

**A Housing Strategy for the
London Commuter Belt Sub-region
2005 - 2008**

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FOREWORD

The London Commuter Belt Sub-Region (LCBSR) holds a unique position, forming the point at which the East of England housing markets joins that of the UK's largest city and Europe's financial centre, London. It is the largest of the nine sub-regions in the East of England, covering a population of almost 1.5 million people, incorporating fifteen district authorities, two county councils and over thirty social housing providers.

This unique location and its size mean that the housing markets within the LCBSR play a critical role in ensuring the continued success of the economy of the East of England and London. The history of the LCBSR is affected significantly by migration from the capital and by the influence on house prices and affordability that the economy of the capital has in the sub-region. Access to housing is financially out of reach for a large and growing proportion of the population and there are accompanying pressures from increased demand from homeless households and meeting the housing needs of key public sector workers.

In national housing policy terms, the sub-region contains the bulk of one of the Sustainable Communities Plan growth areas and directly adjoins two others. Consequently, it has a key role to play in the delivery of a major plank of the current Government housing agenda. The need for growth has also to be balanced against the need to achieve sustainable communities and in particular protect the green belt that makes our sub-region what is it. A mixture of urban and rural areas, the LCBSR faces housing issues as diverse as delivering affordable housing to maintain small rural communities through to the regeneration and renewal of decaying urban areas.

Although this sub-regional strategy builds on the work undertaken by the sub-region in 2002, it is a significantly more robust piece of work, embodying as it does the collective views of the local authorities and registered social landlords (RSLs) that make up the Sub-Regional Housing Group, together with those of a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations operating with the sub-region. It is significantly more precise in its assessment of the sub regional housing market, the activities and actions required to meet the needs of the sub region and contains detailed priorities and action plans to ensure that we achieve a targeted response.

Housing markets and housing policy change. To this end, the strategy and its action plan can never be viewed as a completed piece of work. It will change to react and reflect the demands and pressures placed upon the sub-region. Similarly, this strategy is a segment in a much wider strategic housing process, inputting as it does into the East of England Regional Housing Strategy, scheduled for production in early 2005.

As Chair of the Sub Region group, I would like express my gratitude to the authorities and RSLs that have steered the strategy production process. I

would also like to thank the other statutory agencies and voluntary groups that have contributed to its development.

Ian Christmas

Head of Housing Strategy & Resources, Harlow Council
Chair of the London Commute Belt Housing Sub Region Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The London Commuter Belt Sub-Region (LCBSR) is the largest of the nine sub-regions in the East region, with a population of almost 1.5 million people, incorporating fifteen district authorities, two county councils and over thirty social housing providers.
- The 2005–2008 Housing Strategy identifies and analyses housing issues and priorities in the context of the sub-region's housing market as the basis for identifying relevant investment priorities.
- The requirements to increase land availability whilst achieving sustainable development will continue to inform the sub-region's agenda.
- The development of the 2005-2008 Strategy has been led by a Steering Group, consisting of representatives of key housing organisations within the sub-region, and assisted by the Housing Quality Network.
- The existing regional and local strategies provide a base point for the development of the strategy.
- The Office for National Statistics Classification of Local Authority Areas highlights a high degree of similarity among the 15 local authorities.
- Excluding Uttlesford, it has been estimated that the sub-region requires almost 2,500 new affordable dwellings to keep pace with household growth, and, almost 8,700 per year to meet outstanding housing needs.
- Almost 25,000 households were registered on waiting lists in 2002.
- In 2001/02, 1,871 households were 'accepted' as homeless, which rose to 2,761 in 2002/03.
- Driven by its proximity to London, house price inflation has outpaced the growth in household incomes and many people, including key workers, are unable to secure housing at an affordable level.
- The Capital Development Programme envisages an average of 2,500 new homes annually, which is equal to the lowest growth-based requirement, but is less than 30% of the needs-based requirement.
- An average stock loss of 1,300 homes through the right to buy implies that the average net gain of new homes under the Capital Development Programme is only 1,200.
- The London Commuter Belt sub-region is facing a growing crisis of affordability that is the major challenge to housing providers and the most urgent priority for the sub-region.

- The vision for the London Commuter Belt is:
 - To enable growth in the sub-region and to provide for the needs of homeless people and those who require affordable housing, whilst protecting the environment;
 - To create and maintain sustainable communities and achieve social inclusion; and
 - To make the best use of the existing stock whilst improving its condition in both the public and private sectors.

- In order to achieve this vision, five sub-regional priorities have been identified:
 - Maximising the delivery of affordable housing.
 - Developing the intermediate market.
 - Improving stock condition.
 - Meeting the needs of vulnerable groups.
 - Achieving social inclusion.

- Principles of joint working between partners to the Strategy have been established in order to:
 - Share data and information, identify housing needs and develop market evidence.
 - Share best practice.
 - Undertake joint commissioning.
 - Acknowledge that some local authorities may lead in co-ordinating action in relation to sub-regional priorities.
 - Acknowledge the need to share scarce resources to make best use of those we have.
 - Pool our resources to deliver economies of scale and secure greater influence.
 - Work corporately and in partnership, ensuring in particular that the housing association and voluntary sectors are full and active partners, and that we are connected with health and social services agenda.
 - Pursue the principle of collective gain that may mean that all districts may not gain at the same time.

- The key priorities for investment have been identified as follows:

| | |
|--|-----|
| ○ Growth (incl. homelessness & housing need) | 80% |
| and regeneration | |
| ○ Rural housing | 5% |
| ○ Key workers | 5% |
| ○ Supported housing | 5% |
| ○ Existing housing stock | 3% |
| ○ Black and minority ethnic housing | 2% |

- A set of objectives summarise the priorities for action identified for each of the five sub-regional priorities, and set out what we hope to achieve over the coming three years. An Action Plan details how these objectives will be achieved.

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

The London Commuter Belt (see Map 1) consists of 15 local authorities across Essex and Hertfordshire as follows:

- Brentwood Borough Council
- Broxbourne Borough Council
- Chelmsford Borough Council
- Dacorum Borough Council
- East Hertfordshire District Council
- Epping Forest District Council
- Harlow District Council
- Hertsmere Borough Council
- North Hertfordshire District Council
- St Albans District Council
- Stevenage Borough Council
- Three Rivers District Council
- Uttlesford District Council
- Watford Borough Council
- Welwyn Hatfield Council

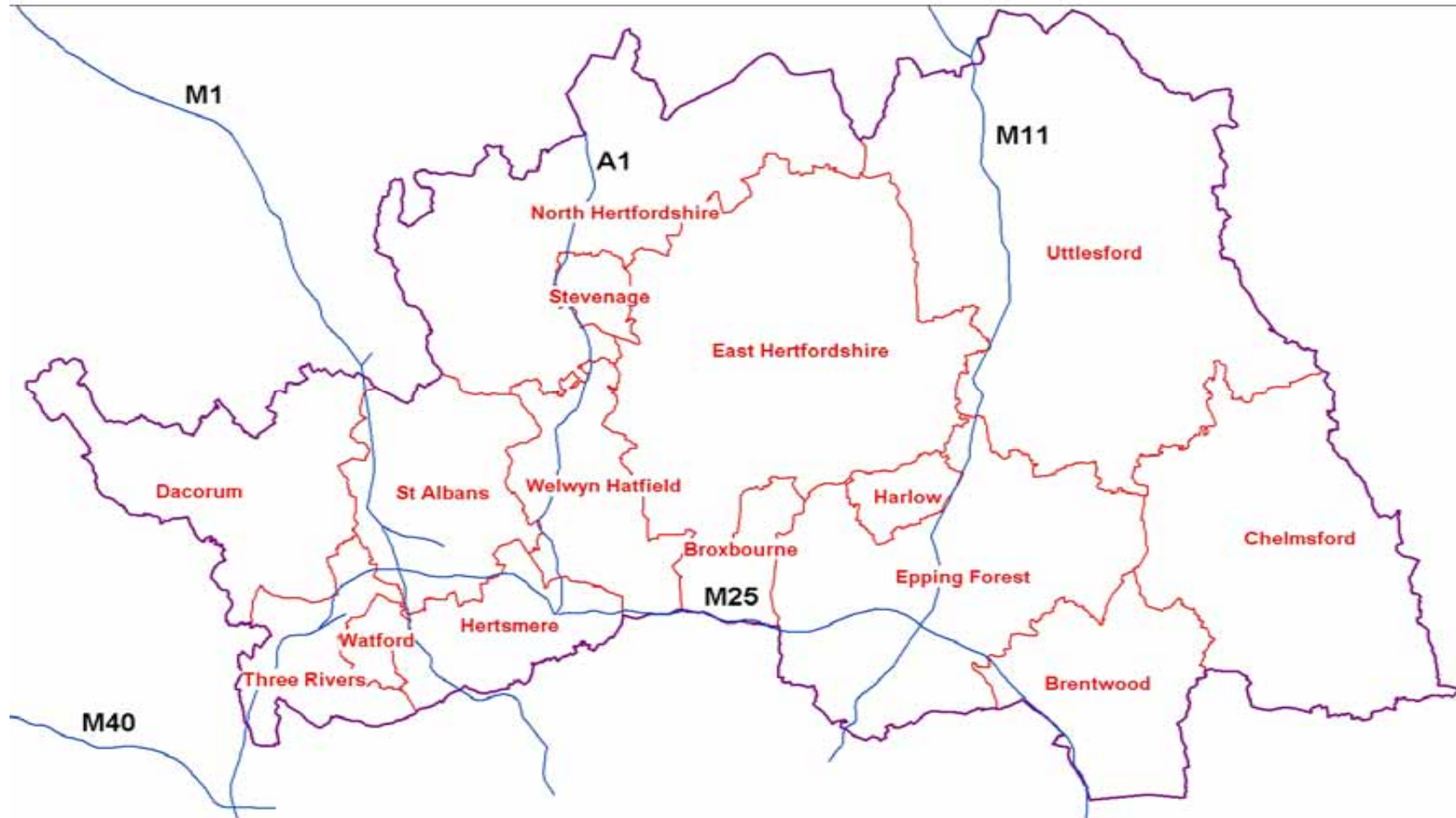
The sub-region incorporates a range of environments from the intensively urbanised, such as Harlow and Stevenage, to the mostly rural, such as East Hertfordshire and Uttlesford, with most local authorities providing clusters of small settlements within semi-rural environments.

The 2003 Housing Strategy for the London Commuter Belt provided a first opportunity to establish priorities for the sub-region. Progress against targets (as summarised in Appendix 1) has been slow and has been impeded by process constraints. A primary aim of the 2005-2008 Strategy is to establish a robust process both to pursue and monitor progress against the priorities for the sub-region set out in Section 4 below.

This strategy identifies and analyses housing issues and priorities in the context of the sub-region's housing market as the basis for identifying relevant investment priorities. This strategy does not attempt to present the sub-region as a uniform collection of local authorities, but recognises that there are important internal differences, for example, between mainly urban and mainly rural areas, and that localised problems and approaches will persist and be maintained. In developing this strategy, we have attempted to achieve a balance between the requirements of different communities.

Local authorities in the sub-region are particularly conscious of the tensions arising from the need to protect the Green Belt whilst supporting housing growth. The requirements to increase land availability whilst achieving sustainable development will continue to inform the sub-region's agenda.

The 'London Commuter Belt' local authorities



1.1 Developing the 2005-2008 Strategy: the approach adopted

The development of the 2005-2008 Strategy has been led by a Steering Group consisting of representatives of key housing organisations operating within the sub-region. The Group committed itself to developing further the 'bottom up' approach initiated in 2003 and commissioned Housing Quality Network Services to assist in this process. The Housing Quality Network (HQN) is an independent and not-for-profit initiative set up in 1997 to assist member organisations to improve their performance and meet the challenges of Best Value. Over 450 local authorities and housing associations subscribe to their services.

