



Chester-le-Street Housing Strategy

2008 - 2013

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Forward

Foreword by (TBC)

I am pleased to introduce the new Chester-le-Street District's Housing Strategy 2008-2013. This document has been written to provide an up-to-date view of housing-related issues which need to be addressed to benefit the residents of the District.

Chester-le-Street District Council is responsible to strategically monitor housing related issues across all tenures within the District and this document will assist in this process by shaping housing and planning policies to ensure that the housing needs and aspirations of the residents of the Chester-le-Street District are met.

We have recognised the need to deliver sustainable communities and the action within this strategy cannot be completed without the need for partnership working. Housing impacts on issues such as health, anti-social behaviour, social exclusion and employment opportunities and a multi-agency approach will increase the opportunities of achieving success.

The Council has focussed on the four objectives which are stated in the Regional Housing Strategy to assist with the Action Plan for the District, the objectives include:-

- Rejuvenating the Housing market.
- Affordable Housing – providing quality and choice.
- Decent Homes – improvement and maintenance of existing housing.
- Meeting specific community and social needs.

I would like to thank all that have contributed to the writing of the Strategy and hope that the document will be used effectively by contributing to the delivery of sustainable communities within the Chester-le-Street District.

Picture of Chris Jukes portfolio holder (TBC)

Executive Summary

Many of the Governments housing related issues begun in 2000 including the announcement of the Decent Home Standard, Affordable Housing schemes and initiatives , homelessness and poor rentals. Since then a number of housing reports and studies have highlighted that the need for new development must also encompass a more broader range of community initiatives in order to create a level of stability which has been titled "Sustainable Communities".

In July 2007 the Government's Housing Green Paper titled "*Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable*" was issued which announced an ambitious target to deliver three million new homes in the UK up to 2020. The mechanism chosen to deliver this strategy was the *Regional Spatial Strategy* drafted in the North East through the North East Assembly. The RSS is continually changing to reflect new trends and the document is helping to assist the Authority with the Local Development Framework – housing is one of the key inputs in this report.

There are now over 24,000 dwellings in the area. The Chester-le-Street District has one of the highest number of Owner Occupiers in County Durham at 77%, with a further 20% of stock owned and run by Registered Social Landlords. 40% of stock is of a Semi –Detached tenure and the District has a diverse range of properties in different age groups.

House prices vary between different house types and location and range from an average one bedroom flat selling at £111,000 to a four bedroom detached house at £236,000. Rental prices average between £365 and £459 again depending on tenure type and location.

Current demographics include a population of 53,200 residents with varying age groups depending on settlement location. 28% of the District's residents are one person households and a further 11% are lone parent families, this change in family composition is one of the key reasons for putting pressure on the housing stock. Whilst the District is located within the County Durham Authority boundaries a recent study concluded that the District's housing market is more clearly linked to Gateshead, Derwentside and Tynedale. Inward and outward migration is well balanced with very little pressure from international migrants. The future population of is expected to increase by 3% to 2021 especially within the 65+ age group.

The Council's current Social Housing register has been used to assess the housing need for the District. Over 41% of the people on the register aspire to owning their own home but are willing to consider social rent until conditions

become more favourable to purchase. All age groups are applying onto the register but there is an increasing number of younger people in the 16-44 year olds joining. Over 40% of the people applying are one person households with a further 22% lone parent families. Houses are in the most demand but larger two bedroom bungalows are also required indicating the needs for the older population. 66% of applicants require two bedroom accommodation.

Housing is a key element which affects the successful delivery of most strategies throughout the Authority. Housing helps to shape communities and contributes to the expansion of the economic base which are key aspects stated in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Along with Meeting the Decent Homes Standard housing can also assist with the regeneration of settlements and Neighbourhood Management Initiatives as stated in the priorities of the Corporate Plan. Different aspects of housing will also provide solutions for other strategies especially Regeneration, Homelessness, Crime and Disorder, Supporting People and Anti-Poverty.

Studies and research continues to benefit the knowledge based of the housing market within the District. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment for County Durham will be issued in the near future which will give an overview of the current housing situation within the area. Whilst the final draft is being prepared we continue to rely on the Housing needs and market assessment carried out in 2004 as an assessment of market conditions and housing needs.

Partnership working is recognised as integral to many groups throughout the Chester-le-Street District and beyond. The Local Strategic Partnership are given regular updates on the housing situation within the District and a few meetings have taken place with Registered Social Landlords to understand their needs and ambitions within the District. The introduction of the County Durham Local Government Review is moving housing related issues into a wider context and the Durham Housing and Neighbourhood Group allow all authorities within the County to meet and discuss housing related issues. Regional discussions throughout the North East are also becoming more common which creates a stronger voice for people in this area especially when addressing the Government.

The Council has focussed on the **four** regional strategic objectives to assist with the action plan for the District, the objectives include:-

- 1/ Rejuvenating the Housing market.
- 2/ Affordable Housing – providing quality and choice.
- 3/ Decent Homes – improvement and maintenance of existing housing.
- 4/ Meeting specific community and social needs.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there are key reports which are still awaiting delivery which can affect aspects of the plan, a more detailed understanding of the entire housing market within the District will help deliver the actions. By working with partners and stakeholders as well as continuing to research and monitoring the housing market the Council will understand in more detail how trends are affecting the housing market, the authority will then be the position to introduce or amend housing policies and procedures to benefit the residents of the District.

The Council intends to monitor and review this housing strategy on a regular basis to highlight progress made to date and make sure that it continues to provide up-to-date and relevant to all key users and other interested parties.

Introduction

The Government's focus on housing was emphasised in the recent Housing Green paper *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable – July 2007*:-

“Everyone deserves a place they can be proud to call a home, at a price they can afford”

The Communities and Local Government (CLG) see Local Authorities as the Community Leaders which are best placed to develop and drive forward Housing Strategies for their area with the help of stakeholders and partners. Chester-le-Street District Council will therefore strategically monitor housing related issues across all tenure types within the District and use planning powers and housing policy to deliver national, regional and local priorities to ensure that the housing needs and aspirations of the Chester-le-Street District are identified and met using the resources available.

Housing is at the centre of Chester-le-Street District Council's plans to create successful and Sustainable Communities and this Strategy will set out the overall direction for improving the quality, choice and affordability of housing in the District.

What is a Housing Strategy?

A Housing Strategy should be an over-arching document that reviews all housing related issues nationally, regionally and locally and it should also demonstrate a level of consultation with partners and stakeholders from within the local community in order to demonstrate that the views of residents and partners are considered. The resultant housing objectives and priorities should be actionable and achievable.

The aims of the Chester-le-Street Housing Strategy are to:

- Set out in detail the local vision for housing and sustainable communities.
- Provide links between housing and other social, economic and environmental programmes within the Community Strategy.
- Translate the regional housing priorities into local priorities.
- Understand local priorities in terms of location, size and types of homes needed.

The document should specifically address the following:-

- Knowledge of the dynamics and trends in the housing markets.

- Ability to assess existing and future housing needs and aspirations for the different types of Housing including knowledge on the condition and popularity of housing in all tenures.
- Involve a range of stakeholders and partners in the development and implementation of the Strategy.
- Have an understanding of the skills and expertise of the stakeholders and partners.
- The ability to work with others by commissioning, funding and co-ordinating activities to implement the Strategy.
- Procedures to monitor and review the Strategy.

The Chester-le-Street District Housing Strategy will be consistent with national policy and designed along side the regional and sub-regional strategies. The Strategy will also meet the Authorities wider objectives as set out in the *Chester-le-Street District Council Corporate Plan 2007 – 2010* and the *Sustainable Community Strategy 2006 - 2016*.

Every care has been taken in the development of this strategy to ensure that the information and data used in this document (including the appendices attached) is accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant and complete. The Council's Data Quality Policy has been referenced when producing this strategy.

Section 1 - Housing Strategy and the Wider Strategic Context

National Housing Perspective

In April 2000 the then Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott launched a green paper titled ***Quality and Choice; a decent Home for all*** to cover England. It was the first comprehensive review of housing for 23 years and it set out one of the key Government messages that “everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home”. The document would highlight the poor levels of accommodation in some areas of England as well as deteriorating estates, lack of affordable housing, poor rental offerings and continuing concerns regarding homelessness. The Government’s response was to make a commitment that they would invest in homes to make them decent by 2010, create initiatives to help first time buyers, introduce Private Landlord Accreditation Schemes to protect private rented tenants and protect and support families and individuals who found themselves homeless. A number of government initiatives would begin from this document.

House prices began to increase in 2002 attributable to low interest rates and good economic growth within the UK with some houses doubling or even trebled in price in a short period of time especially in the southern county regions of England where land was selling at a premium. Whilst there was the obvious financial gain to the seller or the investor the increases in house price increases would place a massive financial strain on people entering the property market for the first time and this would present a series of challenges to the housing sector going forward.

