

***The right home, at the right time,
in the right place: A Housing
Strategy for Worcestershire***

Draft version 13

8th March 2011

1. FOREWORD

(By Kevin Dicks, Housing Lead for the Worcestershire Chief Executive Panel)

We have a driving vision for the future and this strategy will deliver:

"The right home, at the right time, in the right place"

Housing is important to everybody and is essential to achieving a good quality of life. This may mean something different to each of us and may vary throughout our lives but generally involves a safe, secure and affordable home with the right support. It is true that many people are able to solve their own housing issues without help and support from the councils and other agencies but this strategy is about providing the right type of housing and support to those who need assistance.

The adoption of this new countywide housing strategy is well timed as it comes alongside the localism agenda being implemented by the new Coalition Government moving from the era of the 'Big Government' into the era of the 'Big Society'.

'Big Society' is to be locally defined but generally involves; removing unnecessary red tape and regulation, supporting people to get involved with development of their communities and how public money can be spent locally, giving people more choice and a better standard of service, making government information more available and strengthening accountability to local people. In response to this new and evolving agenda we will work together with our local communities to take forward common goals and priorities in ways that are more diverse, more personal and more local.

We will also be working with the Government to implement major changes to housing and welfare policy and develop plans to mitigate the potential risks of the changes to local people. Reductions in public expenditure through the Comprehensive Spending Review¹ will drive efficiencies in service delivery and the need for innovative solutions to help resolve new and existing needs. We will make sure that our communities are places where people want to live with a clear vision of what is required and ensuring that this can be sustained in the long term.

We have a track record of joint working and this strategy is about building on that. We will work together more closely to provide consistent, quality services that meet customers' needs irrespective of where they live within the county. By considering

¹ More detail about the changes and implications of these is provided in a supporting document to this strategy. This can be found on our website or obtained by contacting us – see website link and contact details on the back page of this document.

the root causes of housing needs we will deliver services, which tackle issues at a much earlier stage.

Partnership though is much wider than just the councils. We recognise the crucial role that a wide range of agencies will have in delivering the strategy. They have been actively involved in developing this strategy and we welcome their commitment to partner us in its delivery.

We have worked hard to ensure that people in the County have had the chance to tell us what they think. We have listened carefully and we are confident that our priorities reflect what people have told us and that our objectives and plans are the right ones.

2. INTRODUCTION

Context

A suitable, decent and affordable home is central to ensuring that residents enjoy a good quality of life and contributes to the sustainability of our local communities. Housing is an issue that affects everybody, including those in need of help and support and an inclusive, partnership approach is essential to achieve successful outcomes for Worcestershire residents

However this needs to be considered in light of the huge amount of change to social housing being introduced by the new Coalition Government. These changes include a move towards Localism with local communities having a bigger say about what is required, major funding cuts, the slimming down of regulation, significant reforms to the Benefit system, more emphasis on getting people back into employment, the need to address security of tenure and the role that private sector housing plays in meeting local needs.

The government's Health and Social Care Bill is also the biggest piece of health legislation since the creation of the NHS. This new landscape will have significant implications for local authorities who will have a big role both in overseeing health provision in their patch and in leading on public health. Good housing plays a crucial role in ensuring healthy communities. The changes to commissioning will affect organisations providing care and support but more widely, all housing providers may well be offered new opportunities to take a bigger role in promoting health and wellbeing in their communities. The challenges for housing organisations will be to ensure that their role is recognised and their voice is heard in the new NHS.

Increased delivery of affordable housing is a priority for Worcestershire residents. There continue to be a number of constraints that inhibit delivery such as the availability of suitable sites housing association partners can secure for new development continue to be a difficulty, both in terms of the number of sites generally available, and the financial rules that housing associations are bound by, in terms of competing with the private sector. However there are also new opportunities such as the proposed New Homes Bonus and the new 'affordable rent tenure' both of which will bring further investment to the development of affordable homes.

The existing housing and planning framework suggests that Worcestershire will need to accommodate 36,600 additional dwellings between 2006 and 2026 but the government will be revoking this and abolishing top down targets in favour of local decision making to reflect the local areas vision in the forthcoming Localism Bill.

The Worcestershire local authorities are working with a range of partner organisations to ensure that the full range of housing needs are addressed and a Local Investment Plan is being produced within the county to set out how partner resources can be invested into delivery and provision of necessary infra-structure. Worcestershire partners and local businesses have successfully negotiated a countywide Local Enterprise Partnership which will replace the role of Regional Development Agencies and be influential in the growth of the locality.

There are increased in-migration pressures from both the south as well as from the north, and the effect on house prices and longer distance commuting by higher paid employees is significant in South Worcestershire and Bromsgrove.

Despite the Regional Spatial and Housing Strategies being aimed at reversing this migration pressure from the conurbation, there seems little prospect of the overall migration pressures being relieved in the foreseeable future as a result of the combination of lifestyle choices and demographic growth which is particularly increasing the size of the older population.

The result is that the lower paid and locally employed are being increasingly excluded from the market, with increasing numbers of households on council housing registers and in inadequate accommodation (over 24,000 in 2010). The longest waiting times for social rented accommodation is for two bedroom houses for young families and four bedroom houses for established families that have outgrown their present accommodation. Changes by the Government will focus investment on the provision of shared ownership (new build home-buy) and the new affordable rent tenure rather than social rented homes.

Delivery of rural housing can be difficult to achieve and some rural housing needs are not being adequately met in Worcestershire. These areas require additional and appropriate affordable housing, as without it, the provision of an equitable supply of affordable homes in rural communities is unlikely to be realised. A recent study has been carried out to review the way rural enabling is provided across the county to improve the outcomes achieved for our rural communities and the key findings are reflected within this strategy.

There is some positive action being taken in the county through the planning process to secure allocations of affordable housing on new developments. In most cases, however, these are focussed on larger sites where planning thresholds can be applied, although planning policies are being reviewed to address this. The consequence is that despite affordable housing being a local priority, there are significant challenges in meeting both general housing needs and providing for people who need support.

In addition to the central issue of balancing supply and demand, particularly of affordable housing, there are other principal housing issues that we need to address.

We need to ensure that the use of the existing housing stock is maximised in line with the emerging Government policies. For example; that effective action is taken to bring empty homes back into use, that we respond both to overcrowding and under occupation, that we maximise the use of the private rented sector, that housing for older people is in scale with need and is of the right kind to meet changing needs and that the needs of people with disabilities are responded to effectively.

While the condition of homes in the social rented sector is good with most meeting the Decent Homes standard at the deadline of 2010, this is not the case with privately owned homes. Nearly 40 per cent of those, occupied by vulnerable households, fail to meet the standard and a substantial number are a risk to the health and safety of those who live there. Heating and insulation is a problem, with more than 20,000 households in fuel poverty.

There is a growing need for housing related support to a wide range of individuals. This needs to be approached in the context of both funding cuts to the Supporting People programme which commissions low level housing related support and the implementation of the 'Choice and Control' agenda which provides individuals the opportunity to directly purchase services they require to meet their needs.

Within the county, we already have a proportionally older population than England generally and older people are projected to increase substantially over the next 20 years. There is also a significant forecast growth in the number of people with dementia. This growth in the needs of older people is expected to increase the demand for; low level support, supported housing models including Extra Care, help in making housing choices, adapting homes to enable continued independence and responding to the impact of falls. It is essential that new innovative solutions to housing need, support and care are developed.

There are a range of other vulnerable customer groups who are identified requiring housing and related support including; people with learning and/or physical disability, sensory impairment, mental health issues, substance misuse and people with chaotic lifestyles.

Of particular concern is where people are faced with homelessness and the impact of this on their quality of life. The proposed benefit and housing reforms will need to be monitored to mitigate any risk of increased levels of homelessness within the county.

Housing also needs to play its part in creating and maintaining sustainable communities - a complicated and multi dimensional issue - and in driving through regeneration in areas of market failure to bring about housing growth and economic success.

Why a countywide strategy?

A countywide strategy will be used to complement the new localism agenda, enabling a consistent and cost effective service offer to be provided whilst retaining the ability to be flexible in meeting needs at a local level.

In the past, the six strategic housing authorities have developed individual district strategies which have led to improved services for our local communities. These strategies have also improved our approach to working together and this has led to an increase in the number of countywide initiatives.

This new Worcestershire Strategy takes the next step; a concerted and more integrated countywide approach for the development and delivery of our housing services. We are corporately and jointly committed to this approach; the Chief Housing Officers Group, in conjunction with the Chief Executives and Leaders for the district councils, gave approval for the development of a County Housing Strategy in 2009.

There is a need for more focus around the outcomes achieved for our customers and the social benefits for our partners and the public purse. We aim to work together flexibly, using best practice from outside Worcestershire where this has a strategic fit with our local issues and in partnership with our local communities to find new and innovative solutions to our problems. We will be reviewing existing services and where possible aligning how we work in a more effective and efficient way.

Who is the strategy aimed at?

This strategy is aimed at anyone with an interest in the commissioning and delivery of housing related services within the county. Its objective is to influence thinking, policy making and action at a county and local level to meet the housing aspirations of individuals and communities and to support Local Housing Authorities in attracting resources into Worcestershire.

Central to the strategy is the promotion of partnership working with customers, other agencies and across boundaries to create sustainable places to live.

We recognise the importance of working with all housing providers, including those in the private sector, to achieve a balanced housing market and we will promote the document and its priorities to developers and landlords.

Who and what helped to shape the Strategy?

The strategy responds to the new Localism agenda and the views of local communities and partners to take forward common goals and priorities in ways that are more diverse, more personal and more local.

During the development of the countywide Housing Strategy the local authority partners have sought to engage a broad range of stakeholders, including service users and the wider community, in identifying the key challenges and potential solutions to these.

The consultation process commenced with an event for stakeholders in September 2009. The event sought to identify the key housing issues for different groups within the community and to draw out ideas for resolving these. The event was well attended with 46 different agencies represented representing a wide range of agencies concerned with housing, etc.

Although it was intended that service users attend the event, low attendance by this stakeholder group resulted in a commitment to engage them through existing fora and dedicated focus groups. A series of meetings and focus groups were held between January and July 2010 to engage with:

- People with learning difficulties and their carers
- People with mental health issues
- Young people
- Gypsies and Travellers
- People with visual impairment
- Rough sleepers

In addition, in order to secure the engagement of the wider community an on-line survey was conducted in January 2010 seeking peoples' views about housing priorities and the ways in which local authorities should intervene to help address these priorities. A report produced by the Research and Intelligence Unit for Worcestershire County Council provides an analysis of the results of this survey. This can be found at [web address to be inserted](#).

Our understanding of the views of local people about housing priorities has been further enhanced by the results of consultation during the development of other strategies. The report of the "Research into the Housing and Support Needs of Older People in Worcestershire" conducted by The Housing and Support Partnership in 2009 has provided useful information about the aspirations of older people as well

as their needs. The research involved a questionnaire survey resulting in nearly 1300 responses as well as holding 9 focus groups with 94 older people attending.

An early draft of the strategy was circulated to the West Midlands Leaders Board, the Local Enterprise Partnership and other consultees for comments and the officers responsible for writing the strategy utilised the Audit Commissions' Key Lines of Enquiry to ensure all aspects of strategic housing were covered.

A further event was also held with our partners to comprehensively consider the range of responses received via each of the different consultation mechanisms. This informed the strategic direction and priorities within the new strategy. The key messages from consultees can be found at appendix 3.

How will the Housing Strategy meet Local needs?

The Worcestershire Housing Strategy reflects the multiple and varied housing markets that exist within Worcestershire. For decades, the supply of new homes has not kept up with the rising demand. This strategy will be used to set the high level themes within an action plan that will be co-ordinated to deliver county wide priorities. At a city and district level further action plan will be developed to address local housing needs.

3. SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL AND COUNTYWIDE CONTEXT

A. NATIONAL CONTEXT

The new Coalition Government which took control in May 2010 has commenced the introduction of major change in regional and local government which will impact on this strategy.

The main focus of the new Government is the localism agenda which shifts power from the centralised state to local communities and introduces six actions to deliver de-centralisation down through every level of government to every citizen. The six actions are detailed below:

- Lift the burden of bureaucracy by removing the cost and control of unnecessary red tape and regulation whose effect is to restrict local action.
- Empower communities to do things their way by creating rights for people to get involved with and direct the development of their communities
- Increase local control of public finance so that more of the decisions over how public money is spent and raised can be taken within communities
- Diversify the supply of public services by ending public sector 'monopolies' ensuring a level playing field for all suppliers giving people more choice and a better standard of service
- Open up government to public scrutiny by relation government information into the public domain so that people can know how their money is spent, how it is used and to what effect
- Strengthen accountability to local people by giving every citizen the power to change the services provided to them through participation, choice or the ballot box.

The Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 announced substantial cuts in public expenditure and the Government has abolished many agencies, including the Regional Government Offices and the Audit Commission. Local authorities are expected to make cuts in addition to those already planned to balance their budgets and housing association budgets will be constrained by the impact of low inflation on rent levels and the impending welfare reform. The changes announced regarding the current welfare system, including caps on housing benefit will impact on people's ability to afford private rented housing, thus creating even greater pressure on subsidised housing, and reduce the security of tenure for social housing tenants.

