the planning system as part of the delivery plan for the Housing Group.

We have also started to look into housing needs at a more local level. The Council, along with South Staffordshire Housing Association, has commissioned a Rural Housing Enabler to help identify local need and potentially deliver small rural affordable housing schemes in Parish localities. Thus far, four Parish housing needs surveys have been produced: Swindon, Brewood & Coven, Essington and Wheaton Aston, with surveys planned in a number of other Parishes. The findings of the surveys accurately assess the level of need specifically in the Parish locality. Where need is identified, Parish Councils then have the opportunity to help develop affordable rural housing in their Parish in partnership with the District Council, Housing Associations and Rural Housing Enabler.

We recognise that the current economic crisis will only bring a further increase in demand for affordable housing. Recent reports by the National Housing Federation revealed that throughout England more than 200,000 households are projected to join waiting lists for social housing by 2011, as the recession fuels demand – taking the overall number to a record high of around two million. The last recession in the early 1990s saw waiting lists for social housing rise sharply as unemployment and repossession rates increased. However, with forecasts indicating the current downturn could be deeper and more prolonged, the growth in demand for affordable housing could increase even more rapidly. With this in mind, the partnership will continue to monitor the situation and look to maximise the housing options available to ensure all residents in South Staffordshire have access to good quality homes.
Following a “Housing Options” approach being adopted when dealing with households who may become, or who are homeless, the number of households to whom this authority has a statutory duty to assist under the homelessness legislation has steadily decreased as illustrated in the graph below.

Although there has been a significant decrease, the main reasons for homelessness remain constant – relationship breakdown, family and friends unable to accommodate and ending of tenancies in the private rented sector.

There have also been a significant number of households prevented from becoming homeless as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>2008/09</td>
<td>47</td>
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This has been achieved by development of a homelessness prevention toolkit which includes a 'Sanctuary' type scheme enabling victims of domestic violence to remain in their own homes in a safe and secure environment; restructuring of the front line team to take a more proactive approach to resolving issues before they reach crisis point; finding appropriate settled housing solutions to prevent future homelessness and development of a homelessness prevention fund.

The current Homelessness Strategy for South Staffordshire recognises that preventing and dealing with homelessness cannot be dealt with in isolation and a more holistic approach is needed to address a client’s complex needs. This is achieved by working with appropriate partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. The development of Local Area Agreements will provide greater opportunities to build on existing partnership arrangements to address the needs of vulnerable client groups.

Figure 10 – Number of households accepted as unintentionally homeless, 2004/05-2008/09.
Providing a good quality housing advice service available across the South Staffordshire area is paramount to ensuring that homelessness continues to remain at its present levels. To achieve this it is proposed to:

- Develop a range of appropriate services in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies, to address the needs of homeless or potentially homeless young people to include care leavers;
- Continue to support victims of domestic violence through the South Staffordshire Stay Safe Scheme;
- Further develop links with existing services, to improve the health and wellbeing of homeless households, which will help to prevent repeat homelessness;
- Further develop appropriate services for vulnerable and socially excluded groups, i.e. those with mental health issues, substance misuse, domestic violence etc.;
- Develop appropriate emergency accommodation for those households who are homeless, i.e. supported housing for young people, domestic violence refuges and good quality family accommodation;
- Further develop the homelessness prevention toolkit to offer more choice to potentially homeless households.

**Homelessness and the Recession**

To help minimise the numbers of households becoming homeless due to the current economic climate a range of initiatives have been put into place as follows:

- A homelessness prevention fund offering interest free loans to qualifying households, who are in danger of losing their home.
- A Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme enabling households with limited income to access properties in the private rented sector.
- Participation in Central Government’s Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

These measures, together with the proactive approach taken by the Housing Options Team to prevent homelessness, have resulted in the numbers of households who have been accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need being kept to a minimum during the past 15 months. The same period has seen an increase in the number of clients given general housing advice as shown in the table below.

**Figure 11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quarter 1</td>
<td>Quarter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless Households</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Advice Interviews</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>97</td>
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</tbody>
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The situation will be closely monitored over the coming months and action taken as appropriate to ensure that homelessness is kept to a minimum.
Housing Conditions

The numbers of unfit properties are usually assessed by undertaking a Stock Condition Survey. The most recent full Private Sector Stock Condition Survey carried out within South Staffordshire was in 1997, and this was updated in a desktop study in 2006.

