‘The Right Home’

Housing Strategy for Bracknell Forest

2009 - 2014
BRACKNELL FOREST HOUSING STRATEGY 2009-2014

FOREWORD

On behalf of the Council I have great pleasure in presenting the Housing strategy for Bracknell Forest for 2009 to 2014.

The strategy has been developed through a range of partnerships and consultation events and we believe it represents the views and priorities of the communities in Bracknell Forest and stakeholders who operate in the various housing markets in the Borough.

The strategy has been developed from a sound understanding of the housing markets in Bracknell Forest. This has been informed from both local and sub-regional research. The sub-regional strategic market assessment for Berkshire showed that the housing market in Bracknell Forest works well for most people and most people are adequately housed. However, there are a number of households who need help to resolve their housing situation and the strategy sets out a numbers of ways in which the Council and its partners will intervene in the market to provide that assistance.

The strategy has identified four strategic priorities:

- Supporting a vibrant housing market

  The Council’s role in planning for the residential market is key in maintaining the health of the housing market whilst balancing other land use demands.

- Providing affordable housing

  The majority of new households in Bracknell Forest can afford to buy a home of their own if we provide them with some help. There are households who need an affordable rented home and we will be working to ensure they can access the home they need within a reasonable timescale.

- Providing the right homes for vulnerable people

  There are vulnerable people who need help to make their current home comfortable and warm and we will support programmes to help them achieve that. There are some households who need specific types of homes. The growing proportion of older people in the Borough means we need to work with them to understand their requirements so we can plan the various types of provision they need.

- Contributing to sustainable communities

  I believe it is important that all our priorities are delivered in a community sensitive and sustainable way.

The strategy has identified up to £40 million of public sector investment that can be employed to support the priorities. Of that the Council has committed the proceeds from the stock transfer capital receipt into three programmes:

- Help to buy a home
- Enabling more affordable homes
- Making best use of affordable homes.

The strategy includes some ambitious targets for delivery. The housing market nationally is in a volatile state and that is no different in Bracknell Forest. Over the next four years we will need to constantly check our progress and work closely with partners to either re-set our targets or be ready to seize opportunities.
Overall this strategy aims to enable the provision of the right homes for the communities of Bracknell Forest, in the right place and of the right quality to allow more choice for the residents of the Borough.

I commend the strategy to all residents and look forward to working with you to deliver it.
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Housing Strategy

The aim of this strategy is to enable Bracknell Forest residents to:

“Live in a comfortable home in a community they want to live in.”

Most residents will obtain their choice of housing without any direct assistance from the Council as evidenced by the high levels of private home ownership within the Borough. The Council’s housing role is therefore to do all in its power to ensure the housing market works well, to help create a place in which communities can thrive and to target direct assistance on housing needs that are not otherwise met. This reflects the locally agreed Sustainable Communities Strategy, Local Area Agreement and Local Government guidance:

“Local authorities’ work in producing housing strategies has been a lever for economic and social change in many areas, reflecting a shift towards ensuring local housing markets meet local demands, rather than a narrow focus on directly providing social housing. This strategic housing role is at the heart of achieving the social, economic and environmental objectives that shape a community and create a sense of place.”

This Housing Strategy is based on our understanding of the current and future need (or demand) for housing in Bracknell Forest. It will consider “housing supply” meaning the condition and suitability of the current housing stock across all tenures and the supply of new housing to buy or rent. Most of this knowledge is drawn from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment which was completed in 2007 but also includes analysis of the impact of the 2008 economic downturn on market housing delivery numbers and as a consequence the impact on the delivery of affordable social housing.

The overriding priority of this strategy is to enable the provision of the right homes for the communities of Bracknell Forest, in the right place and of the right quality to allow more choice for the residents of the Borough.

Creating desirable places to live involves a broad range of policies and strategies. To develop and implement successful policies Bracknell Forest Council involves the community and works in partnership with key stakeholders. There are high level strategies such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy which sets out a clear vision for the future prosperity of the area and the associated Local Area Agreement which identifies local priorities and targets. The housing market is affected by National and Regional Housing, Economic and Spatial policies and strategies. The Council takes these into account when forming its own economic and planning policies. This Housing Strategy reflects the national and regional policy and puts it into local context. Bracknell Forest’s housing strategy has been developed along side the Spatial Land Allocation Policy plans of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, to ensure a consistent approach to both housing and development policy.

It is also necessary to recognise the importance of more everyday factors that influence desirability and therefore value of homes. Ensuring the environment is safe and unspoilt by anti social behaviour, access to employment, schools, shops and health facilities also help make communities successful and sustainable and a place where people want to live. The Housing Strategy cannot cover all of these topics but it sets out its proposals for effective joint working with agencies and other Council departments that do deal with these issues.
The Housing Strategy is concerned with the housing aspirations of all sections of the community and aims to develop policies to provide good housing for all. The strategy recognises that some groups may need additional assistance to access desirable housing. The strategy also gives consideration to people who may have special needs such as the elderly and people with a physical or other disability.

1.2 Strategy structure

This strategy will cover the following key areas:

- Understanding housing supply and demand
- Strategic context within national, regional and sub regional priorities
- Bracknell Forest’s own plans and objectives for the community
- How we will monitor the strategy
- The actions that will be taken to achieve the objectives

1.3 Profile of Bracknell Forest

Bracknell Forest is located at the very centre of the Thames Valley, 28 miles West of London. The Borough has good road and rail links with London, Heathrow Airport, Reading and the South and West of England. The main urban areas are Bracknell, Sandhurst and Crowthorne. Bracknell Town is a thriving business district with major companies such as Waitrose, Hewlett Packard, BMW and Novell. Bracknell Forest also hosts a number of other internationally renowned institutions such as Broadmoor Hospital and the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst.

Population estimates for the Borough in 2006 gave a population for the Borough of 112,200. Of the 43,392 households in Bracknell Forest at that time, 64% lived in Bracknell Town, 22.6% in Crowthorne/Sandhurst, 8.4% in Ascot or Binfield and 4.9% in rural areas. The Borough has experienced some of the highest population growth rates in the country. Between 1981 and 2000, the population grew by almost one third. Bracknell Forest is an affluent Borough (Indices of Deprivation 2004) with low rates of unemployment (1.00%). It is a relatively expensive place to live compared with many parts of the Country. The majority of the 45,000 workforce in the area is employed in the service sector, many in the information and communication technology industry.

Before its new town designation in 1949, Bracknell was a small settlement of around 5,000 people. Bracknell Forest was earmarked for development as a ‘new town’ to alleviate the housing crisis after World War II. Bracknell New Town was designed on the neighbourhood principle with a primary school, shops, church, community centre and public house at the heart of each of the nine neighbourhoods. Between 1949 and 1982 approximately 18,000 homes were built by both the Bracknell Development Corporation and private developers.

One of the legacies of the way Bracknell Forest has developed is that the age profile of the housing stock is somewhat different to both that for England as a whole and the South East. Bracknell Forest has a very low proportion of pre-1944 dwellings compared both to England and the South East whereas the proportion of dwellings built after 1964 is significantly higher than both national and regional averages. Similarly, as a result of the extensive building programme of the Bracknell Development Corporation, Bracknell Forest has benefited from a large social housing stock relative to other Boroughs in the south east although this has declined significantly since 1981 as a result of Right to Buy sales. Bracknell Forest now has approximately 44,600 properties within the Borough.
with the majority of these being owner occupied. The key statistics for the Borough of Bracknell Forest can be summarised in the following:

Size, Population and Character
Area – 109 sq km.
Population – 112,200
Population 1996-2006 – 3.3% growth

The profile of the population in Bracknell is set out in the following pie chart:

By 2014, it is estimated that the number of older people in Bracknell Forest aged 65 and over will increase by 16%, an additional 2,180 households and the number of older people aged between 65-74 years is expected to increase by 20%. The number of people aged 65 and over from Black and ethnic minority groups is expected to increase by over 50% by 2012 and it is estimated that within this population there could be 60 older person households requiring some support.

The following table sets out the ethnic composition of the population of Bracknell Forest compared to neighbouring local authorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority area</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Mixed ethnic origin</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Chinese or other ethnic origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Berkshire</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wokingham</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slough</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBWM</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bracknell Forest</strong></td>
<td><strong>95%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2001 Census
Recent studies indicate that since the 2001 census, the ethnic profile of the Borough has changed considerably. Information from schools shows a BME population that has increased from 6% in 2001 to 14% in 2008.
STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 National, Regional and sub-regional priorities

The government set the framework for housing policy in the five year plan – Sustainable Communities: Homes For All published in 2005. This document set out the action the Government would take over the next 5 years in relation to housing. The priorities in the plan include:

Delivery of new homes
- Meeting the Decent Homes Standard
- Creation of sustainable and mixed communities
- Reducing temporary accommodation
- Protecting and enhancing the environment

Sustainable Communities: Homes For All has subsequently been supplemented by the Green Paper: Homes for All which was published in 2007. The Green Paper sets out the Government’s approach to house building in the UK and in particular the supply of affordable housing. There is a particular emphasis on local authorities to ensure meeting housing need is prioritised within strategic documents such as the Local Development Framework and Sustainable Community Strategy and through their engagement with local people. The Green Paper also places housing at the centre of local authorities’ place shaping role. The national planning policy regarding housing and in particular the delivery of affordable housing is set out in Planning Policy Statement 3 and the Accompanying document Deliver Affordable Housing. Further details of Planning Policy Statement 3 are provided later in this document.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-affordable-housing

The South East Regional Housing Strategy 2006 onwards sets out the Regional Housing Board’s priorities for housing investment in the South East and a framework for allocating resources over the years 2006-07 and 2007-08. The priorities within the Regional Housing Strategy are:

- Building more affordable housing
- Bringing decent housing within reach of people on lower incomes
- Improving the quality of new housing and the existing stock

The Regional Housing Strategy was reviewed in 2007 and further priorities were developed for the period 2008-11:

- Maintain a strong focus on delivering affordable housing
- Maintain a commitment to provide funding for improvements to ensure decent homes
- Maintain focus on investment in urban areas
- Increased emphasis on providing the right size and type of housing
- Maintain support for programmes which assist key workers
- Invest in pump priming and innovative delivery mechanisms
- Maintain a commitment to invest in accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers

Bracknell Forest Council is an active member in the sub-regional agenda through membership of various Berkshire wide sub-regional groups including the Berkshire Housing Strategists’ Group. The
Berkshire Housing Strategists Group is made up of representatives of the six unitary authorities; Bracknell Forest, Slough, Wokingham, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire and Reading. There is also membership from the Joint Strategic Planning Unit, Housing Associations, the Government Office and the Housing Corporation. The Berkshire Housing Strategists worked collectively to draft an Interim Berkshire Housing Strategy in 2005 which was subsequently adopted by the six unitary authorities. The work of the Berkshire Housing Strategists group has been set out as an example of good practice within the South East Regional Housing Strategy. The Interim Berkshire Housing Strategy sets out five common themes that reflect national and regional priorities and addresses local challenges:

1. Maximising access and choice – focusing on increasing the supply of affordable housing
2. Contributing to successful and sustainable communities
3. Improving the quality of housing, living conditions and housing services
4. Meeting the housing needs of the vulnerable and those with specific requirements
5. Working together to achieve better results

The Interim Berkshire Housing Strategy included an action plan which has now been completed. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment which was undertaken by the Berkshire authorities working together is a good example of partnership working both in terms of generating value for money and strategically, as Councils’ collectively consider the housing markets beyond their Borough boundaries. The Berkshire Housing Strategists group is now in the process of developing a new Berkshire Housing Strategy which should be in place for the beginning of the financial year 2009/10. This will be significantly influenced by the findings and recommendations contained within the Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

2.2 The Council’s Corporate Objectives

The Council is responsible for providing a range of services to local people and delivering against a broad spectrum of agendas with partner organisations. These range from sustaining and enhancing the physical environment to improving outcomes for children and young people. There are a range of strategies that the Council produces to ensure services meet the needs of residents whilst still providing value for money. The six overarching priorities of the Council are:

1. A town centre fit for the 21st Century
2. Protecting and enhancing our environment
3. Promoting health and achievement
4. Creating a Borough where people are, and feel safe
5. Value for money
6. Sustain economic prosperity

These six priorities are the Medium Terms Objectives 2007-11 which were agreed by the Council in 2007 and updated in 2009. There are thirteen medium term objectives which feed into the six priorities which are supported by 62 action points.
The work of the Strategic Housing Function which is shaped by this Housing Strategy makes a contribution to each of the six Council priorities. The Action Plan at the end of the document sets out how each action relates to the Council’s Corporate Objectives, to be produced following consultation.