In February 2003 the Government published a document titled ***Sustainable Communities: building for the future***. The Government recognised that increasing housing provision in itself would not always solve community-based issues as other factors must also be considered along side these provisions in order to achieve sustainability over the longer-term to prevent problems reoccurring in the near future. The recent Government investments especially in pathfinder areas were starting to tackle the root cause of deprivation and this created a term titled “urban renaissance”. The document highlighted that a step change was required so that housing was considered in partnership with changes to economic, social and environmental initiatives in order to create a successful, thriving and inclusive community. This commitment was designed on a long-term basis over the next 15-20 years and was intended to be delivered through the Regional Planning Bodies and Local Government with the Local Strategic Partnership at the heart of the strategy.

In April 2003 the Government commissioned the ***Barker review*** to understand the issues underlying the lack of supply and responsiveness of housing throughout the UK. A special focus was made on the role of competitiveness, capacity, technology and the building industry and consideration was given on how these

factors interacted with the planning system and the Government's sustainable development objectives. In March 2004 the ***Kate Barker's Review of Social Housing*** was issued and it made a total of **thirty six** recommendations. One of the major highlights of the report was the need to build 17,000 additional houses per annum (23,000 if backlog was considered) and the report suggested that if house building continued at the current rate then problems would increase in homelessness, affordability would decline even further and social division and a decline in standards of public service delivery would become increasingly likely. From an economic perspective it was also highlighted that the net effect of doing business in the UK would also increase .

Kate Barker's key recommendations would challenge all elements of the housing market to include national, regional and local government bodies especially those associated within the planning function and a number of government bodies were reorganised following these recommendations published in this report. The building industry was also challenged to increase customer satisfaction levels, improving designs and use more environmentally friendly methods of construction.

Generally property within the private rented sector is much more likely to be in poor condition and in a state of disrepair. The **2004 Housing Act** strengthened the control of management standards in the private rented sector and at the same time has brought in new standards for health and safety in the home. The provisions within the act include:

- The new Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- Changes in right to buy.
- Empty Homes Management.
- Accommodation needs for Gypsy and Travellers.

In January 2005 the Government issued two reports titled ***Sustainable Communities: Homes for all*** and ***Sustainable Communities: People and Places***. Both reports set out a five year plan taking into consideration the issues raised from the February 2003 *Sustainable Communities: building for the future* report as well as the recommendations from the Barker report and other reports and research commissioned to date.

The report ***Sustainable Communities: Homes for all*** reported on the "built" environment including the provision of more quality homes, helping people own their own home, supporting people most in need for accommodation, identifying alternative forms of accommodation for BME groups such as Gypsies and Travellers and also considering the protection and enhancement of the local environment.

The report ***Sustainable Communities: People and Places*** was written alongside the above report to highlight community issues to show that housing could not be looked at in isolation and good schools, health services, parks and transportation as well as successful businesses were also important when creating sustainable communities.

Following these report the Government identified that whilst housing would still be the main component a good Sustainable Community must also consider the following issues:-

- Active, Inclusive and safe.
- Well run.
- Environmentally sensitive.
- Well designed and built.
- Well connected.
- Thriving.
- Well served.
- Fair for everyone.

The Chartered Institute of Housing commissioned research in April 2006 to examine the range of tools available to local authorities to assist them in working with the private sector. The **Way and Means: local authorities work with the private Sector was published** for use by Council staff to be used when working with the private sector.

The document considered the Government's priorities to:

- Make better use of the private rented sector.
- Deliver decent homes within the private sector (PSA7).
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour.

It was acknowledged by Central Government that Local Government could not tackle these issues alone therefore in October 2006 the **Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'** underlined the importance of local accountability and the control that empowered citizens should have in the governance of their neighbourhoods, towns and cities. It also stressed the role that partnerships play in the delivery of local services and indicated that local housing and homelessness strategies will become part of local community strategies. It also recognises that regional housing strategies must be built up from an analysis of sub regional housing markets.

The ***Hills Report: End and means: the future role of Social Housing in England*** written by John Hill was delivered in February 2007. The report written through the ESRC Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion was tasked with understand the changes in tenant expectations regarding social housing, how housing needs have changed to allow people to get on in life, attempt to

understand social cohesion and recognise the type of communities people would like to live in. The conclusions highlighted that social housing does offer benefits including affordability when house prices are high, supporting mixed-income communities and providing a base which people can build upon. The report points to the successes in Denmark and the Netherlands where there is a higher percentage of social housing.

In June 2007 Martin Cave published a report **Every Tenant Matters: A review of social housing regulation** which looked at current housing regulations and the shortcomings within them. The review identified three principal objectives for the regulation of social housing:

- To ensure continued provision of high quality social housing.
- To empower and protect tenants.
- To expand the availability of choice of provider at all levels in the provision of social housing.

In July 2007 a major update of all housing related issues was published by Communities and Local Government with the Housing Green Paper titled **“Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable.** This document has become the cornerstone of all recent discussions which have taken place regarding housing. The report highlights the improvements in housing stock since 1997 both in terms of quality through the Decent Homes Standard and property value increases between 2002 and 2005. The Government recognises that more homes are needed throughout the UK especially in the South of the Country and would like to see over **three million new homes** built throughout the country by 2020 (223,000 houses per year) whilst emphasising that developments must look to design and environmental improvements as well as links to good transport, schools and healthcare, it is hoped that this approach will address affordability. 60% of these houses are expected to be built on brown field sites as part of the Government target and Authorities who actively demonstrate increases in stock levels will be entitled to apply for the new Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

In February 2008 the Government issued a report titled **“Lifetime Homes, Lifetime neighbourhoods”** a national strategy for Housing in an Ageing society. The report emphasises that better healthcare, new technologies and a more prosperous society is allowing people to live longer and in order for older people to maintain their independence and quality of life an initiative has been introduced by the Government called “Lifetime Home Standards”. All new housing will be built to these standards by 2013 and this will allow adaptations to be made to properties to allow older persons to remain in their homes.

The current situation with the housing market in early 2008 is still concerning. Whilst house prices in the London area rose slightly prices are stagnant or falling in other parts of the Country. Some banks and building societies are not passing

on base-rate cuts and in some cases increasing charges to customers. The limited demand for new build properties are forcing the building industry to scale back projects and lay off workers resulting in a smaller number of new builds than expected. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors is recorded the worst decline in house prices since the 1990's and the Council of Mortgage Lenders has reported that applications and acceptances of new mortgages in February was one of the lowest on record. The Bank of England warned that they may be unable to reduce interest rates any further as the UK economy is experiencing high price rises in fuel and food.

Regional and Sub-Regional Housing Perspective

In 2003 the Regional Housing Boards were formed through Government Offices within the UK. The *North East Housing Board* was set up through *Government Office North East* and it produced two housing strategies for the North East region during this time in 2003 and 2005. The North East Assembly have produced a ***Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East*** a document which was intended to shape the region of the North East by talking with local authorities throughout the North East as well as other regional stakeholders to replace the existing Regional Planning Guidance for the area. The final version of the RSS is expected to be adopted in the summer of 2008.

The February 2008 version of the RSS requires the provision of 2,000 additional dwellings to be built across the District between 2004 and 2021, nearly a 9% increase on the current total stock of around 23,000 dwellings.

In relation to affordable housing and inclusive communities the RSS continued to state development plans and planning proposals which should:

- make provision for a range of dwelling type, size and tenure to meet the assessed needs of all sectors of the community;
- Set local authority affordable housing provision targets informed by up to date local housing assessments;
- Have regard to the level of need for affordable housing, including the use of planning obligations in the development of all housing;

The RSS is still under review as at April 2008.

Due to the recommendations contained within the Barker Report the North East Housing Board became part of the North East Assembly (NEA) in 2006. In early 2007 the organisation published a consultation paper titled ***North East Homes, North East Views*** and this would soon become the latest Regional Housing Strategy focussing directly on the North East not only from a housing perspective but from an economic, social and environmental view as well. The Housing strategy covered the years 2007 to 2021 and is based around the Government

report ***Sustainable Communities: building for the future*** published in 2003. Four key objectives identified as appropriate for the North East region include:-

- 1/ Rejuvenating the housing stock in the North East.
- 2/ Provide quality and choice through the type and mix of new housing.
- 3/ Improving and maintaining existing Housing.
- 4/ Addressing specific community and social needs.

The North East Housing Board seeks to encourage the development of appropriate housing solutions at a regional, sub-regional and local level as well as seeking to influence public and private-sector investment.