Key points from the 2006 update survey were that 28% of the private sector stock was deemed "non-decent" with 2% of the private stock seen as “unfit” which equates to 871 properties across the District and there were 1,738 vulnerable occupants living in non-decent private sector dwellings.

The graph below presents unfit dwellings as a proportion of the overall stock for 2001 and 2006. South Staffordshire has the lowest proportion of unfit dwellings in 2006 across all the benchmark areas. Across all areas there has been a fall in the proportion of unfit stock, and in South Staffordshire the proportion described as unfit has halved.

In 2006 the Building Research Establishment was commissioned by the Regional Housing Board to carry out a desk-top exercise to provide information on the state of the housing stock in the West Midlands and the number of vulnerable occupants. The main findings included:

- 28% of all private sector dwellings are non-decent, below the regional average of 37%. Within South Staffordshire the highest proportion of non-decent private sector properties of all private sector dwellings are found in Trysull and Seisdon (44%) and the lowest in Perton Lakeside (13%);
- 15% of total private sector stock is occupied by a vulnerable person, below the regional average of 28%. Within South Staffordshire the highest proportion of vulnerable private sector dwellings are found in Trysull and Seisdon (44%) and the lowest in Perton Lakeside (13%);
- 69% of vulnerable private sector households now living in decent homes. Within South Staffordshire, Perton East and Perton Lakeside had 81% of vulnerable households in decent standard housing;
- 5% of the total private sector stock is non-decent and vulnerable occupied, below the regional average of 11%. Within South Staffordshire the highest proportion non decent and vulnerable occupied was found in Bilbrook (9%), the lowest found in Perton East (1%);
- 8% of all private sector households are considered to live in fuel poverty, below the regional average of 10%. Within South Staffordshire, Trysull and Seisdon had 15% of its private sector households living in fuel poverty, whilst Cheslyn Hay South and Wombourne South West had just 5%.

Part of the Government’s Decent Home Standard sets out a trajectory for delivery that includes targets up to 2020, expressed as the proportion of vulnerable households in the private sector living in decent homes. The relevant targets are 65% by 2006, 70% by 2010 and 75% by 2020.

South Staffordshire achieved the 2006 target and has already exceeded the 2010 target, with 72.4% of vulnerable private sector households now living in decent homes as of March 2009.
In the public sector stock, South Staffordshire also fares well for achieving the Decent Homes Standard. According to the Regulatory and Statistical Returns Survey 2008, as at March 2008 there were only 48 properties which failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard, which equates to approximately 0.7% of the total public sector stock in the District. RSL’s have confirmed that they expect the Decent Homes Standard to be met with ease for all their stock in the District.

Whilst stock condition is generally good in the District and considerable resources have gone into achieving this, we recognise that there are still hotspots and issues that will need addressing in the future to continuously improve the stock and prevent deterioration in standards. It has been well documented that we have an increasingly ageing population which will present potential issues for those who are ‘asset rich but cash poor’ and are unable to maintain their homes in the future. Clearly there will also be a need to support people to remain in their own homes, and as more of the population reach old age there will be significant implications for adapting properties to meet occupants needs to allow people to stay in their home.

There is also a recognition that housing conditions may deteriorate in the recession as the lack of credit and rising unemployment will result in residents having less income to spend on home improvements. Again, we will need to ensure that our evidence base is robust and information up to date so that we can continue to monitor the current situation. The partners in the Housing Group can then look at how best to respond and at the resources available to enable us to respond.
Private Rented Sector

According to the 2001 Census data, the proportion of private rented stock was just 4.4%, which is significantly lower than the West Midlands (6.4%) and England (8.8%). More precise figures about the number and location of privately rented homes in the District are difficult to obtain but we will carry out more research and work more closely with the Private Landlords’ Forum to secure better intelligence to inform future policy development. The private rented sector meets a variety of housing needs that are not readily satisfied by other tenures. Our work with private landlords will therefore be aimed at encouraging growth and maintaining property standards in this sector.

The recently introduced Private Landlords’ Accreditation Scheme will help to ensure that private rented accommodation meets a good minimum standard of management and stock condition. The scheme will actively encourage willing landlords to ensure that privately rented accommodation is safe for tenants and their families.