Cuts have also been made in planned programmes, such as the funding for new affordable housing promised by the previous Government. Therefore the funding and staffing capacity available for delivery of the strategy is expected to reduce significantly.

The key policy and resource changes announced by the new Government that impact on this Housing Strategy and housing services more generally are set out below:

- Communities, citizens and volunteers will be supported to play a bigger role in shaping and providing services
- Government funding to local authorities will reduce by 28% over the next four years
- Ring fences will be removed from all funding for 2011-12, except for schools and a new public health grant
- Councils will be able to cease monitoring on Local Area Agreement targets, and those which are kept will not be monitored by government
- £6bn will be allocated to funding the Supporting People programme over four years
- Provision for Disabled Facilities Grants will rise with inflation, with local authorities given more discretion for their allocation
- The Regional Growth Fund will be extended to three years, and is increased to £1.4bn
- Government wants to ensure growth is driven by local business and communities
- Local Enterprise Partnerships will help develop the local economy
- The Homes and Communities Agency will be introducing new intermediate rental tenancy plus capital investment will support the building of up to 150,000 new affordable homes over the next 4 years
- Reform of the planning system will put local authorities and local people in charge of decisions on new house-building in their local areas, increasing housing supply
- Introduction of the New Homes Bonus scheme will mean communities benefit from new housing and economic development – matching the additional council tax from each new home for each of the following 6 years. Permission for homes granted now will count for the bonus and the Government are consulting on whether reuse of empty homes will also qualify
- There are no plans to change tenancy terms or rents for existing tenants
- Government wants to make social housing more responsive, flexible and fair so that a greater number of people are able to access social housing in a way that reflects their needs and changing circumstances
- Social housing will be reformed to provide a more tailored response to individual need at lower cost
- Housing associations will be introducing a new intermediate rent tenure called 'affordable rent' to social tenants for a new fixed period

- Investment via the Decent Homes programme will continue
- Government will reform the National Register of Social Housing which will reduce reporting requirements on social landlords
- £2 billion will be allocated over the next four years to fund the implementation of the Universal Credit.
- Household benefit payments for couples and lone parent households will be capped at around £500 per week from 2013
- The age threshold for the Shared Room Rate in Housing Benefit will be increased from 25 to 35
- A one-year time limit will be introduced for contributory Employment and Support Allowance for those in the Work Related Activity Group
- The Warm Front Programme will be scaled down over the next two years, with a budget of £110 million in 2011/-12 and £100 million in 2012-13
- From 2013, the Green Deal will replace Warm Front, and a new obligation will be imposed on energy providers – this will help households improve their energy efficiency with no up-front costs. Phasing out Warm Front is estimated to save £345 million by 2013-14.
- The Government has also announced an independent review of the fuel poverty target and definition before the end of the year

B. COUNTYWIDE CONTEXT

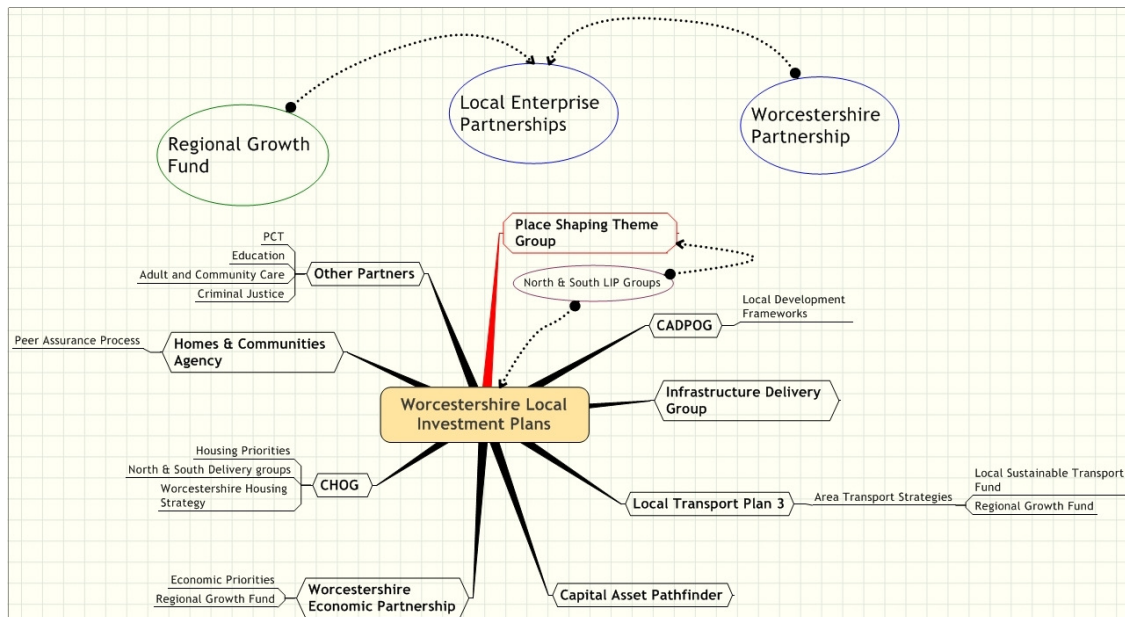
The Housing Strategy is complementary to a web of policies and strategies that are in place across Worcestershire.

Local Enterprise Partnership

A successful bid has been submitted for the first stage in creating a new LEP for the county. This is a developing agenda and both the Local Investment Plan and a robust strategic approach to housing will enable partners to create the conditions for the private sector to flourish in Worcestershire. The bid set out the following priorities for the partnership with commitments for housing and regeneration:

Priorities	Commitments for Housing & Regeneration
Deliver the strategic employment sites & related infrastructure, highways access, utilities etc needed to ensure sustainable economic growth & a low carbon economy.	Ensure an approach to strategic planning that is responsive to the aspirations of Worcestershire's communities and that helps to create a thriving environment for jobs and enterprise
Ensure there is the right support for business start up, business growth, business retention and inward investment	Continue a proactive joint approach to housing, particularly on innovative approaches to affordable housing with locally initiated schemes to meet local needs
Deliver the right infrastructure for businesses including broadband, improving access from the M5 to the Malvern Hills Science park and QinetiQ, improvements to the east west links and the A449	
Invest in skills, ensuring that provision is responsive to business needs, and relevant to future growth & business opportunity	

Local Investment Plan



The development of a Local Investment Plan will set out the vision for Worcestershire in terms of housing, planning, transport, regeneration, social care, health, infrastructure and employment. There is real value in using this process to

help develop priorities for place shaping, investment and set out a co-ordinated and cohesive approach to utilising a wide range of partner resources including monies, land and expertise to achieve the vision. This plan is anticipated to be in place by March 2011 to meet the requirements of the Homes and Communities Agency and their allocation timetable however it is recognised that this is an evolving process.

Table 1: Worcestershire LIP: Summary of Strategic Priorities



As the LIP is updated over time, partners will clearly refine their lists of individual schemes to reflect the delivery of sites and schemes, new investment opportunities that emerge and the availability of public and private sector funding.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The Worcestershire Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the County and is responsible for the development and implementation of the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) *Partnership Towards Excellence* which sets out the overarching strategic vision for Worcestershire and identifies the activity that

partners will need to carry out to achieve outcomes within the following themes for action between 2008 and 2013:

Table 2: Worcestershire Community Strategy Themes & Priority Outcomes

Theme	Priority Outcomes (most relevant to LIP highlighted)
Communities that are safe and feel safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to improve community safety and build confidence in communities To reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol
A better environment for today and tomorrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect and improve Worcestershire's natural and historic environment To promote the re-use, recycling and recovery of waste To address issues of water quality, supply, and consumption and land drainage in Worcestershire To increase energy efficiency and increase the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources
Economic success that is shared by all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote technology-led growth benefiting all sectors and parts of the county To support the sustainable development of the county through infrastructure development (in particular transport infrastructure) and establish Worcester as a growth point To remove barriers to employment and improve skills To ensure that Worcestershire's economic interests are effectively represented at all levels
Improve health and well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support adults to lead healthier lifestyles To reduce health inequalities To improve the quality of life and independence of older people and those with a long-term illness To improve mental health and wellbeing
Meeting the needs of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support children, young people and families to lead healthy lifestyles To identify and deal effectively with bullying and support all children, young people and families who have been affected by it To raise the educational achievement of all children and young people To ensure children, young people and their families have access to positive things to do and enjoy in their communities
Stronger communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide decent, appropriate and affordable housing that meets the diverse needs of Worcestershire To improve quality of life in Worcestershire by providing vibrant cultural and sporting opportunities for all To support effective volunteering that is accessible to all To reduce income deprivation including child and pensioner poverty To deliver an accessible, affordable, safe, convenient, sustainable and integrated passenger transport network

The themes are led by six groups and housing aspects fit primarily within stronger communities. The Housing Strategy has been developed with strong links to the

Sustainable Communities Strategy, associated theme groups and the Local Strategic Partnerships have been a key consultee.

The Worcestershire Partnership has recently agreed to move to a single Sustainable Community Strategy for the County that will run from 2011. Revision of the strategy is currently in place and future updates of strategically relevant documents including the Housing Strategy and Local investment Plan will need to reflect the themes and priorities agreed by the Partnership.

Worcestershire Community Safety Agreement 2010/11

There are also links with the Safer Communities Board (SCB) which is one of the theme groups of the Worcestershire Partnership responsible for delivering the "Communities that are safe and feel safe" block of the Local Area Agreement. It was established to take responsibility for those areas of community safety that require a countywide perspective and to strengthen the strategic co-ordination of community safety activity in the county of Worcestershire, against the overarching priorities identified in the relevant section of table 2 above. The majority of funding is accessed from Central Government via the area based grant (ABG) or via the Local Area Agreements (LAA), both of which exist at county-wide level and is distributed by the SCB. The SCB has a joint commissioning role, which is increasingly becoming a key way of meeting joint or common strategic priorities. Community Safety initiatives in the County are delivered by four Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Bromsgrove, Redditch, South Worcestershire and Wyre Forest.

The following countywide priorities have been identified for Worcestershire:

- **Anti-social behaviour – including agreed anti-social behaviour minimum standards and improving perceptions**
- **Offending / re-offending – including a strategy to deliver the new re-offending requirements placed on CSPs and responsible authorities**
- **Preventing violent extremism / building community cohesion**

The priorities have been informed by what the four local Community Safety Partnerships identified as the main issues for local people. The Housing Strategy will work to promote inclusion by delivering sustainable communities, improving people's life chances, raising capabilities, creating opportunities and developing stronger alignment to economic development through education and employment pathways to seeking and securing work. The impact of the recession in terms of deprivation and unemployment will increase the demand for local services at a time when public sector resources are being significantly reduced. This strategy will work to find bespoke ways to address these issues and focus on ways to achieve a home and a

job for vulnerable groups including offenders under probation supervision, adults in contact with secondary mental health services and adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities.

Core Strategies

Core strategies set out the long term vision, objectives and key policies for development in Worcestershire. In the north, Wyre Forest district already has in place an adopted core strategy while Bromsgrove and Redditch will issue draft core strategies for consultation early in January 2011. The three south Worcestershire districts are in the process of completing a joint core strategy.

Of particular importance to the Housing Strategy and the LIP will be the policies set out by core strategies on housing provision, approaches to affordable housing, regeneration priorities and commercial development. Priorities identified in the Housing Strategy and the LIP will need to be consistent with policies set out in the core strategies, and the location, scale and characteristics of housing developments will be driven in part by local authority planning policies on developer contributions, the preferred composition of affordable housing schemes and the allocation of land for housing.

Local Area Action Plans (AAPs) and a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) have also informed the preparation of the LIP. They are essential to understanding the mix of development that local authorities are seeking to deliver in specific localities. The development of Tenure Strategies and the introduction of the new Affordable Rent Model will be an important factor when updating planning policy and supplementary planning documents and is a key action within this Housing Strategy.

Capital & Asset Pathfinder

Worcestershire is one of several pilot areas for the national Capital and Asset Pathfinder initiative. This initiative has been designed to enable partners to explore new ways of pooling budgets to secure efficiency savings, primarily through the better management of buildings and other assets. Partners have already undertaken a detailed asset mapping exercise, and the pathfinder may assist in identifying potential solutions to the use of publicly owned assets to support housing and regeneration schemes.