County Durham Sub-Regional Housing Strategy

In March 2007 the Durham Housing and Neighbourhoods Partnership Board produced the first County Durham Sub-regional Housing Strategy for the area based on the framework from the Regional Strategy which was titled *A Housing Strategy for Durham 2008-2011*. It describes the housing market in Durham and seeks to set out future strategic and service developments. It includes a set of financial priorities ranging between the years 2008 to 2011 which assist the North East Assembly when allocating their funds.

Section 2 - Context of Housing within the Chester-le-Street District

The following section highlights the current situation and the key trends which are currently affecting the housing market within the District. There are many variables to take into consideration when understanding the current context within the Chester-le-Street Housing market but in order to keep the process useful and informative to the reader a selection of those key variables have been included in the chapter below. The reader should be aware that the housing market is dynamic and therefore continually changing so whilst the most up-to-date information has been used in this section changes to certain market variables can take place very quickly which can have a positive or negative effect on other variables (e.g. an interest rate decrease may increase levels of demand) and this might render some of the enclosed information obsolete at an earlier date than expected.

Brief history of housing the Chester-le-Street District

Whilst the history of Chester-le-Street dates back to the Roman era it would be the discovery of “coal” in the early 18th century that would have the most effect on the landscape of the District. Nearly every outlying town and village boasted a colliery of some description and the continuing need to attract many workers from other parts of the UK and beyond required the mining companies to build housing and infrastructure such as shops, schools and community buildings for the local community. Many of these houses and the accompanying infrastructure were purpose built for the mining community by the owners of the colliery and planning and design was less important than the increase in supply. As 19% of housing stock dates back to before 1919 it is envisaged there are still a number of these early properties remaining within the District.

In the early part of the 20th Century Council housing was being introduced to many parts of the District and developments would continue to expand over the coming decades especially after the second world war.

During the early to mid 1960's many of the collieries were either taken over by the National Coal Board or closed and some communities faced the challenge of diversifying to cope with the consequence of these closures. Whilst many properties would continue to fulfil the accommodation needs of the community in the short term the diversification would bring new wealth to the area and more people were beginning to consider home ownership. In 1985 the Government provided tenants with the opportunity to purchase their properties under the “Right to Buy” scheme which proved very popular with tenants over this period. Present day figures reveal that over half of all the Council stock has now been transferred to owner occupation.

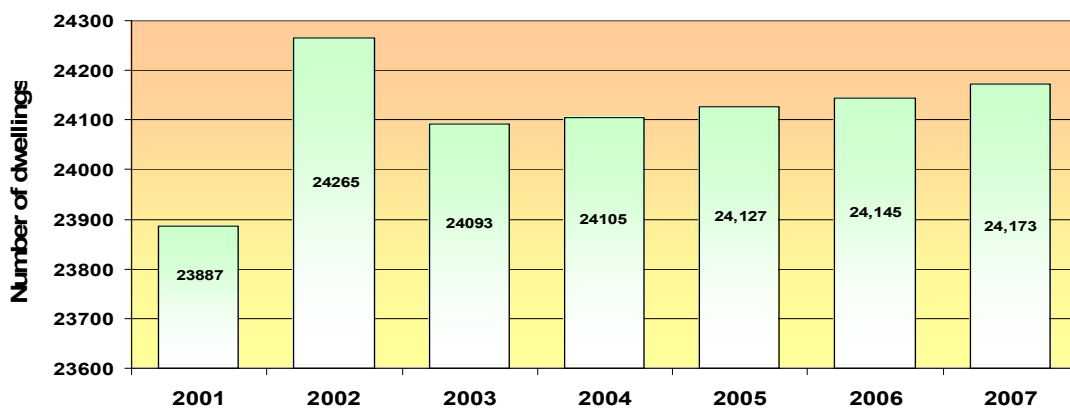
Housing developments continue up to the present day which benefit both the residents of this District and attracts inward migration from people in other areas who see the District as a “location of choice” due to its rural setting and convenient access to the A1M motorway and the East Coast mainline.

Housing Stock in District

Before looking at the current trends which could affect the housing market in the near future it is necessary to understand the make-up of the current housing stock within the Chester-le-Street District.

Chester-le-Street District’s housing stock has grown very slowly over the last six years since 2001. Table 2.1 below indicates that a significant amount of new housing was introduced to the District between 2001 and 2002 but due to a number of regeneration schemes taking place in areas such as Pelton Fell and Sacriston a percentage of old stock has been demolished therefore having a temporary effect of reducing housing stock within the District. Stock is expected to soon reach levels seen in 2002 as new housing is currently being built on these sites to replace these demolished properties. There are also a number of other developments currently taking place within the District.

TABLE 2.1



SOURCE:- HIPS Returns

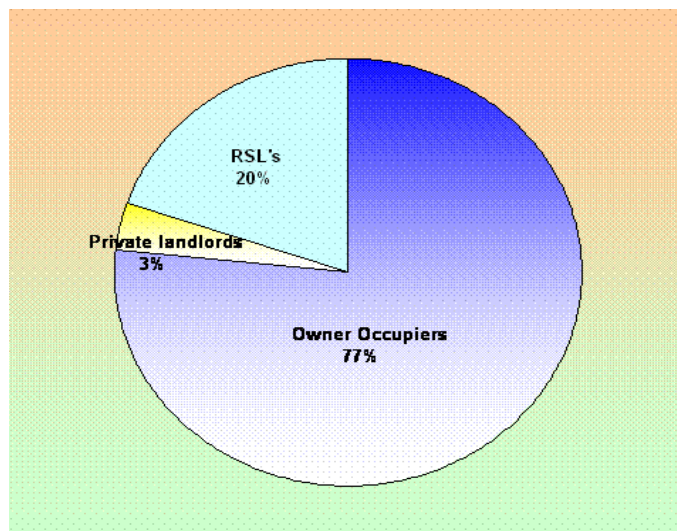
Ownership

At 77% the District has one of the highest owner occupier rates in the whole of County Durham (See Table 2.2 below) and whilst new build properties introduced to the District have contributed to the major share of private ownership the successful “Right to buy” and more recently “Right to Acquire” schemes operated by the Registered Social Landlords (RSL’s) continue to attract tenants into the private sector through the purchase of their homes.

A total of nine RSL's now own and operate 20% of all properties owned throughout the District. This figure has increased from only 2% last year following the successful transfer of the Council's housing stock to Cestria Community Housing Association in February 2008.

Private Landlords make up the final 3% but a warning rider must be placed on this figure supplied from census data in 2001. Identifying both new and existing Private Landlords continues to be a challenge to local authorities as unlike new builds, there is no mandatory registration mechanism which exists to monitor landlord developments and investments.

TABLE 2.2

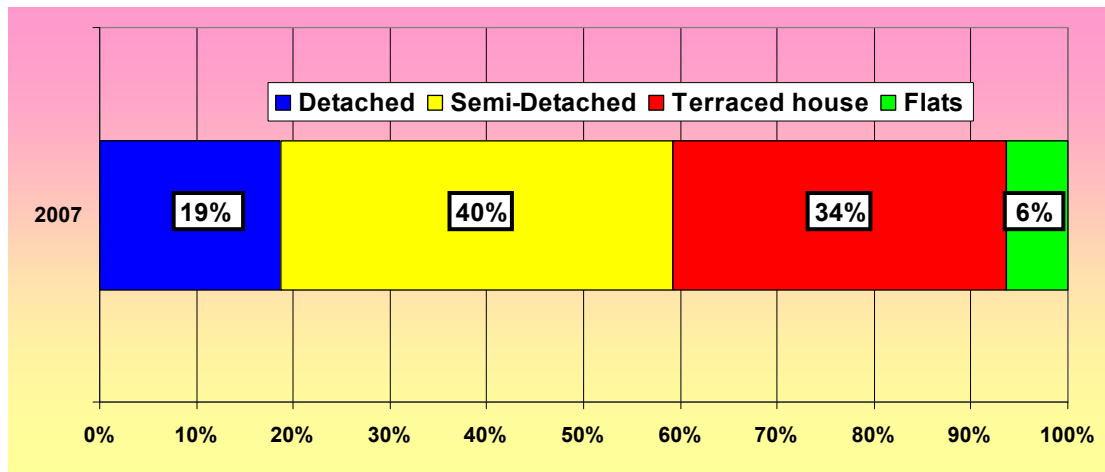


Source: National Statistics

Dwelling stock by type

The North East of England has traditionally been associated with a large number of terraced properties which assisted the mining community during the late 19th/early 20th century. Whilst the history of the District should indicate a dominance of terraced housing it actually has the second lowest number of properties of this type within County Durham. Semi-detached properties are actually the most common tenure types driven by the large number of semi-detached council houses constructed after the war and more recently new build housing schemes (See Table 2.3).