HQN have led on the process of strategy development by undertaking two main activities:

- i) Identifying sub-regional housing issues, practice and problems through a review of each local authority's:
 - o Housing Strategy;
 - o CPA 'Balancing Housing Markets' Diagnostics; and
 - o A self-completed summary of housing 'issues' and 'problems'.Other published sources, from Homelessness Strategies to Housing Needs Studies have been consulted as appropriate.
- ii) Hosting a Strategy Conference in June 2004 attended by 120 stakeholders from throughout the sub-region at which a series of workshops provided the opportunity for participants both to develop and endorse five 'key issues for the future' arising from the first stage of activity:
 - o Making the connections: meeting the needs of vulnerable groups
 - o Affordability: maximising the delivery of affordable housing
 - o Balancing conflicting priorities: general needs or niche markets?
 - o Achieving social inclusion: the challenge for the London Commuter Belt
 - o Improving stock condition: the demands of public and private sectors.

These issues have been developed to constitute the five priorities within this Strategy.

1.2 Market Dynamics and the Need for Market Evidence

As a housing market study is not yet available for the sub-region, we have drawn on data and information available to local authorities to identify the interrelationship between need/demand and supply. What is clear from this analysis is that:

- The sub-region's most acute problem is that housing need/demand exceeds supply, and that this discrepancy is increasing;
- there is a growing problem of affordability throughout the sub-region, and which is affecting middle as well as lower income groups;
- London is the main economic driver in the housing market, and its impact shows no sign of lessening; and
- the impact of the designated Communities Plan 'growth areas' on the overall supply: demand relationship is unclear, and its effects on the sub-region need to be evaluated as a priority. Some local authorities, for example, Brentwood and Chelmsford are effectively 'squeezed' between the Thames Gateway and M11 growth areas, and there is some concern that they and others may be 'sidelined' for investment.

The sub-region is faced with a housing market whose dynamics are difficult to predict. We are aware of the need to strengthen our understanding of sub-regional housing dynamics, not least between 'growth' and 'non-growth' areas, and that there may be a subsequent need to develop sub-groups within the sub-region in response to this.

1.3 The Structure of the Strategy

We have adopted a five stage approach to the structure of the Strategy as follows:

- Section 2 establishes the relevant regional policy context;
- Section 3 provides a socio-economic profile of the sub-region;
- Section 4 identifies the sub-regions' 5 main housing Priorities;
- Section 5 establishes our principles of joint working and details the investment priorities; and
- Section 6 looks forward to the 'next steps' in implementation.

SECTION 2 MAKING THE LINKS: THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

The existing regional strategies provide a base point for the development of the Strategy. Further research and policy, particularly new Regional Planning Guidance and the Key Workers Study, is due to emerge between June and September 2004 which will need to be incorporated. Revised targets are also likely to be required.

The Sub-regional Strategy needs to:

- understand what regional processes are currently taking place;
- highlight the varying sub-regional configurations which exist; and
- link the Regional Housing Strategy with other relevant strategies.

The following section identifies the issues raised by examining regional strategies relevant to the development of a London Commuter Belt Sub-regional Housing Strategy.

Sub-regional boundaries: the M11-Stansted-Cambridge Growth area could be developed as a separate sub-region.

Sub-regional working: the strength of current sub-regional working lies in producing successful joint outcomes. This will require the development of mechanisms to ensure that the sub-region interfaces with the London-Stansted-Cambridge Growth Area.

New Regional Planning Guidance has set dwelling provision targets by local authority area to 2021. Increased targets will be set for the London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor subject to site availability. Such growth needs to attract infrastructure funding particularly for Harlow and the Upper Lee Valley.

The 'London Arc': is identified in Regional Planning Guidance as a separate sub-region heavily constrained by Green Belt policies. The shift of focus to the Growth Areas may leave large towns such as Watford, Stevenage and Hatfield at a relative disadvantage.

Housing Needs, Affordable Housing and Key Worker Studies: a number of current studies are due to be completed which will subsequently need to inform the Sub-regional Strategy.

Housing Investment: there is a need to plan for the end of 70% HIP protection.

2.2 Sustainable Communities in the East of England

The framework for the direction, scale and pace of development was established in the national policy document "Sustainable Communities: building for the future". Its daughter document "Sustainable Communities in the East of England" took its recommendations down to the Regional level. Five Housing Challenges were identified for the East of England:

- i) to provide for the East of England's growing population;
- ii) to address the imbalance in the demand for and supply of housing;
- iii) increasing numbers of those on modest incomes, including key public sector workers and others essential to the local economy, who cannot afford to purchase their own home;
- iv) to close the gap between the need for and provision of affordable housing in rural districts; and
- v) to achieve the Government's target to ensure all social housing meets the decent homes standard by 2010.

The document proposed accelerated development in the Thames Gateway, London - Stansted - Cambridge and Milton Keynes - South Midlands Growth Areas, all of which lie largely or partly in the East of England. For the London - Stansted - Cambridge corridor, a study had generated a range of spatial growth options in four broad areas: Upper Lee Valley - Harlow - Cambridge and, in the longer term, new settlements in north Essex or south of Cambridge.

For Milton Keynes - South Midlands, the preferred option concentrated growth on five major urban areas, two of which fall in the East of England: Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis and Bedford. The Thames Gateway was presented as an opportunity to regenerate existing deprived communities through access to 300,000 new jobs.

2.3 The East of England Regional Housing Strategy 2003 – 2006

The Regional Housing Strategy was published in June 2003 by the Regional Housing Board, and the following points have specific implications for the LCB sub-region:

- Five vision aims are shared by all sub-regions (though LCB split one and therefore has six). The five aims are:
 - i) to ensure everyone can live in a decent home at an affordable price;
 - ii) to contribute to social inclusion within sustainable communities;
 - iii) to enable housing to contribute fully to ensure good health and promote health equality;
 - iv) to use housing investment to complement sustainable economic development; and
 - v) to contribute to a sustainable environment.

- There is an LCB sub-regional issue to be addressed regarding whether the M11-Stansted-Cambridge Growth area should be a separate sub-region.
- There are five Strategic Investment Themes subsequently adopted by the East of England Housing Corporation for 2004-6:
 - Growth 40%;
 - Regeneration 30%;
 - Rural 15%;
 - Supported Housing 10%; and
 - BME 5%.
- Whilst the Growth areas are supported there remain areas where regeneration is still important including the 'new towns' around the London fringe and the heart of other urban centres.
- *"The challenge for the region (and LCB) is to balance our major client group with the emerging needs of Key Workers."*
- 70% of the HIP component of the Single Housing Investment Pot to be allocated on the basis of GNI for the first 2 years of the new arrangements.
- Recognition that Strategy will need to be reviewed to achieve synergy with new Regional Planning Guidance.

The Strategy includes a slightly abbreviated version of the LCB sub-regional housing strategy produced in 2002. As mentioned above six priorities are proposed with supporting objectives.

2.4 Regional Economic Development Strategy

The first Regional Economic Development Strategy for the East of England was produced in 1999 and revised in June 2001. A second revision is due for completion in 2004, the consultation period running from 10 May - 30 July 2004.

The Strategy is based on eight goals two of which interact and interface with the Regional Housing Strategy. These are:

- Goal 4 - to have high quality places to work and live; and
- Goal 5 - to achieve social inclusion and broad participation in the regional economy.

The draft refers to the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA), currently leading on the production of an integrated regional strategy for the East of England which will be completed during 2004.

There is a consistency with the objectives of the existing Regional Housing Strategy, though with more emphasis on ensuring a suitable supply of homes to support economic growth. There is a strong emphasis on achieving economic growth whilst reducing disadvantage and inequality.

The draft Strategy sets out the distinctive issues for the sub-regions and provides a framework for the development of future action plans. The framework draws principally on the draft RPG14 and a study commissioned by the EEDA in 2002 on economic sub-regions.

The revised Strategy identifies the Stansted/M11 corridor as a separate sub-region comprising the local authority areas of Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford, Braintree, parts of East Hertfordshire and Broxbourne. The sub-regional housing priorities are linked to Stansted airport and the RPG14 designated regeneration priorities of Harlow and the Upper Lee Valley. Harlow in particular is seen to have the potential to become an important regional centre.

Stevenage is separately identified as a priority area for regeneration based on its levels of deprivation. There is an identified need to increase the supply of housing to support the supply of local skilled labour.

The strategy uses a 'sub-region' it calls the 'London Arc' which wraps around the northern, north-eastern and eastern boundary of London and includes some of the more prosperous and most deprived parts of the region. The area suffers from a major infrastructure deficit, particularly in sustainable transport networks. There is an identified need to deliver adequate affordable housing to meet the needs of the local housing market, including key workers. The Action Plan section of the Strategy remains in draft and invites Sub-regional or individual local authority responses.

It should be emphasised that, whilst the Regional Economic Development Strategy suggests a different configuration for sub-regions, this Strategy is based around the current situation.

2.5 Regional Planning Guidance (RPG)

The EERA is preparing a new RPG for the East of England (RPG14). It will update RPGs 6 (East Anglia) and 9 (South East) to guide planning and transport policy up to 2021.

Draft RPG14 was approved by the Regional Assembly on 5th February 2004 and has been "banked" with the Secretary of State pending further work. Following discussions with Government ¹, EERA has agreed to investigate the

¹ Draft RP14 made housing provision for 23,900 dwellings a year. Government has suggested an increase in the order of an additional 900 dwellings p.a. The London – Stansted – Cambridge growth area to be extended to include all of the Cambridgeshire sub-region and the Peterborough – Huntingdon area. Provisions for growth at Stansted Airport also be reflected in RPG 14 now.

potential for additional growth in the London - Stansted - Cambridge - Peterborough corridor to increase its contribution to the Government Sustainable Communities Plan.

EERA and partners are preparing an Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) drawing together the key messages, themes and linkages of all Regional Strategies. These have been taken into account in the preparation of RPG14.

In the draft RPG14, areas for which specific sub-regional strategies and policies are proposed include:

- Stansted/M11 and the Harlow area; and
- The 'London Arc'.

Policy H1 sets out the distribution of dwelling provision 2001-2021 for each local authority area in the current definition of the LCB Housing sub-region. For the 15 local authorities, this is an annual average of 6,175 additional dwellings and 123,500 in total for 2001–2021. This provision is subject to:

- the additional study of the London - Stansted - Cambridge - Peterborough corridor to investigate the potential to identify sites for up to 18,000 additional dwellings; and
- for Hertfordshire, the proposed county and district dwelling figures are interim pending a study of potential housing supply in the county.

Policy H2 deals with affordable housing and mix of housing types and proposes that affordable housing constitute at least 30% of the annual supply. RPG14 cross references the East of England Affordable Housing Study (June 2003 Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research and Colin Buchanan Associates). This study identifies the LCB as the sub-region of greatest need for affordable housing: 43,000 units over the period 2001–2021 which represents 35% of the total demand/need (124,000).

The EERA has commissioned a further study to provide more evidence about unmet affordable housing need and, in particular, key workers housing needs. This study is due to be completed in late Spring 2004.

Policy H3 deals with the phasing of housing development. Local authorities are required to keep under review the phasing and release of housing sites in accordance with government guidance.

2.6 Regional allocation of resources

2.6.1 The Regional Housing Board (RHB)

The RHB produced its Investment Programme for 2004/2006 in July 2003. It drew directly from the Regional Housing Strategy in terms of priorities for investment themes:

- Growth – 40%
- Regeneration – 30%
- Rural – 15%
- Supported Housing – 10%
- BME Housing – 5%

There is a £10 million sub-regional contingency fund to support strategic schemes and a proposal to work with the London Housing Board to use part of London's cash to build affordable homes in the East of England.

Reductions in allocations and the demise of LASHG has led to a regional reduction of about one-third in the number of affordable homes funded. £36.5 million (40%) is to be invested in growth in the LCB, Ipswich and Colchester and Greater Norwich sub-regions and the three growth areas. One of the flagship schemes, the BAA Commissioning pilot, is a result of current expansion of Stansted, and will be a large scheme focused on Uttlesford, Harlow and East Herts.

2.6.2 Housing Corporation – East

Distribution of resources for 2004-6 for the East of England was as per the recommended split in the 2003 Regional Housing Strategy.

2.7 Regional Social Strategy

This was due to be published by EERA in May 2004 but has not yet been finalised.

SECTION 3 UNDERSTANDING THE SUB-REGION: A PROFILE

3.1 A Socio-economic profile of the London Commuter Belt

3.1.1 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this section is to provide a socio-economic profile of the London Commuter Belt using Office for National Statistics (ONS) classification of local authority areas. The more specific objectives are to:-

- identify the key socio-economic characteristics of the sub-region that are likely to be of relevance to the project;
- analyse the characteristics of the broader region to shed light on the nature and extent of sub regional housing markets;
- consider the longer term socio-economic trajectory of the sub-region; and
- to enable an assessment of the validity of sub-regional or lesser housing market boundaries.