Homelessness Strategy

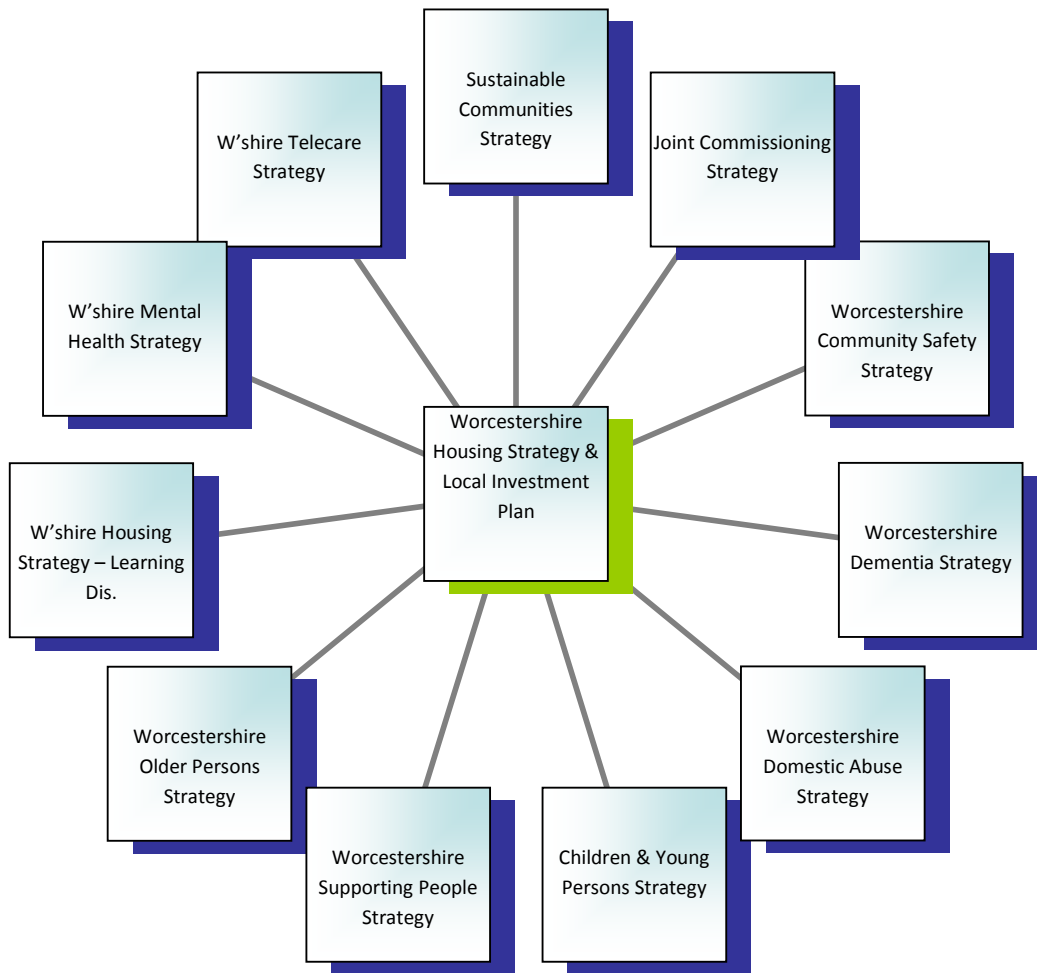
The Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy can be found on any of the district council websites and is due for renewal during 2011/12 and will have strong links to this Housing Strategy.

The vision for the current Homelessness Strategy is “to ensure that everyone has access to a place they can call home, where they can close their door and feel safe.”

The six key priorities are;

- To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services
- To develop a countywide methodology and system for data collection for homelessness information
- To share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice and homeless services
- To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships across the County
- To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives
- Support the development of appropriate types of accommodation for key client groups.

Links with other Strategies

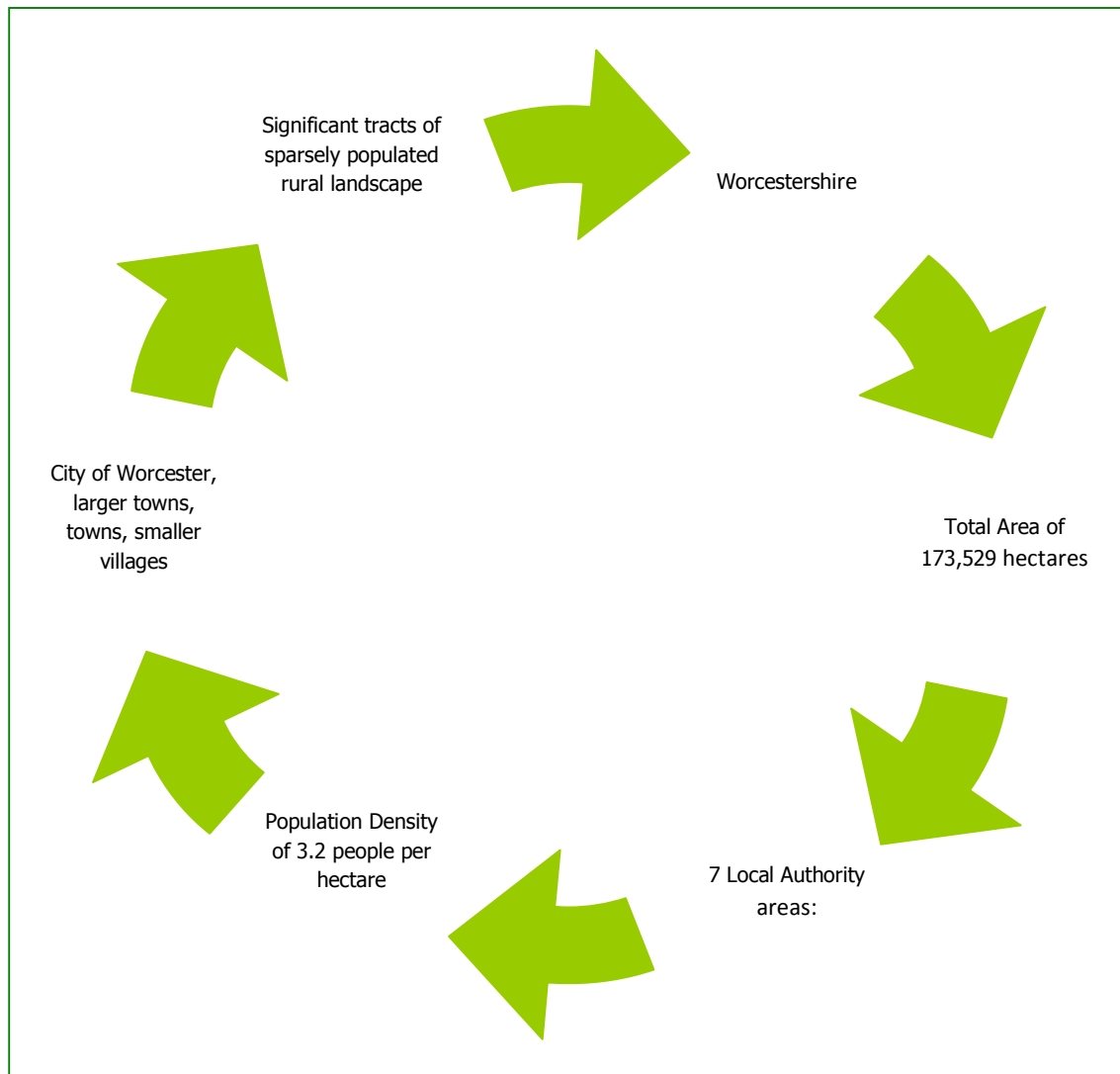


4. WHAT WE KNOW

Worcestershire’s Key Characteristics

Worcestershire is a large and diverse county noted in the UK for its historic built environment and an outstanding natural environment. The key features of the county’s geography, economy and population have played a critical part in shaping its housing markets, and in turn they provide the context for the priorities partners have identified in both the Worcestershire Housing Strategy and LIP.

Worcestershire Geography



(Insert map of W'shire inside the circle and behind arrows as a watermark)

The county provides a high quality environment to live in which has been an important factor in the trajectory of its housing markets during the past decade. The south is geographically self-contained and functions around the role of the city of Worcester. The demand for housing is strong and sustained, driven in part by urban and rural settings which have proved to be a strong draw for house buyers, particularly in older age groups. Many areas of the three northern districts have seen a strong demand for housing resulting from in-migration from the Birmingham conurbation.

All areas of the county continue to experience significant affordability issues and constrained development despite the recession and as a result of upward pressure on house prices and land values.

Population

The population of Worcestershire was estimated to stand at 556,000 in 2009. The County has seen growth of just below 9 per cent in its population since 1991, above average for the West Midlands but on par with the national growth rate.

The age structure of the county's population and expectations about the way it might change are important drivers of the scale and nature of housing that the area will need to provide in the future. Population estimates for 2009 clearly shows that the county is over-represented in older age groups (particularly 50-70 year age group) but under-represented in younger age groups. This is a critical issue both for Worcestershire's future workforce and the pressure it places on services (increased demand for health care, smaller tax base), and it needs to be addressed in the approach to meeting housing need, the investment in housing and creating sustainable communities.

Worcestershire's Housing Market

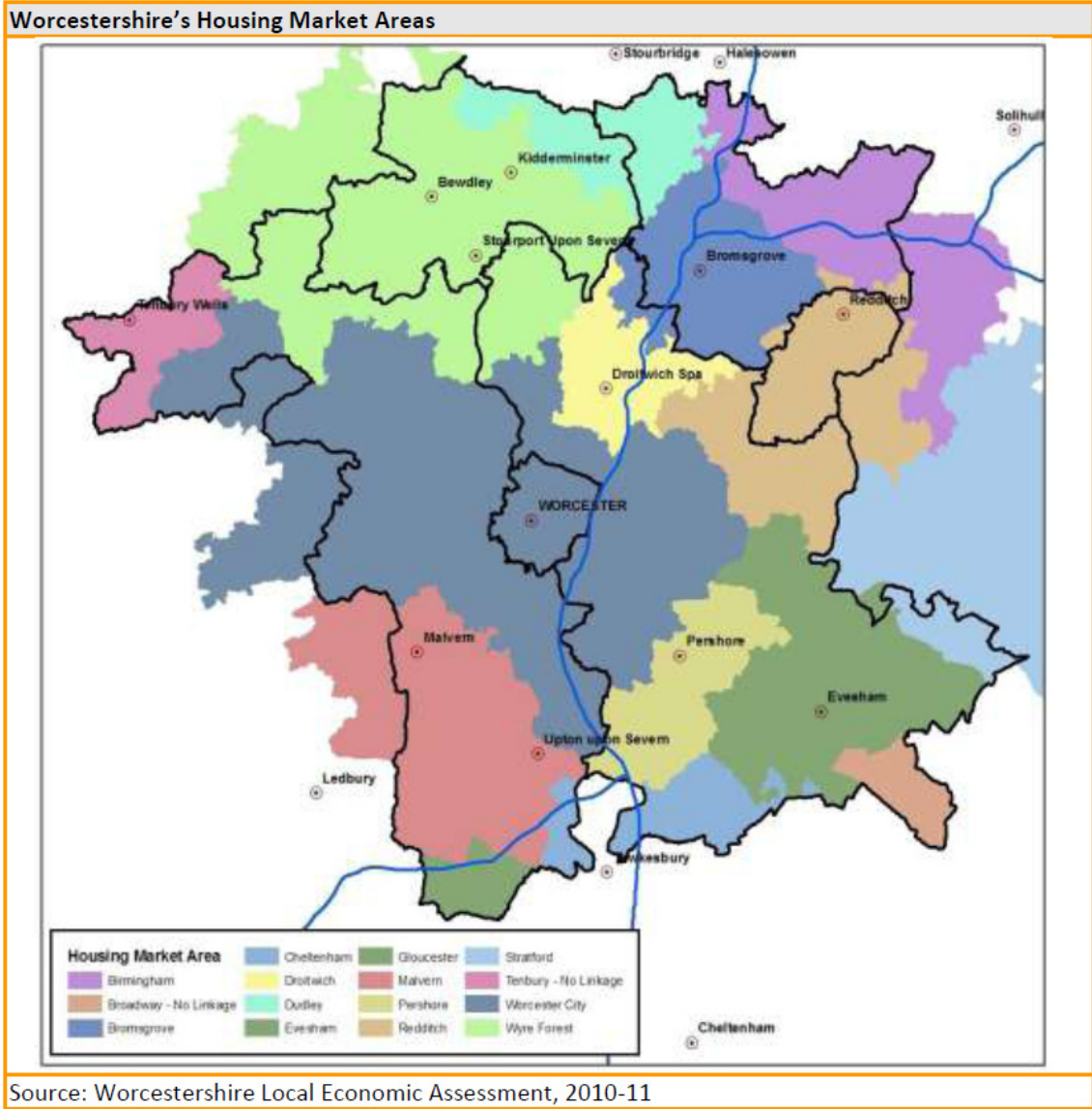
In order to improve understanding of the South Housing Market Area a full Strategic Housing Market Assessment was commissioned by the Partnership in 2006 and annual updates have been undertaken since this date. The most current update can be found at:

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/community-and-living/research-and-intelligence/housing-and-economy/housing/shma.aspx>

A further full Strategic Housing Market Assessment is being carried out currently for 2010/11. The methodology used will provide data to support our understanding of the new Affordable Rent Model and how this can be used effectively to meet housing need.

In a large county covering an area of 1,471 sq km, Worcestershire's housing markets are characterised by a northern area which has a strong relationship with Birmingham, Solihull and the Black Country and by a more economically self-contained area in the south in which the growth and strong economic performance of Worcester City has been a key factor in determining the size and value of local housing markets.

The draft Local Economic Assessment for Worcestershire (2010-11) identifies eight housing markets in the county highlighted in the map below.



Worcestershire's housing markets have been through a sustained period of buoyant demand during the 2000s. Between August 2001 and July 2010, average prices in the county rose from £100,000 to £167,000, peaking at £190,000 in December 2007. Detached house prices almost doubled between August 2001 and December 2007. Over a decade which saw unprecedented rates of growth in house prices, the six Worcestershire districts contributed to the southern housing market area (HMA) of the West Midlands experiencing the highest price inflation of any of the region's HMAs.