TABLE 2.3

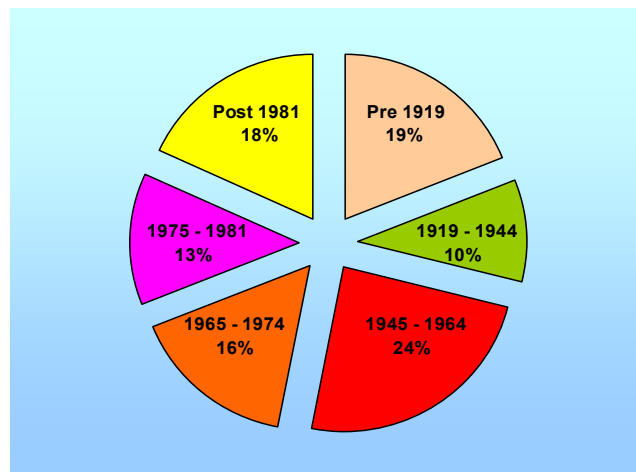


Source: National Statistics

Age of Stock

The age of the stock is very well spread out over the six periods as indicated in Table 2.4 below and there is no particular period which dominates indicating the gradual expansion of housing development within the District.

TABLE 2.4

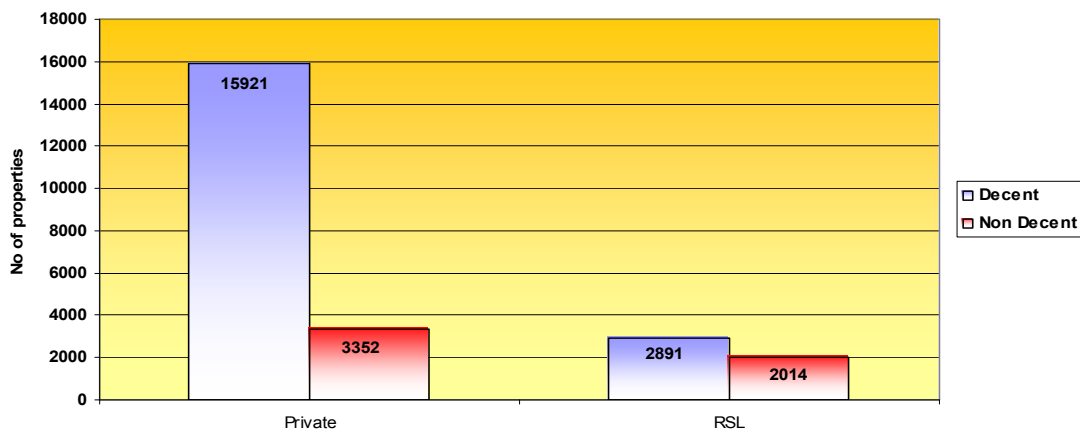


Source: National Statistics

Condition of Housing

The “*Decent Homes Standard*” was introduced by the Government in the early part of this decade to highlight the minimum standards which a property should meet in order for it to be habitable and it set targets for both private and public owned properties to be made decent by 2010. There are currently 3352 houses in the private sector identified and a further 2014 houses owned by RSL identified as non-decent. Please note that research is based on a stratified sample of properties within the District and then multiplied by the number of households so the figure may give an over-estimation on the level of non-decency.

TABLE 2.5

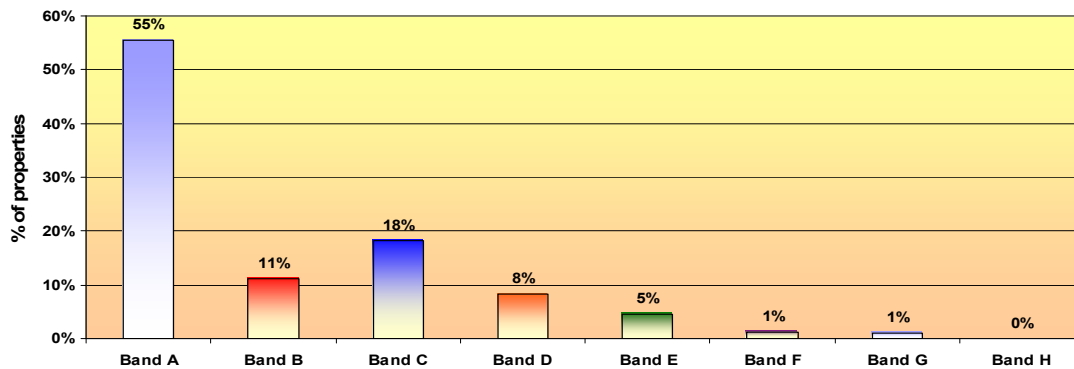


Chester-le-Street Private Stock Condition Survey 2008

Council Tax bandings

Over 55% of all properties were banded in the “A” group when Council Tax was assessed in 1991 (See Table 2.6). This banding rated properties at a value of £40,000 at the time of the assessment indicating a significantly large level of low value properties in the area. The table also illustrates the small number of bandings in the later groups such as Band F and G i.e. properties worth £120,000 or above at this time therefore showing the small number of executive housing offerings within the District.

TABLE 2.6

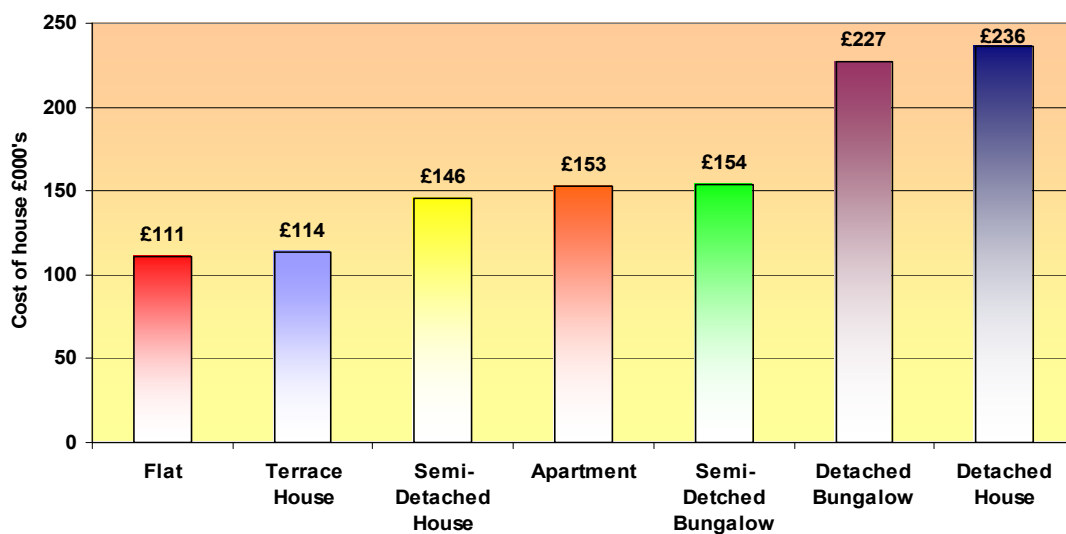


SOURCE:- CLS Council Tax Records 2007

Chester-le-Street House Prices

Chester-le-Street has some of the highest prices in the County Durham region due to it being a location of choice for many residents who commute to work in the Tyne and Wear and Durham regions.

TABLE 2.7



SOURCE:- Robinson and JW Wood Estate Agent asking prices - Jan 08

An analysis of local Estate agents average asking prices in January (see Table 2.7) reveals that there are no properties in the District which average is under one hundred thousand pounds. Prices do vary by settlement for example Terrace housing in Chester-le-Street is about average for the District but buyers will pay much higher prices for Semi-detached and Detached houses including bungalows. Properties in Ouston, Great Lumley and Woodstone Village all fetch

high prices on the open market. Sacriston and Pelton tend to offer similar types of tenure at more affordable prices

Chester-le-Street Rental Prices

A comparison of open market Rental prices within the District (See Table 2.8) was carried out in January and like house prices they also vary depending on tenure type, location and rental offer. Many rental prices are seen to be more affordable than the monthly fee a person/household would pay back on a mortgage and it is becoming the first choice for first time buyers who are unable to enter the property market.