Bracknell Forest Council has recently updated its Community Cohesion Strategy, ‘All of Us.’ The strategy seeks to ensure that everyone has similar life opportunities, diversity of people is respected and valued, there are positive relationships between people and we build and strengthen communities. Equality of access to good quality housing is a key principle of this housing strategy. Housing officers work with partners to identify and meet the needs of people with disabilities. Particular achievements include:

- Approximately 6 new mobility homes will be completed by a specialist partner housing association during 2008/09 with more scheduled to complete in future years
- Developing floating support and other Supporting People funded assistance for people with learning disabilities
- Increasing expenditure on disabled adaptations in both public and private sector housing
- Developing panels to promote access to social housing for disadvantaged young people and adults

As stated in the Community Cohesion Strategy, Bracknell Forest Council also aims to meet the Commission for Racial Equalities revised code of practice that came into force in October 2006. The Housing Department set up a project team to review its compliance with the standard and revised the action plan in 2007. The current monitoring information suggests that numbers of people from a minority ethnic group applying to the Housing Register have not significantly changed over the past 2 years. This information is monitored annually.

Participation in the formation of housing policy by everyone is encouraged. Faith groups, support groups from the voluntary sector were specifically invited to attend the Housing and Planning Conference in October 2007 and were invited to comment on this draft Housing Strategy.

2.3 The Council’s Strategic Framework

Many issues can only be effectively tackled through partnership working and the involvement of the community. The Bracknell Forest Partnership (BFP) is the local strategic partnership for Bracknell Forest and is responsible for delivering the Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Strategy. It brings together local business with the public sector including the Council, Police and the Primary Care Trust and the community and voluntary sectors. The Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Strategy produced by the Bracknell Forest Partnership in 2008 set out a vision for the community:

“Bracknell Forest will have a reputation for its distinguished green landscape and contemporary, vibrant town centre.

Contributing to this unique identity will be many neighbourhoods offering accessible facilities to meet individuals’ needs. Local communities will be strengthened with people feeling safe and getting on well together. Ensuring everyone has similar opportunities and is included in public life will enhance confidence in public services.

Preserving our green heritage will be key to the future development of the area, integrating environmental concerns into all activities. The Borough will have a prosperous and diverse economy, offering local jobs, personalised public services and a range of ways to spend leisure time.
This bold vision for all of us will be achieved through nurturing future and existing generations. A supportive and welcoming Borough will help everybody to live happy, independent and successful lives."

The structure of the Bracknell Forest Partnership and constituent sub-groups is shown below:


2.4 Local Area Agreement

In addition to the new Sustainable Community Strategy, as a result of the publication of the Local Government White Paper; Strong and Prosperous Communities (2007), the Council has negotiated a new Local Area Agreement with the government. The role of the Local Area Agreement is to act as one of the delivery contracts for realising the vision set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy.


The Local Area Agreement contains 16 targets linked to children and education and an additional 35 targets which have been locally agreed. The 35 targets are taken from a national indicator set of 198 indicators which government require local authorities and other public bodies to measure performance against. There are four themes into which the national indicators are grouped:
The funding for the targets within the Local Area Agreement will come partly from an Area Based Grant which will replace a number of specific ring fenced grants which the Council receives.

The Local Area Agreement indicators which relate to the Strategic Housing Service are set out below along with the most recent targets agreed with the Government Office in March 2009:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Indicator</th>
<th>Target 2008/09</th>
<th>Outturn 2008/09</th>
<th>Target 2009/10</th>
<th>Target 210/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Percentage of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living</td>
<td>98.40</td>
<td>98.50</td>
<td>98.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>Net additional homes provided</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>Number of affordable homes delivered</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187</td>
<td>Percentage of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with SAP rating below 35</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187.2</td>
<td>Percentage of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a SAP rating above 65</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>35.62</td>
<td>36.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ensure the implementation of the Housing related objectives within the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Local Area Agreement, a sub-group of the Bracknell Forest Partnership was established in 2004. The Strategic Housing Partnership was established to oversee the Housing Strategy 2005-2008, ensure the implementation of the priorities and specific action points and raise awareness of its strategic aims both within the Council and in the wider community. In addition to Bracknell Forest Council, representatives of the following organisations sit on the Strategic Housing Partnership:

- English Partnerships
- Persimmon Homes
- Beaulieu Homes
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Private Landlords Association
- Bracknell Forest Homes
- Thames Valley Housing Association
- Tenant /Leaseholder representatives

The Strategic Housing Partnership has a number of operational sub-groups which contribute towards specialist areas of the strategic housing function. Sub-groups include the Preferred Partner Housing Association Forum which works to increase the supply of affordable housing in the Borough and the Homelessness Forum which considers issues around homelessness and is overseeing the drafting and implementation of the Homelessness Strategy. Each of these sub-groups has multi-agency membership including housing associations, support providers, and the voluntary sector.
2.5 Local Development Framework

Bracknell Forest is in the process of preparing a Local Development Framework (LDF) which sets out the land use policies for the area. The LDF is a suite of documents called local development documents which, together with the regional spatial strategy, and “saved” policies from the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan, provides the essential framework for planning in the Borough. The Core Strategy is an integral development plan document within the LDF. Adoption of the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy in February 2008 made Bracknell Forest one of the first authorities in the South East of England to have obtained this status.

The Core Strategy sets out a planning framework for guiding the location and level of development in the Borough for the period to 2026. The Bracknell Forest Core Strategy is the spatial expression of the Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Strategy and both share the same vision for the Borough. The Core Strategy policies are divided for ease into six themes:

- Sustainable Growth
- Quality of Life
- The Environment
- Somewhere to Live
- Somewhere to Work and Shop and
- Transport

Although each theme has some relevance to housing, ‘Somewhere to Live’ has the biggest impact on the Housing Strategy as it sets out the Council’s overall approach to housing supply and in particular the Council’s policy on affordable housing delivery. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment, previous housing needs surveys and the Housing Register maintained by the Council all influenced the content of the Core Strategy. However, more detailed policies for each of the different elements of housing need including affordable housing needs will be considered as part of subsequent Development Plan Documents which will be developed during the next stage of the LDF.

The Core Strategy set out the Council’s position in regards to overall housing provision which is that over the period 2006 to 2026 provisions will be made for 11,139 new dwellings. This figure has since been increased to 13,139 dwellings with the publication in May 2009 of the Regional Spatial Strategy: The South East Plan.

In response to this increase the Council intends to prepare a Site Allocations Development Plan Document which will include the identification of sites suitable for housing development. This document will be informed by a Strategic Land Availability Assessment which is in preparation.

In regards to affordable housing delivery (Policy CS17), the Council will;

- Require residential developments on suitable sites to provide affordable housing which is accessible to local people in priority housing need
- State the threshold above which affordable housing will be sought
- State the amount of affordable housing to be provided on suitable sites above the threshold

The details regarding the threshold at which point affordable housing will be required on residential developments, and the amount of affordable housing which will be required will be set out in the subsequent Housing and Commercial Policies and Sites Development Plan Document. The current Council planning policy in regards to affordable housing is as set out in the Local Plan which has been superseded by Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The above sets out the Council’s corporate priorities, vision of the Bracknell Forest Partnership through the Sustainable Community Strategy and the spatial vision of the Borough in the Local Development Framework. Many existing Council plans, and those which have been prepared with partner organisations also have relevance for the housing strategy. The Housing Strategy will compliment the actions within these other strategies as living in decent housing which is affordable and is fundamental to a number of Council objectives such as educational attainment, independence and health.

3.0 HOUSING SUPPLY AND DEMAND

It is important that the housing policies of the local authority reflect the needs of all sections of the community. Housing Policy is a key tool in the authority’s role as a “place shaper” as envisaged in the Local Government White paper. This section of the Housing Strategy considers the demand and supply of housing in Bracknell Forest. It identifies potential issues and the policy options available to tackle them including the state of the housing market and the economy over the life of the strategy.

3.1. The Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment

To understand the key features of the local housing market the Council undertook a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in partnership with the Berkshire Unitary Authorities. The SHMA provided both an assessment of the housing markets which Bracknell Forest operates in and a separate housing needs assessment for the Borough. The SHMA found that based on an analysis of household migration, travel to work patterns and NHS patient registers, there are two functioning housing markets within Berkshire. Bracknell Forest forms part of the West Central Housing Market as it has higher levels of connectivity with Wokingham and Reading both in terms of travel to work and household movement than Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead. The two functioning housing markets are detailed in the following table and illustrated on a map on the following page:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>West Central Berkshire</th>
<th>East Berkshire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bracknell Forest</td>
<td>Windsor and Maidenhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Slough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wokingham</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Berkshire</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Berkshire SHMA found that
- The housing market within Berkshire works well for the majority of people
- Most people are adequately housed
- The majority of people are able to meet their needs in the market place.
- A high proportion of households within Berkshire who live in their own homes are able to secure accommodation that provides them with a high quality of life.

However, the SHMA also found
- A significant number of people are excluded from the housing market and are unable to meet their own basic needs without assistance.
- A growing number of people have been priced out of the market in recent years.

Whilst a proportion of these households may be able to rent privately, they are at present unable to meet their reasonable aspirations to purchase within the housing market. Housing outcomes in Berkshire are considered to be polarised with many able to afford good, spacious housing but a significant minority living in homes that are inadequate for their needs but without the resources to improve their situations.

Economic Prosperity and Housing

The SHMA identified that as a result of very low unemployment within Berkshire, expanding the labour force in the future and ensuring sustained economic growth will be dependent on drawing in additional labour. New workers will require new housing or will have to travel from outside the area. Given the limited labour resources and high rates of economic activity in encompassing areas, this is likely to result in long distance commuting. Therefore, not delivering sufficient housing will exacerbate congestion on the transport networks which will result in increased CO2 emissions.

The relationship between household size, type and property size reflects a complex mix of socio-economic variables. Evidence contained within the SHMA indicates that single person households and couples often aspire to have properties larger than what may be considered to meet their needs. Therefore, there can be no presumption that growth in small households implies that these households can only afford to purchase small dwellings, and the Council should not interpret the anticipated growth in single person households, as implying a requirement for the bulk of new private sector housing provision to take the form of small units.

The SHMA provides an evidence base to inform policies that contribute towards local authorities balancing the housing market. The SHMA was adopted by the Council in November 2007 and its recommendations will inform the action plan within this strategy.

The SHMA will also inform the development of Development Plan Documents within the Local Development Framework which will include future provision of market and affordable housing types and sizes.

http://democratic.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/Published/C00000102/M00001561/AI00006079/SHMASummaryReportFinal.pdf
Summary of SHMA Recommendations

1. Berkshire authorities need to optimise the provision of affordable housing in new development, within the constraints of development economics, grant availability and with consideration for site specific and neighbourhood factors.

2. As the need for affordable housing will not be satisfied, authorities will need to prioritise the type of new affordable housing secured.

**Highest need is for social rented accommodation**, however:

- Authorities and RSLs should consider the appropriate level of rented housing in any development in relation to a range of other factors including the existing mix of housing types and tenures in particular locations.
- Intermediate housing has a role to play in addressing a proportion of the newly arising need and is also sensible as part of a strategy to maximise the level of funding secured for affordable housing.

3. Improve the quality of data held on housing registers particularly in relation to income. This will facilitate better targeting of intermediate housing products. A coordinated approach across Berkshire is recommended.

4. The thresholds at which developers are required to contribute to affordable housing should be reviewed.

5. The Berkshire authorities should consider working together to ensure a mixture of type and size of development sites is available to the market.

6. Authorities should look to provide larger properties for rent and desirable accommodation for older people to create a chain of affordable housing.

7. Joint research should be undertaken by the authorities to design desirable developments to meet the needs of the ageing population.

### 3.2 Housing Needs Analysis

This chapter considers the local housing market in greater detail. It considers the likely supply of new housing in the area and explores the issues around demand and affordability. Information is also presented on special needs client groups and homelessness.

The household size in Bracknell Forest has fallen continuously since 1961 and is projected to continue declining. The statistics which demonstrate the historical decline in household are contained in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>% fall</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>% fall</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>% fall</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>% fall</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons / dwelling</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.86%</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>9.49%</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>9.44%</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>5.02%</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census data*
The statistics which demonstrate the projected continued decline in household size for the Borough produced by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are contained in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2026</th>
<th>Average 2001-2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons per dwelling</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HOPS report, 2003 based household projections (Berkshire) ODPM

The declining household size in the Borough is a result of changes in demographics such as people living longer and changes in society such as fewer people getting married or living together. The most noticeable housing effect of this trend is a growing population of single person households.