The Council has also recently developed a rent deposit guarantee scheme in April 2009. Under the scheme the Council will provide a written guarantee to the landlord for the value of the deposit, payable upon completion of the tenancy if required. It is believed that the scheme will allow a number of people that previously may have spent a lengthy period of time on the housing register to obtain their own home. It is often the case that the primary reason why people wish to rent privately but cannot, is because they are unable to afford the required deposit and in the current recession this situation is likely to worsen still. The scheme will directly assist these groups of people.

We will work with private sector landlords to explore ways in which vacant homes may be brought into use at affordable rent levels. We will work co-operatively with landlord representatives to understand better the workings of the private rented sector.
Empty Homes

Empty properties are a wasted resource and are costly to individuals, communities and organisations. There are not only financial costs arising from empty properties, but costs to people who are waiting to be housed and costs to the environment.

Figures show that in 2008/09 there were 486 empty homes in South Staffordshire, of which 317 were empty for six months or longer. This has been reduced significantly from 5 years ago when in 2003/04 there were 869 empty homes in total and 463 long term empties.

The significant drop in empty properties over this period can be attributed to a number of factors, such as:

- For the financial year 2004/05 the Council ended the Council Tax discount on empty properties. This led to a decrease of over 300 properties in the following year;
- Under the Housing Act 2004 the Government announced its intention to introduce Empty Dwelling Management Orders to add to the Council’s enforcement options. This has since been widely published in the media and has made owners think twice about leaving their property empty;
- The emergence of the Council’s first Empty Property Strategy, which covers the period 2006-2011 set out the Council’s stance on empty properties and the actions it would take;
- The buoyant housing market meant that owners were more inclined to sell or rent as the market was reaching its height;
- Working with RSL partners to bring a number of empty properties each year back into use. The Council has provided capital grants to help bring empty properties back into use whilst simultaneously increasing the provision of affordable homes.

The Council actively pursues owners of empty homes to bring their property back into use. The Council uses a local indicator to continue to monitor the number of empty properties brought back into use, after the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI64) was no longer required to be monitored. The Council recognises that the current economic downturn may lead to increases in the numbers of empty homes and will continue to monitor the market and act accordingly to ensure that homes are not being wasted in this way.
Climate Change

Around a quarter of the UK’s current carbon emissions (around 150 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year) arise from the way we heat, light and run our homes. Yet we need more homes, so it is imperative that they are built in a way that minimises carbon emissions. We need more sustainable homes as well as more affordable homes. As a result, Central Government has set targets for all new homes to emit less carbon; 25% less by 2010, 44% less by 2013 and for all new homes to be zero carbon by 2016.

We also need to take action on existing homes given that houses already built now will represent two thirds of the housing stock in 2050. The Government already has a strong programme to reduce emissions through promoting energy efficiency. The total investment by the Government and energy companies in energy efficiency in the existing housing stock now is over £1 billion per year. The introduction of Energy Performance Certificates will provide detailed information for home buyers about the energy performance of their homes.

South Staffordshire Council’s Climate Change Strategy produced in 2008 sets out how it intends to address climate change locally for the benefit of South Staffordshire and its residents.

The Council is continuing to work with the Energy Savings Trust and the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre to maximise the impact of energy efficiency initiatives and the uptake of energy efficiency grants.

The Council works with its development partners to ensure all new affordable homes are built to the latest development standards set by the Homes and Communities Agency, at present Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3, to ensure homes are secure, warm and energy efficient.

An example of our work on climate change is the partnership between South Staffordshire Council and South Staffordshire Housing Association to develop an innovative project to deliver two eco-homes. The two unit scheme in Penkridge aims to compare the green credentials of a brand new house against that of a refurbished house. Energy ratings, performance and fuel bills will be measured and compared to see whether in the future we can provide people with new and refurbished eco-homes that are super-efficient to run.

In 2008 the Council undertook a Thermal Imaging Survey which involved aerial thermal photographs being taken of every domestic and residential property in the District and overlaid onto Ordnance Survey maps. This enables the Council and partners to see how energy efficient every building in the District is. The Survey was offered to RSL’s to identify any issues they may have in their own stock and work is currently ongoing to match benefit claimants and properties that have low levels of energy efficiency. This will enable us to target those households for potential grants and advice and reduce fuel poverty. This work also has clear implications for improving the health of our most vulnerable households by making their homes warmer whilst costing them less in the process.