TABLE 2.8



SOURCE:- Selection of Chester-le-Street Estate Agent rental prices - Jan 08

Current Demographics trends within the Chester-le-Street District

Brief deprivation profile of Chester-le-Street

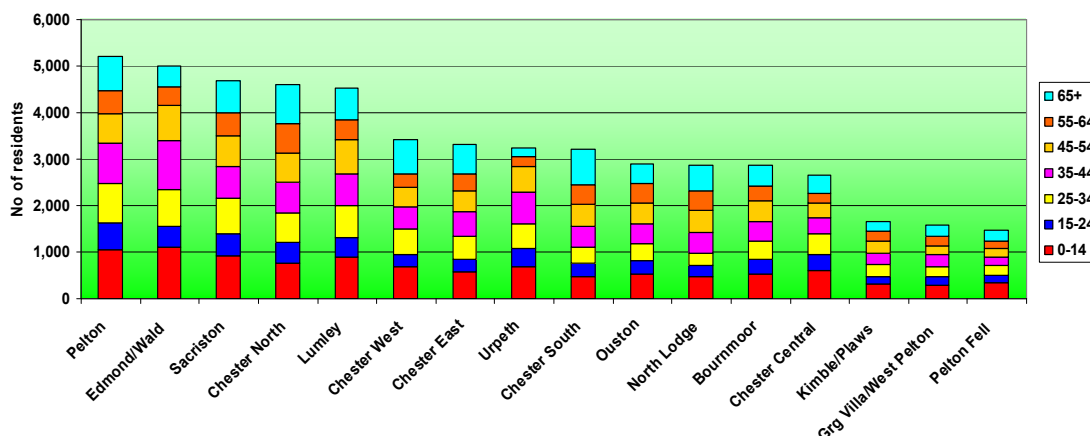
Compared with some other areas the District of Chester-le-Street is not as deprived as other areas within the North East and beyond. Out of 354 authorities within England Chester-le-Street is ranked as the 140 most Deprived and it only contains one super-output area in the top 10% of deprivation. The average gross weekly pay for an individual within the District currently stands at £338.20 per week or £17,586 p.a. (NOMIS DEC 2006). The average wage is well below the current house prices in the District and this explains why affordability is such an issue. Unemployment based on Job Seeker Allowance claimants for the area currently stands at 5% (DWP – Nov 2006) and 12% of people are not in good health (National Statistics). Many wards have over 50% of working adults with low or no qualifications but Crime is much lower than some other areas

Population

Population is one of the key drivers considered in this housing strategy to determine the level of supply and demand. Population is normally determined by the “natural rate of change” in the District i.e. the number of births minus the number of deaths, inward and outward migration is also considered as well as any international migrants who chose the District as a place to live. The future population of the District is a key consideration.

The population of the District currently stands at 53,200 people (National Statistics Mid Year 2006). Over 17,000 people live in the five wards which make up the town of Chester-le-Street itself whilst the populations of outlying wards such as Pelton, Sacriston, and Lumley all exceed 4,500 residents (See Table 2.9).

TABLE 2.9



Source: National Statistics Mid Year 2006

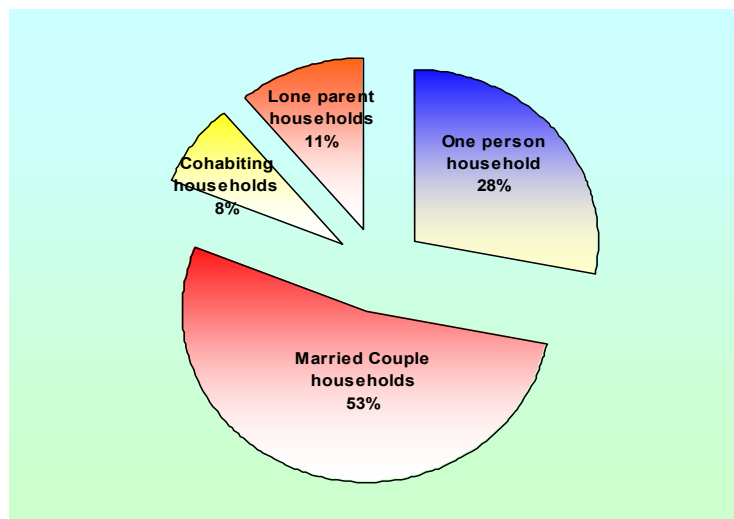
Age

Age and family composition also plays a significant role when determining the type of housing an individual or family requires at different stages of the life cycle. Table 2.9 highlights the variance in age groups between different wards. Significant variances include higher levels of 0-14 year olds living in Pelton, Chester Central, Edmondsley, Pelton Fell, Sacriston and Urpeth. At the other end of the age scale there is an over-average number of people aged 65 and above living in all of the Chester-le-Street wards (excluding Chester Central). The variances therefore indicate the possible demand for more family type properties in some areas and the introduction of more appropriate and suitable accommodation for an ageing population in other wards.

Family Composition

Whilst the population of the District is not growing significantly there are a number of changes occurring with the family composition (see Table 2.10) and this can directly affect housing supply. Whilst there is still a significant number of married households living within the District there is a growing trend towards an increase in single person households as life expectancy levels improve resulting in the slowdown in the turnover of housing stock. A second trend is the increase in Lone Parent families through separation and divorce, in this instance pressure is placed on housing because when a couple split up they will now be living in two separate properties.

TABLE 2.10

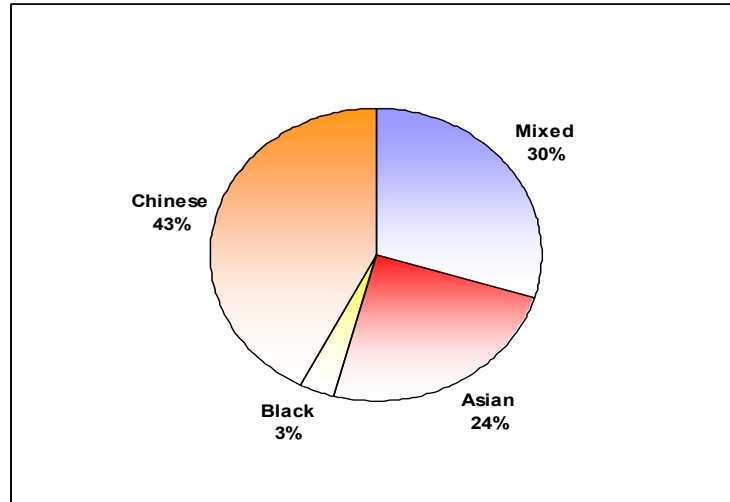


Source: National Statistics Mid Year 2006

Ethnicity

99% of people living within the District are classified as **White British**. The BME community is predominantly Chinese or Asian (see table 2.11).

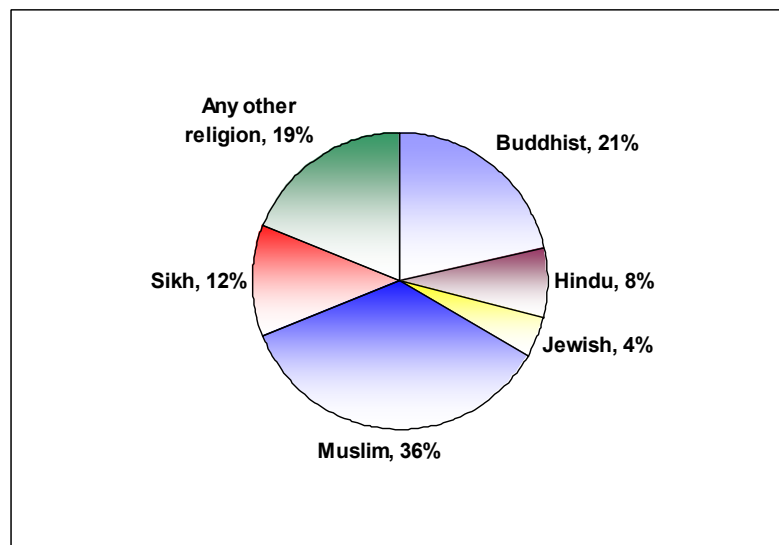
TABLE 2.11



Religion

The Christian religion makes up **99.4%** of all religions within the Chester-le-Street District. Other religions (as seen in table 2.12 below) make up the final 0.6%. It is recognised that some religions require different types of accommodation to those on offer within the District, further research is therefore required to understand these issues in more detail.

TABLE 2.12



Occupancy Rate

It is known that there are 53,200 people living in the areas and that there are currently 24,178 houses in the District, there is also 1,280 houses for sale within the District (*HIPS April 2007*) so the average household size for the District is 2.3 people.

Inward and Outward Migration

A additional pressure which can affect the supply of housing stock is a term called "Migration". A study commissioned by Newcastle University titled the CURDS report (Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies) monitored the movements of households throughout the North East and beyond when they moved home. It was discovered that this District is a very popular choice with people from Gateshead, Derwentside and Tynedale and as a local authority we must now understand why this is a location of choice for people from these areas. The report also highlighted the number of households which left the District in this instance they tended to move to other Districts within County Durham. Again as an authority we must understand the trends behind these conclusions. The report concludes that the number of people who have moved into and out of the District are very similar.