Overall the population of Bracknell Forest is young. The mean average age of the population in Bracknell Forest is 35 which is younger than Berkshire which is 37 years and the South East of England and England, which are both 39 years. However, reflecting national trends there is expected to be an increase in the number of households aged over 75.

It is vital to consider the changing demographics of an area when planning housing development of both market housing and affordable housing. One of the implications of reducing household sizes is that it places additional pressure on the existing housing stock in terms of there being fewer people occupying the same level of housing. This projected reduction in average household sizes from 2.46 in 2001 to 2.31 in 2026 alone creates a need for additional new homes in the Borough.

In terms of the health of the local population, Bracknell Forest fares well in comparison to regional and national indicators. The lifestyles of people living in Bracknell Forest are healthy compared with other areas of England. Fewer people in Bracknell Forest rate their health as "not good" compared with the England average. In the Indices of Deprivation 2004, Bracknell Forest was ranked at 319 out of 354 local authorities in England, where 1 was the most deprived and 354 the least deprived. Bracknell Forest also has an unemployment rate which is below both the UK and South East average.

Bracknell Forest Council is engaged with the local Primary Care Trust in meeting the national and local objectives. Local priorities are reducing health inequalities across the local population and promoting health and wellbeing. Research undertaken by the British Medical Association has shown that housing which is adequate in size, in a decent state of repair and affordable, is essential in ensuring good physical and mental health.


The Health and Well Being Strategy sets out the Council’s corporate approach to improving health and sustaining Bracknell Forest as a healthy place to live, work or visit. Within the Health and Well Being Strategy, access to good quality housing is recognised as a key determinant of health. Increasing the supply of affordable housing and increasing the amount of homes which meet the Decent Homes Standard are priorities within the Health and Well Being Strategy.

http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/00F5EE1F-38EE-4EF7-9911-EAD420E9DF40/0/Health_and_Wellbeing_Strategy_BracknellForest.pdf
House Prices and Affordability

Since 1998, house prices have more than doubled within Bracknell Forest. Although increases in house prices have undoubtedly benefited home owners, it has become increasingly difficult for first time buyers to be able to get their foot on to the property ladder.

House Prices in Bracknell Forest (Dec 06 – Sept 08)

![Graph of house prices in Bracknell Forest from Dec 2006 to Sept 2008](image)

(Graph to be updated in line with final publication date)

To help analyse the effect of house price rises on affordability and to update the information in the SHMA the Authority uses data supplied by HomeTrack which is updated monthly. The current uncertainty in the housing market appears to have halted house price inflation and has resulted in vastly reduced house sales. The reduced activity means that it will be some time before the full effects of the “credit crunch” on local markets will be known.

The following graph based on data as at September 2008 shows the income levels that households would need to purchase different types of property in the borough. The graph indicates that first time buyers need to have a household income of £38,000 to be able to afford to purchase a flat/maisonette, and an income of at least £50,000 to purchase a terraced property.
The average household income for Bracknell Forest is £42,239 which exceeds the Berkshire average by £2,239.

Rents in the private sector market closely follow the local housing allowance. Given the shortage of affordable housing and the inability of some households to buy a home that meets their needs it is logical to expect a strong demand for private rented homes in Bracknell Forest.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property size</th>
<th>Average monthly private sector rent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 bed</td>
<td>£ 650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bed</td>
<td>£ 825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bed</td>
<td>£ 950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bed</td>
<td>£ 1400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on January 2009 Local Housing Allowances

**Housing Need in Bracknell Forest**

The role of the local authority is to develop policies to facilitate a balanced housing market. As stated earlier most people are able to resource their own housing solutions within the market. The role of the authority is therefore to help the market meet local supply requirements. However it is also clear that for a proportion of Bracknell Forest residents the market will not provide for their housing needs. This section looks at how the number of people in “housing need” and the specific needs of different groups of people may be assessed.

The data sources utilised to build up evidence about the level of housing need are as follows.

- The Housing Register maintained by the Council contains information about general housing need for affordable housing, both affordable rented and intermediate housing (re: housing that is below market prices and meets government definitions as set out in PPS3).

- Housing Needs Assessment undertaken in 2006 which formed part of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The Housing Needs Assessment which was undertaken follows the guidance produced by the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Department which advises on best practice in the use of secondary data to estimate the number of households in housing need. The housing need calculation itself is based on the ‘Local Housing Needs Assessment; A Guide to Good Practice (DETR 2000). This works by calculating current need and current supply and newly arising needs and future supply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHMA Housing Needs Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total current housing need (as per formula)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Total available stock to meet current need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Total current unmet need (1– 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Additions units required to meet current unmet need over five years (3 x 20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Total newly arising need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Total units required each year (4 + 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Annual supply of affordable housing (re-lets and new supply)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Overall shortfall (6 – 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence from the Housing Register

The Council maintains a Housing Register to prioritise access to affordable housing. There are over 4,000 households on the Housing Register waiting for affordable rented accommodation. Applicants are registered according to their need and their preference so for example single people and childless couples would only be allocated 1 bedroom properties. The type of accommodation required by the 4,000 households on the housing register at 1 April 2009 is as follows:

- 13% are older people requesting sheltered accommodation or older people’s bungalows
- 48% are single people and childless couples seeking one bedroom accommodation
- 21% are families waiting for 2 bedroom properties
- 16% are families waiting for 3 bedroom properties
- 2% are families waiting for 4 bedroom or larger properties

The Housing Register includes homeless households to whom the Council has accepted a statutory duty to permanently house, those who wish to be transferred from their existing social housing and those who wish to access social housing. Households are considered to be in housing need for a range of reasons including ill health, overcrowding, neighbour dispute and living in accommodation which is not secure. The number of households on the housing register has increased substantially, more than doubling between 2003 and 2007. Over the same time period, the amount of new vacancies generated from new build affordable rented homes and existing General Needs (GN) Local Authority (LA) becoming vacant has declined from over 375 a year in 2003 to under 350 a year in 2007. This is illustrated in the following graphs:

![Housing Register Numbers 2003-2007](image1)

![Affordable Rented Housing Lets](image2)
Analysis of the Housing Register indicates that households will have to wait an average of between 4-5 years before they are likely to be offered an affordable home. The graph below illustrates the expected average waiting times for each sized property based on data taken from the housing register for former Council house lettings (excluding housing association lettings). It illustrates that families needing 2 and 3 bedroom accommodation would expect to wait at least 4 years with households needing bed-sit, 1 or 4 bedroom accommodation expected to wait at least 5 years. The data is based on the amount of Council lettings over the last three years and a snapshot of the Housing Register at December 2007. It is important to be aware that the figures in the graph are averages, some households would be re-housed more quickly than the average waiting times where as others can expect to wait longer and some may not be re-housed at all.

The supply of lettings within the social housing sector averages about 400 properties a year of which approximately 35% are for older people including sheltered housing. The supply of new lettings each year is considerably lower than the average net increase in the overall size of the housing register which has increased by an average of 615 households per year over the last 4 years. In real terms, the Council is only able to assist one household in every ten who are registered for affordable rented homes. The graph below illustrates the gap between the supply and demand for affordable rented homes in the Borough. The graph shows the demand for different sized properties in comparison to the expected supply.

As a result of the above analysis the Council will ensure that the supply of affordable homes in the Borough is allocated to ensure the best use of the available housing stock whilst complying with statutory obligations.
The following table sets out the estimated demand for housing over the next four years and the supply of accommodation (including both relets and new build) anticipated to be available to meet this demand:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First time applicants</td>
<td>3056</td>
<td>3120</td>
<td>3183</td>
<td>3249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer applicants</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>1095</td>
<td>1116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4188</td>
<td>4295</td>
<td>4380</td>
<td>4467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Older Person's Housing

The picture of housing need for older people in the Borough is very different. The number of older households on the Housing Register is relatively small and there is a reasonable supply of social rented housing in the Borough to meet this need. However there is a significant mis-match between the type of housing that is available and the type of accommodation wanted by older applicants. This is summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bedsit</th>
<th>1 Bed</th>
<th>2 Bed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demand</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>1574</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these numbers would suggest that the overall housing need of older people can be met within the Borough, many of these applicants have very specific housing requirements, particularly for two bedroom bungalows with gardens. In addition, the 171 bedsit properties are all bedsit flats in sheltered housing. The demand for these properties is particularly low, and vacancies can be hard to let.

The Council is required by the Homelessness Act 2002 to operate an open housing register whereby households who live outside of the Borough can apply to be re-housed within Bracknell Forest. An analysis of the Housing Register shows that approximately 7% of the households on the housing register live outside the Borough. Of the small proportion of people who are registered for housing who live outside the Borough, around half of these are elderly households interested in sheltered accommodation. The overwhelming demand for affordable rented housing is made up of people who currently live within the Borough.

The demand for intermediate housing solutions

The Council maintains a separate Housing Register for those households who are interested in Intermediate affordable housing.

There are a number of intermediate housing products such as the First Time Buyers Initiative, New Build Home Buy (part rent - part buy) and intermediate rented.
The Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified the percentage of households in housing need who could afford to buy the various low cost home ownership products based on households using 33% of their gross income and an average 2 bed room property price.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared ownership 50% equity 3% rent</th>
<th>Shared ownership 25% equity 1.5% rent</th>
<th>Open market home buy 75% market purchase price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows that even the most affordable form of low cost home ownership will be out of reach of around 15% of newly forming households. This is particularly the case as the data used is based on average household incomes and of course newly forming household will have on average lower income levels.

However, there is a further complication born out of the current economic situation in that although some households can afford low cost home ownership based on their household incomes they cannot access mortgage finance due to the lack of the required deposit. The information from the Council’s Shared Ownership Register set out below illustrates this.

The total on the Shared Ownership Register in September 2008 was 352 households, and of those, 191 households had savings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Savings</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>% with that level of savings</th>
<th>% of households on the register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£0-£1000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£1001-£5000</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£5001-£10000</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£10,001-£20,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20001-£30000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30000-£500000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lack of funds for a deposit will present a considerable barrier to households being able to realise their ambition of home ownership.

http://www.helptobuy.org.uk

Homelessness

As housing need generally has increased, homelessness as a sub-set of housing need has also increased in Bracknell Forest. This is despite increasing levels of preventative homelessness work. The number of homeless households whom the Council has a statutory duty to re-house has increased from approximately 80 households a year in 2002/03 to approximately 120 households a year in 2007/08. The graph below demonstrates how homelessness has increased over the last 5 years in the Borough:
The main reasons for homelessness in 2007/8 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Bracknell</th>
<th>Nationally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental eviction</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/friends eviction</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship breakdown</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage arrears</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent arrears</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of private sector tenancy</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left institution or care</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures have been put in place to tackle the main causes of homelessness in the Borough. For example, a Sanctuary Scheme has been introduced to help women at risk of domestic violence to remain in their own homes and an enhanced rent deposit loan scheme to facilitate access to the private rented sector.

Despite these measures, the Council is expecting homeless demand to remain at similar levels in view of the economic climate prevailing at the beginning of this strategy period.

**The need for Housing with Support**

The primary demand for housing with support comes from vulnerable homeless applicants. This group represents almost 20% of homeless acceptances in the Borough. The needs of vulnerable single people are co-ordinated via two multi-agency accommodation panels – the Young Persons Accommodation Panel and the Adults Panel. These panels co-ordinate access to the two supported housing schemes in the Borough and allocate the floating support resource which is funded via the Supporting People programme.