It should be noted that the degree of similarity in the socio-economic profiles is significant in the context of developing a sub-regional housing strategy. Our experience indicates that where groups of local authorities have similar characteristics (as expressed through ONS classifications), the potential for, and the importance of partnership working (including the preparation of sub-regional strategies) is much stronger.

For example, the local authorities in the Welland Partnership in the East Midlands (comprising five councils across four counties) are within the same ONS super group and group. Commonality of housing and labour market characteristics has contributed to the five authorities preparing, for example, Welland Housing Strategy and a Homelessness Strategy as well as a common approach to planning agreements. In addition there are common approaches on e-government and tourism and economic development.

3.1.2 Approach

The main source of information that has been used is the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Classification of Local Authority Areas. Using census data, the ONS produces a classification of local authorities based on a range of key socio-economic variables. Each local authority area is allocated into a hierarchy of super groups, groups and sub-groups with similar characteristics. The classification system based on the Census in 2001 was published in late 2003. Some comparisons can be made with earlier ONS classifications for 1971, 1981 and 1991 although they have been modified over time.

Comparisons that can be made between groups of adjoining local authorities will help to provide information on housing markets and it is possible to focus on the changing socio-economic profile of an area over time.

3.1.3 Sub-Regional Profile (2001)

3.1.3a Super Groups, Groups and Sub-Groups

The ONS Classification based on the Census 2001 highlights a high degree of similarity among the 15 local authorities. Fourteen out of the fifteen local authorities are included in the 'prospering UK' super group. The exception - Watford - is classified as a member of the 'cities and services' super group.

At a 'group' level, ten of the local authorities are within the same category i.e. 'prospering southern England':

- Brentwood
- Chelmsford
- Dacorum
- East Hertfordshire
- Epping Forest
- Hertsmere
- North Hertfordshire
- St Albans
- Three Rivers
- Uttlesford

The exceptions are:-

- Broxbourne, Harlow and Stevenage: New and growing towns group
- Welwyn Hatfield: Prospering smaller towns group
- Watford: Thriving London Periphery group

Finally at a sub-group level, where there is often significant local variation, again the degree of similarity is remarkable with ten local authorities in the same category – 'prospering southern England – A'.

3.1.3b Geographical Perspective

Within the 'London Commuter Belt', there is some evidence from the ONS classification that there are a group of adjoining/adjacent local authorities with slightly different characteristics from those of the sub-region as a whole. Broxbourne, Welwyn Hatfield, Harlow and Stevenage have different group membership to the rest of the sub-region. In addition, Watford is classified as a member of the 'cities and services' super-group. It may therefore be necessary in developing a sub-regional housing strategy to acknowledge this diversity in terms of emerging housing policies.

3.1.3c Characteristics

The 'prospering southern England' group, which dominates the sub- region, has the following characteristics:

- Relatively high proportion of:
 - Higher education qualifications;
 - Professional and managerial occupations;
 - Employment in the financial sector;
 - Working from home;
 - Two or more cars per household;
 - Household composition of two adults with no children;
 - Women looking after the home; and
 - Detached properties.

- Relatively low proportions of:
 - Single person households;
 - People employed in routine occupations;
 - Indicators of deprivation e.g. unemployment and limiting long term illness; and
 - Workers in primary and secondary sector occupations.

The five 'exceptions' i.e. districts not in the 'prospering southern England' group have, in many respects, similar characteristics (particularly Welwyn Hatfield) but with the following significant differences:-

- 'New and growing towns'
 - Younger age profile
 - Fewer people with higher education qualification and in professional and managerial occupations
 - Higher proportion of lone parent families
 - Higher population density
 - Greater relative proportion of terraced properties

- 'Thriving London periphery'
 - Relatively high proportion of black and minority ethnic households
 - Higher population density
 - Higher proportion of single person households
 - High proportion of flats

There has been a growing similarity between local authorities in terms of their socio-economic profiles between 1991 and 2001. In 1971, the pattern of dissimilarity was very evident. In Hertfordshire, a clear division existed between the west and the east and in 1981, there was a clearer division between Essex and Hertfordshire.

3.2 Evidencing the need

We have summarised here key data evidencing the need and demand for housing within the Sub-region as follows.

3.2.1 The need for new homes

The following table which was included in the 2003 Sub-regional Strategy identifies the requirement for new affordable dwellings implied from estimated household growth and district-level housing needs surveys.

Table 1: projected growth in the need and demand for new homes, 2001-2016

| Indicator | Herts. | Essex districts | Sub-region |
|---|---------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| New affordable dwellings required to 2016 (based on official household projections) | 1,840 p.a. | 543 p.a. | 2,383 p.a. |
| New affordable dwellings required (based on district housing needs surveys) | 6,167 p.a. | 2,530 p.a. | 8,697 p.a. |

(Source: LCB Sub-regional Strategy 2003)

Key findings:

- excluding Uttlesford, it has been estimated that the sub-region requires almost 2,500 new affordable dwellings to keep pace with household growth; and
- almost 8,700 per year to meet outstanding housing needs.

These estimates will need to be revised in the light of amended Regional Planning Guidance.

3.2.2 Housing Waiting Lists and Homelessness

The following tables summarise the total number of households registered on local authority waiting lists in the sub-region.

Table 2: the number of households registered on local authority waiting lists in Essex and Hertfordshire, 2002

| Indicator | Herts | Essex districts | Overall |
|---|--------------|------------------------|----------------|
| No. of households on housing register, 2002 | 16,592 | 7,876 | 24,468 |

Key findings from the data available:

- almost 25,00 households were registered on waiting lists in 2002.

In terms of the incidence of homelessness:

- in 2001/02, 1,871 households were 'accepted' as homeless, which rose to 2,761 in 2002/03; and
- across the London Commuter Belt, lettings and nominations to homeless applicants in 2002/03 ranged from 8% to 56% of total. In 11 of the 15 authorities, homeless households accounted for 23% of the total.

3.2.3 Access to housing

The following table summarises incomes in the London Commuter Belt Sub-region where available.

Table 3: average incomes across the London Commuter Belt, 2003

| Local authority | Earnings (£) | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| | By workplace | | By home address | |
| | Weekly | Annual | Weekly | Annual |
| Chelmsford | 552 | 28,870 | 552 | 28,709 |
| Dacorum | 547 | 28,418 | 565 | 29,354 |
| East Herts. | 486 | 25,288 | Not available | |
| Harlow | 446 | 23,176 | 446 | 23,176 |
| Hertsmere | Not available | | 591 | 30,753 |
| North Herts. | 460 | 23,920 | 533 | 27,706 |
| St Albans | 526 | 27,336 | 736 | 38,288 |
| Stevenage | 532 | 27,674 | 472 | 24,518 |
| Watford | 503 | 26,135 | 514 | 26,749 |
| Welwyn Hatfield | 560 | 28,907 | Not available | |

(Source: *New Earnings Survey, 2003*)

Key findings:

For those local authorities where data are available:

- Annual earnings by workplace in 2003 ranged from £23,176 in Harlow to £28,907 in Welwyn Hatfield; and
- Annual earnings by home address ranged from £23,176 in Harlow to £38,288 in St Albans.

The demand for housing close to London is high and is increasing, resulting in high house prices and price growth. Those in Hertfordshire are among the highest in the country, mainly due to close proximity to good motorway and rail links (in Broxbourne, 50% of the workforce commutes to London each day). Similar conditions prevail in the Essex districts.

The rapid rate of house price inflation has outpaced the growth in household incomes. It is clear that many people, including key workers, are unable to

secure housing at an affordable level. The following table summarises sub-regional house price levels.

Table 4: Land Registry property prices, January - March 2004

| Local authority | Detached | | Semi-Detached | | Terraced | | Flat/Maisonette | | Overall | |
|------------------------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | Av. Price £ | Sales | Av. Price £ | Sales | Av. Price £ | Sales | Av. Price £ | Sales | Av. Price £ | Sales |
| Brentwood | 466982 | 89 | 221635 | 94 | 189823 | 57 | 158350 | 78 | 269076 | 318 |
| Broxbourne | 415821 | 55 | 241337 | 114 | 193487 | 185 | 131897 | 132 | 213144 | 486 |
| Chelmsford | 305806 | 183 | 189271 | 237 | 168955 | 187 | 132619 | 185 | 198167 | 792 |
| Dacorum | 406710 | 114 | 231345 | 136 | 180335 | 240 | 146541 | 122 | 227101 | 612 |
| East Herts. | 393060 | 183 | 228166 | 175 | 201540 | 230 | 143037 | 155 | 242777 | 743 |
| Epping Forest | 500160 | 114 | 250018 | 174 | 214456 | 179 | 154391 | 145 | 263555 | 612 |
| Harlow | 264827 | 40 | 202110 | 62 | 140755 | 227 | 100366 | 97 | 152137 | 426 |
| Hertsmere | 506893 | 65 | 256357 | 116 | 207980 | 135 | 165262 | 93 | 259491 | 409 |
| North Herts. | 362151 | 119 | 206589 | 139 | 164053 | 187 | 125574 | 113 | 209103 | 558 |
| St Albans | 492902 | 148 | 287651 | 179 | 240538 | 205 | 171678 | 141 | 294139 | 673 |
| Stevenage | 275804 | 21 | 186615 | 50 | 137952 | 203 | 89763 | 58 | 145581 | 332 |
| Three Rivers | 544133 | 87 | 249609 | 104 | 199906 | 119 | 160088 | 68 | 285644 | 378 |
| Uttlesford | 356478 | 117 | 224527 | 74 | 180037 | 69 | 129851 | 48 | 249929 | 308 |
| Watford | 365362 | 41 | 216854 | 113 | 184818 | 174 | 143693 | 156 | 194336 | 484 |
| Welwyn Hatfield | 435135 | 89 | 243579 | 98 | 191411 | 203 | 128880 | 73 | 239443 | 463 |

(Source: Land Registry)

Key findings:

- The highest average prices (based on all sales) being recorded in St Albans (approaching £300,000); and
- the lowest in Stevenage (£146,000) and Harlow (£152,000).

The huge disparity between earnings and house prices can be identified by applying the typical mortgage multiplier of 3.5 times to average salaries recorded in table 3. On this basis, owner occupation is beyond the reach of single earners and requires at the very minimum, the equivalent of two average incomes per household.

Private sector rents are similarly high: local housing needs surveys have established that both purchase and private renting are out of reach for the majority of households, especially 'concealed' households. The following table summarises data for renting flats in the sub-regional private market.

Table 5: the cost of rented flats across the London Commuter Belt: June 2004

| Local authority | 1 Bed Flats monthly rents | | | 2 Bed flats monthly rents | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|------|---------|---------------------------|--------|---------|
| | Min | Max | Average | Min | Max | Average |
| Brentwood | £435 | £975 | £629 | £550 | £2000 | £884 |
| Broxbourne | £450 | £650 | £568 | £575 | £900 | £717 |
| Chelmsford | £430 | £570 | £479 | £550 | £1,250 | £677 |
| Dacorum | £475 | £695 | £577 | £550 | £1,175 | £718 |
| East Herts. | £465 | £650 | £550 | £550 | £950 | £725 |
| Epping Forest | £500 | £895 | £633 | £600 | £900 | £754 |
| Harlow | £450 | £550 | £495 | £650 | £750 | £675 |
| Harlow | £425 | £625 | £492 | £500 | £1,200 | £633 |
| Hertsmere | £560 | £636 | £595 | £692 | £1,104 | £811 |
| North Herts. | £425 | £550 | £475 | £500 | £725 | £573 |
| St Albans | £650 | £850 | £764 | £595 | £1,300 | £784 |
| Stevenage | £500 | £575 | £525 | £575 | £650 | £625 |
| Three Rivers | £450 | £750 | £597 | £595 | £1,100 | £811 |
| Uttlesford | £395 | £595 | £495 | £495 | £725 | £610 |
| Watford | £525 | £700 | £600 | £675 | £950 | £752 |
| Welwyn Hatfield | £495 | £650 | £584 | £625 | £800 | £709 |

(Source: local authority Housing Needs Surveys)

Key findings from the data available:

- Rents for 1 bed flats range from £395 in Uttlesford to £895 in Epping Forest; and
- for 2 bed flats, from £495 in Uttlesford to £1,300 in St Albans.