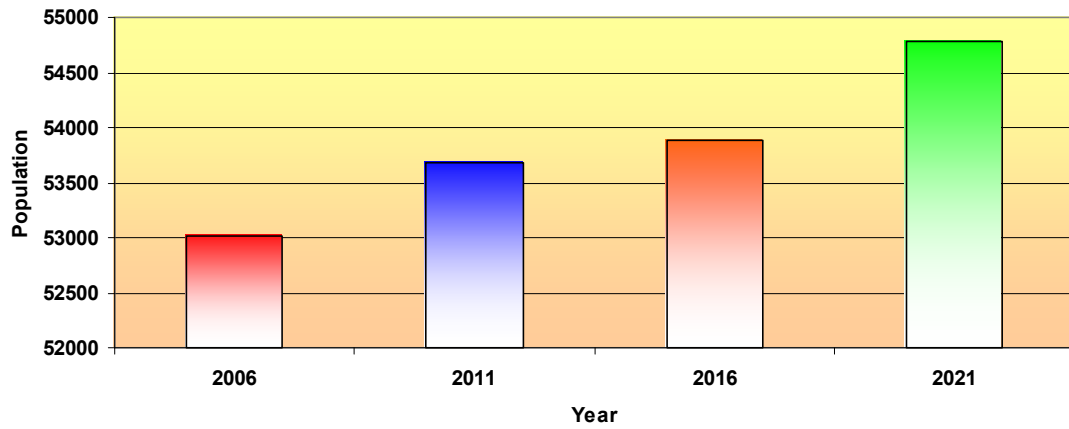
International Migration

International migrants can place a heavy strain on the housing supply with any local Authority but in this instance foreign migrants do not see the District as a location of choice as these groups prefer living in the Tyne and Wear area where local services are more tailored to their needs.

Future Population Projections

According to figures supplied from Durham County Council the population of the District is expected to grow by 3% by 2021 to a population of 54,785 (see Table 2.13).

TABLE 2.13



Durham County Council February 2008

The increase is due to an increased population within the 65+ age group. This group currently make up 17% of the Districts population but by 2021 this will rise to 24%.

Housing Need within Chester-le-Street

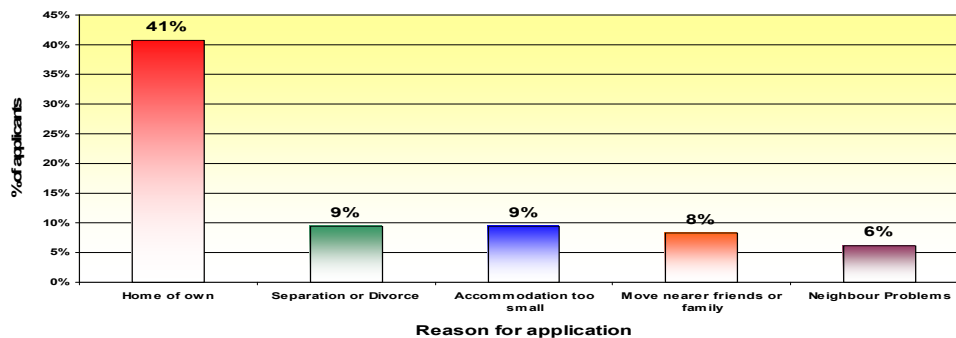
The recommended measure to assess the housing “need” for a Local Authority is to analyse the trends occurring within the current “housing register” therefore all information provided in this section is sourced from the waiting list as at 12th January 2008. Please note that this evidence is based on a stated “need” but it does not include unexpressed “need” from individuals who are in housing need but do not wish to be considered for suitable social rented properties.

2172 people have applied to the Chester-le-Street District Council’s housing register and therefore all of the analysis below is based on this waiting list profile.

Reasons for moving

Most applicants provided reasons as to why they want to move into social rented properties. Table 2.14 highlights the top five reasons

TABLE 2.14

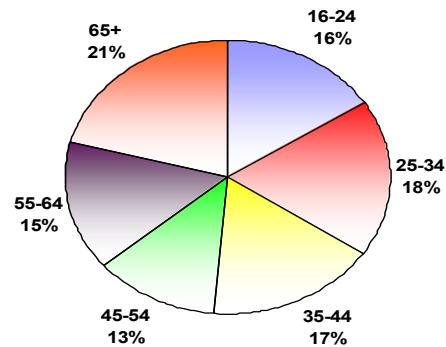


It is interesting that we know first times buyers are struggling to enter the property ladder due to house prices and this is reflected in 48% of people who are aspiring to a “home of their own”. It has also been identified that changes to family composition is putting pressure on the housing market within the District and this is backed up by 9% of applicants who require a house following separation or divorce. Overcrowding is another issue to address as people require larger properties. Location is one of the key decision-making factors when looking at properties and this will be tackled in a separate table below. Neighbour Problems indicate levels of possible crime and Anti-social behaviour.

Age Group demographics

In order to understand those age groups most in need it is necessary to look at the age groups stated in the register as indicated in Table 2.15 below.

TABLE 2.15

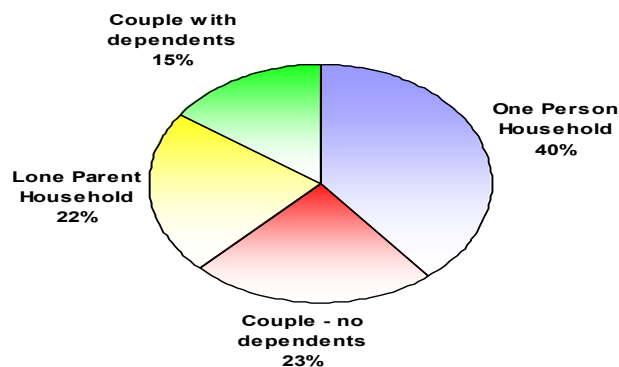


Whilst there is an over-average number of people aged 65+ waiting for properties many applicants will also be transferring between properties. The younger age groups are the more important from a trend perspective and as this is clearly spread between different age groups it highlights the need for properties of all age groups in the District.

Household Composition

Table 2.16 illustrates the type of individual(s) who are applying for properties within the District.

TABLE 2.16



One person households make up the majority of applicants. Whilst this age group in the past has been made up of older residents there is now a considerable number of 16-35 year olds which make up this group backing up the increasing trend towards more single people living alone. Lone parent households and couples with dependents tend to be aged between 25 to 44 years old.

Tenure Type(s) required

The type of tenure indicates the properties in demand throughout the District.

TABLE 2.17

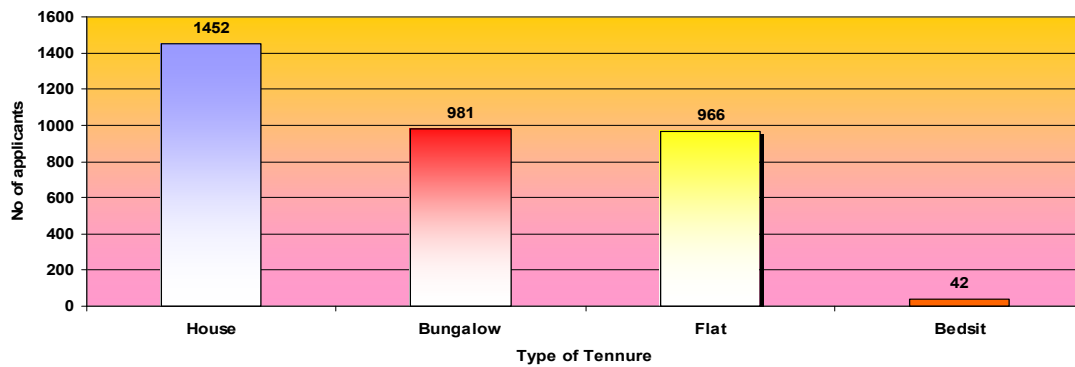
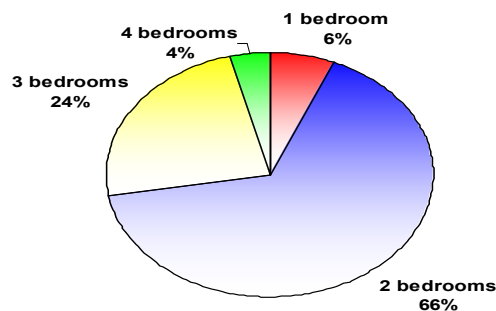


Table 2.17 shows demand for housing is very popular with all of the younger age bands between 16 to 44 years old whilst Bungalows are preferred by the 55+ age groups. Flats and bedsits are in the most demand by single 16 to 25 year olds.

Number of bedrooms

The number of bedrooms helps to determine the type of tenure required

TABLE 2.18



It can clearly be seen by Table 2.18 that one third of demand is for 2 bedroom accommodation. A further quarter is for 3 bedroom houses. There is very limited demand for 1 and 4 bedroom houses and flats.

Section 3 – Chester-le-Street District Council as a Strategic Housing Authority

The aim of this section is to demonstrate how the Housing Strategy feeds into other Strategies, policies and plans. Furthermore how other Strategies and policies are required to assist in delivering the objectives within the Housing Strategy.