There are a number of young people coming up to leaving care age each year who require intensive support. It will be necessary to develop accommodation and support services that will address their specific needs.
Since the completion of the last housing strategy there has been specific focus on the provision of accommodation to meet the needs of households which include someone with a physical disability. This ongoing joint work will deliver at least 8 family sized properties over the next four years of wheelchair units. Six of those homes have already been completed with the remaining two homes scheduled for completion in 2009. In terms of longer term future provision the Council will continue to secure wheelchair provision on all major housing developments. In terms of the wider issues around accessibility of buildings and the built environment, the Council has produced ‘Designing for Accessibility in Bracknell Forest’, to provide guidance regarding the standards of accessibility which should be achieved in all development in the Borough.

http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/designing-for-accessibility-in-bracknell-forest-spd.pdf

A range of strategies have been completed which provide data on vulnerable people and in particular information regarding housing needs. The Mental Health Commissioning Strategy states that the Council has provided a service to an average of 546 people via the Community Mental Health Team annually over the financial years 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07. Of the people who are provided with support for their mental health issue, 45% of people are living in affordable housing, 13% in supported accommodation, 18% in owner occupation and 6% in private rented accommodation. When asked, people who use services identified accommodation issues such as housing related support, access to housing, respite and support for homeless vulnerable people as areas for development as part of the consultation on the Mental Health Commissioning Strategy.

http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/00F5EE1F-38EE-4EF7-9911-EAD420E9DF40/0/Health_and_Wellbeing_Strategy_BracknellForest.pdf

Within the Council, Services for people with a learning disability and their carers are provided by the Community Team for People with a Learning Disability (CTPLD), which is made up of people from local Health Services and Bracknell Forest Adult Social Care Services. The 2001 ‘Valuing People’ white paper formally stated the aims and principles that should guide services for people with learning disabilities. These are inclusion, being part of the mainstream, promoting independence, enforceable civil rights, and challenging discrimination. Accordingly Bracknell Forest has a long established Learning Disabilities Partnership on which both service providers and people with a learning disability are represented. In December 2007 the government issued a consultation document ‘Valuing People Now’, from progress to transformation. This consultation covers a range of issues that affect people with a learning disability such as health, employment and housing.


Locally, assessing the housing needs of people with a learning disability has identified that there are around 100 people with a learning disability who need re-housing in the short to medium term, from a range of housing circumstances including living in supported housing, living with elderly carers and residential care. In addition there is newly arising need from people with a learning disability who are currently at school and likely to need re-housing in the future. Reflecting the national policy and person-centred planning where individuals have control over their life options, there is not a significant need for purpose built accommodation for people with a learning disability other than when people are wheelchair users. However, Learning Disability Services have reported the need for more suitable accommodation for a small number, approximately 15 people, with learning disabilities who need intensive support but on an un-predictable, out of hour’s basis.
As set out in the national consultation the Council needs to ensure that people with a learning disability have a choice of housing options, and are able to access rented accommodation and in some instances home ownership. Equally as important as the right accommodation, having the right support is essential for many people to live successfully in the housing of their choice. The Council continues to promote Direct Payments to ensure people can decide for themselves about who provides their support.

Further work needs to be undertaken to establish more comprehensive information about the housing needs of special needs groups. This will be included in the Strategy Action Plan.

**Gypsies and Travellers’ Needs**

It is also important to note that Gypsies and Travellers are recognised ethnic groups and an understanding of their culture is important to ensure the Council complies with its duty to promote good race relations, equality of opportunity and community cohesion in all its policies and procedures. To understand the wider needs of Gypsies and Travellers and in response to Section 225 with the Housing Act 2004 requirements, the Council undertook a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) in 2006 in partnership with the local authorities across the Thames Valley. In addition to the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, the study also considered education, health and housing related support needs.

http://democratic.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/(S(5ekd4s45g02uqi55rd4oz545))/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Id=2300

Following submission of the GTAA to SEERA in October 2007, there was a consultation on four options proposed by SEERA for Gypsy and Traveller site provision in the South East Region for the period 2006 - 2016. The four options proposed between 6 and 17 new pitches for Bracknell Forest in the period 2006 - 2016.

In January 2009 SEERA Regional Planning Committee indicated that 15 new pitches were to be proposed for Bracknell Forest in the period 2006 - 2016. This allocation of 15 new pitches (required due to the partial review of the South East Plan) was agreed for public consultation at the Regional Assembly on 4 March 2009. This consultation is expected to take place after June 2009 with Examination about December 2009. As SEERA no longer exists it is expected the consultation will be led by the South East England Strategy Unit (SEESU) which will report to South East England Councils (SEEC). Publication of the Panel Report would then be expected about spring 2010 with publication of the final regional allocation about the end of 2010.

The proposed redevelopment of the Easthampstead Gypsy and Traveller site will result in a net increase of three pitches. Since April 2006 there have been 4 additional Gypsy and Traveller sites that have obtained planning consent by appeal. Therefore, if the SEERA recommendation that Bracknell Forest should allow for 15 additional pitches is confirmed there will be a requirement to find 8 additional pitches by 2016.

### 3.3 Housing Stock Condition Analysis

Bracknell Forest Council recognises the essential role that good quality housing plays in promoting health, well-being, educational attainment and independence for residents, and in maintaining the quality of life and vibrant local communities. All local authorities in England are required as part of the
Government’s national objectives to meet targets in the condition of both Council housing stock and private housing stock. In regards to the Council housing stock the government set a target for all social housing to meet a standard called, the Decent Homes Standard. In order to meet and maintain this standard the Council transferred its housing stock to Bracknell Forest Homes in February 2008. In the private sector housing stock, the Government had set a target regarding the amount of vulnerable people who are living in homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard.

Bracknell Forest now has approximately 44,600 dwellings with the majority of these being owner occupied. The housing stock within the Borough is broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupied</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private rented</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Association (RSL)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Private Sector Stock Condition Survey was undertaken in the Borough in 2003. The survey identified that Bracknell Forest had better dwelling conditions and similar energy efficiency levels in the private sector to those found nationally. This is largely because of the relatively modern age profile of the stock. The survey suggested that 700 dwellings were likely to be unfit. This was just 1.9% of the total dwelling housing stock compared to 4.3% nationally and 2.8% in the South East. Within the overall housing stock, excluding former Council homes, 23% of homes, approximately 6,200 properties, failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard and 57% of these were occupied by people over 65 years old.

This survey data was updated in February 2009, using the Building Research Establishment (BRE) Stock Models. This work has indicated that the condition of the private sector housing stock in Bracknell Forest continues to be generally good. In particular, the Model estimates that:

- 71% of vulnerable households are living in decent homes. This compares well with the Government target of 70% of vulnerable households should be living in decent homes by 2010 and demonstrates the effectiveness of the Council’s private sector activity over the last 5 years.
- 9% of properties in the private sector have a SAP\(^1\) rating of less than 35. This is significantly less than the national average of 13%.
- 5% of households in the private sector are living in fuel poverty. This is again significantly less that the national average of 12%.

However, the model also estimates that 14% of private sector dwellings have a Category 1 HHSRS hazard. The Health and Housing Safety Rating System (HHSRS) was introduced in April 2006, and has replaced the fitness standard as the measure of the minimum acceptable conditions for housing. This number of properties attracting a category 1 rating is likely to place an increased demand from households seeking appropriate intervention treatments and for enforcement within the private rented sector.

\(^1\) **Definition of SAP rating:**
This is a government-specified energy rating for a dwelling. It is based on the calculated annual energy cost for a dwelling. The calculation assumes a standard occupancy pattern, derived from the measured floor area so that the size of the dwelling does not strongly affect the result, which is expressed on a 1-120 scale. The higher the number the better the standard.
In order to target the remaining 29% of vulnerable households living in non-decent housing, we have cross referenced data on households who are in receipt of state benefits with the stock condition data which identifies properties with poor energy efficiency so as to allow the targeting of initiatives. The Stock Condition Survey found that the main reason for non-decency in the private sector was lack of thermal comfort. The updated Stock Models data estimates the majority of properties with a category 1 hazard rating are likely to attract the rating on the basis of “excess cold”. The Council’s priority therefore continues to be the targeting of initiatives that improve the thermal efficiency of properties in the borough.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO’s) make up a very small proportion of the private rented sector in the Borough. There are an estimated 150 HMO’s and 10 licensable HMO’s in Bracknell Forest. The Council has introduced a risk rating inspection system for these properties to ensure the relevant standards are in place.

Housing Transfer

One of the biggest challenges the Council has faced in recent years is the Government’s requirement to meet the Decent Homes Standard within the Council housing stock by 2010. In November 2006, the Council commissioned an independent survey of its homes. This showed that to meet and maintain the Decent Homes Standard, the Council needed to spend over £33 million by 2012. However the Council projected it could only afford £18 million leaving a £15 million gap. The survey also identified a need to invest just under £211 million in major repairs and improvements to homes and £101 million in day to day repairs over the next 30 yeas giving a total of £312 million. The budget projections showed that the Council could not meet these costs and maintain the level of services to tenants.

In order to continue to achieve the aim to provide good quality, well managed and well-maintained homes at an affordable rent, the Council worked with tenant and leaseholder representatives, Councillors, Council staff and an Independent Tenant Adviser to fully examine all the options available to meet the Decent Homes Standard. The Council undertook a major consultation exercise in partnership with tenants and leaseholders. The options facing the Council where clearly explained. The consultation process informed the offer document that eventually formed part of the transfer proposal.

In March 2008 the Council asked its tenants to vote on whether to transfer the homes to a new specially created local housing association. Over 70% of tenants voted in the ballot with over 75% voting in favour of transferring the homes to Bracknell Forest Homes. As a result of the tenant’s ballot to transfer, the housing stock will benefit from £312 million of investment to be spent on major repairs, maintenance and improvements to the homes and estates over 30 years.

Establishing Bracknell Forest Homes with the resulting investment to bring the properties to a standard well in excess of the Decent Homes Standard in the former Council housing stock in the Borough was one of the main objectives of the previous Housing Strategy 2005-08 and is a significant achievement.
4.0 THE COUNCIL’S STRATEGIC HOUSING PRIORITIES

Based on the national, regional, and sub regional housing priorities, evidence of local housing need and consultation with key stakeholders the strategic housing priorities for Bracknell Forest Council are:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Supporting a vibrant housing market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Providing affordable housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Providing the right homes for vulnerable people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Contributing to sustainable communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Supporting a vibrant housing market

Through its housing and planning policies the Council aims to promote a vibrant housing market that provides suitable housing for all Bracknell Forest residents and facilitates economic prosperity.

Bracknell Forest Council has already achieved a great deal:

- The first Council in the Thames Valley to have a Core Strategy assessed as ‘sound’ by a Government inspector
- Worked with RSL’s to support the delivery of approximately 1,500 homes in total in the Borough since 2003/04 including 441 new affordable homes
- The delivery of 193 new affordable homes in the Borough during 2007/08
- Undertaken a Strategic Housing Market Assessment in partnership with neighbouring local authorities
- Attracted £13,701,616 of Housing Corporation funding to deliver new affordable housing in Bracknell Forest in the funding rounds 2006/08 & 2008/11

New Housing Provision in Bracknell Forest

The current South East Plan which is the document produced by the South East England Regional Assembly, is the Regional Spatial Plan which sets out how many new homes are to be built in the region at each local authority up until 2026. The Secretary of State is currently consulting on changes to the South East Plan. Within this consultation, Bracknell Forest has been allocated 12,780 homes which on an annual basis equates to 639 homes a year. In addition, there is a further 359 dwellings shortfall carried over from the previous structure plan, making a total of 13,139 dwellings to be provided. The South East Plan sets out that of new housing 25% should be affordable rented accommodation and 10% should be intermediate accommodation. The following graph shows the level of house completions in the Borough and the expected supply of new housing in the Borough:
Between the years 2007-12 the housing trajectory indicates that up to 4057 new homes will be built. These new homes will be delivered on the following sites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Total amount of homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff College</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacock Farm</td>
<td>1174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracknell Town Centre</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites under construction</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites with planning permission</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites identified with urban potential</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small windfall sites</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, actual time of delivery of completed units will be determined by the current economic climate and the impact on construction.
The three identified sites – Staff College, Peacock Farm and Bracknell Town Centre have been highlighted on the following map of the Borough:

Amen Corner

As part of meeting the South East Plan allocation of homes, Bracknell Forest Council has been proactive in identifying suitable sites for development. This includes the Amen Corner site which is located in the east of the Borough in Binfield near the Borough of Wokingham. This site has been identified as an opportunity for a comprehensive, well designed mixed use development including residential, employment and social and physical infrastructure. It will also protect the strategic gap between the Boroughs of Wokingham and Bracknell Forest. The Council will shortly be submitting its proposal for Amen Corner for examination in public having undertaken numerous public consultations.

http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/final-amen-corner-spd.pdf
4.2. Providing affordable housing

Making best use of existing housing stock

A priority for both the Council and RSL’s with properties in the borough is to ensure that best use is made of the existing social rented housing stock in the borough. Under-occupying tenants are prioritised for re-housing in the Council’s Allocations Policy and Bracknell Forest Homes offer financial incentives to tenants releasing family sized properties. An average of 20 properties are released in this way each year.