South Staffordshire LSP Housing Strategy 2009-12
Ensuring that a variety of housing options are available for our more vulnerable residents is one of the key priorities for the Housing Theme Group of the LSP. Whether this is by adapting residents’ existing homes, developing new schemes or by ensuring adequate support is provided to enable residents to stay in their current homes, a number of solutions continue to be developed by a range of partners.

As the section on ‘Population and Demographics’ has indicated, South Staffordshire will be experiencing a rapidly ageing population which will provide significant strategic housing, care, support and health challenges for agencies operating in the District. As such, catering for the ageing population is a key priority area for the LSP and a range of options have and are being developed to meet these challenges. In recent years this has included increases in funding to provide more Disabled Facilities Grants, the development of new build bungalows and the development of Extra Care facilities in the District.

Staffordshire County Council is also working on producing an evidence base for the requirement of Extra Care accommodation in Staffordshire. The report entitled ‘Older Peoples Extra Care Needs Analysis Evidence Base (aged over 65)’ provides robust information which will assist in predicting the numbers, age and health profiles of Staffordshire residents who may require a range of Extra Care services in the future. Headline figures show that in South Staffordshire it is projected that by 2025 there will be a need for 590 Extra Care bed spaces, 69 by 2010, 243 by 2015 and 416 by 2020. We will be continuing to work closely with the County Council to develop an Extra Care Strategy for Staffordshire to ensure we are directing our efforts and resources to where they are most needed.

However, we are aware that our ageing population is not the only group in South Staffordshire that will require the Partnership to focus its attentions on. As such we have developed a range of actions around 3 key themes, which will also include client groups such as people with learning difficulties and people with mental health issues:

- Increasing community based housing options
- Increasing community based care and support options
- Improving service delivery

These themes were developed in the County Council’s Independent Living Strategy and the local delivery plan for that strategy has been incorporated into the delivery plan for this strategy to ensure there is an integrated approach to delivering the best possible outcomes. South Staffordshire is cited by the County Council as having the most advanced approach to this priority amongst the Staffordshire Authorities for delivering this work through its LSP.

Developing a robust evidence base is key to determining priorities and subsequent action plans for a wide range of client groups and work has recently been completed on a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This is in addition to the work on Extra Care needs, continuing needs assessments currently being undertaken as part of the Supporting People Strategy refresh, the Housing Market Assessments, local pieces of work around needs analysis, for example an accommodation based service for victims of domestic violence, and assessing the housing needs of people with learning disabilities.

The Staffordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, produced by North and South Staffordshire PCT and Staffordshire County Council, provides a multi-agency view of ‘need’ across the District. It identifies ‘the big picture’ relating to health and wellbeing needs and inequalities of the local population. The study has provided a useful socio-economic analysis as well as identifying priorities for future investment to inform commissioning decisions. As such it will be an important tool in developing our approach for meeting the housing, care, support and health needs of our residents.
Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Needs

According to the 2001 Census the majority ethnic group in South Staffordshire was ‘white’, accounting for approximately 98% of the population. This proportion is above that of the proportion in Staffordshire (97.6%) and well above the West Midlands (80.7%) and England (90.9%).

The proportion of BME households is made up of several different minority groups. The biggest minority group present in the District is the Indian cohort followed by mixed ethnic groups, at 0.7% and 0.6% respectively. The 2007 HMA collected some data on the housing needs of BME households but the statistical validity of this data is not sufficient enough to be considered reliable. The data from the 2007 HMA showed:

- 87.8% of BME households lived in owner occupied property, 7.4% rented Housing Association accommodation, 3.5% had accommodation tied to their employment and 1.3% rented privately;
- The majority lived in detached accommodation (62.8%) and semi-detached (24.9%). 70.4% of respondents living in detached accommodation had 4 bedrooms. 62.6% of those in semi-detached houses had 3-bedrooms.

Whilst recognising that at present the various BME communities only make up a small proportion of the total population, and that no specific housing issues have been identified, we also recognise that this does not mean that no issues exist. All partners will continue to work together to highlight any issues that require attention. An example of this partnership approach is the development of an innovative short term project by Staffordshire Women’s Aid and supported by the Council for Supporting People funding. The project will deliver a specialist domestic violence service to meet the very specific needs of BME communities in southern Staffordshire.