The Sustainable Community Strategy sits at the heart of all the Council's Strategies (see diagram 1). All other Strategies together with the Housing Strategy feed into one another therefore the Housing Strategy cannot be seen or delivered in isolation.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The Sustainable Community Strategy seeks to “promote sustainable communities through better quality and access to housing”.

The Strategy sets out a framework for action by the public, private and voluntary sectors and local communities working together. The aim is to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to Chester-le-Street District by creating sustainable cohesive and inclusive communities.

Building Communities is the core theme of the Strategy with the following being the four aspects to the vision:

- A Strong and diverse economic base
- Inclusive Communities
- Excellent communication networks
- An attractive and protected environment

The following are brief summaries of the various strategies adopted by the Council. The summary is intended to show how they all fit in with the Sustainable Community Strategy and how all the strategies fit together.

Corporate Plan

The Chester-le-Street District Council's ***Corporate plan 2007/2010*** sets the vision and framework which the Housing Strategy links into. The **seven priorities** are:

- **1/ Customer Excellence** – improving customer care while providing new ways to access our services.

- **2/ Working in Partnership to deliver the Community Strategy** – continuing to work with our partners in the District Partnership to deliver within the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- **3/ Meeting the Decent Homes Standard** – Working with our tenants to consider new ways of providing housing services and accessing additional funding which will meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.
- **4/ Regenerating the District** – working with businesses, partners and customers to implement the Regeneration Strategy.
- **5/ Neighbourhood Management** – Working with our community and partners to deliver action at the neighbourhood level, improve the quality of public services, engaging people in local democracy and as a result helping to create an improved environment and sustainable communities.
- **6/ New ways of working in Leisure** - Consider options for the delivery of our range of leisure services.
- **7/ Maximising Efficiencies** – Find new ways of working in all services by working in collaboration with others to achieve economies of scale and better service delivery.

The Corporate Plan was published at the end of June 2007 however progress against the plan has been delayed because of the uncertainty around Local Government Review. Executive in October agreed a revised approach to re-assessing priorities and proposals. The council now has a transition plan which sets out what the council is trying to do during the transition to a new unitary local government in April 2009. In particular it sets out;

- Do-able actions from the 2007/2010 corporate plan agreed in June last year;
- a focus on the single priority of ***People and Place***;
- how the council will assist and support employees during the transitional period;
- how the councils contribution to the new unitary will be provided and managed;
- a summary of the agreed budget for the forthcoming year; and
- the council's corporate improvement plan.

The council has reviewed its priorities and have agreed that Partnership related community engagement will be the council's single priority for the coming year. This priority will be promoted under the name of: ***"People and Place"***.

"People and Place" will comprise of four key elements:

- **Partnerships for Future** – building on existing relationships between appropriate agencies to develop young people with the right skills to secure jobs that are available within the District, thus sustaining employment opportunities;

- **Investing in the Town Centre**– Building on the investment already made in Chester-le-Street Town Centre to maximise its sustainable benefit;
- **Strengthening Partnerships** - focusing partnership improvement activity (including partnerships with people) towards those which will sustain community engagement, including arts and culture, through into the new unitary arrangements; and
- **Neighbourhoods**– undertaking village planning work and local charters where there is capacity at the local level both within the council and within communities to secure sustainable change

Regeneration Strategy

The first Regeneration Strategy for Chester-le-Street was published in 2007. The Strategy covers all aspects of regeneration: economic, social and physical therefore links well into the Housing Strategy.

Objective 3 of the Strategy aims to contribute to delivering sustainable communities through better quality and access to housing in the neighbourhoods and also making the District a better place to live. In addition, the strategy will also assist in the delivery of community engagement and that there is greater opportunity for participation.

Homeless Strategy

A new Homelessness Strategy has been published this year, the first being developed in 2003 as a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002.

The main objectives of the Homelessness Strategy are:

- Preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness in the district.
- Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation.
- Improving Support Services for homeless households.
- Implementing service improvements.
- Raise Homeless Policy issues with Central Government.

Crime and Disorder Strategy

The Council and its partners agreed a Crime and Disorder Strategy in 2005 with the main aim to further reduce crime and disorder making the Chester-le-Street District a better and safer place to live, work and visit.

The priorities of the Crime and disorder strategy are:

- To reduce total crime.
- To increase public reassurance and tackle anti-social behaviour.

- To tackle drugs, substance and alcohol misuse to reduce the harm they cause.
- To tackle Domestic Violence.
- To tackle hate crime.

Supporting People Strategy

The Supporting People Strategy was published in June 2007. This consultation included over 600 written responses from people using the service. Findings from the strategy titled “Supporting Independence: Next Steps in our Supporting People Strategy” includes:

- Keeping service users at the heart of the programme.
- Building on already successful partnerships.
- Delivering effectively.
- Working towards better efficiency.

The Supporting People Programme provides the most vulnerable people with help and support to live independently. Furthermore it enables vulnerable people to participate fully in the social and economic life of their communities. By assisting people to live independently it helps to reduce homelessness, rough sleeping and anti social behaviour, helping the most vulnerable and socially excluded groups.

Anti-Poverty Strategy

The vision of the Anti-Poverty Strategy for the Chester-le-Street District is:

‘To ensure that the whole of the District benefits from wealth creation and to work with our partners, stakeholders and other organisations to provide a staircase out of poverty’

The objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Address health inequalities.
- Maximise incomes.
- Work with partners to promote the opportunities for training and education.
- Work with partners to promote economic growth within the district.
- Ensure the less affluent or disadvantaged are not excluded from initiatives to address anti-social behaviour.
- Work with partners to promote culture and leisure activities.

Local Plan and Policies

The following are local plans and policies adopted by the Council and similar to that of the Strategies which feed into the Housing Strategy to assist in delivering the key objectives

Planning Policy and Local District Plan

The **Local Plan** policy on the provision of affordable housing states:

Chester-le-Street District Council will seek to negotiate with applicants for the provision of an element of affordable housing suitable for those who are unable to buy or to rent in the open market:-

- (i) on allocated housing sites;
- (ii) on windfall housing sites;
- (ii) on residential redevelopment schemes;

where the development site has a capacity of 15 or more dwellings (or the site exceeds 0.5 hectares regardless of the number of dwellings). Provision of affordable housing will be sought on the basis of the initial indicative target figure of 30% (Chester-le-Street District Local Plan 2006).

Only in exceptional circumstances may affordable housing be provided through a financial or other contribution towards the provision of affordable housing on another site in the Local Planning Authority's area.

To ensure that the housing provided under this Policy remains available to provide affordable housing for local people, the Council will impose appropriate conditions or seek planning obligations in respect of the affordable housing element of any scheme for which planning permission is to be granted. Permitted development rights will be withdrawn from such housing to prevent its enlargement or alteration in any way which would reduce its affordability.

In addition, the Council will encourage the provision of low-cost market housing through residential subdivisions subject to Policy HP12; through schemes for living over the shop under Policy HP15; and by bringing vacant housing back into use

The emerging **Local Development Framework (LDF)** will need to ensure that the provision of around 2,000 additional dwellings in the District between 2004 and 2021 as required by the RSS. As at April 2008 there had been 306 additional dwellings completed.

The LDF will also review the local plan affordable housing policy based on up to date evidence of housing need, including the Sub Regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008.

Equalities and Diversity Plan

Chester-le-street District Council is committed to promote Equalities and Diversity in both service delivery and employment.

A range of service is provided by the Council and the communities we serve are many and diverse. The same levels of service may not meet every ones needs therefore we must ensure our services meet the needs of all communities and groups.

Chester-le-Street District Council is committed to ensuring that all citizens in the District, its staff and all those associated with the Council receive fair and appropriate services and treatment, irrespective of their nationality, ethnicity, race, sex, marital status, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or other social factor.

Local Area Agreements

Local Area Agreements are part of the Government's ten year strategy to build a better relationship between central and local government. The County Durham Local Area Agreement (LAA) brings together partners from all sectors within County Durham (including Local Government, the Police, the Primary Care Trust and the voluntary and community sector) to examine and identify areas of major change that will most benefit local communities.

The County Durham Partnership, with Government Office North East (GONE) and central government are working towards negotiating County Durham's second LAA. The Partnership has selected a priority group of indicators from the new National Indicator Set. Through the development of the Local Area Agreements key themes were emerging and the priorities have been grouped around these. These themes are:

- Healthy and Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Positive Contribution
- Economic Wellbeing
- Physical Place

Powers within the Housing Act 2004

The Housing Act 2004 is a key piece of legislation for local authorities giving them additional powers to protect the most vulnerable groups in society and also helping to create a better and fairer housing market.

This act gives local authorities the powers to deal with poor conditions in the private sector. Furthermore it strengthens the government's requirements to meet the decent homes standard and creating sustainable communities.