Delivering Affordable Housing through Planning Policy

The Government sets out the national framework for affordable housing delivery through the planning system in Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS 3) which was published in 2007 with a supplementary document Delivering Affordable Housing. The delivery of affordable housing over the last 5 years is detailed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The supply of affordable housing in the Borough over the next five years will be delivered on a combination of s106 affordable housing sites and 100% affordable housing schemes which have been assembled by housing associations in partnership with the Council. The estimated supply over the next three years is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/localplan

In terms of the future provision of affordable housing the recent Government publication Planning Policy 3, sets out an expectation on local planning authorities to set an overall target for affordable housing provision within an authority. The Council will undertake a Viability study to inform the new planning policy which will set out the approach to delivering new affordable housing and undertake a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to further build on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) findings. This considerable evidence base will then inform the drafting of the Development Management – Housing and Commercial Policies and Sites Development Plan Document (DPD) which forms part of the Local Development Framework which will include targets for affordable housing delivery. The Development Plan Document (DPD) which will replace the SPG, will
set out clear policies regarding affordable housing – both affordable rented and intermediate accommodation.

The Council's affordable housing policy subject to consultation; is that for proposals to develop 3 or more additional dwellings the Council will seek up to 25% affordable housing. The Council will presume the affordable housing obligation will be met on site for developments of 15 units plus unless the developer can justify exceptional circumstances for the obligation to be met off site or if that is not possible via a commuted sum. Developments between 3 to 14 units will require off site provision or a commuted sum to meet the affordable housing obligation. The affordable housing obligation will be modelled on 70% being affordable rented accommodation and 30% low cost home ownership. The modelling of the 30% low cost home ownership should be such that households can purchase a minimum 25% share.


Delivering affordable housing through partnership working

There is an established Preferred Partner forum of housing associations that the Council works with to develop new affordable housing. This will be reviewed during 2009. As a result of the stock transfer, the Council is now in a position to invest directly in affordable housing provision for the first time since the abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant in 2003. Accordingly, the Council wants to ensure that it gets value for money from the grant it invests.

The Council will commission a new partnership of RSLs to deliver this aspect of the housing strategy. The partnership will seek to deliver the very best standards of development and management activity as well as meet the strategic targets in terms of type of housing and size of housing.

The partnership, through the combined resources of the Homes and Communities Agency and the capital receipt will aim to enable at least 292 units of affordable rented housing over the life of the strategy. The total number of units actually delivered/completed over the strategy period is likely to be less reflecting of the time delay in development and the economic climate.

The Council's preferred property size mix for affordable rented housing is set out in the table below. That is an idealised mix and discussion will take place on a site by site basis to achieve as close as possible across the programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One bedroom</th>
<th>Two bedroom</th>
<th>Three bedroom</th>
<th>Four bedroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General needs</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low cost home ownership housing

Bracknell Forest Council supports an active housing market enabling first time buyers to purchase homes in the area. The Council works in partnership with RSLs to deliver new build HomeBuy (part rent part buy) low cost homes ownership properties in the Borough. In addition Catalyst Housing Group is the zone agent for the whole of Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire responsible for promoting the low cost home ownership opportunities in the Borough. The Council has supported a number of events to promote the low cost home ownership opportunities in the Borough. In addition to the new build HomeBuy properties which have been secured with housing association partners
either through planning gain or on 100% affordable housing schemes, the First Time Buyers Initiative properties have also been delivered in the borough.

The market conditions prevailing at the start of this strategy may mean that some households will find it difficult to get a mortgage to buy shared ownership products and RSL’s may be reluctant to develop on that basis. The Council will seek to enable shared ownership sales where possible as set out below. However, if it can be demonstrated that there is not strong demand for shared ownership products on a particular development the Council would support the development of intermediate rented products which would in time come back to the market as shared ownership. This should ensure the development of balanced sustainable communities.

The partnership should aim to deliver at least 150 units of intermediate housing over the life of the strategy. The type of product and property sizes are set out in the table below. Again the property size mix will be sought across the programme during the life of the strategy and may not be applied to every site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One bedroom</th>
<th>Two bedroom</th>
<th>Three bedroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New build homebuy</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open market homebuy</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate rent</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Council recognises that some households need help to access home ownership. Two products to help households into home ownership have been established by the Council as a pilot. The first is a cash incentive scheme to help tenants in affordable rented housing to buy a home and secondly a home affordability loan for households who struggle to find the deposit required to get a mortgage even though they can afford the mortgage payments from their incomes. The cash incentive programme aims to help 42 households buy a home thus releasing their current home for someone in housing need. The home loan scheme aims to help at least 57 households buy a shared ownership home.

If RSL’s are reluctant to develop low cost home ownership in the short term because of the market conditions the Council would support the development of intermediate rented homes. Intermediate rented homes would be allocated to households from the Council’s shared ownership register so that they can buy that home in the future. The Council will work with RSL’s to develop a policy which will enable households to purchase the intermediate rented units.

http://www.helptobuy.org.uk

Actions

- Continue to encourage under-occupying tenants to move to smaller homes, releasing a target of 20 properties each year in this way.
- Enable at least 292 affordable rented homes to be developed over the life of the strategy
- Enable at least 150 low cost home ownership homes to be developed over the life of the strategy
- Develop a policy approach to the role of intermediate rented housing in promoting balanced sustainable communities.
- Develop innovative products to enable households to access low cost home ownership
4.3. Providing the right homes for vulnerable people

What we have achieved:

- Released 91 under occupied family affordable rented homes under the Tenant Incentive Scheme over the last 5 years for families who needed to move
- Re-designated 344 elderly person properties to general needs accommodation over the last 10 years to allocate to younger households in housing need
- Worked with housing associations to de-designate 12 hard to let elderly person properties into popular homes for people with a learning disability
- Successfully decanted an unpopular town centre block which will now be redeveloped as part of the town centre regeneration
- Undertaken a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the Council housing stock to the newly established housing association Bracknell Forest Homes which will result in investment of £61m over the next 5 years to improve the transferred homes
- Working in partnership with 15 other local authorities in the south east £15m has been allocated to improve the condition of owner occupiers homes over the next 3 years
- Significantly improved the SAP ratings of homes in the Borough since 2005
- Been successful in applying to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to improve the condition of vulnerable households homes through the Warmth Income and Safety in the Home WISH project
- Brought 149 empty homes back into use for households in housing need over the financial years 2005/06-2006/07 through the rent deposit scheme
- Met the government target of halving the number of households in temporary accommodation in the Borough from 96 in 2004 to 48 by 2010 two years early
- The Council’s work in preventing homelessness has been recognised as good practice by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted)
- Successfully prevented 211 households from becoming homelessness in 2008/9
- Enabled 50 households to remain in their own homes through the provision of disabled adaptations
- Provided housing related support to over 800 people

To build on the success of the Tenant Incentive Scheme where the Council assists people who are under-occupying homes to move to more suitably sized accommodation the Council will explore the opportunity to work with all of the housing associations in the Borough to offer support to all affordable housing tenants in the Borough under-occupying their affordable homes.

Empty Homes

The Council recognises the importance of bringing empty homes back into use as part of the strategic housing role, especially as there is such a demand for homes in the Borough. Within Bracknell Forest there are estimated to be approximately 430 homes which have been empty for over 6 months. This figure includes 128 empty bedsit flats within a block called Enid Wood House which the Council used as part of the affordable housing stock. This block had extensive management problems due to the poor design and layout of the accommodation. Following extensive negotiations with the freeholder of Enid Wood House, the tenants have been re-housed leaving the accommodation empty. Enid Wood House will now be incorporated into the wider regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre.
Additionally, in January 2008 the Council reduced the council tax discount for owners of long term empty properties from 50% to 10%. It is hoped that the reduction in the discount will encourage owners of long term empty properties to bring them back into use.

The overall figure for empty homes in the Borough is reduced to approximately 140 when homes which are empty pending a planning consent for re-development such as Enid Wood House are taken into account. A new phenomenon which has emerged recently is corporate lets where large businesses operating in the Borough purchase properties for employees who are moving into the area on a temporary basis. It is not clear whether these properties are being occupied or left empty. The strategy has a specific action to investigate this further and work with the owners to bring them back into use. The new Private Sector Housing Strategy will be drafted in 2009 to replace the existing Housing Renewal Strategy.

Action:
- Draft a new Private Sector Housing Strategy which will set out the Council’s approach to Empty Homes, Homes in Multiple Occupation, and Disabled Facilities Grants
- Work with Housing Association partners to introduce a Borough wide Tenant Incentive Scheme to make best use of the affordable housing stock in the Borough

Former Council Housing Stock

A major achievement of the Council has been the successful transfer of the former Council housing stock to the newly established Housing Association - Bracknell Forest Homes. The transfer took place in February 2008 which will mean a range of benefits for tenants and leaseholders of Bracknell Forest Homes in the medium and longer term. In addition, there will be a range of benefits to households in housing need in the Borough. The key benefits to tenants of Bracknell Forest Homes as a result of transfer are as follows:

- Approximately £61 million of investment on repairs and improvements on homes to ensure that all homes meet the Bracknell Forest Standard over the first 5 years
- A full programme of £312 million planned to be spent on major repairs, maintenance and improvements to the homes and estates over 30 years
- Improvements to services for older people, disabled people and sheltered housing

These can be viewed in greater detail within the Offer document which was sent to all of the former Council tenants as part of the consultation process before the ballot took place.

http://www.bracknellforesthomes.org.uk/main.cfm?type=CHWFHTO&Object=2149

Housing Association Stock

Returns to the Housing Corporation (now the Homes and Communities Agency) indicated that at the 1 April 2008 there were 1885 rented homes in the Borough (excluding those of BFH) which includes sheltered provision, supported housing and general needs affordable rented homes in the Borough. The largest stock holders in the Borough after Bracknell Forest Homes are the Guinness Trust, London and Quadrant Housing Association and Southern Housing Group. The Housing Association stock in the Borough is mostly constructed post 1966 and does not have significant repair problems. Some older houses, mainly those acquired for renovation or bought through the Existing Street
Purchase Programme may be in need of investment to meet the full standard but the Housing Corporation has reported that it is confident that local associations will meet the target standard by 2010. The Council will however monitor the progress of Housing Associations to ensure they meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

Actions:
- Work in partnership with Bracknell Forest Homes to ensure that the pledges set out within the Offer document are fully met.
- Set up a monitoring framework to ensure that housing associations meet the Decent Homes Standard within their housing stock in Bracknell Forest by 2010

**Private Sector Stock**

As a result of the findings of the Private Sector Condition Survey, the Council has been targeting resources at tackling fuel poverty and improving the SAP ratings of properties occupied by vulnerable households. Specific projects which the Council has promoted have been Warm Front and a scheme in partnership with British Gas. Warm Front is a government funded scheme which provides grants to make homes warmer, healthier and more energy efficient. Since the private sector stock condition survey was undertaken £591,500 has been spent insulating 3,243 homes through the Warm Front scheme. The Council has worked in partnership with British Gas who has insulated 233 homes since 2006 with residents benefiting from a £50 rebate on their Council tax bill. The cost of these works alone is estimated to be £77,500. The benefits have been substantial with the SAP ratings of homes in the Borough, excluding mobile homes, now at an average of 60.

[http://gov.uk/warm-front-scheme](http://gov.uk/warm-front-scheme)

An unusual element of the private sector housing stock in Bracknell Forest is that there are over 1,000 mobile homes in the Borough. There are a number of mobile home sites with the main sites being in Sandhurst, Winkfield and Warfield. Although many of these homes are relatively new and very well maintained they have poor insulation qualities. The heating fuels and systems also tend to mean the energy efficiency rating of these homes is very low. The average SAP rating for mobile homes in the Borough is 28. The table below illustrates the SAP ratings and the effect that mobile homes has on the average for the Borough:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property type</th>
<th>SAP rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile home</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing stock (Excluding mobile homes)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the factors influencing the SAP rating of mobile homes is the type of fuel used. The majority of mobile home sites are not connected to mains gas and the homes rely on liquid propane gas. The following table illustrates the impact on the SAP rating of these homes if the energy supply was changed from LPG to mains gas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SAP rating with LPG</th>
<th>SAP rating with mains gas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

39
In order to improve the SAP rating, and therefore the energy efficiency of these properties, it is proposed that a consultation exercise is undertaken with the residents on these sites to encourage a transfer to mains gas the cost of which would be met by the gas suppliers.