Table 6 summarises data for renting houses in the sub-regional private market.

Table 6: the cost of rented houses across the London Commuter Belt, June 2004

| Local authority | 2 bed houses monthly rents | | | 3 bed houses monthly rents | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------|---------|----------------------------|--------|---------|
| | Min | Max | Average | Min | Max | Average |
| Brentwood | £675 | £1,100 | £792 | £725 | £1,400 | £1,029 |
| Broxbourne | £675 | £900 | £730 | £675 | £950 | £823 |
| Chelmsford | £600 | £975 | £712 | £650 | £1,300 | £823 |
| Dacorum | £675 | £825 | £741 | £700 | £1,200 | £814 |
| East Herts. | £575 | £1,100 | £700 | £695 | £1,100 | £850 |
| Epping Forest | £660 | £1,300 | £868 | £800 | £1,400 | £960 |
| Harlow | £650 | £850 | £700 | £725 | £995 | £850 |
| Hertsmere | £700 | £852 | £748 | £712 | £1,844 | £1,061 |
| North Herts. | £550 | £850 | £635 | £650 | £900 | £743 |
| St Albans | £725 | £825 | £794 | £880 | £1,800 | £1290 |
| Stevenage | £600 | £750 | £675 | £655 | £900 | £775 |
| Three Rivers | £695 | £950 | £820 | £750 | £1,400 | £992 |
| Uttlesford | £575 | £790 | £683 | £625 | £1,500 | £1,063 |
| Watford | £695 | £850 | £765 | £780 | £1,100 | £924 |
| Welwyn Hatfield | £665 | £800 | £732 | £695 | £1,350 | £957 |

(Source: local authority Housing Needs Surveys)

Key findings from the data available:

- rents for 2 bed houses range from £550 in North Hertfordshire to £1,300 in Epping Forest; and
- for 3 bed houses, from £625 in Uttlesford to £1,844 in Hertsmere and Three Rivers.

The Hertfordshire Key Workers Study for 2003 has established that:

“Access to home ownership is beyond the reach of around 80% of key worker households in the survey, based on any realistic assessment of the availability and cost of the cheapest properties. Additionally the private rented sector is expensive and makes only a limited contribution to access to affordable housing and this underlies the difficulties faced by key workers in the County”.

3.2.3 The Supply of Housing

Right to buy sales continue to have an impact on the availability of social housing in the London Commuter Belt sub-region. The following table summarises trends in sales over the past three financial years.

Table 7: the level of right to buy sales across the London Commuter Belt, 2001-2004

| Local authority | 2001-2 | 2002-3 | 2003-4 | Total sales |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Brentwood | 22 | 31 | 28 | 81 |
| Broxbourne | 45 | 59 | 68 | 172 |
| Chelmsford | N/A | 142 | 59 | 201 |
| Dacorum | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| East Herts. | 96 | 55 | 91 | 242 |
| Epping Forest | 85 | 100 | 139 | 324 |
| Harlow | 204 | 289 | 210 | 703 |
| Hertsmere | 18 | 29 | 20 | 67 |
| North Herts. | 187 | 184 | 140 | 511* |
| St Albans | 54* | 61* | 95 | 210 |
| Stevenage | 265 | 291 | 224 | 780 |
| Three Rivers | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Uttlesford | 42 | 46 | 26 | 114 |
| Watford | 43 | 48 | 89 | 180 |
| Welwyn Hatfield | 123 | 129 | 129 | 381 |
| Overall totals | 1,130 | 1,403 | 1,318 | 3,851 |

Notes:

North Herts. * There have been an additional 19 shared ownership sales in 2001-4

St Albans: * includes rent to mortgage sales

Key findings:

The steady erosion of the social housing stock is apparent from this table. In the context of an annual affordable housing requirement in the range 2,500-8,500, and from the data provided:

- total sales were 3,851 during this period, ranging from 1,130 in 2001-2 to 1,403 in 2002-3; and
- in the region of 1,300 new social sector dwellings need to be provided each year simply to replace stock lost.

The following table shows the potential level of social sector and sub-market completions based on the anticipated Capital Development programme 2004 to 2009. Categories applied are:

- Rented: all forms including general needs and intermediate housing;
- Low cost home ownership (including shared ownership); and
- Other (including special needs/sheltered housing etc.)

Table 8: the projected Capital Development Programme for the London Commuter Belt Sub-region, 2004 to 2009

| London Commuter Belt Sub-region - Capital Development Programme, 2004 to 2009 by financial year | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------|------------|-------------|------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | Brentwood | Broxbourne | Chelmsford | Dacorum | East Herts. DC | Epping Forest | Harlow | Hertsmere | North Herts. DC | Stevenage BC | St. Albans | Three Rivers | Uttlesford | Watford | Welwyn Hatfield | Annual Total |
| 2004 / 2005 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rented | 15 | 116 | 142 | 49 | 59 | 103 | 175 | 80 | 67 | 17* | 200 | 37 | 86 | 82 | 216 | 1,444 |
| LCHO | 0 | 0 | 52 | 42 | 28 | 22 | 15 | 40 | 32 | 3 | 42 | 6 | 75 | 30 | 52 | 439 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 27* | 25* | 0 | 57 | 13* | 4 | 12 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 151 |
| Total | 15 | 116 | 194 | 91 | 94 | 152 | 215 | 120 | 156 | 33 | 246 | 55 | 161 | 118 | 268 | 2,034 |
| 2005 / 2006 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rented | 46 | 278 | 259 | 46 | 161 | 76 | 245 | 60 | 65 | 268** | 32 | 161 | 166 | 101 | 214 | 2,178 |
| LCHO | 0 | 60 | 17 | 40 | 50 | 10 | 86 | 30 | 41 | 232 | 24 | 50 | 148 | 22 | 20 | 830 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 6** | 12** | 0 | 23 | 5** | 24 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 116 |
| Total | 46 | 338 | 276 | 86 | 231 | 92 | 343 | 90 | 129 | 505 | 80 | 223 | 314 | 123 | 248 | 3,124 |
| 2006 / 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rented | 72 | 74 | 139 | 15 | 252 | 75 | 242 | 37 | 107 | 48 | 63 | 113 | 78 | 79 | 203 | 1,597 |
| LCHO | 0 | 20 | 4 | ? | 123 | 12 | 90 | 18 | 47 | 46 | 53 | 20 | 179 | 62 | 21 | 695 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 12* | ? | 21 | 8*** | 8*** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 55 |
| Total | 72 | 94 | 155 | 15 | 396 | 95 | 340 | 55 | 154 | 94 | 116 | 139 | 257 | 141 | 224 | 2,347 |
| Indicative Programme | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2007 / 2008 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rented | 39 | 103 | 198 | 0 | 173 | 150 | 165 | 20 | 88 | N/k | 80 | 10 | 63 | 70 | 185 | 1,344 |
| LCHO | 0 | 25 | 55 | 0 | 14 | 50 | 25 | 10 | 41 | N/k | 30 | 0 | 53 | 71 | 20 | 394 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 8** | 0 | 10 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/k | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 54 |
| Total | 39 | 128 | 261 | 0 | 197 | 220 | 190 | 30 | 129 | N/k | 120 | 10 | 116 | 141 | 211 | 1,792 |
| 2008 / 2009 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rented | 56 | 35 | 118 | 0 | 147 | 150 | 119 | 20 | 41 | N/k | 65 | 15 | 22 | 69 | 60 | 917 |
| LCHO | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 48 | 50 | 18 | 10 | 19 | N/k | 30 | 0 | 32 | 77 | 10 | 294 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/k | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 31 |
| Total | 56 | 35 | 118 | 0 | 195 | 220 | 137 | 30 | 60 | N/k | 100 | 15 | 54 | 146 | 76 | 1,242 |
| 5 Year Total | 228 | 711 | 1004 | 192 | 1113 | 779 | 1225 | 325 | 628 | 632 | 662 | 442 | 902 | 669 | 1027 | 10,539 |

Notes:

- Chelmsford: * 2006/2007 Supported Housing Scheme
 ** 2007/2008 Supported Housing Scheme
- Epping Forest: * Frail elderly 22 + women's refuge 5
 ** LD scheme 6
 *** Physical disability scheme 8
- Harlow: Rented column includes PFI funded Key Worker rented in 04/05 and 05/06
 * Includes 25 PSL and 4 supported housing
 ** 12 supported housing units
 *** 8 Supported housing units
- Stevenage: * Rented - all social rented
 * Other - sheltered bungalows, all social rented
 ** Rented - includes 56 intermediate rented
 ** Other - 5 units special needs, social rented

Key findings:

In the context of an annual affordable housing requirement in the range 2,500 (household growth-based) and 8,500 (housing needs-based):

- total annual completions are estimated not to exceed 3,100;
- in each of the next 3 years they are likely to average 2,500 new homes, which is equal to the lowest growth-based requirement, but is less than 30% of the needs-based requirement; and
- an average stock loss of 1,300 homes through the right to buy implies that the average net gain of new homes under the Capital Programme is only 1,200.

Appendix 2 provides a detailed breakdown of the relationship between need and projected supply in the context of the land issues and identifies the complexity of the sub-regional situation at local authority level in terms of policies and priorities. These themes are picked up in relation to Sub-regional Priorities below. Appendix 3 summarises the Capital Funding requirements arising from the programmes in 2006-7 and 2007-8.

Comment

The London Commuter Belt sub-region is facing a two fold crisis in the mismatch between:

- the current level of need for housing in the context of supply, and between,
- the projected level of need and future supply.

This crisis is reflected in a growing problem of affordability which is the major challenge to housing providers and the most urgent priority for the sub-region.

SECTION 4 THE SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGY: VISION AND PRIORITIES

This key section of the Strategy identifies current Sub-regional priorities in the context of priorities for the region as a whole.

4.1 Vision for the London Commuter Belt Sub-region Housing Strategy

Our vision for the London Commuter Belt is:

- To enable growth in the sub-region and to provide for the needs of the homeless and those who require affordable housing, whilst protecting the environment;
- To create sustainable communities and achieve social inclusion; and
- To make the best use of the existing stock whilst improving its condition in both the public and private sectors.

4.2 Sub-regional Priorities

In order to achieve our vision, the following sub-regional priorities have been identified. These are set out in detail over the following pages.

- i) Maximising the delivery of affordable housing;
- ii) Developing the intermediate market;
- iii) Improving stock condition;
- iv) Meeting the needs of vulnerable groups; and
- v) Achieving social inclusion.

We recognise that much progress has been made locally in developing approaches to the priorities established, and this constitutes sub-regional good practice from which other partners might gain. Consequently, we have structured the presentation of each priority to take account of:

- **The Challenges** facing partners;
- **Good Practice** within the sub-region; and
- **Proposals** for action.

SUB-REGIONAL PRIORITY 1: Maximising the delivery of affordable housing

Relevant Regional Priority: To ensure everyone can live in a decent home at an affordable price

Challenges

A summary of the current patterns of provision in the context of supply issues can be found at Appendix 2. Whilst there is a demonstrable need to increase capital funding to meet the housing needs of the sub-region, it is recognised that there is a responsibility on local authorities and their partners to make the best use of the available resources in order to maximise investment.

In addition to the need for external funding, there is also a need to maximise the resources which can be generated locally through:

- making land available;
- providing funding (stock transfer authorities have established limited development programmes);
- securing maximum return from private developers, primarily via section 106 planning agreements, and,
- making best use of the existing housing stock.

A key challenge for the sub-region will be to consider how the Growth Areas will meet the housing needs of those locations where development opportunities are currently insufficient to meet local need. Will such cross-district developments lead to cross-district referrals, and if so, how will this work in practice?

There is an unresolved issue over the extent to which housing growth within the sub-region will stimulate further demand from London rather than meeting need and demand generated internally.

Protecting the Green Belt remains a priority throughout the sub-region but this is in tension with the pressure for continued residential growth to balance the need and demand for housing.