However, the housing sector in Worcestershire has been particularly hard hit by the recession. Sales have fallen dramatically from their peak in 2006, while the completion of new homes also fell sharply after 2007 as house builders bore the brunt of the credit crunch. In a county in which lower quartile affordability ratios are

significantly higher than both the national and West Midlands averages, the recession has further exacerbated the impact of affordability problems on Worcestershire's economy.

Despite the recession, one of the main effects of the recent period of strong demand is that Worcestershire now has some of the highest value housing markets in the West Midlands. Local housing markets within parts of south Worcestershire have some of the highest cost housing in the West Midlands, with prices having risen particularly sharply during the mid 2000s. For example, Malvern Hills has seen substantial price increases allied to higher than average increases in average household income in recent years. This reflects a combination of the area's AONB status, a reputation for its high quality of life and high levels of well paid knowledge workers with the location of QinetiQ in the district.

In common with much of the UK, price inflation has resulted in significant affordability problems in Worcestershire, and this has become an important issue for the county's economy. Data for 2009 shows a county wide lower quartile affordability ratio of 7.3, well above the regional (5.8) and England (6.3) averages. The affordability issue is most pronounced in those areas which have seen strong rates of in-migration in recent years (eg. Wychavon and Malvern Hills) in the south of the county, but even in lower cost local housing markets (eg. Redditch), the lower quartile income-price ratio still stands at 6.4, ie above average. This issue reflects the characteristics of local housing markets in an area which is seen as a desirable place to live with good standards of living, good quality services and easy access to large employment centres in both the Midlands (Birmingham) and, increasingly, the south east.

Affordability problems are especially acute in the starter homes market. For South Worcestershire, housing market data point to a mismatch between incomes and house prices which is especially acute in the family starter homes market (2 bedroom). At the same time, Worcester, Droitwich and Evesham have been identified as having the biggest current and projected shortages of affordable housing. Redditch and Wyre Forest have the biggest stock of more affordable property with 24.2% and 25.7% of properties sold in 2008/09 for under £120,000 compared to just 5% in Pershore.

A key outcome of high housing costs has been difficulties for particular population groups in securing a foothold on the housing ladder and their ability to climb the ladder. Evidence generated for the strategic housing needs assessment for South Worcestershire underlines particular problems faced by young families seeking to purchase a first house or rent a property, and those with expanding/growing families. For those who cannot afford to buy property, the challenge is exacerbated

by a supply shortage of property for rental in the £500-600 per month category. For Worcestershire's economic development, this is an issue both for the growth and prosperity of its town and for the sustainability of rural communities, where prospects of living and working in the same location are severely restricted by a lack of affordable property and limited employment opportunities.

High levels of demand for housing in some areas of Worcestershire have been fuelled by its position as an attractive location for commuters. Data for earnings in Bromsgrove show that resident average earnings are £8,000 higher than workplace earnings, underlining the extent to which the area has attracted well paid commuters who are working in Birmingham and the surrounding area. However, the pattern is not replicated across the County. While parts of Wyre Forest have seen increases in out-commuting, this has not been matched by strong demand for new homes in the district, and house builders have shown comparatively limited interest in the area.

The high level of in-migration to Worcestershire has presented a complex challenge for south Worcestershire's housing markets, where evidence suggests that in-migration by buyers with the financial means to purchase family homes is crowding out potential local buyers on lower incomes. Travel to work data produced by the West Midlands Regional Observatory (March 2010) show that in managerial and professional occupations, Worcestershire has a very strong relationship with Birmingham. Mobility within local housing markets is further restricted by a tendency (identified in the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment) for older people to retain family housing because of a shortage of stock and development aimed at ageing residents.

Local housing market areas faced with high demand have been constrained in their ability to develop new housing, although the pattern has not been a consistent one across the county. For example, Worcester's geographic expansion has been bounded by controls on new development on the edge of the town. Clearly, market forces have also played a critical role in supply side issues, with a preference for higher value developments and apartment schemes inevitably overriding pressure for more affordable supply in lower value locations.

Despite these constraints, the county has a good recent record of delivering new homes, reflecting the commercially attractive environment it continues to offer private sector developers and Registered Providers. During the 2000s, the county achieved a house building rate of 1,900 units a year on average. However, the recession has resulted in a marked fall in new completions, and the county fell well short of the Local Area Agreement target for completions in 2008-09. While there are some signs of recovery in the market, it has been slow to emerge and continued

economic uncertainty makes it a difficult climate in which to bring forward new housing schemes.

Following the decision to revoke the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands, housing targets will be set by the core strategies currently being produced by each of the county's district authorities. However, maintaining the level of new build required to meet demand is a key challenge for partners. The level of additional affordable homes required for Worcestershire is 2,277 needed each year to keep pace with demand. This strategy also points the need for sustained investment in new housing stock to meet demand from older people, including extra care and specialist care provision. Projected increases in the number of people over the age of 65 also require a remodelling of the existing stock to offer more aspirational homes for purchase and rent.

Stock Condition

While the condition of homes in the social rented sector is good with most meeting the Decent Homes standard at the deadline of 2010, this is not the case with privately owned homes. Nearly 40 per cent of these fail to meet the standard and a substantial number are a risk to the health and safety of those who live there. Heating and insulation is a problem, with more than 20,000 households in fuel poverty.

In most of the districts there are few private landlords and a relatively low supply of privately let flats and smaller sized dwellings. Some increases in purchase by investors of properties to let are in evidence but the majority of these properties are offered at very high market rents that are not accessible by those in housing need. Houses in multiple occupation are disappearing in high cost areas as owners derive profit from conversion to apartments for sale.

The City of Worcester has a greater supply of houses in multiple occupation than other districts but the poor condition of some is not conducive to making them attractive lets. This lack of an active low cost private rented sector will be made worse with the expansion of University College Worcester from 7,000 to 13,000 students. This expected increase in demand could limit access to rented accommodation to meet general needs.

The level of empty homes in most districts is low and is projected to decrease offering limited opportunities for use as affordable housing. Reductions in Council Tax discounts have been made by some authorities to try and stimulate the return of second homes to full time occupation but the impact is limited

Decent Homes

Approximately 39% of the homes within the County are deemed non-decent. The highest proportion of non decent homes are located in Malvern Hills, where 50% (13,453 properties) of the housing stock is deemed non-decent. The highest number of non decent homes in any one district are found within Wychavon (16,710 – 41%) where it has been assessed that in order to tackle non decency approximately £139,698,693 is required. The lowest levels of non decency found within the county can be found within Redditch, with 30% of the stock being deemed non decent. The average cost of bringing a non decent property back into decency across Worcestershire is £8,360 per dwelling. Therefore the total investment required across the whole county is £635,294,639

Housing Health & Safety Rating System

Nationally the major cause of failure under Decent Homes has been as a result of inadequate thermal comfort, however there has been a significant shift to failures under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System increasing from 18% in 2001 to 24% in 2008. Within the Worcestershire County there are an above average number of properties failing HHSRS (28%) with Malvern Hills having the greatest proportion (38%) of the homes in the County failing under HHSRS and Redditch to the north of the County with the lowest proportion 19%.

The average cost of repairs for owner occupied properties with a category 1 hazard in Worcestershire is £8,811.

Thermal comfort

The national Decent Homes rate of failure on thermal comfort is 17%. The Worcestershire average is 20% (38,571) of dwellings failing the Decent Homes Standard as a result of inadequate thermal comfort. The district with the highest failure rate is Wyre Forest with at 24% which results in approximately £59,314,230 of investment needing to be spent to remove this risk and Redditch having the lowest proportion of homes that fail under thermal comfort at 16%. The Worcestershire average cost of remedying an owner occupied property with an inadequate thermal envelope is approximately £7,017.

Modernisation

The recent BRE (Building Research Establishment) report for Worcestershire identifies that the cost of works are considerable when modernising properties throughout the county. The Worcestershire average is 1.3% of dwellings failing Decent Homes Standard as a result of modernisation requirements. The north part of Worcestershire is more in line with the national average of 1% with Bromsgrove recording 1% and Redditch 1% of dwellings failing under modernisation. Worcester

City (2%) and Malvern Hills (2%) are further above national average of stock not meeting modernisation requirements of the Decent Homes Standard. The Worcestershire average cost of repairs necessary for owner occupiers to undertake in order to provide adequate modern facilities within a Worcestershire home is approximately £22,462 per property.

Disrepair

The National average for properties failing Decent Homes Standard for reasons of Disrepair is 8%. The Worcestershire average is 10% with Wyre Forest having the greatest proportion of housing (13%) that fails under the disrepair aspect of the Decent Homes Standard, amounting to approximately £79,841,448 of required investment to address the issue. This is significantly above Redditch's level (7%) which is below the national average of 8%. In order to remove disrepair issues from properties within Worcestershire it has been deemed that it would cost approximately £17,762.28 per property.

Vulnerable Households

Nationally the average proportion of all properties that are occupied by vulnerable people who live in non decent homes is 8%. Within Worcestershire this average proportion of all dwellings that are occupied by vulnerable people that live in non decent accommodation is 7% with Malvern Hills having the largest proportion of properties occupied by vulnerable people living in non decent homes being 9% and Bromsgrove being the lowest with 5 %.

There are 33,379 number of households that are classified as vulnerable or on a low income. Of these vulnerable households an estimated 13,768 are classified as living in non-decent homes which represents 41% of vulnerable household. Conversely this means that 59% of vulnerable households are living within decent accommodation.

Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty is defined as householders spending more than 10% of their income on heating and fuel provisions within their property. On average 14% of households in Worcestershire experience fuel poverty and the problem poses the greatest threat to households in Malvern with 17% of the population being in fuel poverty which is 5% higher than the national average (12%) and Wyre Forest at 8%.

Worcestershire districts have an above average population of residents over the age of 65 and above 75. There is an identified need to support older people to maintain and to assist them to remain in their homes through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grant and other grants. Strong, and in many cases significantly increasing,

demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) is evident. Given the ageing population within the area this demand will almost certainly continue.

Countywide HIA

Worcestershire districts have an above average population of residents over the age of 65 and above 75. There is an identified need to support older people to maintain and to assist them to remain in their homes through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grant and other grants. Strong, and in many cases significantly increasing, demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) is evident. Given the ageing population within the area this demand will almost certainly continue.

Each of the Council's work on Disabled Facilities Grants across tenure and other housing assistance to the private sector is channelled through a Countywide Home Improvement Agency. The Worcestershire partner organisations identified significant benefits for local older and disabled residents from delivering services through a partnership arrangement that covers the county and works closely with social care and health professionals.

A Worcestershire wide Care & Repair Agency was established during 2010 with a vision to deliver a range of options, including helping people to repair, improve, maintain or adapt their home. The purpose of the service is to help people live independently, in the home of their choice, warm, safe and secure. The range of services on offer include:

- Information, advice and signposting
- Disabled Facility grant and other housing grant work
- Fitting aids and adaptations
- Minor works and handyperson services
- Falls and accident prevention
- Hospital discharge support
- Home energy, security and safety checks
- Advocacy and support on housing options
- Kickstart loans

Kickstart

A number of additional funding streams were accessed during the set-up of the service including Kickstart funding. Unfortunately the government funding allocated to support the delivery of this service has been withdrawn. Kickstart was a regionally funded scheme that provides an additional or alternative form of assistance to help home owners improve and renovate their dwellings through subsidised equity release loan facilities. The funding for this scheme was held centrally by Birmingham

City Council and administered by them on behalf of the partnership. It was envisaged that based upon the projected available funding, the service would have been able to provide up to 30 Non Equity (such as unsecured loans) and 36 Equity Loans in Year 1 building up to 48 Equity Loans and 50 Non Equity loans by year over the three year programme. This will deliver approximately £380,000 of work up to the end of the financial year 2010/11. It will now be necessary to consider how private sector improvement can continue without the mix of equity and non-equity products for those people needing to undertake decent homes work to their property.

Due to constraints on capital budgets the local housing authorities are unable to satisfy demand for discretionary grants to improve private sector dwellings or even to meet requirements for mandatory DFG's. The role of Home Improvement Agencies & the Kickstart products were essential to reducing the impact of the withdrawal/reduction of discretionary assistance. An area of work to be investigated would be to identify sufficient core resources rather than relying on fee income and Supporting People funding. A possible avenue is to work with health authorities to contribute to HIA funding, as one of the key outcomes for HIAs is the reduction of hospital admissions and bed blocking.

The new health landscape will have significant impacts for social housing. The importance of decent, affordable housing in promoting better health outcomes is critical and housing providers, beyond their role as providers of directly commissioned services, should therefore be able to expect a place at the table under the new arrangements for promoting health and wellbeing. The housing sector has long argued that investment in housing and housing related support offers real benefits for health. The NHS reform should offer new opportunities for housing to become involved with other partners in local government and health in providing preventative and community health services as well as care and support services. Housing's expertise should not be forgotten and should be used more effectively or new relationships will need to be built to deliver across housing, health and social care.