Given the very poor insulation qualities which mobile homes have and the effect upon the overall SAP ratings, an action arising from this housing priority will be to explore the opportunities to improve the SAP ratings of mobile homes in the Borough.

To supplement the work undertaken to increase the SAP rating of houses occupied by vulnerable households, the Council was successful in applying to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for grant funding for the Warmth, Income and Safety in the Home (WISH) project. The initial aim of the project was to create a master database of potentially vulnerable households in all privately owned and privately rented dwellings across the Borough. This has been enhanced with an update of our existing database by the use of night time aerial thermal image of the Borough which will be matched with GIS survey so individual properties with poor thermal qualities can be easily identified. Once poorly insulated properties have been identified we will target those households which are vulnerable and most likely to experience fuel poverty based on existing data which the Council holds. The Council has set a target of assisting 2,500 households by the end of 2010/11 by targeting existing government schemes.

Home Owners

In addition to the findings in relation to the energy efficiency of properties, the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey found that the properties in the poorest condition in the Borough are owner occupied accounting for 87.9% of unfit properties in the Borough. Furthermore the group of people most likely to be living in unfit housing is single pensioners, with 7.7% of all single pensioner households living in unfit dwellings compared to 1.8% of all households.

The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey estimated that there is considerable potential to utilise the resources of owner occupiers through equity release schemes to meet the cost of undertaking urgent repairs. To carry out all urgent repairs required to owner-occupied dwellings would cost an estimated £20.8m which could be reduced to £5.3m when taking into account the possibility of owners undertaking the repairs themselves from their incomes or equity release. The Private Sector Stock Condition survey 2003 made a specific recommendation to establish a mechanism to enable homeowners to release equity to pay for essential works.

Accordingly, working in a consortium with 15 other local authorities in the South East, the Regional Housing Board has awarded £16m to be spent over the three financial years 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 to establish a flexible loan scheme. The flexible loan scheme will enable older home owners to access capital funds to undertake home improvements which will contribute towards meeting the Decent Homes Standard. The flexible home repair assistance loan will be secured by a charge on the householder’s property and may be repaid in a manner to suit the borrower. Payments of capital and interest may be made on a regular, or irregular basis, or not at all and re-claimed from the final estate. Thus the loan may be viewed as a conventional mortgage, or an overdraft, or as an equity release loan, or as a combination of any of them. Subject to the successful take up of the flexible loans over the three financial years the expectation is that a further bid will be made to the Regional Housing Board for ongoing funding.
Actions:
- Implement the flexible loan scheme within Bracknell Forest.
- To target help to 2,500 households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes by 2010/11
- Undertake a consultation exercise with mobile home residents to see if they are interested in signing up for mains gas supply.

Making best use of the Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector has an important part to play in the Bracknell Forest housing market. The lack of affordable housing and the market conditions prevailing for home ownership mean that a home in the private rented sector will be the only option available for some households. In addition the private rented sector will form a tenure of choice for some households who are mobile and do not wish to purchase a home in Bracknell Forest. Developing products that will respond to those households will form an integral part of the town centre regeneration and underpin regeneration activity.

The Council can improve access to and improve information on the private rented sector for households. It will work with landlords and their national representatives to promote that element of the housing market. The Council has extended the loan of deposits to households to include a month’s rent as well to enable households to take advantage of securing a home in the private rented sector. The Council will hold regular liaison meetings with the organisations that operate in that market to ensure that the Council is working corporately to support the private rented sector.

The Council will work with the market to raise standards and where appropriate it will support accreditation schemes to help those in the market understand the quality of property, management and tenant better. In addition the Council will take action where it finds landlords failing in their responsibilities. The Council will take informal action in the first instance to resolve issues but if that is not successful formal notices will be used to improve standards.

http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/helpwithrentingahome

http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/privatesectorhousing

Action:
- Work with private sector landlords to increase the amount of properties made available to households and generate circumstances for investment where necessary.
- Implement and actively promote the flexible loan scheme in the Borough to improve the condition of properties in the private sector contributing towards the Decent Homes Standard.
- Refresh the information within the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey
- Undertake a specific project to improve the SAP ratings of mobile homes in the Borough
- Complete a new private sector housing strategy

Homelessness
The Council is working to meet its target set out in 2005 to reduce homelessness against the 3 main causes. The 3 main causes of homelessness in Bracknell Forest are:

- Parental eviction
- End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the private sector
- Relationship breakdown

The Council prevents homelessness by providing advice and help to people when they are at risk of becoming homeless, including referral to specialist agencies which may enable them to stay where they are living, and debt advice to avoid eviction through arrears. The graph below shows that although the overall trend in homelessness acceptances in the Borough is down, it is very sporadic.

As seen, the Council and its partners have developed a range of products and services that can be offered to households to help them resolve their housing situation. The introduction of a new computer system tied in with choice based letting will enable a range of options to be systematically offered to households in a proactive manner. The Council intends to review its allocation policy so that households who are proactive in solving their housing situation and secure an alternative home in the private rented sector rather than approaching as homeless receive additional priority.

The Council will be drafting a new Homelessness Strategy in partnership with the Homelessness Forum for adoption during 2009/10. This will set out the approach taken by the Council to effectively prevent and reduce the main causes of homelessness.

The Council is currently developing its approach to choice based lettings. It has undertaken consultation with key stakeholders. It will also review its current allocation policy so that it operates more effectively under a choice based model. Coupled with the implementation of a new computer system the intention is that the new choice based system will go live in the autumn 2009.
Actions:
- Draft a new Homelessness Strategy for adoption during 2009/10
- Review Council's allocation policy in 2009
- Implement Choice Based Lettings in 2009

Meeting the Housing and Support Needs of People with Special Needs

Achievements:
- Commissioning of a new floating support scheme to enable vulnerable people with complex issues to remain in their own homes. Floating support is where a support worker provides support to a person in their own home
- Successful move away from accommodation based support to person based support as set out in the previous Supporting People Strategy
- Completion of a new low support housing scheme to act as move on accommodation from high support accommodation
- Adoption of a “Move On” strategy to ensure the best use of the supported housing provision in the Borough
- Work of the Young Persons Resource Panel acknowledged as good practice by the Government Office for the South within the region for assisting offenders with substance misuse issues
- The Council's Learning Disability Services recognised as the best in region for Dignity in Care in the Health and Social Care Awards 2008

Supporting People is a government initiative funded by the Communities and Local Government department. It enables vulnerable people to remain, or become, independent in the community, through the provision of housing related support services that are cost effective, compliment existing care services and are accountable to service users and to local and central government. Housing related support services include advice on tenancy agreements, help with budgeting and liaison with utilities companies.

Supporting People

The Bracknell Forest Supporting People partnership developed a strategy of how and where housing related support services should be delivered for the five years from 2005 to 2010.

The Supporting People Commissioning Body which oversees the programme has membership from the Primary Care Trust, Thames Valley Probation Service and Bracknell Forest Council. Supporting People commission services which provide support to over 900 households in the Borough. The pie
The majority of the current Supporting People contracts expire in November 2009. A programme of service reviews has been undertaken in order that contracts can be re-tendered by November 2009. It is proposed that the current programme allocation across client groups will be retained as the basis for re-commissioning. During the service review process, the feasibility of introducing “spot purchasing” housing related support for all client groups on a needs basis will be explored. This approach will allow more accurate targeting of supporting people grant funding.

During 2008/09, the Homelessness Forum undertook a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the supported housing provision in the Borough. This work included input from service users. One of the “threats” identified by this work was the lack of a formal Move On Strategy for supported housing. This meant that there was a risk that residents could not move on to independent housing when they were ready. Consultation has taken place with key stakeholders about the introduction of a move on strategy. Agreement has been reached on the principle and the detail can be considered as part of the review of the Council’s allocation policy.

The general direction of travel for the provision of support services is to provide them on a floating support basis and to move away from services tied to properties if possible. This allows better targeting of services and also facilitates some households moving towards more independence. So as to facilitate this strategic direction there will be a need to establish move-on forecasts from schemes on an annual basis. These forecasts will allow providers to plan and work with households to help them move to another home and achieve higher levels of independence where possible.

Ex-Offenders

The National Offender Management Service has highlighted the importance of settled and suitable housing in reducing re-offending. Ensuring offenders are able to access settled and suitable housing can be the foundation of rehabilitations, resettlement and risk management. Housing is vital for ex-offenders as it can act as a springboard for other life events such as keeping a job, registering with a doctor and getting into drug treatment. The National Offender Management Service has published a Reducing Re-offending Housing and Housing Support Resource Pack.
**Action:**

- Identify how the authority can work with partner housing associations to re-house offenders and contribute towards reducing re-offending and develop a relevant action plan.

**Substance misuse**

Within the Council the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) commission a range of services in partnership with the Primary Care Trust and the Probation service. The majority of services including outreach work, drop in sessions and counselling are provided at the New Hope Centre which is a multi agency one stop within Bracknell Town Centre. New Hope is the first point of contact to all substance misuse services in the Borough. During 2006/07 364 people used the services provided at the New Hope Centre.

The current thrust of Government policy is to increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training. This is reflected in the Public Service Agreement (PSA) 16 produced by the Government. The PSA focuses on four client groups – care leavers, adult offenders, adults with mental health issues and adults with learning disabilities. This agenda is also reflected in the Local Area Agreement which has specific targets around adults with learning disabilities in employment, the amount of young offenders in education, employment or training and reducing drug related offending.


Accordingly, in relation to the accommodation element of people being able to access stable accommodation in both the public and private sector, the Council will be exploring the introduction of a system where a small supply of accommodation will be available to the groups identified in PSA 16. This accommodation will be over and above the supply of accommodation which would otherwise have been available through the Council statutory homeless obligations.

**Action:**

- Consider the option of a move on quota within the new allocations policy as part of Choice Based Lettings to enable some vulnerable adults, including those who are at risk of re-offending, to access accommodation
- Adopt a new Supporting People Strategy during 2009
- Re-tender Supporting People services during 2009

**Enabling Older People a choice of home and support**

**Achievements:**

- Completion of the Older Persons Commissioning Strategy
- Enabled around 2600 elderly or vulnerable households to remain at home thanks to the community alarm system provided by Forestcare throughout Berkshire, around 1,400 of which are within Bracknell Forest
- As a result of the transfer of the former Council housing stock, considerable resources will be spent on improving the Bracknell Forest Homes sheltered housing stock
The Council has been assessed by the Audit Commission as performing well in promoting and supporting the independence and wellbeing of older people.

In 2008 the Council’s dementia team has won a national award for innovative work which helps people with dementia to live at home for as long as possible.

Bracknell Forest Borough is typical of the United Kingdom in terms of having an ageing population with an increasing population of people aged 65 and over. In 2001 there were approximately 12,000 people aged 65 and over making up close to 12% of the Borough’s population. Between 2006 and 2021, the number of people over 65 years is expected to increase steadily to an estimated population of 17,600.

The Council recognises that health, housing social care and support are inextricably linked. The appropriate support and care services can help people to remain independent and enjoy living in their homes for as long as possible. Well maintained, warm, secure and suitable housing can help prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital or institutional care. The Government has set out the national approach to housing for the ageing population in the publication *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society* which was published in March 2008. The Government’s approach is based on the principles that everyone should be able to make a choice which mirrors their lifestyle and circumstances, remain safe in their own home as long as they wish to and that there is a supply of desirable housing with support and care to match individuals changing capabilities.


Bracknell Forest Council has produced an Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy for Older People’s Services. The Commissioning Strategy, which was developed in consultation with local older people, carers and community stakeholders sets out the strategic direction in terms of the support and services provided by adult social care. In terms of the housing options for elderly people, the Council will be modernising services with an emphasis on moving from commissioning residential and nursing care and instead providing home based support and preventative work to enable people to live at home for longer. It is estimated that by 2012 there will be a demand for 36 additional properties for frail older people. That level of demand is not likely to be economically viable in terms of support costs for such a scheme and so a larger scheme will need to be commissioned perhaps even including mixed tenure. The overall strategy will aim to improve the current quality, range and type of housing available for older people. This approach to accommodation mirrors the vision in the *National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society* which sets out the importance of a wide range of specialised accommodation to encourage choice. In addition to the Commissioning Strategy as part of the objective within the Sustainable Communities Strategy to create a Borough where people are, and feel safe, the Council will be drafting a Borough-wide Strategy for Older People.