The South Staffordshire LSP, in conjunction with Stafford and Cannock Chase LSPs and Staffordshire Police Chase Division, has applied for Migration Impact Funds money from the Government Office West Midlands. If the bid is successful we are hoping that the project will help us to better understand and embrace the migrant communities within the wider communities of Southern Staffordshire, and to develop services suitable to ensure that Education, Health, Transportation, Personal Safety and Community Safety are fit and able to serve those communities effectively. This would clearly enable the partnership, including the members of the Housing Group to be able to respond more appropriately in the future.

A 2007 report entitled 'Migrant Workers in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent' produced by Staffordshire County Council presents an account of the number of migrant workers, as individuals who have registered to work, in each of the local authority areas in Staffordshire.

Since May 2004, members of the Accession 8 countries who wish to take up employment in the UK are required to register with the Worker Registration Scheme. Between May 2004 and September 2006 there were 226 applicants registered to the Worker Registration Scheme as being employed within South Staffordshire, this accounts for just 4% of registered migrants in all Staffordshire authorities.

The highest proportion of registered migrants in South Staffordshire were Polish, accounting for 55% of applicants within the District. Lithuanian workers account for 25% of the total and Latvian 10%. Of the applicants to the Worker Registration Scheme in South Staffordshire, 41% were aged 18-24, 45% aged 25-34, 8% aged 35-44 and the remaining 6% were aged 45+. Agriculture is the largest employer of migrant workers in South Staffordshire by a considerable amount, employing 42% of registered migrants.
An understanding of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation issues is important to make planned provision and avoid the associated problems of ad hoc or unauthorised provision. It is the Department of Communities and Local Government’s aim that a comprehensive strategic approach to Gypsy & Traveller pitch provision will greatly strengthen the ability of local authorities to respond quickly and firmly to inappropriate unauthorised developments and encampments.


In total there are 32 recommendations in the study but the key issue for South Staffordshire is potential future pitch requirements. These pitch requirements have been based on a ‘need where it arises’ basis and as South Staffordshire already has the highest level of pitch provision in the sub-region, it has also been recommended we receive the largest pitch allocation for the 2007 – 2026 period. The study found South Staffordshire currently had 88 authorised residential pitches and there was an additional need for 97 residential pitches during 2007-2026, 45 of which to be provided between 2007-12.

The housing needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities, including Travelling Showpeople, will be addressed in the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, although an interim policy is currently being produced to address the policy deficit whilst we await the exact pitch requirements to be confirmed through the RSS. The location of any new sites will be determined through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

The GTAA study is available at www.sstaffs.gov.uk/housing
LSP Theme Groups – Cross Cutting Agendas

All of the LSP Theme groups have connections to the wider housing agenda and vice versa. Some of these themes are cross cutting, and as such will cut across the work of various LSP sub partnerships. All LSP themes contribute to enhancing the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the residents of South Staffordshire.

Economic Vibrancy

One of the objectives of the Economic Vibrancy theme group is to create a network of high quality sustainable rural communities within South Staffordshire that attracts and retains a diverse and thriving workforce, encourages enterprise and is located within a high quality environment. Clearly a good quality, affordable and appropriate housing offer has a key role to play in maintaining and improving the sustainability of our communities.

Unfortunately some areas with high concentrations of social housing also suffer from high levels of worklessness. The Council’s lead on Worklessness is also the Chair of the LSP Housing Group and works within the Housing Strategy and Regeneration team and thus offers a clear link to tackle these issues in a co-ordinated role.

In recognition of the links between economic development and housing the District Council is planning to re-organise its Strategic Services functions to deliver both services in the same team to ensure a co-ordinated approach to service delivery.

Health and Wellbeing

The link between poor housing or a lack of housing and poor physical and mental health is well documented. The LSP has identified improved health and wellbeing amongst the community as a key area to focus on and as such good quality affordable housing meeting the needs of all sections of our community is a key element in delivering this. This has been recognised in the development of the Council’s emerging Health Strategy, where the role housing plays has been recognised as one of the key determinants in improving the health of our residents.

The Health and Wellbeing Group also recognises the increase in population in the older age groups and the increasing pressure upon housing and support related services. The Group aims to develop an integrated approach to supporting older people to stay healthy and remain independent. Good housing and support services are central to achieving this priority and the delivery of Extra Care is a good example of an agenda that cuts across both theme groups.