Older Persons Accommodation and Support Needs

The six strategic housing authorities working with the Worcestershire County Council and Supporting People commissioned research into the housing and related support needs and aspirations of older people living within Worcestershire over the next 20 years. The full report findings can be found at:

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/health-and-social-care/supporting-people/strategic-reviews.aspx>.

Some of the key findings were;

Older people are the housing services largest and most rapidly growing client group.

In Worcestershire by 2031 there will be a 52% increase in those over 60 and a 155% increase in those over 85. Rates of growth vary between Districts with higher growth in Wychavon and Malvern Hills. In absolute terms, Wychavon and Wyre Forest have the biggest population of older people.

This research recognised that there was an above average provision of sheltered housing across the county but an under-provision of Extra Care units and that an additional 1938 units were required within the county, although needs and current supply within each district varied.

The research also recognised the current imbalance in supply between older people's accommodation to rent (through Registered Social Landlords) and properties for sale, particularly opportunities for low cost home ownership (the need for an additional 4636 units).

There were also issues raised around the quantity and quality of affordable sheltered housing and the need to reduce provision by 1171. However the supply of sheltered housing varied across the districts. There was also a requirement to provide more enhanced sheltered housing (1610 units).

There is an identified requirement for housing for people with dementia of 838 units and the growing need from elderly people with learning difficulties.

The research also identified a critical need for better signposting for older people to the range of housing options available from trusted sources and expanding the advice already available to include all services and funding opportunities available including equity release options.

Also the need for both Home Improvement Agencies and floating support services was identified to assist the growing numbers of elderly home owners remain in their homes. This will include the need for support to be available to those individuals pursuing the choice and control agenda and requiring support to identify and access care packages.

Levels of owner occupation amongst older people in Worcestershire are very high at over 80% in the 55-74 age range underlining the importance of planning for all tenures but also the possible role of equity schemes.

There are 745 households over 50 on housing waiting lists with an accepted housing need, there are also a small but growing number of older people with learning disabilities to cater for.

Nationally demand for specialist accommodation for people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups outstrips provision. With a predicted growth in the number of BME elders and changing cultural attitudes amongst younger BME family members, it is anticipated that demand will increase further over the next twenty years.

Within Worcestershire the number of BME elders is relatively low at just 1.3% of the older population. However, it is important to note the higher proportion amongst the 'rising elderly' group of people aged 55 to 64 is 1.5% compared with just 0.7% of those aged 85+.

These findings identify substantial demographic changes taking place within the county. The information will be used as a sound basis for forward planning and thinking through the way all housing authorities and their partner Registered Provider's should respond to the seismic, demographic shifts taking place. The Older People's Strategy and synergy with this strategy will be one of the mechanisms to address how we are going to reshape the specialist housing and related support services to meet these needs.

Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation & Support Needs

The local authorities of the South Housing Market Area commissioned a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment which was published in January 2008. The assessment estimates unmet accommodation needs and identifies aspirations and perceptions in respect of alternative types of site. The study also considered the needs of Travelling Showpeople.

The Government's bi-annual caravan count in July 2007 shows that Worcestershire has a far higher number of Gypsies and Travellers than any other county within the region, with 445 caravans. Worcestershire's number has increased by 26% in the last 2 years, which is well above average. There has been substantial reduction in the proportion of Gypsy and Traveller population which is travelling in pursuit of employment resulting in a more settled population.

For Travelling Showpeople there has been less of a reduction in travelling for employment. Sites are pre-arranged when they are away from their base, so unauthorised encampments do not occur.

Pitch Requirements

Table 3: Summary of Additional Site Requirement for 2008/13

District	Permanent Pitches	Permanent Showpeople 'Yards'	Temporary Stopping Places	Total
Bromsgrove	0	0	0	0
Malvern Hills	26	8	10	44
Redditch	0	14	18	32
Worcester	16	0	20	36
Wychavon	40	0	20	60
Wyre Forest	30	0	0	30
Sub-Region	112	22	68	202

includes 20 pitch private site for specific group

The greatest amount of provision required is related to:

- The present level of overcrowding on approved sites,
- The small number of permanent unauthorised encampments, and
- The growth requirement from a largely settled population.

Apart from Bromsgrove and Redditch, the largely settled population contains a high proportion of families from which household growth can be expected.

The study recommends that as almost one third of the provision required is related to the very transient groups of mainly Irish Travellers –it would be more appropriate to establish Temporary Stopping Places, with a minimum and unobtrusive level of facilities, that could be brought into use as and when required. Accommodation for Travelling Showpeople will normally be acquired and managed privately, so site identification in conjunction with the Showmen’s Guild will be a sufficient response. Sites for permanent pitches for Gypsy and Traveller families will need to be predominantly on sites that are acquired, managed and developed by local authorities or RSLs, and can receive 100% government funding.

This strategy draws down from a wide range of sources of information that have led us to establish our mission, vision and goals and ultimately our action plan. A

number of these have already been discussed in earlier sections of the document but sources also include:

1. A wide range of specific studies carried out by the individual local authorities that have informed their housing and planning strategies.
2. data from the partner agencies that help to inform the housing challenges e.g. National Health Service falls data and housing association stock condition information
3. Wide ranging consultation with residents, representative groups and partners.

Consultation during the development of this strategy was linked with that undertaken to develop the Supporting People Strategy, the Older Peoples Strategy, the Domestic Abuse Strategy and the Joint Commissioning Strategy where possible. This helped to reduce consultation fatigue, achieve better value for money and ensure that outcomes were effectively linked.

In addition to looking inwardly at the issues facing Worcestershire we have sought to identify and use good practice from elsewhere through beacon council and good practice visits.

Review of Rural Enabling Across Worcestershire

A review of rural enabling activity was undertaken within Worcestershire during 2011 with support from consultants, Rural Housing Solutions. This review was to evaluate performance within the county, identify barriers to affordable housing delivery, look at best practice, review the governance, structure and funding arrangements with a view to improving joint working with partners and the speed of delivery.

Four main challenges were identified as follows;

1. Gaining and maintaining political and executive leadership

Includes developing a Communications Strategy, an ambassadorial role by a senior councillor for each Local Authority area and to ensure rural enabling is a golden thread running through corporate plans and strategies.

2. Providing a supportive strategic policy framework

Includes exploring the use of Home Choice Plus choice based lettings scheme and other techniques to inform local housing needs data, undertaking specific rural analysis as part of the SHMA, developing more proactive planning policies and a more responsive approach to rural affordable housing involving local communities

3. Securing capital and revenue funding

Includes ensuring local funding and targets for rural enabling within the Local Investment Plan, introduction of tariffs to support rural community

infrastructure, planning policies which respond to lack of funding by considering option of cross subsidy, longer term sustainable funding for the Rural Housing Enabler service which is value for money.

4. Performance management and delivery of a rural programme

Includes the establishment of robust governance arrangements for rural enabling across a range of partners/funders, clear Terms of Reference and decision making, common Performance Management Framework, audit of enabling resources and agreed work plan, implementation of a delivery team approach and increased speed of delivery

A sub-group of the Worcestershire Rural Housing Enabler Steering Group are using this work to develop a forward Action Plan for the county.

4. VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

Our **Vision** is:

"The right home, at the right time, in the right place"

This means that we want every household in Worcestershire to be able to access housing that suits their needs and circumstances when they need it. It is implicit in the vision that we want all housing to reach an appropriate standard, currently the Decent Homes Standard, and that the right home means one that is affordable to the households budget. However we do not mean that changing household circumstances should always result in the need to move home. Our vision embraces a much wider approach which always involves a housing options assessment to ensure household needs are met.

Our **Mission** is:

"We will work with individuals, communities and partners to deliver housing opportunities so that people have the right homes, at the right time and in the right place"

In order to achieve our vision and provide focus for our mission we have identified four primary goals. These are underpinned by four goals that will ensure that our work in delivering the primary goals creates sustainable communities, provides value for money, enables equality of access to all and helps to combat climate change.

Our **Primary Goals** are:

(all goals are to be achieved between 2011 – 2016 unless otherwise specified)

- **Better use of existing homes** - We will maximise the use of the existing housing stock by:
 - Bringing **700** empty properties back into use,
 - Adapting **2500** for disabled occupants through Disabled Facilities Grants & Registered Provider schemes,
 - Helping **400** households with a disable member to move to suitable alternative accommodation,
 - Helping **1200** households to move who have more than one bedroom surplus to their requirements,
 - Helping **3000** overcrowded households move to a more suitable home.

- **Delivering new homes** - We will enable **500** new affordable homes which meet local needs in terms of property type, size, tenure and affordability by 31st March 2012.
- **Improving the condition of existing homes** -We will improve the condition of 2500 private sector homes using direct action of the local authority by 2016 to improve peoples' quality of life.
- **Providing housing related support** - We will seek to maintain 42,000 positive outcomes for vulnerable people

Our **Underpinning Goals** are:

- To ensure that our plans contribute to the development of sustainable communities and economic success for Worcestershire having regard to the themes and cross cutting themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy, both within new housing developments and our regeneration activity.
- To adopt a strategic commissioning approach, including identification of needs; gap analysis; prioritisation; outcome based commissioning; monitoring and review, to ensure the right solutions are provided.
- To embrace the diversity that exists within Worcestershire and ensure that we plan to meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- To ensure that services are delivered efficiently balancing performance, customer satisfaction and cost

The way in which we will deliver our goals is outlined in the following sections together with a detailed action plan for each goal.

5. GOAL 1 MAKING THE BEST USE OF EXISTING HOMES

What we know

Achievements to Date

- Empty Homes Strategies or policies are in place for each district.
- 138 empty homes brought back into use during 2009 - 2010.
- 2 authorities assisted 72 applicants to downsize through financial incentives during 2009 - 2010
- 5 authorities assisted 158 applicants to downsize through allocations during 2009/2010.
- Access and use of their existing home was enabled for 1373 disabled people through provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (financially completed cases) during 2007-2010.

Supporting Evidence of Future Challenges

- Reliance on the Private Rented Sector is growing because of limitations in social housing supply, and because first time buyers cannot afford owner occupation until much later now.
- The Private Rented Sector is increasingly important in preventing homelessness and widening choice through Choice Based Lettings. Demand for homelessness services is predicted to grow.
- Many private landlords are inexperienced – an estimated three quarters of landlords are individuals or couples, the majority of whom don't let properties as their main profession.
- Reuse of empty homes is seen as a priority by local people – 97.2% of respondents to the Housing Strategy survey.
- High levels of under-occupation in socially rented housing stock evidenced by surveys in Wychavon and Bromsgrove and this is likely to be replicated across the County.
- Empty homes are a problem – although only 2.1% of the total housing stock there were 5,248 empty homes at the end of March 2010, of which 2,543 were privately owned and vacant for more than 6 months.
- Number of homeless preventions through rent deposit schemes is 491 during 2007 - 2010.

- Over supply of affordable sheltered housing (1,171 units in excess of projected need).
- 1696 households on the Home Choice register are living in overcrowded conditions.
- Demand for adaptations for disabled people is high – 665 customers were waiting for Disabled Facilities Grant approval at the end of October 2010.

Future actions to address the challenges

Goal 1 – Better use of existing homes

Links to other Strategies and Plans – W’shire Sustainable Communities Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Local Empty Property Action Plans, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies, W’shire Community Safety Action Plan, W’shire Supporting People Strategy, Older People’s Strategy, Registered Providers Business Plan

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Changes
1.	Increase the number of empty homes brought back into use – homes that stand empty are a wasted resource and have a detrimental effect on neighbour hoods	a. Develop a countywide toolkit for bringing empty homes back into use, including: improving informal advice and encouragement through practical measures such as flats above shops, working with RP’s to purchase or lease and to use enforcement powers but as a last resort	Existing staff resources	Worcester C C	April 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - HCA priority - New Homes Bonus - Community Safety
		b. Attract available Government funding to maximise the number of empty properties brought back into use - The Government is exploring a range of measures to bring empty homes into use	National funding Local Investment Plan Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities / CHOG	2011 - 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - HCA priority - New Homes Bonus

Goal 1 – Better use of existing homes

Links to other Strategies and Plans – W’shire Sustainable Communities Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Local Empty Property Action Plans, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies, W’shire Community Safety Action Plan, W’shire Supporting People Strategy, Older People’s Strategy, Registered Providers Business Plan

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Changes
2.	Reduce the level of under occupation in affordable housing	a. Develop a Countywide approach to identifying under-occupation –	Existing staff resources	CHOG	March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced funding to deliver new affordable housing means there is a need to better utilise existing stock - Link to 2 year minimum tenancy proposal by coalition government
		b. Use the Allocation policy to facilitate moves from under occupied affordable homes to more suitable accommodation	Existing staff resources	HC+ Steering Group & Redditch BC	2011 - 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced funding to deliver new affordable housing means there is a need to better utilise existing stock
		c. Encourage under-occupiers to move to smaller accommodation through the development of a comprehensive package of incentives eg. Data research, financial incentives, advice, options interviews, support to	Existing staff resources	Wychavon D C	March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced funding to deliver new affordable housing means there is a need to better utilise existing stock

Goal 1 – Better use of existing homes

Links to other Strategies and Plans – W’shire Sustainable Communities Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Local Empty Property Action Plans, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies, W’shire Community Safety Action Plan, W’shire Supporting People Strategy, Older People’s Strategy, Registered Providers Business Plan

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Changes
		move, creating a protocol with other partner agencies				
3.	Increase the use of the private rented sector	a. Use choice based lettings schemes to promote the choice of privately rented homes as an alternative housing option	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities	2011- 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local decisions – a fairer future for social housing - Reduced funding to deliver new affordable housing means there is a need to better utilise existing stock
		b. Actively work with private landlords to promote a good joint understanding, foster good working practices and overcome obstacles to providing homes to people in need eg local authorities with voluntary accreditation schemes can help landlords to self-regulate – an extremely cost	To be locally determined	All Local Authorities	March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local decisions – a fairer future for social housing - Reduced funding to deliver new affordable housing means there is a need to better utilise

Goal 1 – Better use of existing homes

Links to other Strategies and Plans – W’shire Sustainable Communities Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Local Empty Property Action Plans, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies, W’shire Community Safety Action Plan, W’shire Supporting People Strategy, Older People’s Strategy, Registered Providers Business Plan

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Changes
		effective way to improve standards in the sector in preference to more expensive enforcement action.				existing stock
4.	Reduce the number of people living in overcrowded conditions	a. Work with partners to develop a toolkit of measures for use across the county to tackle overcrowding e.g effective allocation policies, managing houses in multiple occupation (HMO’s) through licensing and registers	Existing staff resources	CHOG	March 2013	- Further powers to be introduced by Government
5.	Enable people to make the right choice of home and where appropriate repair / adapt to meet the needs of the occupants	a. Further develop the housing options approach in ensuring the right housing solution is found which considers household needs and also achieves best value for money in service provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - homeless prevention - adaptations - support to move to the a more suitable property 	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities – Worcestershire Care & Repair	2011-2016	- Best use of additional resources provided by Government towards provision of DFGs and homelessness.