Rural Housing and Sustaining Village Communities

Sustaining village communities and meeting local housing needs are key challenges for many districts. Through the planning system, 'exception policies' seek to provide appropriate affordable housing development adjoining a defined settlement where the local housing need has been clearly identified and the dwellings proposed cannot be met in any other way. Rural Enablers working with Parish Councils may facilitate this process.

Good practice

Joint Commissioning

Joint Commissioning models that make best use of resources to maximise the delivery of affordable housing have been developed within the London Commuter Belt and could be extended across the sub-region if appropriate models can be identified. Such examples include Watford and Three Rivers Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI) which over the past 5 years has seen nearly £23m invested in affordable housing, delivering 301 affordable homes with 125 units over 2003/4. The Initiative has included:

- agreed frameworks for Section 106 Agreements;
- shared nominations;
- agreed priorities for Housing Corporation funding;
- the joint selection of preferred RSL development partners; and
- a more strategic view of land holdings and mechanisms to deliver affordable housing.

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage have developed a cross boundary RSL partnership agreement to deliver affordable housing and are working towards Preferred Development Partners.

Epping Forest has adopted a pilot joint commissioning approach where sites are allocated by agreement to a preferred partner which negotiates with developer.

Planning

With the potential to secure affordable housing through Section 106 Agreements, the importance of joint working with private developers assumes great significance. It is noted that the level of affordable housing sought under planning policies requires sound evidence from housing needs surveys.

Across the sub-region there are many examples of good practice including the use of planning briefs particularly for larger and more strategic sites to obtain the best balanced housing outcome.

Epping Forest DC has placed on deposit its first alterations to its Local Plan, which propose a number of changes in local planning policy relating to housing, including:

- A reduction in the threshold above which affordable housing is sought on development sites in urban areas, from 1 ha or 25 units to 0.5 ha or 15 units;
- A reduction in the site threshold for affordable housing in rural areas to 2 dwellings;

- Where Social Housing Grant is available, an increase from 30% to 40% in the amount of affordable housing expected on development sites in urban areas that are above the new threshold, including a proportion of key worker dwellings as required, with free land being provided by the developer;
- An expectation that 50% of properties on developments in rural areas will be affordable housing; and
- Only if Social Housing Grant is not available, an acceptance that a lower proportion of affordable housing can be provided, although the same level of developer subsidy would be required.

Stock Transfer

Option appraisal exercises are being undertaken by all local authorities by July 2005 and stock transfer may unlock resources for new investment.

Proposals for action

The Housing Conference supported the principle of RSL joint commissioning and proposed that this be strengthened by developing sub-regional 'Quality Marks', for example in relation to minimum design and management standards, Section 106 Agreements etc.

Given the scale of the sub-region, it may be appropriate to work at times at sub sub-regional levels which better reflect housing market dynamics or common interests.

The delivery of affordable housing could be further strengthened by a combination of:

- Establishing forums to bring partners together to identify, develop, share and promote good practice;
- Exploring the potential of developing Special Delivery Vehicles across or within the sub-region;
- Clear and consistent Section 106 Agreements and guidance that are standardised across the Sub-Region;
- Encouraging a cross-regional standard approach to subsidy (e.g. free serviced land could be "banked" if funding/planning is required or unavailable);
- Undertaking a cost benefit analysis of local authority-owned sites to identify housing and social benefits;
- Exploring opportunities to use public land with other bodies including the HCC and NHS including subsidising housing provision;
- Establishing a joint delivery unit at sub-regional level or below combining planning, housing and legal functions;

- LCB councils clarifying the resources that are available locally and identifying the resources they predict can be made available over a 3-5 year period; and
- Exploring measures focused specifically at rural communities including the piloting of a policy of the 'purchase and rehabilitation' of existing dwellings.

SUB-REGIONAL PRIORITY 2: Developing the intermediate market

Relevant Regional Priority: To use housing investment to complement sustainable economic development

Challenges

In the context of an increase in homelessness and housing waiting lists and the need to maximise the delivery of affordable housing (Sub-regional Priority 1), there is increasing pressure to deliver intermediate market homes for those who aspire to owner-occupation but are denied access due to market conditions.

The Housing Conference identified concerns that local authority housing register applicants will lose out to investment in key worker housing, for example where developers prefer to provide for key workers through shared ownership or equity sharing rather than rented housing.

The Hertfordshire County Council Key Worker Study has identified that a large proportion of key workers are already in home ownership and need/want access to the next level of housing rather than rented homes. Consequently, a range of housing products is required.

The main challenge is to achieve a balance between provision for such groups and those in traditional housing need, whilst adopting a common definition of key worker housing. The government is determined to address the problems of key workers through the provision of ring-fenced funding, but a key issue is whether the definition should be sufficiently broad to meet local economic needs. East Hertfordshire, for example, uses a definition of 'anyone in employment'. Whilst taking into account variations in the sub-regional housing market, agreement on 'key worker' definitions is a priority.

Proposals for action

Key worker definitions

There is a need to develop a shared sub-regional definition of key workers based on central government's definition but extended to reflect local needs. For example, the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership has adopted the following local key worker definition of:

- Workers who meet the Government's definition of key workers at the time (but without any exclusions relating to area);
- Local government staff;
- Public transport staff (even if employed by a private company);
- Full-time paid employees of not-for profit organisations that provide a public service similar to that provided by the other organisations covered by the local key worker definition; and

- Key workers must either currently work in the District, or have an offer of employment to work in the District (subject to them taking up the offer of employment).

East Hertfordshire District Council have developed an innovative definition of key workers which gives first priority to all public sector workers and second priority to all private sector employees earning under £35,000. In terms of policy, all shared ownership is marketed directly to people in employment and 5% of mainstream social rented stock and new build schemes at social rent levels are provided exclusively for key workers.

Managing market evidence

There is currently a lack of consistent and robust market evidence across the sub-region, especially in relation to the intermediate market, and it is suggested that a working party is established to assess the benefits and the feasibility of commissioning such a study.

The sub-regional study might identify the validity of developing sub sub-regions based on market issues.

Arrangements are needed to monitor changing house price and income levels at sub-regional and local levels either by commissioning external consultants, extending the monitoring undertaken by the Hertfordshire Observatory or requesting market evidence support from the Regional Housing Board and Observatory.

Housing Needs Studies

It is suggested that a joint approach to commissioning housing needs studies should be developed across the sub-region as a priority, with a common approach and timetable achieved by 2009.

The potential of choice-based lettings

It is suggested that a working group is established to examine the potential for creating a sub-regional approach to choice based lettings.

SUB-REGIONAL PRIORITY 3: Improving Stock Condition

Relevant Regional Priorities:

- To enable housing to contribute fully to ensure good health and promote health equality; and
- To contribute to a sustainable environment.

Challenges

The Decent Homes Standard and Beyond

Meeting the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 is a priority for the sub-region and is focused on improving private sector housing conditions, especially for vulnerable households. However, this is a baseline position, and the sub-region recognises tenant aspirations to achieve higher standards in improvement works.

Former new towns have a unique problem in that much of their original housing and infrastructure are reaching the end of their useful lives. Consequently, for Harlow and other towns with similar housing profiles, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal are fundamental requirements.

The Decent Homes Standard and Social Housing

The Government requires the achievement of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) for all rented social housing by the target date of 2010, and the continued availability of funding to achieve this is a necessity. Many councils will meet the challenge by using existing resources and will retain both ownership and management of their stock.

For those councils which need extra funding to meet the required standard, the Government has outlined three options. In the sub-region, four councils have transferred their stock, which will assist in achieving the DHS. The 'balance' between authorities undertaking stock transfer, proceeding to ALMO or retaining their housing stock will have an impact on the resources available for new housing provision across the sub-region, both through the receipts realised through stock transfer and through the demand for resources for DHS work from authorities retaining their stock. RSL investment plans seem less well developed and information on progress can be patchy, especially for smaller housing associations.

The Sub-regional Housing Conference in June 2004 identified from consultation with tenants, councillors and other local stakeholders that meeting the DHS attracts a lower priority than dealing with other issues, such as delivering more affordable homes for local people and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

Future investment is not solely concerned with achieving the DHS. Council Business Plans are required to project forward for up to 30 years including investment needs post-2010. In particular this includes the New Towns (i.e. Harlow, Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead) who will face housing investment 'peaks' in 10-15 years time. There is a continuing need to forward plan and identify works required to maintain a high standard of repair.

Private Sector Housing

Many older people have little finance that is readily available and can be described as *asset rich and cash poor*. For those who cannot access the grants system, a reliable equity release product needs to be developed so that older vulnerable people can trust it.

The sub-region has identified that many property owners whose homes are in need of repair and improvement are reliant upon Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) to help them through this process. The Supporting People Commissioning Bodies have the key strategic role in delivering consistent and effective HIA services.

The Government's aims (as identified by the recent ODPM bidding round that required submission by 31 January 2004) towards HIAs are:

- Extended geographical coverage of HIA services, particularly into those areas where there is a significant need for those services; and
- Improved capacity of the HIA sector through restructuring in line with the recommendations of the national co-ordinating body (Foundations).

The long-term goal is a network of area resourced HIAs based on Supporting People Administering Authority boundaries, combining a central management function with local delivery points. The Conference workshops identified that more work needs to be done to extend HIA coverage across the sub-region involving contracting with just one or two larger providers.

Empty homes strategies feature in most local housing strategies but the delegates at the Conference thought that progress on tackling empty homes across the sub-region is variable.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) require specific attention because of the higher level of risk to their occupants. The incidence of HMOs varies over the sub-region. Areas which have high student populations are also require specific attention. Epping Forest has identified 4,442 HMOs in its locality.

A number of Homelessness Strategies have highlighted the importance of working with the private rented sector not only to reduce the incidence of homelessness but also to widen access to housing to meet their needs. Landlord forums and accreditation schemes have been proposed to improve communication, raise standards and provide a temporary accommodation resource.

Good Practice

Both councils and RSLs have concerns over the capacity of the property maintenance industry to cope with the demands of social housing providers to meet the DHS. We believe that there must be more emphasis on long-term partnering arrangements to achieve greater economies of scale, possibly on a sub-sub-regional level.

Such an example is Harlow which is a Pathfinder Authority on the ODPM's Strategic Partnering Task Force and is currently moving towards a strategic Service Delivery Partnership (SSDP) for works and procurement related activities. Through this partnership they hope to produce significant cost and service improvements in delivering a range of works services, including repairs, maintenance and improvement of Council owned homes. They have also entered into a partnership with a uPVC window/door manufacturing and installation company to supply and fit new doors and windows as part of the Decent Homes and Energy Efficiency works programmes.

Proposals for action

Monitoring stock condition

The sub-region will put in place arrangements to maintain reliable information on the condition of the housing stock. The sub-region will keep future investment needs beyond 2010 under review and identify the resources required. A key challenge for all housing providers is to ensure that environmental concerns are adequately addressed to ensure quality of life and future sustainability of neighbourhoods is delivered.

Joint working

Through joint working we will identify and promote best practice across all councils and RSLs in all areas to deliver effective and cost efficient improvements to our housing stock.

There is the potential to develop cross boundary procurement of capital works to achieve economies of scale/value for money (partnering).

Private Sector conditions

Councils across the sub-region have published their private sector strategies as to how they will address conditions in their area. This is in response to the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 that allows councils much greater flexibility over the forms of assistance they can provide. In line with Government policy, home-owners will meet most of the cost of repair and replacement. However, the demand for renovation assistance from those unable to finance repairs will be likely to far exceed levels of grant spending.

The conference highlighted a need to improve engagement with the private sector and develop partnership working. Our aim is to work with private sector owners to reduce the level of unfit and improve conditions as measured against the housing, health and safety and energy rating systems. We will also develop best practice with regard to private sector landlord forums and accreditation schemes.

There is a need to extend and rationalise Home Improvement Agency coverage supported by a reliable equity release product.

Empty homes

It is proposed that there should be a flexible 'funding pot' across the sub-region to support Empty Homes Strategies and to help counter difficulties in securing development and arrangements made with designated RSLs who can take on either leasing or ownership of an empty property.

Housing in the former New Towns

In recognising the distinct circumstances of the early New Towns, there is a requirement to identify from existing data sources, the improvement needs of former New Town property types and to disseminate best practice in diagnosing and dealing with areas in need of improvement.