Children and Young People

The Locality Board for Children and Young People has a number of objectives centred around being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving and making a positive contribution. As previously mentioned, good housing goes hand in hand with good health and wellbeing and conversely it is also well documented that a lack of housing or settled housing, poor quality housing and overcrowding can have a negative impact on a child’s wellbeing and educational attainment. Good quality well designed housing, with open spaces and amenities for children and young people will have a significant positive impact upon their lives.

The Council is working proactively with partners, not just in South Staffordshire, to improve the housing options and prevent homelessness for young people. This has involved a countywide protocol on working with young people to prevent homelessness and working with Staffordshire County Council on the development of a Younger Person’s Housing Strategy. More locally we have recently introduced a mediation service that addresses the needs of young people within the District who are in danger of being
made homeless by family and friends. The Council is also working with Bromford Support with a view to extending the successful Perton Young Person’s Scheme to provide support to more young homeless households.

**Environmental Quality**

South Staffordshire has a diverse and distinctive environment, which is highly valued by residents and visitors. In addition 80% of the District is in the Green Belt with the remainder in open countryside, and preserving this environment is a key priority for the LSP.

The Housing agenda has an important role to play in achieving sustainable development in the District by ensuring high quality sustainable development that addresses the implications of climate change and the reduction of CO2 emissions, encouraging renewable energy and the promotion of energy efficiency. Good examples of this are the Thermal Imaging Survey and the Eco-homes project in Penkridge.

New housing development also has a key role in maintaining the historic character of our villages through sympathetic and well designed homes. A good example of this is the work currently ongoing to develop a rural exceptions site in Swindon. Considerable work has been undertaken by the District and Parish Council and South Staffordshire Housing Association and their architects, to design a scheme that respects the local vernacular to preserve and enhance the local distinctiveness of the village core.

**Community Safety**

Priorities of the Community Safety Partnership include road safety, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse and domestic violence. Through the building of mixed and sustainable communities these issues can hopefully be mitigated.

Considerable progress has been made in recent years in the steps we have taken as a Partnership to develop responses to domestic violence. Housing related responses have included the development of a ‘Stay Safe’ Scheme and attracting Supporting People funding to provide floating support to victims of domestic violence. We are working in partnership with Stafford Borough Council’s Community Safety Partnership to identify and address the issues around domestic violence within the district. The post of Domestic Violence Coordinator is based within the Domestic Abuse Partnership in Stafford and is jointly funded by Stafford’s Community Safety Partnership and this Council.

Dealing with anti-social behaviour is a key priority within the Sustainable Community Strategy and clearly housing organisations have an important role to play in this agenda. The RESPECT campaign is high on all RSL’s agendas but specifically South Staffordshire Housing Association is working with high schools in the District on implementing the campaign with local young people.
Local Development Framework

A Local Development Framework (LDF) is being prepared to help shape a sustainable future for South Staffordshire. It replaces the existing Local Plan and will set out the spatial planning strategy for the District up to 2026. At the heart of the LDF is the Core Strategy which will set out the long term vision, objectives and planning policies to deliver the vision and secure a sustainable future for the District.

The Core Strategy will draw upon many other strategies produced by partners but it is particularly influenced by the Sustainable Community Strategy. The LDF reflects the long term vision of the South Staffordshire Sustainable Community Strategy in meeting local needs and aspirations of those who live and work in the District.

The Housing Strategy and LDF are effectively part of a suite of interlinking strategies and policy documents that feed up into and from the overarching Sustainable Community Strategy. The Housing Strategy will use the LDF to help deliver upon the priorities and objectives, which are identified in the following chapter. The Core Strategy sets out the broad spatial delivery plan for housing in the District to achieve the long term vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy. It is also the job of the Housing Strategy to help inform the LDF and Sustainable Community Strategy to create a more detailed strategic housing direction and vice versa. As such the LDF plays in key role in helping to deliver this Strategy.

One of the major issues that the LDF will need to consider will be the mismatch between the likely housing allocation for South Staffordshire Council from the Regional Spatial Strategy, and the large shortfalls of affordable housing as demonstrated by the HMA and sub-regional HMA. Clearly there is no chance that the unmet level of affordable housing need is ever going to be met. However, the evidence base indicates very high levels of need on which to base a robust policy stance for delivering affordable housing through the planning system.