Goal 1 – Better use of existing homes

Links to other Strategies and Plans – W’shire Sustainable Communities Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Local Empty Property Action Plans, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies, W’shire Community Safety Action Plan, W’shire Supporting People Strategy, Older People’s Strategy, Registered Providers Business Plan

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Changes
		b. Research means of ensuring more effective use of the resources available to repair homes by offering financial assistance not grants	Availability of Kickstart funding and recyclable LA financial assistance	All Local Authorities	2011-2013	- Better use of existing resources
		c. Improve housing opportunities for single people by developing a shared housing living model across all tenures	Existing resources	Bromsgrove DC	March 2014	- Housing Benefit Reforms
6.	To create move on opportunities within supported housing and floating support services	a. Work with partners to provide support to enable people to move on to full independence from supported housing and floating support	Existing resources	All Local Authorities / Worcestershire County Council / Primary Care Trust / Probation	2011 – 2016	- Government Priority
		b. Free up supported accommodation by facilitating move on eg through choice based lettings schemes and implementation of the Move On Protocol Plan (MOPP)	Existing resources	HC+ Steering Group & Redditch BC	2011 - 2013	- Better use of existing resources

Goal 1 – Better use of existing homes

Links to other Strategies and Plans – W’shire Sustainable Communities Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Local Empty Property Action Plans, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies, W’shire Community Safety Action Plan, W’shire Supporting People Strategy, Older People’s Strategy, Registered Providers Business Plan

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Changes
7.	To address the issue of over/under and inappropriate supply of sheltered and supported housing within the county	a. Undertake strategic service reviews of mental health, learning disability, physical disabilities, domestic abuse and chaotic lifestyles	Existing resources	Supporting People	2011 - 2016	- Government priority - Better use of existing resources
		b. Use existing research and evidence to determine whether the best use is being made of current supported / sheltered housing supply and where appropriate re-model to alternative uses	Existing resources	CHOG	2011 - 2016	- Government priority - Better use of existing resources

6. GOAL 2 DELIVERING NEW HOMES

Achievements to date

- In spite of the impact of the decline in the economy, 1386 new homes were delivered in 2008/09 against the Local Area Agreement target of 1830 (NI 154). In the early years of the Local Area Agreement performance exceeded this target.
- 501 new affordable homes were delivered in 2009/10 exceeding the Local Area Agreement target of 380 (NI 155) by 121. In total since 2005 2,184 affordable homes have been developed.
- Standard heads of terms for section 106 agreements (planning gain) agreed for use across the County.
- As part of the Worcestershire Total Place project a review of property in the ownership of public bodies has been completed and a “property club” established to consider opportunities for better use of the estate, including potential for housing development.
- A Rural Housing Enabler has been employed with joint funding (local authority and housing association) and a review of activity across Worcestershire has recently been completed providing recommendations for future improvement.
- Social Housing Grant invested in Worcestershire has increased through lobbying during the 2008 – 11 period.
- Joint bids have been made for a rural housing delivery programme
- Joint work with Supporting People is ensuring co-ordinated development of supported housing schemes.
- Joint working across Worcestershire by housing and planning officers has enabled the Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.
- 194 units of extra care housing have been commissioned jointly.

Supporting Evidence of Future Challenges

- 2,277 additional affordable homes are needed annually.
- 88.6% of residents surveyed during development of this strategy said affordable housing is a priority.
- As well as the need for additional homes there is a mismatch between supply and the aspirational needs of some households, e.g. demand for a mix of property types and sizes to enable older people to downsize.
- Property prices are high compared to national and regional averages, particularly in Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills and Wychavon.
- There is a significant affordability gap for those with average or below average incomes – the house price to earnings ratio² in 2009/10 was 7.27.
- Affordability is a particular problem in rural areas – the recent review of rural housing activity has provided some new challenges including the need for robust housing needs information and greater support at parish level to promote delivery of new homes.
- The affordability gap is leading to lower turnover in the social rented stock with consequent increases to waiting and transfer lists.
- Inward migration continues to have a significant impact driving up land and property prices – in 2008/09 Worcestershire experienced net inward migration of 1,500 households from the rest of the West Midlands and 500 from abroad.
- Most of the districts have a low supply of private rented accommodation.
- The level of empty homes in most districts is low and is projected to decrease offering limited opportunities for use as affordable housing.
- A significant loss of affordable housing through the Right to Buy has not been matched by new development.
- Local authority and housing association land banks have been exhausted.
- High flood risk affects potential development in some parts of the County.
- The current economic climate has affected developer's ability to deliver affordable housing, particularly on brownfield sites and in lower value areas like Kidderminster.
- NIMBYism in high value rural areas, particularly from people moving into the area, making delivery of affordable housing extremely difficult.
- Limited information exists about the need for housing by some groups, including key workers and migrant workers
- 1938 units of extra care housing are needed by 2031.
- 4636 units of sheltered housing for sale are needed.
- 53 pitches have been delivered and a further 149 additional pitches are needed for Gypsies and Travellers by 2012.

² Lower quartile house prices from the Land Registry compared to the workplace based annual income of full time employees.

Future actions to address the challenges

Goal 2 – Delivering new homes						
Links to other Strategies and plans – W'shire Sustainable Communities Plan, Supporting People Strategy, W'shire Local Investment Plan, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Plan, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Plan, Older People's Strategy, Dementia Strategy, W'shire Homelessness Strategy						
Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
1.	To implement the government directive to reduce tenancies for life	a. To develop and implement a Tenure Strategy which will effectively manage the supply of affordable housing to meet housing need	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities, RP's, HCA	2012	- Government priority - Local decisions – a fairer future for social housing - Localism Bill
2.	To attract external investment into the county to support maximum delivery to meet needs of the diverse communities	b. Implement and continually review the Local Investment Plan which sets out partner investment over the period 2011 -14	Skills, Land, Money as set out in the LIP	All Local Authorities, RP's, HCA	2011 - 14	- Reduced funding for new affordable housing
		c. Develop a Supported Housing Commissioning Plan for the County which co-ordinates capital and revenue investment	Supporting People, HCA, RP's, LA's, Social Care, Health etc.	CHOG and Supporting People	2011 - 12	- Government Priority
3.	To embed 'fit for purpose' structural arrangements within the county to	a. Keep under review the governance structure & groups for place shaping	Existing staff resources	Place Shaping Theme Group	2011 - 12	

Goal 2 – Delivering new homes

Links to other Strategies and plans – W’shire Sustainable Communities Plan, Supporting People Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Plan, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Plan, Older People’s Strategy, Dementia Strategy, W’shire Homelessness Strategy

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
	enable the delivery of affordable housing	across Worcestershire				
4.	To develop provision to meet the diverse needs of our communities	a. Fully utilise and review the housing needs evidence available to bring forward and identify the right numbers and mix of affordable housing (i.e. types, size and tenure)	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities	2011-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Local decisions – a fairer future for social housing
		b. Maximise the delivery of sustainable and affordable homes through ensuring clear planning policies are in place.	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities	2011-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Local decisions – a fairer future for social housing
		c. To deliver the supported housing needs identified within the Worcestershire Supported Housing Commissioning Plan	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities	2011-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Local decisions – a fairer future for social housing

Goal 2 – Delivering new homes

Links to other Strategies and plans – W'shire Sustainable Communities Plan, Supporting People Strategy, W'shire Local Investment Plan, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Plan, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Plan, Older People's Strategy, Dementia Strategy, W'shire Homelessness Strategy

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
		d. Complete a new Gypsy & Traveller needs assessment	Existing staff resources	CHOG	March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Local decisions – a fairer future for social housing
4.	To ensure the right commissioning partners are engaged and encouraged to invest resources in Worcestershire	a. Review the existing RP commissioning partner arrangements to have regard to government changes and the views of the HCA and develop new partnership working	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities	March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources - ARM
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To undertake further research to bridge gaps in the strategic housing evidence base 	a. Ensure that the strategic housing evidence base is kept up to date and that further detailed work is undertaken as required subject to available resource eg SHMA and updates	LA funding – to be determined locally	All Local Authorities	2011-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources

7 GOAL 3 IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF EXISTING HOMES

Achievements to date

- Bid to the Kickstart programme to draw down funding earmarked for Worcestershire to begin to offer loans and equity release to households to improve the condition of their property.
- Success in tackling fuel poverty (NI 187) has been evidenced by a reduction in the proportion of homes with SAP ratings less than 35 to 8.82% (2009/10 target 9.18%) and an increase in the proportion of homes with SAP ratings above 65 to 43.34% (2009/10 target 38.23%).
- 1345 homes each year have been improved through use of Discretionary Housing Assistance during 2007/10
- 1417 private rented homes inspected following complaints in 2007/10 reflects performance in 5 authority areas
- 1443 homes improved through informal and enforcement action during 2007/10 reflects county wide performance

Supporting Evidence of Future Challenges

- 88.7% of respondents to our Housing Strategy survey said improving housing conditions is a priority.
- 89.1% said improving energy efficiency is a priority.
- Most of the social rented stock in Worcestershire met the Decent Homes Standard at the end of March 2010.
- Around 39% of homes are "non-decent" (75,992), and in Malvern Hills this rises to 50%.
- The total investment required to address conditions is £635 million.
- 18.1% of non-decent homes are occupied by vulnerable people. A staggering 41% of all vulnerable households are classified as living in non decent homes.
- The proportion of homes failing the Housing Health and Safety Rating System standard is higher than average at 28%.
- 53,601 Category 1 hazards exist in homes across the county.
- 20% (38,571) of dwellings fail the Decent Homes Standard as a result of inadequate thermal comfort compared to 17% nationally. The average cost of remedying this is just over £7,000.
- There were 334 winter deaths during 2009/10 within Worcestershire.
- 14% of households in Worcestershire experience fuel poverty (22,816) compared to the national average (12%).
- The number of houses in multiple occupation is varied across the county, however evidence consistently shows these properties can exhibit some of the poorer standards.

- 3.4 billion is paid in housing benefit to neglectful landlords. Local Authorities can use their powers
- It is more difficult for local housing authorities to improve property standards and meet the demands of an increasing need for adaptations due to budgetary constraints.