As part of ensuring that people can remain independent within their own homes in the Borough the Council provides a range of services such as meals on wheels, community and day care services. Forestcare, which is the Council’s own 24 hour, 365 days-a-year emergency response centre also provides support to enable vulnerable and elderly people to remain in their own homes through the provision of community alarms. Forestcare now provide services across Berkshire with 858 sheltered housing residents connected to community alarms in Bracknell Forest alone.

Forestcare also provide a range of assistive technology equipment used to enable older and vulnerable people to remain in their own homes. Usually provided in addition to a Lifeline, assistive technology provided by Forestcare can include bogus caller alarms, smoke detectors, gas detectors,
falls detectors and bed and chair sensors. Forestcare have equipped a flat in one of Bracknell Forest Homes sheltered schemes with various pieces of assistive technology. The flat is used as a training tool for Social Services, housing, and NHS teams to learn more about assistive technology and how it can help their clients. It is also used by them as an “assessment” flat so that someone who may benefit from the equipment can try it out or stay there for a week or so to see how they get on with the equipment before it is installed in their own home.

http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/forestcarelifelinealarms

http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sensors

The Flexible Loan Scheme which is mentioned within an earlier chapter will also allow older owner occupiers whom may otherwise have considered moving home because of the condition of their property to remain where they are and undertake major repairs financed through the scheme. This enables older people to retain their independence and contributes towards one of the Council’s wider objectives to improve the condition of the existing housing stock. The Council also funds from the Supporting People programme an independent Home Improvement Agency. Home Improvement Agencies are locally based, not-for-profit organisations that help older, disabled and vulnerable homeowners or private tenants to repair, improve, maintain or adapt their homes. Their prime purpose is to help people continue to live in their own homes in comfort, safety, security and independence. Within Bracknell Forest, Anchor Staying Put has been providing the Home Improvement Agency service since April 2004 following a successful bid for grant funding to the then Office for the Deputy Prime Minister. In addition to providing the Disabled Facilities Grants core services Anchor Staying Put Bracknell has assisted individuals to claim additional benefits and sourced a number of charitable funding opportunities.


The majority of older people in Bracknell Forest live in their own homes. A strategy will need to be developed which is capable of enabling older person households to stay in their own home if that is what they choose. Through consultation with older people the strategy will influence the provision of market housing for older people in Bracknell Forest and identify gaps in provision of affordable and low cost home ownership housing.

As the majority of older people currently own their own home and as that is set to continue, the strategy for provision of accommodation for older people should include new and innovative ways of meeting that demand. Consultation with older people will include the discussion of concepts new to Bracknell Forest such as care/communities, sometimes called care villages. So as to ensure that such concepts can be developed if older people express support for them it will be necessary to identify possible locations and site allocations.

Actions
• Develop an older persons accommodation and support services strategy to establish;
• the quality and type of housing provision older people in Bracknell Forest want in the future;
• the range and type of support services older people would like to see in place;
• the social/leisure facilities and networks and communities that older people would like to live in.
The proposed actions will contribute to balanced sustainable communities by enabling people to live in a comfortable home in a community they want to live in.

5.0 RESOURCING THE HOUSING STRATEGY

This chapter sets out the resources that are available to the Council and the key financial choices that have to be made to deliver its housing strategy and plans.

Bracknell Forest Capital Strategy

The Council’s Capital Strategy sets the priorities for capital investment across the council and provides a framework for the allocation of capital resources across the range of council investment needs. Bracknell Forest Council is a debt free authority and has not been reliant on external borrowing to finance its Capital Programme. The main sources of funding for the Capital programme are;

- Accumulated capital receipts
- Government grants
- Other external contributions such as commuted sums from planning obligations

The Council's policy is to treat all capital receipts as a corporate resource, enabling investment to be directed towards those schemes or projects with the highest corporate priority. The Council’s use of capital resources is set out in the Council’s Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy 2008/09.

Government Grants

Currently the Government makes specific grants available to assist the Council with its housing programmes. The following table sets out the grants and the estimates for the next 3 years. It should be noted that Supporting People Grant is reducing and will be paid as part of the LAA area based grant in 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008/09 (£)</th>
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<th>2010/11 (£)</th>
<th>2011/12 (£)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>324,000</td>
<td>324,000</td>
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<td>Flexible Loan Scheme</td>
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<td>200,000</td>
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<td>1,866,238</td>
<td>1,921,158</td>
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Housing Transfer Capital Receipt

In addition to the resources mentioned above a one off capital receipt is available to the Council from transfer of its housing stock to Bracknell Forest Homes in February 2008.

The “Offer Document” to tenants contained the following commitment
“The Council will commit 75% of the available capital receipt from transfer to fund new affordable homes in the Borough over the next five years”
“The Council would ensure that the money remaining after paying transfer costs would benefit the wider community, for example by improving local facilities, including youth facilities.
This will mean that £17.250 million pounds will be available for affordable housing over the next 5 years in addition to other sources of funding. The Council is keen to ensure this one off investment opportunity is used to increase the supply of housing over the next five years and does not simply replace other sources of funding.

New affordable housing provision

The Council’s affordable housing policy will seek up to 25% affordable housing where three additional units are proposed. The level of affordable housing or commuted sum contribution towards the provision of affordable housing will be calculated via a viability analysis for each site. If the viability analysis identifies the need for social housing grant to enable the scheme to proceed the Council will work with partners to secure the necessary funding. Potential sources of the funding are the Council, RSL preferred partner reserves and the Home and Communities Agency (HCA).

The Council has worked in partnership with Registered Social Landlords in the Borough to access grant funding from the Housing Corporation’s National Affordable Housing Programme. In the funding period 2006-07/200708, Registered Social Landlords and a major national house builder were awarded £10,772,500 to build 218 new affordable homes in the Borough.

In the latest funding bidding round, registered social landlords have bid for funding to construct an additional 275 new affordable homes in the Borough. Additional bids are also expected from registered social landlords as part of the Regular Market Engagement which the Housing Corporation has introduced as part of the 2008-2011 investment programme whereby in-year bids for grant are being encouraged.

The following table sets out the estimated level of investment that the Council would wish to secure with its RSL preferred partners from the HCA over the life of the strategy

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2,700,000</td>
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<td>13,500,000</td>
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</table>

Note: This investment sought from the HCA is in addition to the stock transfer capital receipt.

The following tables set out the programmes for investment of Council resources over the next five years that will be funded from the stock transfer capital receipt.
### Help to buy a home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Cash incentive scheme</td>
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<td>190</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>290</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>290</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1060</strong></td>
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### Enabling more affordable homes

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temporary to permanent</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>750</td>
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<tr>
<td>More new affordable homes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>7803</td>
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<td>New homes through partnership</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1424</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<td>1000</td>
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<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>250</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>3477</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>3000</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>3500</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>2500</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
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## Making best use of affordable homes

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<td>560</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>7</td>
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## Total of programmes

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<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help to buy a home</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling more affordable housing</td>
<td>1379</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3477</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14106</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>1140</td>
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<td>540</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4407</td>
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<td>4330</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3640</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2640</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above programmes are modelled on the predicted average levels of subsidy available to develop affordable housing during the life of the strategy. With the housing market being so volatile it is very difficult to predict how far resources will stretch across the proposed programme areas. The average level of subsidy required will be reviewed on an annual basis subject to the results of commissioning.

Help to buy a home

Some households in Bracknell Forest will have difficulty buying a new build Home Buy home. The Home Loan Scheme is aimed at helping households access shared ownership. Firstly, if households have the income to buy a share in their new home but do not have the deposit saved which will give them access to the best mortgage products they can apply for the deposit required. There will be a requirement for the loan to be repaid.

The cash incentive scheme is an option for existing affordable housing tenants who want to own a home. The Council will offer the scheme to all affordable housing tenants by offering a cash incentive grant equivalent to the maximum right to buy discount to help them buy an alternative home thus releasing their current home for someone else in housing need. This scheme is a cost effective way of generating access to additional affordable housing.

Depending upon take up and market conditions this element of the programme could help around 35 households buy a home.

Enabling more affordable homes

There are three elements to this part of the programme. Firstly, the Council wants to establish a temporary to permanent scheme with RSL’s to provide a portfolio of properties to allocate to homeless households who are waiting to move to a permanent home. This will provide a much better temporary housing solution for those households by purchasing existing satisfactory properties to let at sub-market rents.

Secondly, the Council will fund a development programme with its preferred partners of new build affordable housing by the provision of social housing grant. This element of the programme should be in accordance with the commissioning targets set in the delivering affordable homes through partnership section of the strategy. As stated before the Council wishes to enter into a protocol with the Housing Corporation in terms of funding new development to ensure that the stock transfer proceeds does not displace the Homes and Communities agency funding that would have been made available to support schemes in Bracknell Forest.

Thirdly, The Council will investigate the option of being a partner in a development company with a RSL and a third equity partner. The Council would intend to use the allocated amount of the programme as its equity share. The model would have to demonstrate that it was capable of delivering additional affordable housing or other benefits over the conventional route of providing funding for the RSL preferred partners.

This element of the programme has been modelled on current average social housing grant rates over the life of the programme. It is hoped that the economies of scale generated by the scale of the programme will be able to maintain that level. Consequently, this element of the programme aims to deliver 213 new affordable homes. However, it is recognised that the lack of opportunity to develop shared ownership housing may have an impact on this target.
The Council is keen to promote sustainable development and act as a community leader in every respect.

Action:

- The Council will hold a competition for one development in this programme which will aim to act as an exemplar in sustainable development.

Making best use of affordable housing

The Council intends to allocate funding to support the development of the older persons accommodation and support services strategy. This strategy intends to ensure there is accommodation that will meet the needs of older people taking into account the changing demographics and older people’s choice of housing solution.

The second part of this element of the programme is funding to enable new affordable housing to be adapted to meet the specific household needs where households have disabled members. This will fund the additional costs involved in meeting the special needs. Therefore, this will run alongside the new affordable housing programme.

Other Areas of Housing Investment.

Council Capital Resources - £143,000 has been allocated to progress the development of Choice Based Lettings. The purchase of a new Strategic Housing IT System will be necessary to implement Choice Based Lettings. In addition the Council is investing over £80,000 in a new information technology system to facilitate the administration of the Supporting People programme.

The Council operates a Rent and Deposit Loan Scheme for homeless households to help them secure privately rented housing.

Homelessness Directorate Grant – The Council receives an annual grant of £30,000 from the Homelessness Directorate to support initiatives within its Homelessness Strategy. This grant is currently funding a voluntary agency to provide resettlement support for single vulnerable people and a voluntary agency which provides out-reach support for young mothers and babies. Both of these initiatives contribute to the prevention of homelessness.

Resources available to support Private Sector Initiatives

Given that the vast majority of the housing stock lies in the private sector the quality of much housing stock in Bracknell Forest is largely dependent on owner-occupiers and landlords maintaining and periodically refurbishing their properties. However, the Council has a role to play as the strategic housing authority to ensure that homes in the private sector occupied by vulnerable people meet the Decent Homes Standard. During 2007/08 the Council secured £44,700 from DEFRA to resource the WISH project which involved a range of initiatives targeting energy efficiency improvements across the Borough.
The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) to fund adaptations for people with physical disabilities is a priority issue for the Council. Resources available for DFG's is summarised below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Resource Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>363,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>324,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10(est)</td>
<td>324,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11(est)</td>
<td>324,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demand for disabled facilities grants is expected to increase during the term of this strategy. The main reason for this is the potential increase in demand from tenants of the new stock transfer housing association, Bracknell Forest Homes. While Bracknell Forest Homes has made provision for investment in minor adaptation works within their Business Plan, tenants with a need for more substantial adaptations over the value of £7,000, will need to apply for a DFG.

During 2007/08 a successful sub-regional bid was made to Government Office for the South East (GOSE) to fund a Flexible Home Improvement Loan Scheme across the sub-region. A three year allocation has been received, of which Bracknell’s allocation for 2008/09 is £188,787. The allocations for 2009/10 and 2010/11 have yet to be confirmed. As a result of the Stock Transfer, properties owned by the new Housing Association, Bracknell Forest Homes, will receive a major investment programme of over £61m for repairs and improvements over the next 5 years.

**Funding for Housing Related Support**

During 2007/08, the Council received £2m Supporting People Grant. The grant programme delivers housing related support to over 1,000 vulnerable people across the Borough each year. Services are provided by a diverse range of organisations, from large housing associations to small locally based voluntary organisations.