A Preferred Spatial Strategy consultation document was published in January 2009 suggesting an affordable housing requirement of 50% on qualifying sites. At the time of writing this strategy the outcome of that consultation is unknown and further work will be required on the economic viability of allocated housing sites in due course to test whether 50% is realistic. However, it will be the work of the Housing Group to ensure that a variety of approaches are adopted, in addition to planning gain, to ensure that as many new affordable homes can be developed as possible.
Priorities and Objectives

This chapter of the Strategy provides more detail about how we aim to deliver successful outcomes that will make the vision real.

- Maintain the sustainability of South Staffordshire villages;
- Ensure the supply of the right type of housing in the right locations;
- Reduce and prevent homelessness;
- Target poor quality housing and ensure that everyone has access to a decent house;
- Ensure that a variety of housing options are available for our most vulnerable residents.

Maintaining the sustainability of South Staffordshire’s villages

The role that housing plays in its widest sense is recognised in sustaining a future for our communities in both the most local and broadest senses. As such a number of actions have been developed by the LSP Housing Group to contribute towards future sustainability.

- Ensuring existing and new homes are more energy efficient - On a macro scale the climate change agenda is clearly important but the work the Council has undertaken with its Thermal Imaging Survey will mean that individual properties that suffer poor energy efficiency can be targeted. This information can be matched against benefit claimant details to target the most vulnerable and cash poor households. This is a joint action with the LSP Environmental Theme Group;

- Delivering long term regeneration projects to the neighbourhoods that suffer from deprivation – Whilst the District is generally affluent, particular hotspots exist that will require varying degrees of action from partners. An example is the regeneration of the Giggetty Estate in Wombourne, a multi-agency approach lead by South Staffordshire Housing Association to bring physical and social regeneration to the area;

- Tackling worklessness – A multi-agency approach in conjunction with the LSP Economic Vibrancy Theme Group is being developed to tackle hotspots of worklessness in the District to assist in helping long term benefit claimants into work. This work is also identified as a priority through the LAA indicator NI 152;

- Developing ‘Rural Exceptions’ sites – Some Parishes have recognised a lack of affordable housing as a key issue for their areas. They have identified that small scale provision to meet local needs will also aid the sustainability of the villages in terms of maintaining local services and schools;

- Increasing the numbers of empty properties brought back into use.
Priorities and Objectives

Ensure the supply of the right type of housing in the right locations

Whilst the Strategy highlights the considerable issue of a lack of affordable housing in South Staffordshire, the partnership recognises the key role that all sectors of the market play in delivering a balanced housing market in the District.

- Ensuring there is a robust evidence base on which to develop Local Development Framework policy and housing strategy;
- Producing revised affordable housing guidance in the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Supplementary Planning Guidance to ensure we are maximising supply through the planning process;
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing to meet local needs and to deliver the LAA indicator NI 155;
- Deliver 75 affordable homes per annum;
- Ensuring that a range of options for delivering affordable housing are used so as not to solely rely on the planning system to deliver;
- Maximising funding from the HCA and any other sources to deliver more affordable housing
- Ensuring future allocations of land for housing reflect the requirements of our communities in both open market and affordable housing. This includes ensuring that the information gathered through the robust evidence base directs housing development throughout our communities and that this development meets identified local requirements. A LAA priority delivered through NI 154;
- Develop adequate planning and housing policies regarding future housing requirements of all of our residents, including Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

Reduce and prevent homelessness

Considerable work has been undertaken by the Council and its partners since the 2002 Homelessness Act to develop a more preventative homelessness agenda, whilst providing a range of housing options to deliver improved solutions to meet a wide range of housing requirements

- Reducing the use of temporary accommodation as per the LAA indicator NI 156;
- Increasing the number of homelessness preventions;
- Appointing a Private Sector Housing Officer to build better links with private landlords and to develop schemes such as a Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme and Property Accreditation Scheme. Ultimately we are trying to widen the housing options available to those in need and improve standards and confidence in the sector;
- Developing a mediation service for young people who may become homeless;
- Working with providers to improve the accommodation and support available for young homeless or potentially homeless households;
- Developing a financial support service for those in danger of losing their homes due to financial difficulties, including progressing DCLG’s Mortgage Rescue Scheme;
- Further improve joint working within the District Council on the impact of the Local Housing Allowance and the use of discretionary Housing Benefit payments;
- Further needs analysis on the potential requirement for an accommodation based domestic violence (DV) service. Presently there is only floating support for DV victims with accommodation based services being in surrounding areas;
- Continuing to develop and improve the ‘Stay Safe’ scheme for victims of DV.
Priorities and Objectives

**Target poor quality housing and ensure that everyone has access to a decent house**

As the Strategy has demonstrated, the stock in both the private and RSL sector is generally good, however, there are pockets of poor housing and there are a number of residents who are ‘asset rich but cash poor’ and lack the resources to effectively maintain their properties. As the demographic information has also highlighted, we have an ageing population and this places greater strain on the resources available to adapt homes to meet the needs of our older people to maintain their health and independence.