Future actions to address the challenges

Goal 3 – Improving the Condition of Existing Homes

Links with other Strategies and Plans – W’shire Sustainable Community Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Community Safety Action Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Plan, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Plan

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
1.	Improve the property standards (including energy efficiency) across tenures using all of the tools at our disposal	a. Develop a consistent approach to working with private sector landlords, including a common accreditation scheme, through establishing a working group comprising the local authorities and landlord representatives	Existing staff and partner resources	Redditch B C	March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
		b. Use enforcement powers appropriately to enforce property standards across all tenures	Existing staff resources	All Local authorities	2011-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
		c. Move away from awarding capital grants to recycling housing assistance and equity release products	Existing staff and Worcestershire Care & Repair	All Local authorities	2011-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources

Goal 3 – Improving the Condition of Existing Homes

Links with other Strategies and Plans – W’shire Sustainable Community Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Community Safety Action Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Plan, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Plan

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
			resources			
		d. Ensure that in developing a consistent approach through Worcestershire Care & Repair that there is efficient use of allocated financial resources e.g. improved procurement practices	Existing staff and Worcestershire Care & Repair resources	Worcestershire Care & Repair	March 2012 And then annual review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
		e. Review and re-tender the Home Improvement Agency services	Existing staff & resources	CHOG Supporting People	2012/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
2.	To attract investment to help improve property standards including energy efficiency	a. Explore opportunities with private industry to provide greater levels of funding and ways to improve property standards	Existing staff resources	All Local authorities WCC	2011-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making best use of existing and new resources - Service improvement - Green Deal

Goal 3 – Improving the Condition of Existing Homes

Links with other Strategies and Plans – W’shire Sustainable Community Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Community Safety Action Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Plan, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Plan

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
		b. Prepare for and maximise take up within the county of nationally funded schemes	Existing staff and Worcestershire Care & Repair resources	All Local authorities SLA with procured Agent	2011-2016	- Making best use of existing and new resources - Green Deal
3.	Support households to take responsibility for improving their homes and reducing fuel poverty	a. Apply a consistent countywide approach to empowering people to improve their quality of life through developing a toolkit of information, skills and training, discounts, funding and loan products.	Existing staff and partner resources	CHOG	2011-2016	- Empowering local people - Making best use of existing resources

8 GOAL 4 PROVIDING HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT

Achievements to Date

- The proportion of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living (NI 142) is on track to reach the 2010/11 target of 98.02% (out-turn for 2009/10 was 98.01%).
- Over 20,000 vulnerable people were being supported in 2009/2010 realising 42,000 positive outcomes for those people.
- An assessment of the value of Supporting People provision has shown a saving of £50m each year in other budgets (e.g. health and social care)
- The Comprehensive Area Assessment found that more older people are being helped to live at home, adults with learning disabilities are being given more choice about how to live independently and more people with physical and mental disabilities are living at home with care and support.
- A countywide Choice Based Lettings scheme was introduced in September 2008 with common allocation and banding arrangements (in all districts except Redditch BC which may join the scheme in 2011). This has contributed to a reduction in the time taken to re-let vacant housing association properties and greater transparency about the process and satisfaction for customers.
- Levels of statutory homelessness and numbers of people in temporary accommodation have declined due to homelessness prevention activity which helped 3058 households during 2007/10.
- New housing support and other services have been commissioned following research for the Countywide Homeless Strategy and Supporting People strategic reviews. These include the development of a joint 16/17 yr old young persons protocol across the county, a young peoples support service provided by St Basils in the north of the county, the opening of a Foyer in Bromsgrove and the development of The Bubble a new gateway service to help young people access accommodation and support in the south.
- Research commissioned into the housing and related support needs and aspirations of older people living within Worcestershire over the next 20 years.
- Development of a new Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy and progress towards a new Worcestershire Older People's Strategy.
- A countywide Home Improvement Agency service was jointly commissioned in 2010 and the new service is being provided by Festival Housing Group.

- The implementation of a Countywide Gateway software system from November 2010 for identification of available support and bed spaces for people with chaotic lifestyles
- Successful application to Department of Health of pump prime funding to help develop a core and cluster scheme to provide supported accommodation for people with substance misuse/alcohol issues and creation of seven accommodation units specifically for substance misuse/alcohol customers in the County by Stonham Home Group.
- Work with partners to help offenders back into community including following the Regional Offender Protocol, utilising the new Countywide Integrated Offender Management Scheme.

Supporting Evidence of Future Challenges

- The ageing population is generating a need for advice about housing options; support and adaptations help older people maintain independence.
- Projected increase in population of older people by 2031 – 52% over 60; 155% over 85.
- 87.8% of people surveyed said support for older people to make housing choices is important.
- 7,000 people have dementia and this is expected to increase to 21,000 in next 20 years. There is an identified requirement for housing for people with dementia of 838.
- Growing number of older people with learning disabilities rising to 6,000 over next 20 years.
- High levels of falls by older people.
- 35% of older people responding to a survey said they needed practical support– gardening, shopping, cooking etc.
- Life expectancy in deprived areas is low.
- Slow 'move-on' from supported housing schemes for clients experiencing domestic violence or suffering with mental health difficulties is reducing their effectiveness.
- Schemes to provide new supported housing are hampered by lack of certainty about future revenue funding.
- A survey of clients of the Drug, Alcohol Action Teams in 2006 showed that 23% had a clear housing need.
- A review of single homeless people receiving support demonstrated a need for finance related support and support in accessing healthcare, training and education.
- Better understanding required about the support needs of Gypsies and Travellers through a planned strategic review within Supporting People.

Future actions to address the challenges

Goal 4 – Providing housing related support

Links with other Strategies & Plans – W’shire Sustainable Community Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Older Person’s Strategy, Dementia Strategy, W’shire Domestic Abuse Strategy, W’shire Telecare Strategy, Supporting People Strategy, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Investment Plan, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Strategy

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
1.	Manage financial reductions to the Supporting People programme whilst continuing to meet housing related support needs in a more targeted way	a. Manage the budget reductions by prioritising service provision, benchmarking value for money. undertaking targeted strategic reviews, measuring social outcomes being achieved.	Existing staff resources	All Local authorities / Worcestershire County Council / Primary Care Trust / Probation	2011-2016	- Making best use of existing and new resources
		b. Support and implement the Supporting People Strategy. This will include; needs research, strategic reviews, re-commissioning of services, addressing identified problems and the commissioning of new services	Existing staff resources	SPCB	2011-2016	- Making best use of existing and new resources
		c. To work with the Joint Commissioning Unit to develop financially sustainable models for Extra Care provision and implementation.	Existing staff resources	CHOG	March 2012	- Making best use of existing and new resources

Goal 4 – Providing housing related support

Links with other Strategies & Plans – W’shire Sustainable Community Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Older Person’s Strategy, Dementia Strategy, W’shire Domestic Abuse Strategy, W’shire Telecare Strategy, Supporting People Strategy, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Investment Plan, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Strategy

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
2.	To mitigate risks of increasing levels of homelessness and to address the needs of those who become homeless	a. Review and renew the Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy and action plan.	Existing staff resources	County Homeless Implementation Group (CHIG)	March 2012	- Making best use of existing and new resources
		b. Focus on increasing homeless preventions through a toolkit of measures available across the county	Existing staff resources	County Homeless Implementation Group (CHIG)	March 2013	- Making best use of existing and new resources
		c. Monitor the impact of benefit reforms on the levels of homelessness and worklessness, responding to any areas of concern	Existing staff resources	County Homelessness Implementation Group	2011 - ongoing	- Making best use of existing and new resources
		d. To review the joint working arrangements & funding for Countywide Posts	Existing staff resources	CHOG	2011	- Making best use of existing and new resources
3.	To provide equal access of opportunity to affordable housing and other housing options	a. Use the information we know about need for supported housing and floating support to ensure that new provision is appropriate.	Existing staff resource	All Local authorities	2011-2016	- Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources

Goal 4 – Providing housing related support

Links with other Strategies & Plans – W’shire Sustainable Community Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Older Person’s Strategy, Dementia Strategy, W’shire Domestic Abuse Strategy, W’shire Telecare Strategy, Supporting People Strategy, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Investment Plan, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Strategy

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
		b. Consider the needs of BME households, Gypsies & travellers and migrant workers to ensure an inclusive approach to accommodation and support provision	Existing staff resource	All Local authorities	2011-2016	- Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
		c. Keep the allocation policy in use within the county under review to ensure appropriate accessibility and consistency / fairness to all residents and to respond to proposed Government changes.	Existing staff resource	Home Choice Plus Steering Group	2011-2016	- Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
		d. To enhance the range and consistency of advice and information with various media outlets in a leaner way.	Existing staff resource	All Local authorities	2011-2016	- Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
		a. Consider impact of the	Existing staff	All Local	2011-2016	- Government priority - Making best use of

Goal 4 – Providing housing related support

Links with other Strategies & Plans – W’shire Sustainable Community Strategy, W’shire Local Investment Plan, W’shire Homelessness Strategy, Older Person’s Strategy, Dementia Strategy, W’shire Domestic Abuse Strategy, W’shire Telecare Strategy, Supporting People Strategy, Mental Health Joint Commissioning Investment Plan, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Strategy

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
		personalisation agenda when developing or reviewing strategic housing procedures, policies, service improvement plans and strategies.	resource	authorities		existing and new resources

9. UNDERPINNING GOALS

- i. To ensure that our plans contribute to the development of sustainable communities and economic success for Worcestershire including future proofing for climate change and having regard to the themes and cross cutting themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy, both within new housing developments and our regeneration activity.
- ii. To adopt a strategic commissioning approach, including identification of needs; gap analysis; prioritisation; outcome based commissioning; monitoring and review, to ensure the right solutions are provided.
- iii. To embrace the diversity that exists within Worcestershire and ensure that we plan to meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- iv. To ensure that services are delivered efficiently balancing performance, customer satisfaction and cost

Achievements to date

- Development of the Social Outcome Framework for Supporting People services
- Joint partner commissioning of the new Worcestershire Care & Repair Agency
- Implementation of sub-regional choice based lettings scheme called 'Home Choice Plus' across five Worcestershire Local Authorities and Stratford on Avon D C
- The joint funding of a Worcestershire Rural Housing Enabler, County Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator and Housing Substance Misuse Development Officer posts.
- The development of the "Areas of Highest Need" projects within the six Local authorities to tackle deprived communities with LAA funding and further work being undertaken through Total Place pilot.
- Development of the Re-Wyre regeneration initiative in Wyre Forest to tackle areas of market failure.
- Redditch B C successful gained government funding under the Enhanced Housing Options programme
- Development of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan with input from across the County

- Undertaken customer satisfaction surveys relating to homelessness and choice based lettings
- Joint procurement of various research / projects to meet countywide strategic housing objectives,

Supporting Evidence of Future Challenges

- Worcester City, Wyre Forest and Redditch have been identified as a significant area of deprivation within the top 10% nationally. The type of deprivation is within housing, access to services especially within rural areas and education. It should be noted that the general affluence of the area hides some big differences in some areas.
- Health and economic inequalities identified in Redditch e.g. people die earlier, more babies have a poor start in life and grow up in families on low incomes, young people attain lower educational results and go on to have fewer job opportunities when they leave school.
- Economic decline – increased benefit claims and worklessness.
- Infrastructure is required to deliver sustainable growth particularly within Worcester City as the designated area of significant growth.
- 93.6% of respondents to survey said local services to sustain rural villages is important.
- Planning and delivering services equitably.
- Ensuring effective and structured links between housing and wider objectives e.g. education and health.

Future actions to address the challenges

Underpinning Goals – Providing housing related support						
Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
1.	To ensure that our plans contribute to the development of sustainable communities and economic success for Worcestershire having regard to the themes and cross cutting themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy, both within new housing developments and our regeneration activity & NHS reforms.	a. To imbed new structural arrangements within the county to bring together housing, planning, regeneration, economic development, health and social care partners with the objective of adding community benefit through the place shaping role	Existing staff resources	All Local authorities	2011-2014	- Making best use of existing and new resources
		b. To establish strong links with the new Local Enterprise Partnership once established	Existing staff resources	All Local authorities	2011-2014	- Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
2.	To adopt a strategic commissioning approach, including identification of needs; gap analysis; prioritisation; outcome based commissioning; monitoring and review, to ensure the right solutions are	a. To formally imbed this strategic commissioning approach within key strategic housing partnerships to ensure effective and efficient work processes particularly around procurement.	Existing staff resources	CHOG	2011-2016	- Making best use of existing and new resources

Underpinning Goals – Providing housing related support

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
	provided.					
		b. To develop an outcomes framework to evidence the value of housing activity both for the local authorities and other key statutory partners	Existing staff resources	Worcester City	March 2013	- Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
3.	To embrace the diversity that exists within Worcestershire and ensure that we plan to meet the diverse needs of our communities.	a. To ensure equalities standards are met within all housing procedures, policies, plans and strategies.	Existing staff resources	All Local authorities	2011-2016	- Government priority
		b. Where appropriate to undertake Equalities Impact Assessments and produce plans for improvement where necessary	Existing staff resources	All Local authorities	2011-2016	- Government priority
4.	To ensure that services are delivered efficiently balancing performance, customer satisfaction and cost	a. To work together across the six strategic housing authorities to identify areas for improved joint working and potential efficiencies	Existing staff resources	All Local authorities	2011 - 2016	- Government priority - Making best use of existing and new resources
		b. To work together across the six strategic housing authorities to test customer satisfaction in areas of work such as Housing advice,	Local Authority funding – to be determined	All Local authorities	2011-2016	

Underpinning Goals – Providing housing related support

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Government Proposals
		homelessness, housing development and delivery of private sector grants	locally			

10. RESOURCING OUR STRATEGY

We have started to assess the resources we expect to be available to all partners in order to deliver our strategy over the next 5 years. These include:

- Capital expenditure by the local authorities for improving housing standards and subsidising the delivery of new affordable homes.
- Funding available to enable people to move to more appropriate accommodation making best use of existing homes.
- Homes and Communities Agency and housing association subsidy for delivery of new affordable homes.
- Revenue funding from local authority and key partner agency budgets, Government grants and incentives and Supporting People funding.
- Staffing capacity dedicated to strategic housing employed within local authorities, contracted agencies e.g. home improvement and housing advice agencies and partners e.g. housing associations.

Most of the resources described above are shown in appendix 2 to this strategy and details of the resources available within each local authority area are available on request. We will continue to develop the resource information base across the county during the life of this Strategy.