SUB-REGIONAL PRIORITY 4: Meeting the needs of vulnerable groups

Relevant Regional Priority: to enable housing to contribute fully to ensure good health and promote health equality.

Challenges

Secure accommodation with support is fundamental for a number of client groups if clients are to achieve changes within their lives and behaviour to achieve and maintain independence. Developing provision and support services for the following client groups should be prioritised:

- People with learning difficulties;
- People with mental health problems;
- People fleeing domestic violence;
- Young people at risk/leaving care;
- People with drug and alcohol problems; and
- People at risk of offending/ex-offenders.

Addressing gaps in provision is a key challenge for new Shadow Supporting People (SP) Strategies. SP strategies are currently under development and will, by November 2004, outline a list of proposals based on needs identified within each SP area. This work needs to be incorporated into the Sub-regional Strategy in due course and taken into account in any subsequent development of supported accommodation and support services.

An ageing population

The population of the sub-region is ageing, with the number of people in Hertfordshire aged 65+ set to rise by 10% between 2001-2011, and the number of those aged 85+ set to increase by 30% in Hertfordshire and 28% in Essex. One person in fourteen in the county, aged 65+ receives home care or residential care services. A similar position is recorded in Essex where the greatest rise in the next ten years will be among those aged over 80 and who make the heaviest call on services.

Homelessness

Local authority Homelessness Strategies have identified increasing levels of single homelessness with support needs. It is important that new Supporting People Strategies adequately reflect government guidance to deliver tenancy support to help people maintain their accommodation and prevent homelessness. Whilst support can be delivered to the single homeless client group, Floating Support Services, access to single person accommodation, adequate move-on from hostel and accommodation-based support services remain critical to achieving central government targets and objectives.

People with disabilities

All local authority housing needs surveys have identified people with disabilities living in unsuitable housing. Investment in both public and private sectors is required to ensure that people have homes that are adequate for their needs.

Good Practice

Following consultation with supported housing providers and clients, Epping Forest District Council, in liaison with the District SP Core Strategy Group, produce an annual Local Supporting People Strategy setting out details of the need, supply, issues and detailed action plans relating to all SP client groups.

The Essex Strategic Reserve (ESR) capital funding system represents an innovative approach to cross boundary and multi-agency planning and development. This voluntary agreement between the local housing authorities, the Housing Corporation and the County Council promotes a tendered programme of supported housing schemes, which single Districts could not justify or could not afford to develop. The scheme has developed over the years to target resources on 'hard to reach groups' including young people leaving care.

The ODPM assessment of East Hertfordshire's Homelessness Strategy acknowledged that their new Homelessness Toolkit was innovative and offered a best practice learning point for other local authorities. Their Homelessness Act funds are used to enable access to the private sector by providing flexible packages of rent in advance/damage deposit/landlord fee/utility fees etc. and 35 placements have been supported in the first year of application.

Proposals for action

In relation to homelessness

Whilst Supporting People has an important role to play in assisting a range of homeless client groups and indeed playing a vital role in homelessness prevention there is a need to pursue joint working with other agencies. Such examples include joint working at a county level with social and probation services. Herts. Young Homelessness Group (a voluntary organisation) provides a mediation service for 16-25 year olds and 'crash pad' scheme working with Herts. local authorities, health trusts, YOTs, DATs, the Probation Service, RSLs and others.

Opportunities to co-ordinate joint working and promote best practice on homelessness across the sub-region should be taken with the priority on preventative measures, using joint working to identify opportunities for shared commissioning and funding.

Meeting the needs of people with disabilities

Local housing needs surveys have identified people with disabilities living in unsuitable housing and the range of recommended actions includes:

- Promoting disabled adaptations in order to improve the ratio of suitably adapted properties for disabled people; and
- Creating a register of adapted property and disabled people needing adapted accommodation in order to facilitate better matching.

Standards and best practice approaches to meeting these needs across the sub region should be developed. This could be taken forward by:

- Identifying gaps in provision across the sub-region by types of service and location;
- Developing core specifications for support services, merging and remodelling services to promote their availability to all across the sub-region; and
- Developing referral protocols for those schemes.

Co-ordination and joint working

In meeting the needs of vulnerable groups, there is a need to co-ordinate joint working which represents a complex and major challenge. Essex alone has identified that 27 statutory agencies jointly commission services, and there is a similar picture in Hertfordshire. Joint Commissioning for Supporting People is a partnership between Local Housing Authorities, Social Services, Probation and Primary Care Trusts. Along with local authorities, both RSLs and the voluntary sector have a major role to play in delivering services. Liaison with Hertfordshire County Council is a priority in relation to Supporting People Strategy, and an immediate task is to bring together the Joint Commissioning Bodies for Essex and Hertfordshire. Joint planning and working between Hertfordshire and Essex needs to be considered in the wider context of the Supporting People Eastern Region Cross-Authority Groups. This is an initiative promoted by ODPM to promote cross authority services.

Development Issues

There is a perceived reluctance on the part of developers to develop special needs housing under Section 106 planning agreements with either traditional owner-occupied housing for key workers, shared ownership or equity sharing seen to be more attractive.

In order to develop supported housing projects there is a need to co-ordinate revenue and capital funding as the separation of these two streams through Supporting People can lead to a block on further developments, especially in cases of windfall sites and opportunities for re-modelling.

Supporting People needs to be identifying complementary funding streams that can be accessed at various levels such as district, county or regional to supplement fixed levels of funding.

The role of sheltered housing and its alternatives should be reviewed to meet a range of support needs. Other issues include:

- Providing 'intermediate housing' to assist with rehabilitation and hospital discharge; and

Overall

There is a need:

- To identify the problems of working together and the best ways to share and promote good practice in developing supported housing if we are to improve our ability to meet the needs of vulnerable people across the sub-region.
- Being better at identifying and agreeing Supporting People priorities in a consistent way at district, county and sub-regional levels, including needs mapping will identify priorities for future investment in services and schemes. It is essential that Supporting People strategies for Essex and Hertfordshire reflect the importance of the sub-region and identify sub-regional priorities.
- To explore the added value that could be achieved through jointly commissioning services by Herts. and Essex across the sub-region for example, for the BME communities, offenders, drug and alcohol abusing groups.

SUB-REGIONAL PRIORITY 5: Achieving social inclusion

Relevant Regional Priority: to contribute to social inclusion within sustainable communities.

Challenges

In improving social inclusion for disadvantaged groups, the sub-region wishes to adopt a broad perspective and to examine the housing needs/priorities of a wide range of marginalised and excluded groups, including:

- young people without settled family homes;
- people with disabilities;
- people with mental health, drug or alcohol problems;
- street-sleeping homeless people; and
- gypsies and travellers.

A complexity within the sub-region is that some groups live in localised areas or are dispersed, throughout the community, making them more isolated and difficult to reach. Their small numbers may result in them being marginalised through lack of community networks and support. Providing appropriate means of support would contribute to breaking down the barriers to social inclusion.

Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Issues

Black and minority ethnic communities are more likely to live in areas of deprivation, in poor quality and overcrowded housing, and are also more likely to be unemployed or on a low income. They also suffer the consequences of language and cultural barriers, and racial discrimination, all of which contribute to social isolation and prevent access to community services.

BME populations form a relatively small part of the total population of Hertfordshire, with less than 6.3% recorded in the 2001 Census and 5.5% in Essex. The largest recorded ethnic minority population in the sub-region is nearly 14% in Watford, over 5% of whom are of Pakistani or Indian origin.

The Essex Supporting People Strategy reported *“The consultation and information gathering exercises undertaken as part of producing this strategy have failed to identify any clear picture of the needs of black and minority ethnic communities”*. The Supporting People mapping exercise showed that there are few services specifically designed for, or targeted at, people from black and minority ethnic communities.

At the Conference a gap in research was identified that has led to a lack of evidence of need across the sub-region to develop adequate housing response for BME communities, and that this gap should be tackled as a matter of urgency.

Good practice

There are many examples of good practice developing across the sub-region including:

- East Herts have been running 'Planning for Real' consultation exercises in their two most deprived wards for the last four years using Housing Corporation Innovation and Good Practice Grants to support the development of the arts, sports, play and lifelong learning. The Council has subsequently funded two new community centres, one of which was completed in September 2004.
- Harlow employs Community Development workers at neighbourhood level.
- North Herts. has established a BME Forum and a local authority-funded resource centre.
- Essex Housing Officers Group has commissioned research into the housing and support needs of black and minority ethnic groups. The research report 'Facing the Facts' was launched in March 2004. The aims of the research were to:
 - document the housing and related needs of all BME communities resident in the County;
 - Identify appropriate ways to engage with these communities at the operational and strategic level; and
 - Identify their views on accessing services in their locality.

At the Conference it was also recognised that the London Commuter Belt should also learn from initiatives developed outside the sub-region.

Proposals for action

Developing a sub-regional approach

The sub-region needs to determine its role in developing policies. It is suggested that a sub-regional working group is formed to assist in developing a strategy which might be integrated with the aims and objectives of the Regional Social Strategy,

There is a need to encourage the sharing of information through local authorities, RSLs and the voluntary sector working together, including for example, the opportunity to deliver social inclusion through the education and training opportunities that housing development presents.

Delegates at the Conference suggested bringing together the work of the LDF Statement of Community Involvement to add weight to 'housing's' voice in the sub-region.

Given the variation at district level in the proportion of BME populations, levels of deprivation, etc., it is proposed that some districts 'lead' on aspects in which they have closest involvement and develop best practice principles across the sub-region.

BME communities

Provision for BME communities needs to be informed by a sub-regional study of the housing needs and aspirations of ethnic groups and communities.

Local authorities and RSLs should explore the development of protocols for local lettings plans, estate agreements and CBLs to ensure positive action is taken and discrimination against those less advantaged does not occur.

The Housing Corporation investment theme for BME housing should be widened to take into account other groups falling under the broader category of Equality and Diversity.

Ensuring access and choice

Under the Homelessness Act 2002 local housing authorities were required to review allocation policies to ensure appropriate consideration towards the homeless. The potential of choice based lettings schemes are relevant here.

Capacity building

Getting the right infrastructure in place in terms of capacity building and community facilities is essential to bring about social inclusion. Infrastructure can be equally and sometimes more important than houses. Key to this is using existing forums/networks to engage with community members.

Performance in the area of community development needs to be recognised – if Housing Plus and integrated communities are considered important why not reward (extra funding) achievements in those areas.

New development

In relation to new development, there is a need to:

- Develop a range of housing that do not exclude the poorest households;
- Ensure adequate provision of suitable supported accommodation and support services;
- Develop models of care and support population in partnership with the health, social care and voluntary sectors; and
- Link both Supporting People and Homelessness Strategies.

SECTION 5 THE SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGY: INTERVENTION AND INVESTMENT

This section sets out the principles underpinning how the partners in the London Commuter Belt will work together to achieve the Strategy's priorities.

5.1 Principles of joint working

Our principles are underpinned by the need to develop a process for joint working across the sub-region in order to:

- Share data and information, identify housing needs and develop market evidence;
- Share best practice;
- Undertake joint commissioning;
- Acknowledge that some local authorities may lead in co-ordinating action in relation to sub-regional priorities;
- Acknowledge the need to share scarce resources to make best use of what we have;
- Pool our resources to deliver economies of scale and secure greater influence;
- Work corporately and in partnership, ensuring in particular that the housing association and voluntary sectors are full and active partners, and that we are connected with health and social services agenda; and
- Pursue the principle of collective gain which may mean that all districts may not gain at the same time.

5.2 Investment priorities

From the vision and the priorities, the key priorities for investment for the sub-region have been identified as follows:

| Investment Theme | Note | Proposed % |
|---|--|-------------------|
| Growth (including homelessness & housing need) | - | 80% |
| Regeneration | NDC & NRA permitted only | 0% |
| Rural housing | | 5% |
| Key workers | ODPM defined | 5% |
| Supported housing | Capital funding only | 5% |
| Existing housing stock | Private sector & DFG only | 3% |
| BME | Includes general & specialist/ travellers & gypsies | 2% |
| Total | | 100% |

SECTION 6. NEXT STEPS

6.1 Objectives

These objectives summarise the priorities for action identified for each of the five sub-regional priorities and they set out what we hope to achieve over the coming three years. The Action Plan at Appendix 4 details how these objectives will be achieved.