- Continuing to identify and target high risk properties;
- Re-assessing previously identified non-decent properties and ascertain whether the occupiers are vulnerable;
- Targeting the Council’s discretionary grants programme at vulnerable residents in non-decent housing;
- All RSL stock to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010;
- Introducing the ‘Kickstart’ Scheme to provide loan assistance to qualifying persons and investigate the scope for pursuing this scheme sub-regionally with neighbouring authorities. This will reduce the administrative burden on each authority whilst delivering economies of scale;
- Employing and funding the South Staffordshire Energy Advice Centre to ensure that we are reducing the incidences of fuel poverty across the District;
- Delivering a Disabled Facilities Grants programme to those residents requiring adaptations to remain in their own home.

**Ensure that a variety of housing options are available for our most vulnerable residents**

The actions listed under this objective have largely been developed from Staffordshire County Council’s Independent Living Strategy local delivery plan. There is recognition from the partners that this joint approach to meeting the housing, support and care needs of our residents is key to ensuring an integrated and co-ordinated service delivery and avoiding duplication.

- Increasing the supply of Extra Care Housing for the elderly. The evidence base and strategy has identified the significant ageing population and the issues that face the partners in the District. The provision of extra care accommodation is one solution we are progressing. The proposed provision of an extra care scheme in Penkridge is a true LSP project and is being jointly developed on adjoining pieces of land owned by the District Council, the County Council and South Staffordshire Housing Association. We also have planning permission for another scheme in Essington and over the lifespan of this strategy will be seeking opportunities for a scheme in each of the District’s five localities;
- Using South Staffordshire Council Capital resources (£2m) to increase the supply of Extra Care housing.
- Developing a Vulnerable Persons’ Housing Register – In response to the County Council’s ‘Changing Lives’ agenda and the closing of a number of their care homes, there has been a recognition of the need for more proactive work to find alternative accommodation. The register will enable a clear understanding of the housing requirements for a range of Social Care and Health clients;
Priorities and Objectives

• Increasing community based housing options for vulnerable people is a key aim of this strategy and we will be developing a number of initiatives to enable this. These include leasing adapted properties from RSLs as re-ablement accommodation, developing an adapted property register to better match properties to people’s needs, and setting up a brokerage service with RSLs so that suitable accommodation for Social Care and Health clients can be found;

• Developing a range of housing and support options for all vulnerable client groups – this will include working closely with the County Council’s Strategic Housing team, which includes Supporting People, in identifying needs and auditing local provision so that we can increase community based care and support services;

• Maximising funding from the HCA and any other sources to deliver more affordable supported housing;

• Informing the development and updating of the Supporting People Strategy – all partners will work with the County Council to identify needs, priorities and opportunities arising from the current review of the Supporting People Strategy and any other key strategies being developed over the life of this strategy and beyond.

Delivery Planning

The delivery plan is a live document and will be constantly reviewed, updated and added to throughout the life of this strategy. The aim of this strategy and delivery plan is to set a clear strategic direction within which flexible solutions can be developed to deal with changing circumstances, emerging issues and significant events.

To achieve this and to monitor and manage performance of the delivery plan, it will be reviewed via the LSP’s performance management framework, which includes progress updates at each bi-monthly Housing Group meeting, and then by exception through the LSP Officer Steering Group and Executive. The LAA indicators attached to this strategy are managed through the same process but also through the District Council’s performance management framework and through the governance structures put in place to deliver the LAA in Staffordshire.

South Staffordshire Council provides the County delivery leads for both NI 155 and NI 156, both of which are key indicators in the delivery plan for this strategy, as well as a representative on the countywide LAA Performance Management Group. Therefore the performance of the housing priorities in the LAA are well embedded within both the LAA and LSP performance management structures.