11. MONITORING AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

We need to monitor progress against our goals to ensure that our action plan continues to be relevant. We have therefore established clear definitions for the goals that will enable us to measure progress in a consistent way

We are mindful of the need to ensure that our information is kept up to date and we will do this through a mixture of annual updates and full newly commissioned research as outlined below:

- Housing market assessment annual update (2010/11)
- New Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2011/12)
- New Gypsy & Traveller Needs Assessment (2011/12)

In order to ensure that we are clear about the progress we are making and any remedial actions required we have adopted the following monitoring arrangements:

- Progress monitored by the Local Authority Chief Housing Officers Group on a quarterly basis and then regularly reported to the Strategic Place Shaping Theme Group. Annual review of action plan and midterm review of full Housing Strategy in consultation with partners and customers to include new actions where required.
- Annual updates to County action plan and annual review of overall achievement to include local action plans.
- Key statistics to be monitored and updated annually.
- Mid-term review event with stakeholders and customers.
- District Action Plans to be updated quarterly and reported back through appropriate local monitoring mechanisms.

In drawing up the strategy at this time we are aware that the new coalition government has announced a range of potential changes that will affect this strategy. In particular there are proposals to radically revise the planning/housing framework. In addition the forthcoming comprehensive spending review may impose constraints on the resources available to us. The strategy will be updated in the light of these changes and the responses of the councils to those changes.

12. KEY CONTACTS IN EACH OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

If you would like any further advice on any of the information contained in this document then please contact either of the following officers:

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE BASE

Worcestershire - Information & Policy Base		
Strategic Documents:		
South Housing Market Assessment	South Housing Market Area	SHMA April 2007 and updates for 07/08, 08/09 and shortly for 09/10 http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/community-and-living/research-and-intelligence/housing-and-economy/housing/shma.aspx
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment	South Worcestershire Wyre Forest DC	http://www.swjcs.org/html/shlaa_2edition.html Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Report - December 2009
LDF - Core Strategy	South Worcestershire Wyre Forest DC	http://www.swjcs.org/ Local Development Framework - Core Strategy - Preferred options paper - January 2009
Affordable Housing SPD	Malvern Hills DC Worcester CC Wychavon DC	http://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/cms/planning/supplementary-guidance/affordable-housing.aspx http://www.worcester.gov.uk/index.php?id=1127 http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/cms/pdf/wdc-planning-spg-affordable-housing.pdf

	Wyre Forest DC	Wyre Forest District Local Framework - Supplementary planning document planning obligations - February 2007
Design SPD	South Worcestershire	http://www.worcester.gov.uk/index.php?id=1748
Housing Needs Survey	South Worcestershire	http://worcestershire.whub.org.uk/cms/community-and-living/research-and-intelligence/housing-and-economy/housing/south-worcs-housing-needs.aspx
Homelessness research	Worcestershire	http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/pdf/County%20Homelessness%20Strategy.pdf
Older peoples needs assessment	Worcestershire	Research into the Housing and Support Needs of Older People within Worcestershire. http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/health-and-social-care/supporting-people/strategic-reviews.aspx
Disabled peoples needs assessment	Worcestershire	Countywide Disabled Peoples Needs Assessment being progressed (Supporting People/Physical Disability Team)
Young peoples needs assessment	Worcestershire	http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/health-and-social-care/supporting-people/strategic-reviews.aspx
BME needs assessment	Worcestershire	http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/community-and-living/research-and-intelligence/population/ethnicity-projections.aspx
Gypsy and Traveller needs	Worcestershire	http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/pdf/GTAA_FinalReport.pdf

assessment		
Migrant workers needs assessment	Wychavon DC	http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/cms/business/market-towns/rural-economy.aspx http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/cms/community-and-living/equality-and-diversity/migrant-workers.aspx
Existing housing condition/suitability:		
Private sector housing condition survey	Malvern Hills DC Worcester CC Wychavon DC Wyre Forest D C	BRE survey - details to follow http://www.worcester.gov.uk/fileadmin/assets/pdf/Housing/private_sector/FINAL_STOCK_CONDITION_SURVEY_AUGUST_2004.pdf http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/cms/pdf/wdc-housing-ps-stock-condition-survey.pdf http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/cms/pdf/wdc-housing-ps-hmo-report-2005.pdf Private Sector House Condition Survey 2007 - Final Report - November 2007 Need Link

APPENDIX 2 RESOURCES AVAILABLE

	2009/10 out-turn	2010/11 planned	2011/12 proposed	2012/13 proposed
Capital Expenditure				
Capital expenditure on housing within the HRA (H1a)	9596000	7773000	6500000	6020000
Capital support for RPs (H2)	360000	1092000	126000	100000
Capital expenditure on other housing (H3)	4017000	4369000	3671000	3345000
Above funded from:				
Borrowing (H4a1)	0	0	0	0
Capital grants (H4a2)	2573000	2438000	2242000	1895000
Useable capital receipts (H4a3)	1515000	2474000	1105000	1085000
Contributions from revenue (H4a4)	3892000	3800000	3800000	3800000
Other (H4a5)	0	170000	55000	40000
PSR assistance:				
Expenditure on grants (K2)	893000	1080000	887000	0
Expenditure on loans (K4)	276000	388000	435000	0
Mandatory DFG allocations			185500	
Provision of affordable housing:				
Total LA expenditure (N11)	875000			
Estimated value of developer contribution through AH units	2493618			
Estimated value of developer contribution through commuted sums	731222			
HCA subsidy	12726581	9515645	2853408	4651137
Revenue Funding				
Homelessness Grant	377100	377100	674530	674530
Housing planning and delivery grant	804612			
Regional Housing Body funding	1042000			

SP funding

14,653,000

APPENDIX 3 – KEY MESSAGES FROM CONSULTEES

There is a reassuring level of consensus about the key issues from respondents to the on-line survey and agencies and individuals engaged through the initial stakeholder event and focus groups. The main divergence exists around the need for housing in rural areas against protection of green space although, to a lesser extent, support for housing for vulnerable people is offset by a view that people should be more self-sufficient in meeting and managing their housing needs.

Housing Strategy Survey

The on-line survey demonstrated significant support for additional affordable housing being a priority for the new strategy (69.6% said this was very important and a further 19% said it was fairly important). Other issues rated as very/fairly important were energy efficiency (89.1%), improvement in housing conditions (88.7%) and supporting older people to make housing choices (87.8%). Regeneration of town centres was seen as least important although still quite a high proportion said it was very or fairly important (79.7%).

Respondents identified a need for all types of housing. The most popular was family housing across all tenures but support was also evident for rented accommodation for vulnerable people, older people and young people.

Asked about priorities for urban regeneration respondents saw reuse of empty homes as the main priority (97.2% thinking this was very or fairly important). The most important factor in regenerating rural villages was seen as work with partners to provide local services to help people remain in rural communities (93.6%).

Respondents thought that raising awareness about grants and loans was the most important factor in improving affordable warmth with 88.2% selecting this option. Bringing empty homes back into use was also seen as important in improving housing conditions generally with 92.3% of respondents selecting this.

The survey asked people what help they would require if threatened with homelessness and 80.8% felt that advice to remain in their own home was important. Respondents were generally supportive of a range of options for helping older people plan for their future housing needs and young people and vulnerable people meet their housing needs.

Research into the Needs of Older People

The results of the survey of older people carried out as part of the research project can be summarised as follows:

- Nearly 1 in 5 already lived in a property that had been adapted
- 15% said that home was unsuitable; the main reasons were because of poor health, it was too large or because they had problems with mobility
- The vast majority (81%) wish to stay in their present homes in later years; two thirds expect to receive some support to enable them to stay put; 40% would like some adaptations
- About a third of owners expressed a positive interest in retirement housing for sale or extra care; slightly more tenants are interested in sheltered housing to rent
- People predominantly want help with things like the garden, shopping and cooking
- There is a strong allegiance to the locality with two thirds hoping to stay in Worcestershire as they grow older; there is a significant gap in peoples knowledge of both housing and care options available
- Expectations are rising about space with more people looking for a minimum of two bedrooms. There is a significant demand for showers and managing stairs is a common barrier to continuing to live at home, as is inadequate heating
- There is a definite interest in extra care housing

The key themes emerging from the focus groups with older people were:

- People want to have better information from a trusted source about the full range of housing options and considerations for them; this includes advice on support possibilities, money and grants for adaptations
- Resistance to equity release schemes as currently available
- Extra care models of housing are viewed positively for rent and to buy
- Some reluctance to plan for the future in terms of the types of housing and carer support that people may need
- Difficulty for many owner occupiers in getting practical jobs done and knowing where to get help from
- Strong sense of local identity, even within districts – most people want to stay living near to their existing social and community networks

- Telecare, aids, adaptations – seen as potentially helpful; a frequent message was that telecare should not be at “expense” of personal support from people/paid carers
- Residential care is not popular but most people are not really aware of the full implications for them personally and their finances

The comments included in responses to these surveys are logged in the “You Said, We Did” document supporting this strategy along with the issues raised through stakeholder events and focus groups. The main issues raised are summarised below:

New homes

- General support for more housing for all groups
- Other options needed for older people wishing to move eg shared ownership and extra care
- Older people aspiring to larger homes (2-bed plus)
- More supported housing needed for young people and people with mental health issues
- Flexible tenancy arrangements needed for people with learning difficulties to enable sharing
- Lifetime homes should be provided as standard
- More plots needed for Gypsies and Travellers, preferably close to family
- Research on Gypsy and Traveller site design to ensure plots are big enough for privacy and deter overcrowding

Better use of existing homes

- Under-occupation is an issue – incentives and support to move are seen as solutions
- Many older people feel their current accommodation is unsuitable
- Hard to let sheltered accommodation is a waste
- Better use could be made of adapted homes, perhaps by holding a database
- Better use could be made of the private rented sector

- Reuse of empty homes is a priority
- Lodging schemes could be introduced

Existing housing standards

- Better links with landlords are needed
- Incentives could be used to improve private rented housing
- Targeted enforcement could work
- Space and noise insulation should be addressed as well as minimum standards
- Existing schemes for young people are poor standard

Affordable warmth

- Better standards should be aimed for – SAP 65 by 2020 and CSH level 4.
- Better information should be available – up to date and more accessible
- Fuel choice in rural areas should be assisted
- Advice should be available through GP surgeries
- Discounts from local companies should be arranged for energy conservation materials
- Grants should be available for external insulation
- Difficulty in keeping caravans warm in winter – need for affordable solutions

Urban renaissance

- Funding is of key importance
- Infrastructure needs to be available before or alongside housing
- Community ownership/buy-in is important – need to engage at early stage
- Sustainability needs to be embedded – supply of materials, minimised car use etc
- Need to ensure people maintain gardens

- Adapt vacant business space for housing

Rural renaissance

- A positive policy stance (rather than exceptions) should be adopted
- Parish plans should be established
- An infrastructure levy should be introduced
- Work to overcome obstacles to development should be resourced
- Action to retain focal points eg schools, post offices
- Work with Parish Councils to reduce nimbyism
- Links with infrastructure are important – employment etc
- Brownfield development should take priority over greenbelt

Housing options

- Better information about housing and related services to enable choice
- Ensure everyone can access information eg rough sleepers
- Low level support for older people who wish to stay put
- Support to move on for older people
- Help to access private rented accommodation
- Single access point with a joined up approach for young people and older people
- Early intervention eg through schools
- Flexible support services for people with chaotic lifestyles
- Support to introduce to new home for people with learning difficulties
- Temporary accommodation to be suitable and affordable
- Customer care improvement needed

- Deposit guarantee scheme needed for couples and families

Housing support and adaptations

- More flexible support
- Investment in support and adaptations to save on hospital admissions etc
- Use of assistive technology is helpful but not at expense of personal care/support
- Early intervention at transition stage
- Pre-tenancy and life-skills training
- Better joined up working across agencies
- Support in using CBL service
- Information and support for carers
- Adaptations are important for people with sensory impairments to remain in their own homes
- Help needed to enable older Gypsies and Travellers to remain in own homes, perhaps by providing living rooms in utility blocks
- Support to enable ex-rough sleepers to develop social networks

Other

- CBL service issues
- Community facilities – better access and more for young people
- Employment and benefit issues

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF CONSULTEES

Organisation
Worcester City Council
Wyre Forest District Council
Wychavon District Council
Redditch Borough Council
Sanctuary Housing
West Mercia Housing
Batchley Support Group
YMCA Worcester
YMCA Redditch
Worcestershire County Council
CAB Redditch
St Paul's Hostel
Fosseway Housing Association
Bromford Housing
Rooftop Housing Association
Help The Aged
Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
Deaf Direct
Festival Housing Group
Home and Community Agency
Herefordshire County Council
Herefordshire & Worcestershire Fire
Riverside Housing Association
Worcester Relate
Worcester Community Housing
John Martins Charity
English Church Housing Group
St Basils
Nightstop
Acton Energy

Bubble
Redcross
Redditch Friends
Servite Houses
Malvern Hills District Council
Worcestershire SAAFA
Age Concern Redditch
WHBAC
Herefordshire & Worcestershire Connexions
Wychavon CAB
Wyre Forest CAB
Waterloo Housing
Community Housing Group
West Mercia Police
Jephson Housing