PRIORITY 1: Maximising the delivery of affordable housing

Our objectives are:

1. To strengthen the principle of RSL joint commissioning by developing sub-regional 'Quality Marks', for example in relation to minimum design and management standards, etc.
2. To explore the potential for developing strategic sub-groups within the sub-region where they better reflect housing market dynamics or common interests.
3. To establish forums to bring partners together to identify, develop, share and promote good practice.
4. To explore the potential for developing Special Delivery Vehicles across or within the sub-region.
5. To participate in the emerging co-ordination structures for the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough growth corridor.
6. To consider the appointment of a housing co-ordinator to work across the sub-region to identify Section 106 opportunities and make links with identified priorities, capital and revenue funding sources.
7. To develop clear and consistent Section 106 Agreements for affordable housing.
8. To undertake an investigation into local authority practice as the basis for developing a cross-regional approach to providing subsidy, for example, of the benefits of 'banking' free serviced land.
9. For local authorities to review land holdings with other public sector bodies, including the county councils and the NHS, and to explore the potential to use public land to subsidise housing provision.
10. To explore the development of a joint delivery unit at sub-regional level or below combining planning, housing and legal functions.

11. For LCB councils to clarify the resources that are available locally and to identify the resources they predict can be made available over a 3-5 year period.
12. To explore measures focused specifically at rural communities including the piloting of a policy of the 'purchase and rehabilitation' of existing dwellings.
13. To explore the opportunities to work with neighbouring sub-regions to increase investment in the LCB.

PRIORITY 2: Developing the intermediate market

Our objectives are:

14. To develop a shared sub-regional definition of key workers based on the government's definition but extended to reflect local needs.
15. To agree arrangements to monitor changing housing costs and income levels across the sub-region.
16. To develop a joint approach to commissioning housing needs studies across the sub-region with a common approach and timetable achieved by 2009.
17. To explore the potential for creating a sub-regional approach to choice based lettings.

PRIORITY 3: Improving Stock Condition

Our objectives are:

18. To put in place arrangements:
 - to maintain reliable information on the condition of the housing stock;
 - to keep future investment needs beyond 2010 under review;
 - to identify the resources required;
 - to ensure that environmental concerns are adequately addressed to ensure quality of life and future sustainability of neighbourhoods; and
 - to identify and promote best practice across all councils and RSLs to deliver effective and cost efficient improvements
19. To review Home Improvement Agency coverage in consultation with Supporting People bodies.
20. To explore the potential for developing a flexible 'funding pot' across the sub-region to support Empty Homes Strategies and the possibility of making arrangements with designated RSLs who can take on either leasing or ownership of an empty property.

21. To explore the opportunities for developing a cross-local authority home improvement loans agency.
22. To develop cross authority private sector landlord accreditation schemes.
23. To identify from existing data sources, the improvement needs of New Town property types and to disseminate best practice in diagnosing and dealing with areas in need of improvement.

PRIORITY 4: Meeting the needs of vulnerable groups

Our objectives are:

24. To promote the development of lifetime homes standards for new housing.
25. To identify the current proportion of homes with disabled adaptations as the basis for improving the ratio of suitably adapted properties for disabled people.
26. To create a register of adapted property and disabled people needing adapted accommodation in order to facilitate better matching.
27. To develop standards and best practice across the sub-region by:
 - identifying gaps in provision by types of service and location;
 - developing core specifications on support services; and
 - by merging and remodelling services to promote their availability to all across the sub-region, and, by developing referral protocols for those schemes.
28. To extract the housing implications for vulnerable people from strategies, for example for people with mental health problems, teenage pregnancies etc.
29. To seek to ensure that Supporting People strategies for Essex and Hertfordshire reflect sub-regional priorities.
30. To explore the added value that could be achieved through jointly commissioning services by Hertfordshire and Essex across the sub-region for special needs groups.
31. To co-ordinate joint working and promote best practice on homelessness across the sub-region with the priority on preventive measures.

PRIORITY 5: Achieving Social Inclusion

Our objectives are:

32. To consider developing a sub-regional working group to encourage the sharing of information between local authorities, RSLs and the voluntary sector, and to assist in developing a strategy which is integrated with the aims and objectives of the Regional Social Strategy.
33. For RSLs in the sub-region to fund a BME Housing Needs and Aspirations Study.
34. In view of the variation at district level in the proportion of BME populations, levels of deprivation, etc., to encourage districts to take the lead in developing and disseminating best practice in achieving social inclusion.
35. To review the role of sheltered housing and its alternatives.
36. To identify and develop best practice principles across the sub-region in supporting neighbourhood and community development for example, the opportunity to deliver social inclusion through the education and training opportunities which housing development presents.

Evidencing need

37. New Regional Planning Guidance and the Key Workers Study, due to emerge between June and September 2004 will need to be incorporated into the Strategy.

APPENDIX 1: ACTION PLAN UPDATE ON PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE 2003 STRATEGY - MAY 2004

| Area Of Activity | Measure | Target | Data Source | Update |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Secure the maximum provision of affordable and intermediate housing through the use of public land, enhanced land availability especially brownfield sites suited to sustainable communities, and planning agreements | Develop a sub regional commissioning process for housing need and market analysis drawing on the consolidated 2002 Needs Study which includes a focus on development process and planning system outcomes | Agree process and commission first study through Sub Regional Strategy Group by 30.9.03. | London Commuter Belt Sub Regional Strategy Group minutes | The target has not been met. The Strategy Group has produced a specification for the study although no decision has been made on the commissioning of it. Key worker study for Hertfordshire was completed in 2004. Harlow key worker research published in 2003 |
| Secure resources to provide housing / support to meet vulnerable tenants needs | Identify gaps in provision with Local Supporting People Teams | Deliver needs mapping by 31.3.04. | Housing Strategies and Local Supporting People Strategies | Analysis has been carried out for the Homelessness Strategies. Needs mapping has been undertaken as part of the production of district level Supporting People position statements, that will feed into the next Essex wide SP strategy (Essex Districts). Further needs mapping will take place prior to the Supporting People Strategy being produced. |
| Balance the provision of housing and services in new development to meet the needs of the whole local community | Reduction of economic, health, and social inequalities. Increase in peoples' ability to sustain independence | Needs identified within Housing Strategies are being met. | Supporting People Strategies Local Housing Strategies Health Improvement | Programme of bids for 2004/5 and 2005/6 were not met in full. A number of schemes were not funded either through the AHP or through LASHG. |

| | | | Plans | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Provide adequate temporary accommodation and support, prevention and advice services for homeless and potentially homeless households | Sharing of Homelessness Strategies within the sub region prior to publication to maximise resources in accommodation prevention, advice and support. | Audit sub - regional homeless reviews and strategies for joint funding opportunities by 30.4.03. | London Commuter Belt Sub Regional Homelessness Officers Sub Groups minutes Homelessness Strategies Local Housing Strategies | No work has been carried out on this. |
| Address the intermediate market focusing on key workers important to prosperity and social well being | Work with other high growth sub regions to develop effective responses | Establish links with Cambridge Thames Gateway and South Midlands sub regions and the London Region by 30.11.03. | London Commuter Belt Sub Regional Development Officers Sub Groups minutes | Harlow Key worker research published in 2003. Representative from LCB Sub-region attends Cambridge Sub-Region. Herts. Key worker study published in 2004. Epping Forest DC Key Worker Study completed in Spring 2004 |
| Work with partners to maximise the current and potential use of sustainable resources in house building and improvement and minimising environmental impact | Review sub regional ADP and other development / improvement activity for good practice | Development Officers complete review by 30.11.03. | LCBSRDOSG minutes Housing Strategies and Local Plan | No work has been carried out on this however Chelmsford have target of 25% MMC for their ADP. |

APPENDIX 2: AFFORDABLE HOUSING: NEED, SUPPLY AND LAND ISSUES

| Local authority | Need | Supply | Land issues |
|------------------------|---|---|--|
| Brentwood | The Housing Needs survey identified 275 new affordable homes per year to meet demand | 228 units projected over next 5 years | Land at a premium. Seeking to apply lower site threshold of 15, and to increase % of affordable in current local plan |
| Broxbourne | Need for 340 additional homes annually Will provide 350 over next 2 years 145 shortfall. | 470 completions due 2004-06. after which site availability will substantially reduce development programme to around 70 p.a. (average) | Considering increasing affordable housing target on s106 sites to 40% |
| Chelmsford | HNS estimate shortfall of 1,047 affordable homes per year up to 2007. Will seek 35% affordable homes target. RSS14 requires 700 new homes per year | Target of 150 Affordable homes annually Achieved 195 in 02/03 Expect 193 in 03/04. LASHG changes pose a problem - using limited grant subsidy approach (75% TCI) can deliver 4 units for price of 3 Supported bids for current ADP bidding round totalled £9.2 million of which funding allocated was for £2.7 million. | Limited council owned land majority of sites will be negotiated – since May 2004 moving towards no grant for S106 sites but have many pre negotiated sites where grant is implied. |
| Dacorum | Developed approx. 700 affordable housing units in past 10 years | 1998 target of 100 pa. 02/03 produced 81 dwellings | 27 units in 6 villages exception sites |
| East Herts. | DCA survey 2004 identifies need for a net of 594 new affordable units per annum, total 4,158 until 2011 | Affordable programme of on average 200 new affordable homes a year over four years. The programme is heavily loaded to delivery in 06/07. | 30% affordable housing target s106 |
| Epping Forest | ¾ the HC allocated £7.14m to build 82 affordable homes. 93- 03 767 affordable homes build | House building rates have exceeded SP target, sufficient land in Structure Plan Not proposed to allocate more at present emerging RPG 14 has not made it clear what dev will be in EF. All housing land allocations have been taken up. Hence gain from windfall sites sought. | |
| Harlow | Developed 328 affordable housing units in past 10 years | £1.7 LASHG 03/04 | 30% local plan affordable requirement on sites greater than 15 units. Sufficient land to meet existing structure plan targets. Constrained boundaries limit further housing |
| Hertsmere | 4,637 total need over period 1999/00 – 2003/04 incl. 2,735 in need at start of period plus estimated 1,902 net projected need | Minimum target of 410 new affordable housing completions between 1998 and 2011 217 actual new affordable | 25% of affordable housing sought on suitable sites involving the provision of 25 or |

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|--|
| | 444 on Housing Register at 1.4.99 892 on Housing Register at 1.4.04 | housing completions in last five years (1999/00 – 2003/04 inc) | more new dwellings or on sites of 1 hectare or more. No more than one third Intermediate Housing, unless exceptional case demonstrated |
| North Herts. | 97/98 – 02/03 achieved 181 affordable units average 31 units pa From 03/04 plan to deliver 500 homes over 5 years. Housing Needs survey indicates a short fall of 357 affordable units annually to 2011 | 02- 03 £11.5m dev programme | Proposal to increase s106 from 25% to 35% based on recommendation from the housing needs survey. |
| St Albans | Housing Needs Survey in 2002 identified need for 897 new affordable homes per year. | Very dependent on S106 sites. The Council has allocated £2.16m for 2004/05 to support the provision of affordable housing, plus £1m has also been identified for 2005/06 | SPG in April 2004 increased percentage target for affordable homes on qualifying sites from 25% to 35% |
| Stevenage | Since 2002 97 affordable homes provided and 135 in pipeline | 02/03 bid supported was £8m. Awarded £143,000 for Homebuy (0.3% of sub region allocation of £47.5m) | Growth of 6-8,000 homes to 2021 but land for 2,200 only. Plans to expand the town by 15,000 |
| Three Rivers | Target new homes in 2003/04 has been increased from 49 to 81 and from 18 to 117 in 2004/05 | | |
| Watford | A need for 631 new affordable units every year until 2006. The population of Watford is projected to increase by 8,526 people, 10% over the 20 years to 2021 | In 2003/ 04 able to fund and build only 98. | 30% affordable housing target on s106 sites |
| Welwyn & Hatfield | Housing Register (1.4.04) = 2,787 households. Homelessness acceptances (2003-04) = 336 households. | Devt programme 02/03 = 148 units (129 sold RTB) Devt programme 03/04 = 326 units (129 sold RTB) Devt projections: 04/05 = 268 units. 05-06 = 248 units. | Urban Capacity Study provides basis for land allocation. New District Housing Needs Survey ready by March 2005. S106 currently 30%. |
| Uttlesford | Developed 536 social rented units in past 10 years | Rural exception sites New Local plan seeks 40% affordable housing | Sufficient land till 2011 |