The Government has recently issued details of its Supporting People Grant allocations for the next three years. Unfortunately, the grant allocation for Bracknell is expected to be reduced by 12% by 2010/11. The Supporting People Commissioning Body has decided to use a current under spend to smooth out the reduction in funding over the next three years. All services are currently contracted on the basis of three year steady state contracts which will end in 2009/10. The Council will need to review its investment priorities within the context of the new 5 year Supporting People Strategy which will be developed during 2008/09. This strategy will provide the framework for re-commissioning services for 2010/11.
6.0 CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

Involving Stakeholders – Opportunities to Participate

The Council has created a variety of consultation structures and programmes that aim to meet the overall consultation requirements of local people and the Council. These are area based, Borough-wide or service specific structures. These include the following:

- Neighbourhood Action Groups – A partnership with Thames Valley Police and Berkshire Fire and Rescue authority where neighbourhood issues can be raised with senior officers within the Council, police and fire service. The Neighbourhood Action Groups take place in each of the Boroughs 14 neighbourhoods. Successes which have occurred as a result of the Neighbourhood Action Groups include reducing the speed limits in areas identified by residents as accident black spots, the establishment of a Take Pride litter pick and specific events for young people in the Borough.
- BF 1500 – A citizen engagement panel of up to 1500 local people who are surveyed up to 4 times a year.
- Town and Country – A Council produced newsletter delivered to every resident in the Borough which the Council uses as a mechanism to consult on various issues.

In September 2006 a Best Value User Satisfaction Survey was undertaken with over 1,350 questionnaires returned. The survey asked participants "what was most important in making somewhere a good place to live?" the responses, of which people were allowed to pick up to 5 choices from a list were as follows:

- Level of crime (60%)
- Health services (53%)
- Clean streets (35%)
- Education provision (40%)
- Affordable decent housing (38%)

Involving Stakeholders in the Housing Strategy

There has been extensive consultation on both the drafting of the housing strategy and the gathering of the evidence base which informs the strategy. The Strategic Housing Partnership has approved project plans and contributed towards the priorities within this document. The Strategic Housing Partnership has also monitored progress against the targets in the previous housing strategy and contributed towards the Thames Valley West Key Workers Housing Needs Assessment, Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The Strategic Housing Partnership will be given responsibility for monitoring progress against the targets set in this strategy and ensuring delivery.

In addition to the role played by the Strategic Housing Partnership, a major Housing Conference event was held in October 2007 in Bracknell Town Centre which was attended by over 100 delegates. This was arranged jointly by both housing and planning officers. The event was an opportunity for stakeholders to contribute towards the priorities within the new housing strategy and the content of the key Development Plan Document which will inform the delivery of housing in the Borough. Feedback from the conference included:
“Housing strategy should not consider affordable housing in isolation from new market housing provision and the existing housing stock.”

“Relationship of income v affordability which will require robust up to date info - how will this be kept ‘live’ throughout life of the strategy?”

“How BFBC will use it own assets to improve the delivery of affordable housing i.e. not selling at highest market value, considering the bigger picture of how land/assets committed for affordable housing will have long term effect in reducing revenue costs e.g. around supported housing for older people, reduced cost on homelessness, failed tenancies etc”.

All of the additional comments made by the delegates have shaped the priorities made within this Housing Strategy and all topics have been covered.

As a result of the conference a range of partner organisations requested to be consulted on the draft housing strategy. They have also shaped the existing priorities within this Housing Strategy. The partner organisations that will be part of future consultations include:

- RSLs
- Home Builders Federation
- Berkshire and Hampshire Councils
- Carers UK
- Voluntary Sector Forum
- Bracknell Town Council
- Binfield Parish Council
- Crowthorne Parish Council
- Sandhurst Town Council
- Warfield Parish Council
- Winkfield Parish Council
- Planning Consultants
- House Builders
- Thames Valley Police
- Supporting People service providers
- Berkshire East PCT

Other Consultations

The Council has undertaken a number of consultation exercises with residents, service users and other stakeholders to inform a range of strategies where concerns about housing conditions and access to affordable housing have been raised. Consultation undertaken on the Long Term Conditions Strategy, the Mental Health Commissioning Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy all identified access to affordable housing as a key concern. A consultation event which was undertaken to inform the new Sustainable Communities Strategy had the following feedback:

- More affordable housing
- Houses for rent
- Sustainable new homes
- Available housing for mixed population - singles, families, elderly, young
- More affordable housing for renting as well as purchase
- Affordable housing to enable younger people to live here and not move away
- Good quality accommodation for single young people
- Affordable, good quality housing
- Affordable and appropriate housing
- Negate homelessness
- Affordability of housing for low income/young people
- More affordable housing to meet local need
- Housing is of good quality and there is a good mix
- Affordable housing especially for young people
- More affordable housing
- New homes with sustainable energy
- Sustainable affordable housing
- Housing price/salary ration at acceptable levels
- Affordable homes e.g. more key worker housing
- Really sustainable homes
A clear theme from the comments which were made at the stakeholder event was that there is a need for more affordable housing of all types. This feedback has contributed to the Delivery of Affordable Housing as a key strategic priority within this document.


7.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

Performance assessment

The Council is subject to both external and internal scrutiny. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment undertaken by the Audit Commission assesses the performance of local authorities and the services they provide to local people. In 2008 Bracknell Forest Council was assessed as a Good 3 Star Council which is improving well. The following is the scorecard for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment for the Council produced by the Audit Commission in March 2009:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction of travel against other councils</th>
<th>Performance against other councils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>improving strongly</td>
<td>4 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improving well</td>
<td>3 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improving adequately</td>
<td>2 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not improving adequately</td>
<td>1 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not improving</td>
<td>0 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Audit Commission


The Council has a variety of mechanisms for measuring its performance including an Annual Report, Performance Management Reports and Overview and Scrutiny Commission Reviews. Each year the Council publishes an Annual Report which contains the Council’s work plans for the coming year. The Annual Report also contains a summary of how the Council performed against the targets for the previous year. There is a performance management system in place to ensure that the Council completes the plans set out in the Annual Report. Every quarter, each service department produces a statement of how well they are performing against the objectives and targets set in their service
plan. These reports are assessed by the Corporate Management Team, elected Members and Scrutiny Panels. In this way the Council is able to monitor its progress steadily, over time, identifying emerging issues and, if necessary, take action to improve performance.

Housing Strategy 2005-2008

The previous Housing Strategy adopted in 2005 had 12 priorities with 32 specific action points attached to these priorities. Of the 32 action points 28 have been completed. The 4 which have not been completed are:

- Review the Private Sector Renewal Strategy
- Develop a Housing Advice Strategy with an emphasis on homelessness prevention
- Implement a Choice Based Lettings scheme

Although the above actions have not yet been completed in their entirety, progress has been made against each one. Considerable progress has been made in improving the standards of properties within the private sector and made good progress in preventing homelessness. However, to ensure completeness, each of the above actions has been rolled forward into the new action plan with the exception of a new target for the delivery of affordable housing which is set out as part of the LAA process.

Monitoring

The previous Housing Strategy was monitored by the Strategic Housing Partnership by way of presentations and progress reports. The Strategic Housing Partnership have made contributions to key documents such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Strategic Land Availability Assessment and the Viability study where their collective expertise has made a real impact. The Government Office for the South East has also monitored the progress within Bracknell Forest through a Housing Strategy review meeting and generally through attendance through regular forums such as the Berkshire Housing Strategists.

As a result of an Audit Commission inspection the Supporting People function was moved into the strategic housing service to more fully align the service with the needs of the community and other key strategies such as the Housing Strategy. The Audit Commission have subsequently recognised that good progress has been made in terms of the Supporting People service that is now being delivered. In addition to this change in the location of the Supporting People function, the re-structure of the Council will bring the strategic housing function and the planning function within one department ensuring close alignment between the strategic and operational services. The establishment of the new structures within the Council will enable fresh focus on the monitoring of this Housing Strategy. A high level officer group will monitor the strategy on a quarterly basis to ensure that progress is being made against the action plan and where this is not the case take corrective action.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing</td>
<td>The Government definition of affordable housing in Planning Policy Statement 3 is that it is social rented and intermediate housing provided for households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable rented housing is housing owned and managed by Local authorities and Registered social landlords for which rents are set by a national rent regime. Intermediate housing is housing at rents and prices above those of social rent but below market levels. Council’s are required by the Housing Act 1996 to have an allocation policy for the allocation of affordable housing in their area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocations policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area based grant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire unitary authorities</td>
<td>These are the six Council’s that operate in the County of Berkshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracknell Development Corporation</td>
<td>This was the development corporation set up by the Government to develop the new town around old Bracknell until 1982. The registered social landlord established to take the transfer of the Bracknell Forest Council housing stock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracknell Forest Homes</td>
<td>The Housing Act 1996 requires local authorities to offer people a choice of housing. Choice based lettings are a way of organising the allocation of affordable housing so people can choose the home they want to be considered for. This is a sum of money calculated to meet the affordable housing obligation that a developer would be required to provide for their development. This is a Government standard which in general requires a home to be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice Based Lettings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commuted sum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent homes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Payments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Time Buyers Initiative</td>
<td>This is a scheme operated by the Homes and communities agency which offers first time buyers a loan of up to 50% of the purchase price of the property with nothing to pay until year 3. This is support provided by agencies to help households carry on living in their home. The support will move with the household to whichever property they move to. This is the Council’s service which provides lifelines and monitors them for vulnerable households. Houses in multiple occupations. The definition of a house in multiple occupations is normally a three storey house with three separate unrelated households living in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floating support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest care</td>
<td>A common name for registered social landlords who own and manage affordable housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMOs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing associations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Corporation</td>
<td>The Government agency that used to monitor and fund registered social landlords. It has now become part of the Homes and communities agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing needs survey</td>
<td>An independent survey undertaken to establish the level of housing need in a local authority area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Register</td>
<td>The list of households who have registered with the Council for affordable housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate housing</td>
<td>This is affordable housing but the cost is between affordable rented housing and market prices. It includes rented and low cost home ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key workers</td>
<td>The Government has defined a number of public sector workers as key workers. In the past there have been specific affordable housing schemes and programmes directed at those groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Development Framework</td>
<td>The collection of planning policy documents that control development in Bracknell Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Strategy</td>
<td>This is the key document in the Local development framework and it guides development in Bracknell Forest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local housing allowance</td>
<td>The amount of housing benefit paid to households to help pay towards the rent of their home in the private rented sector. The Local housing allowance is set for different housing market areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low cost home ownership</td>
<td>This is usually shared ownership housing where a household can buy anything from a 25% share and rent the remaining equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Indicators</td>
<td>A set of annual performance indicators set by the Government for Local Authorities and Local authority partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Build Home Buy</td>
<td>This is the national definition of shared ownership housing where a registered social landlord builds a new shared ownership home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older peoples bungalows</td>
<td>Bungalows reserved just for older people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning gain</td>
<td>The definition of the contribution a new residential development will make towards other community benefits to mitigate the impact of the new development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Policy Statement 3</td>
<td>This is the national Government guidance which sets out the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Care Trust</td>
<td>This is a board of stakeholders in the South east region who developed the regional housing strategy for the South east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Housing Board</td>
<td>This is a scheme where the Council provides a loan to households to help them pay months rent in advance or a deposit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent deposit scheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSLs</td>
<td>Registered social landlords are providers and managers of affordable housing. As the name suggests, they are registered with the Homes and communities agency and subject to regulation by that body as well as the Tenants services Authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctuary Scheme</td>
<td>A scheme which allows households who are threatened by domestic violence to stay in their home if they so wish by strengthening their security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Ownership Register</td>
<td>The list of households who are registered for shared ownership housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered accommodation</td>
<td>Accommodation for older people, usually flats with a warden service and some shared facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social rented</td>
<td>Rented accommodation with rents set at the target rents for the property based on the national rent regime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory duty</td>
<td>A duty under law that the Council is required to meet. For example, providing homeless households emergency housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock transfer</td>
<td>The transfer of the Council’s housing stock to a register social landlord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Housing function</td>
<td>The Council's role to assess housing need and set housing policies as well as allocated housing and provide advice, assistance and housing for homeless households.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting People</td>
<td>The national scheme to fund the support vulnerable households receive to help them remain in their homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant Incentive scheme</td>
<td>A scheme to help tenants of affordable housing to move to smaller housing in they are under occupying by providing help and financial assistance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>