APPENDIX 3: CAPITAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS, 2006-2008

| | | Growth, including Homelessness (£k) | Regeneration (£k) | Decent Homes Standard (£k) | Rural (£k) | Supported Housing (£k) | BME (£k) | Private Sector Grants (£k) | Disabled facilities Grants (£k) | Totals (£k) |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| North Herts DC | 2006 / 07 | 9,400 | 0 | N/a | 872 | 1,000 | 500 | 350 | 250 | 12,372 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 8,050 | 0 | N/a | 872 | 1,000 | 500 | 350 | 250 | 11,022 |
| Harlow | 2006 / 07 | 6,577 | 0 | 17,302 | 0 | 1,260 | 0 | 40 | 200 | 25,379 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 11,540 | 0 | 4,238 | 0 | 608 | 0 | 40 | 200 | 16,626 |
| Epping Forest | 2006 / 07 | 9,100 | 0 | 0 | 380 | 650 | 0 | 200 | 300 | 10,630 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 9,300 | 0 | 0 | 420 | 650 | 0 | 200 | 300 | 10,870 |
| Watford | 2006 / 07 | 3,400 | 3,200 | 1,393 | 0 | 0 | 1,500 | 450 | 350 | 10,293 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 3,250 | 3,200 | 560 | 0 | 0 | 1,250 | 450 | 350 | 9,060 |
| Welwyn / Hatfield | 2006 / 07 | 10,150 | 0 | 1,488 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 146 | 490 | 12,274 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 9,250 | 0 | 1,265 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 146 | 490 | 11,151 |
| Dacorum | 2006 / 07 | 3,250 | 0 | 870 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 250 | 375 | 4,745 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 4,000 | 0 | 1,305 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 250 | 375 | 5,930 |
| Chelmsford | 2006 / 07 | 6,480 | 500 | N/a | 460 | 788 | 250 | 314 | 350 | 9,142 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 6,536 | 500 | N/a | 468 | 1,838 | 250 | 314 | 350 | 10,256 |
| Broxbourne | 2006 / 07 | 8,080 | comb | 478 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 90 | 350 | 8,998 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 10,710 | comb | 618 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 90 | 350 | 11,768 |
| St Albans | 2006 / 07 | 5,200 | 0 | 6,159 | 0 | 500 | 250 | 150 | 400 | 12,659 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 5,200 | 0 | 5,479 | 0 | 500 | 250 | 150 | 400 | 11,979 |
| East Herts | 2006 / 07 | 17,597 | 0 | 0 | 694 | 0 | 0 | 272 | 318 | 18,881 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 4,501 | 0 | 0 | 517 | 0 | 0 | 272 | 318 | 5,608 |
| Brentwood | 2006 / 07 | 4,320 | 0 | 1,887 | 360 | 270 | 0 | 150 | 220 | 7,207 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 2,340 | 0 | 1,887 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 150 | 220 | 4,597 |
| Hertsmere | 2006 / 07 | 3,500 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 400 | 0 | 30 | 175 | 4,105 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 3,500 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 400 | 0 | 30 | 175 | 4,105 |
| Uttlesford | 2006 / 07 | 11,184 | 0 | 3,450 | 1,608 | 0 | 0 | 60 | 60 | 16,362 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 4,416 | 0 | 0 | 1,608 | 0 | 0 | 60 | 60 | 6,144 |
| Threerivers | 2006 / 07 | 2,062 | 1,451 | 5,906 | 4,700 | 0 | 0 | 70 | 250 | 14,439 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 492 | 0 | 5,906 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 70 | 250 | 6,718 |
| Stevenage | 2006 / 07 | 2,350 | 0 | 4,500 | 0 | 250 | 0 | 250 | 250 | 7,600 |
| | 2007 / 08 | 2,350 | 0 | 4,500 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 250 | 250 | 7,350 |
| | Total | 188,085 | 8,851 | 69,191 | 12,959 | 10,114 | 4,750 | 5,644 | 8,676 | 308,270 |

APPENDIX 4: LONDON COMMUTER BELT SUB-REGIONAL ACTION PLAN 2005 - 8

Priority 1: Maximising the Delivery of Affordable Housing

| Objective | Action / Outcome | By when | Resources | Lead |
|---|--|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Strengthen the principle of RSL joint commissioning/procurement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop sub-regional 'Quality Marks', for example in relation to minimum design and management standards, etc | March 2007 | Standard to be produced within existing resources. Award to be commercially sponsored. | David Bogle |
| 2. Explore the potential for developing strategic sub-groups within the sub-region where they better reflect housing market dynamics or common interests. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish forums to bring partners together to identify, develop, share and promote good practice. | March 2006 | Within existing resources. | Ian Christmas |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the development of a joint delivery unit at sub-regional level or below combining planning, housing and legal functions. | March 2006 | Within Existing Resources | Marion Harris |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the potential for developing delivery arrangements/vehicles across or within the sub-region. | March 2007 | Within existing resources. | Will O'Neill |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in the emerging co-ordination structures for the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough growth corridor. | Timetable to be determined | Within existing resources. | Ian Christmas/Alan Hall |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an investigation into local authority practice as the basis for developing a cross- | March 2006 | Within existing resources. | Rod Chamberlain/ Helen Frost |

| Objective | Action / Outcome | By when | Resources | Lead |
|---|---|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | regional approach to providing subsidy, for example, of the benefits of 'banking' free serviced land. | | | |
| 3. Consider the appointment of a housing co-ordinator to work across the sub-region to ensure delivery of the strategy action plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations agreed by the Housing strategy Group and funds identified. | March 2005 | £59,500 | Ian Christmas & Patrick Odling-Smee |
| 4. Develop clear and consistent Section 106 Agreements for affordable housing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement with housing and planning services across the LCB achieved. | March 2006 | Within existing resources. | Darren Welsh |
| 5. Review land holdings with other public sector bodies, including the county councils and the NHS, and to explore the potential to use public land to subsidise housing provision. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce Terrier of land holdings Start negotiations with landowners on future use of land. | September 2005 | Within Existing Resources | Colin Farrar. |
| 6. LCB councils clarify the resources that are available locally and identifying the resources they predict can be made available over a 3-5 year period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources to be identified | December 2004 | Within existing resources. | John Geisen. |
| 7. Explore measures focused specifically at rural communities. including the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop piloting of a policy of the 'purchase and rehabilitation' of existing dwellings. Develop networks to identify landowners and new products and examining sub regional support for Rural Housing Enablers role. Report on options and | April 2006 | To be determined. | Will O'Neill |
| | | April 2005 | To be determined. | Patrick Odling-Smee |
| | | April 2005 | | Will O'Neill |

| Objective | Action / Outcome | By when | Resources | Lead |
|---|---|----------------|----------------------------|---|
| | opportunities for commissioning and procurement of a cross boundary programme of new affordable rural homes. | | | |
| 8. Explore the opportunities to work with neighbouring sub-regions to increase investment in the LCB. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence discussions with London North & East, Thames Gateway, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire on partnership arrangements. | June 2005 | Within existing resources. | Patrick Odling-Smee Ian Christmas Pauline Pennifold |

Priority 2: Developing the Intermediate Market

| Objective | Action / Outcome | By when | Resources | Lead |
|---|---|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 9. Develop a shared sub-regional definition of key workers based on the government's definition, but extended to reflect local needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition to be agreed by Housing Strategy Group. | June 2005 | Within existing resources | Will O'Neill |
| 10. Agree arrangements to monitor changing housing costs and income levels across the sub-region. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up system for collecting and disseminating information. | March 2005 | Within existing resources | Marion Harris |
| 11. Develop a joint approach to commissioning housing needs studies/Housing Market assessments across the sub-region with a common approach and timetable achieved by 2009. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish working group to produce proposals on how this can be delivered and the links to planning policy. | March 2006 | Within existing resources. | Pauline Pennifold |
| 12. Explore the potential for creating a sub-regional approach to choice based lettings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set pilot CBL scheme in volunteer LA areas. | April 2006 | To be determined. | Alan Hall |

Priority 3: Improving Stock Condition

| Objectives | Action / Outcome | By when | Resources | Lead |
|--|---|----------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 13. Maintain accurate stock condition information. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up system for maintaining reliable information on the condition of the public and private sector housing stock | April 2006 | To be determined. | Fred Davies |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review investment needs beyond 2010 identifying the resources required. | April 2006 | To be determined. | Alan Hall |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify from existing data sources, the improvement needs of New Town property types and to disseminate best practice in diagnosing and dealing with areas in need of improvement. | June 2005 | Within existing resources. | Valerie Corrigan |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess environmental concerns to ensure quality of life and future sustainability of neighbourhoods. | On-going | Within existing resources. | Malcolm Knights |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and promote best practice across all councils and RSLs in all areas to deliver effective and cost efficient improvements | On-going | Within existing resources. | John Geisen |

| | | | | |
|---|---|------------|---|---|
| 14. Review Home Improvement Agency coverage. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish working group to review the HIA arrangements across the sub-regional and explore improvements to the services. Explore the opportunities for developing a cross-local authority home improvement loans agency. | April 2006 | Within existing resource. To be determined | Jan Halliday Martin Cooper Karen Dragovic |
| 15. Explore the potential for developing a flexible 'funding pot' across the sub-region to support Empty Homes Strategies and the possibility of making arrangements with designated RSLs who can take on either leasing or ownership of an empty property. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up working group to produce recommendations to the Housing Strategy Group. | April 2007 | Within existing resources | Rod Chamberlain/Helen Frost |
| 16. Develop cross authority private sector landlord accreditation schemes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheme proposals produced and implemented. | April 2006 | To be determined | Fred Davis |

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Priority 4: Meeting the needs of vulnerable groups

| Objective | Action / Outcome | By when | Resources | Lead |
|--|---|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 17. Promote the development of lifetime homes standards for new housing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the current proportion of homes with disabled adaptations as the basis for improving the ratio of suitably adapted properties for disabled people. | April 2005 | Within existing resources. | Colin Farrar |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a register of adapted property and disabled people | April 2005 | To be determined. | Malcolm Knights |

| | | | | |
|---|---|------------|--|---|
| | needing adapted accommodation in order to facilitate better matching. | | | |
| 18. Develop standards and best practice across the sub-region. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify gaps in provision by types of service and location; developing core specifications on support services. To merge and remodel services to promote their availability to all across the sub-region To develop referral protocols for those schemes. | March 2005 | As part of the SP Strategy Development | Jan Halliday Martin Cooper |
| 19. Extract the housing implications from strategies for vulnerable people, for example, for people with mental health problems, teenage pregnancies etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to ensure that Supporting People strategies for Essex and Hertfordshire reflect sub-regional priorities. Explore the added value that could be achieved through jointly commissioning services by Hertfordshire and Essex across the sub-region for example for specialist BME, offenders, drug and alcohol abusing groups. | March 2005 | As part of the SP Strategy Development | Jan Halliday Martin Cooper Jan Halliday Martin Cooper Ian Christmas |
| 20. Co-ordinate joint working and promote best practice on homelessness across the sub region with the priority on preventive measures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum for sharing best practice established. | June 2005 | | Chris Wainman |

Priority 5: Achieving Social Inclusion

| Objective | Action / Outcome | By when | Resources | Lead |
|---|---|----------------|---------------------------|--|
| 21. In view of the variation at district level in the proportion of BME populations, levels of deprivation, etc., encourage districts to take the lead in developing and disseminating best practice in achieving social inclusion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine feasibility of commissioning sub regional BME housing needs survey. | December 2005 | To be determined | David Bogle |
| 22. Review the role of sheltered housing and its alternatives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the role of sheltered housing and its alternatives. | December 2005 | Within existing resources | Jan Halliday Chris Wainman Martin Cooper |
| 23. Identify and develop best practice principles across the sub-region in supporting neighbourhood and community development for example, the opportunity to deliver social inclusion through the education and training opportunities which housing development presents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum for sharing best practice established. | June 2005 | Within existing resources | Val Corrigan |

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