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The HHSRS assesses 29 broad categories of housing hazard and provides a rating for each hazard. The rating is based on the risk to the occupant therefore making any residential properties a safe and healthy environment. The hazards are summarised as:

- Dampness, excess cold/heat
- Pollutants e.g. Asbestos, carbon monoxide
- Lack of space, security, lighting or excessive noise
- Poor hygiene, sanitation, water supply
- Accidents-falls, electric shocks, fires, burns and scalds
- Collisions, explosions, structural collapse

The council will approach the Landlord informally however we do not have powers to move to formal action if the Landlord does not co-operate.

Empty Dwellings

The Empty property strategy is to be developed by the Council in July 2008. The empty homes strategy should identify:

- The local and regional priorities
- Where resources should be targeted
- Action Plan to implement solutions
- Publicity for the strategy and approach

Ensuring that empty homes become occupied can result in improved environmental and social conditions and a reduction in the level of crime, anti-social behaviour often associated with empty, derelict properties and the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Disabled Facility Grants (DFG)

These are mandatory grants which are made available by the Council to owner occupiers to help fund adaptations to properties to ensure disabled people live as comfortably and as independently as possible in their homes.

Disabled Facilities Grants are awarded for essential adaptations to give a disabled person better freedom of movement around the house. This work includes:

- Widening doors or installing ramps.
- Providing a specially adapted room in which it is safe to leave a disabled person unattended.
- Installing a stair lift so there is better access to a bathroom, kitchen, or bedroom.
- Installing a downstairs bathroom.
- Improving or installing a heating system which is suitable for the disabled person.
- Adapting heating or lighting controls so that they are easier to use by a disabled person.

Recent local housing studies

In order to inform the Regional, Sub-regional and local Housing Strategies various studies have been carried out. The following is a summary of such studies

Gypsy & Traveller Study

Durham Housing and Neighbourhoods Group commissioned consultants to carry out a survey of the services around Gypsy and Travellers in County Durham. This report was published in July 2007. The survey was to include:

- The type of accommodation needed.
- The demand for permanent sites.
- The demand for alternative housing options.
- The need for the expansion and/or improvement of existing sites.
- The need for transit sites to meet seasonal, commercial and irregular demand.
- The geographical gaps in provision.
- The affordability of existing and proposed accommodation options.

The following were recommendations highlighted in the report:

- A minimum of a further 3 to 5 small pitches are required although more work needs to be done to identify where these are needed.

- Urgent refurbishment of existing sites.
- A need for stop-over sites in certain areas.
- A County Task Group to co-ordinate a response to the needs highlighted in the study.
- The need for housing related support services
- The need for training among a number of agencies

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Housing Needs and Market Assessments which were previously presented as two separate documents have now been combined into one report titled "Strategic Housing Market Assessment". Durham County along with the seven District Councils have commissioned GVA Consultants to write the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the area. The final report has yet to be issued but it is expected to be available in **June 2008**. Until this document is issued we continue to rely on the Housing Needs Survey carried out in 2004 as the only official indication of Housing Needs within the District.

Chester-le-Street Housing Market, costs and income

- The house price inflation increase for the District over the last three years is 71.1%.
- The entry level stock, (terraced houses) has increased by 104.9% and average terraced house prices have increased by 43.7% alone in the last 12 months to September 2004.
- In terms of the entry level stock, terraced houses are assessed to be the main access property for first time buyers, due to sales levels being almost half of all sales in the District and the average price at £86,195, significantly lower than semi-detached stock.
- The sales levels of terraced and flat / maisonette properties in 2004, 40.0% and 5.8% respectively are similar to 2002 levels (37.4% and 6% respectively). Although flat prices are cheaper the volume of sales and therefore availability is still very low.
- The increase in the price of terraced houses (104.9%) and flats / maisonettes (74.8%) is massively in excess of wage inflation in the two year period. Incomes in the District are assessed independently to have increased by 10.7% for the 2 year period up to April 2004. 5.6.6 Access to market housing has therefore become more difficult for new households than it was in 2002, increasing the need for subsidised housing.

Population Growth and Household Information Projection

- The most significant feature here is the growth of the population in the over 65 age group. An increase of 2,453 individuals is seen over the forecast period, the largest increase is seen between 2011 and 2016 (1,482; 15.0%).

- Another prominent feature is the fall in the 30-44 age group. This main economically active group shows a significant decrease over the forecast period (2,259; 17.0%). A steady decline can be seen throughout the wide forecast period, with the largest decline seen between 2006 and 2011 (1,224; 10.3%).
- Numbers in the 20-29 age group are projected to rise overall (611; 10%). As this age range comprises new households forming this will have implications for future affordable housing need both in the short and longer term.
- The "older" retirement group, those 80 and over grows by 42.2%, 733 more people by 2016. This group represents 2,468 people in the area by 2016 who are much more likely to have care and support needs which should now be assessed in detail

Housing Needs

- The total affordable housing need annually is now 832 units. Net re-lets of the existing social stock after the RTB impact average 429 units, based on the 2003/04 levels. Re-lets shows a decreasing trend which should continue through stock rationalisation and RTB.
- Even after allowing for this level of supply, there will still be an annual affordable housing shortfall of 403 units a year. These units will need to come from new sites, conversions and market purchase by RSL's to reduce the shortfall figure each year.
- This level of demand exceeds the number of units likely to be able to be delivered resulting in growing levels of unmet need each year. There has been virtually no new delivery over the last three years.
- This suggests that the target of new units negotiated should be increased to address the need for both affordable housing for rent and subsidised low cost market housing.
- Essentially planning should be providing for balanced communities, which acknowledge the need for social compatibility if the problems of housing in the past are not to be repeated. The increases in average house prices of between 43% and 96% for flats and terraced houses over the last two years have excluded a large proportion of 'first-time buyers' from the owner occupied market.
- The proportion of affordable housing provided on new sites should encompass more subsidised low cost market housing than would have been the case two years ago when it was a more marginal element of affordable need, even although there was only a limited expressed need from respondents in 2002. However the majority need is for social rented units.
- In 2002 we assessed there was a need for 125 unsubsidised small units in the general market to 2006, required to meet the needs of households whose incomes were sufficient to enable them to access the market without any subsidy or discount. The changed relationship between

- incomes and prices will mean that the number who can access housing in the private sector without subsidy will have reduced significantly and increased the scale of subsidised low cost market housing need.
- The overall target should be 30% with around a third of provision 10%, as low cost market housing, provided it is delivered at a cost below the cheapest entry level costs in the general market and would be available on a similar basis to subsequent purchasers.
 - Both the affordable housing target and the tenure balance within it may vary on a site by site basis.

Private Stock Condition Survey

In 2003 Chester-le-Street District Council commissioned David Adamson and Partners to carry out a Private Stock Condition Survey on 1700 households (9% of all dwellings in the District) and 2297 homes failed the Decent Homes Standards with 983 dwellings failing the Fitness Standard.

In June 2006 the Government replaced the *Fitness Standard* with the *Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS version 2)* which is a more thorough investigation based on 29 hazard ratings which are given either a “Category 1” or “Category 2” rating, category 1 hazards are more concerning.

A new survey was issued on February 2008 which uses previous data collected in 2003 where the new HHSRS has been applied and the number of non-decent properties have increased to 3352 homes or 17% of all private sector stock (an increase of 1055 properties on 2003). There are now 2158 dwellings in the District which contain a Category 1 hazard and the estimated cost to address these hazards is estimated at £8.357m (based on £3873 per property). Please note that research is based on a stratified sample of properties within the District and then multiplied by the number of households so the figure may give an over-estimate on the level of non-decency.

Public Stock Conditions Survey

The Council carried out a detailed stock condition survey in 2002 which was then updated in 2004. The key findings of the report were:

- The total cost to carry out all repair and improvements over the next 30 year would be £234 million.
- An estimated £4.4 million would need to be spent on catch up repairs.
- Future investment would need to be in the region of £113 million.
- A total of £3.02 million will need to be spent annually over the next 30 years on responsive and cyclical maintenance.

At the time of the survey 22% of council dwellings failed to meet the decent homes standard and the associated cost of bringing these up to the basic decent homes standard would be £13.71 million.

The Council has consulted widely with tenants to find out what was important to them. All of the information was fed back to the Council along with the information from the stock condition and subsequently the Council has decided that transfer of the housing stock to a housing association, set up specifically to provide a local housing service, appears to be the best available option.

The Council transferred all the Council's housing to a newly formed, not-for-profit housing association called Cestria Community Housing with effect from 4th February 2008. Up to the end of March 2007 2010 properties were identified by the RSL (HIPS RETURNS 2007) as being non decent within the Social Housing Sector and a five year modernisation programme will begin in 2008 to address this issue.

Diagram 1 - How Housing Strategy fits with other strategies to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy

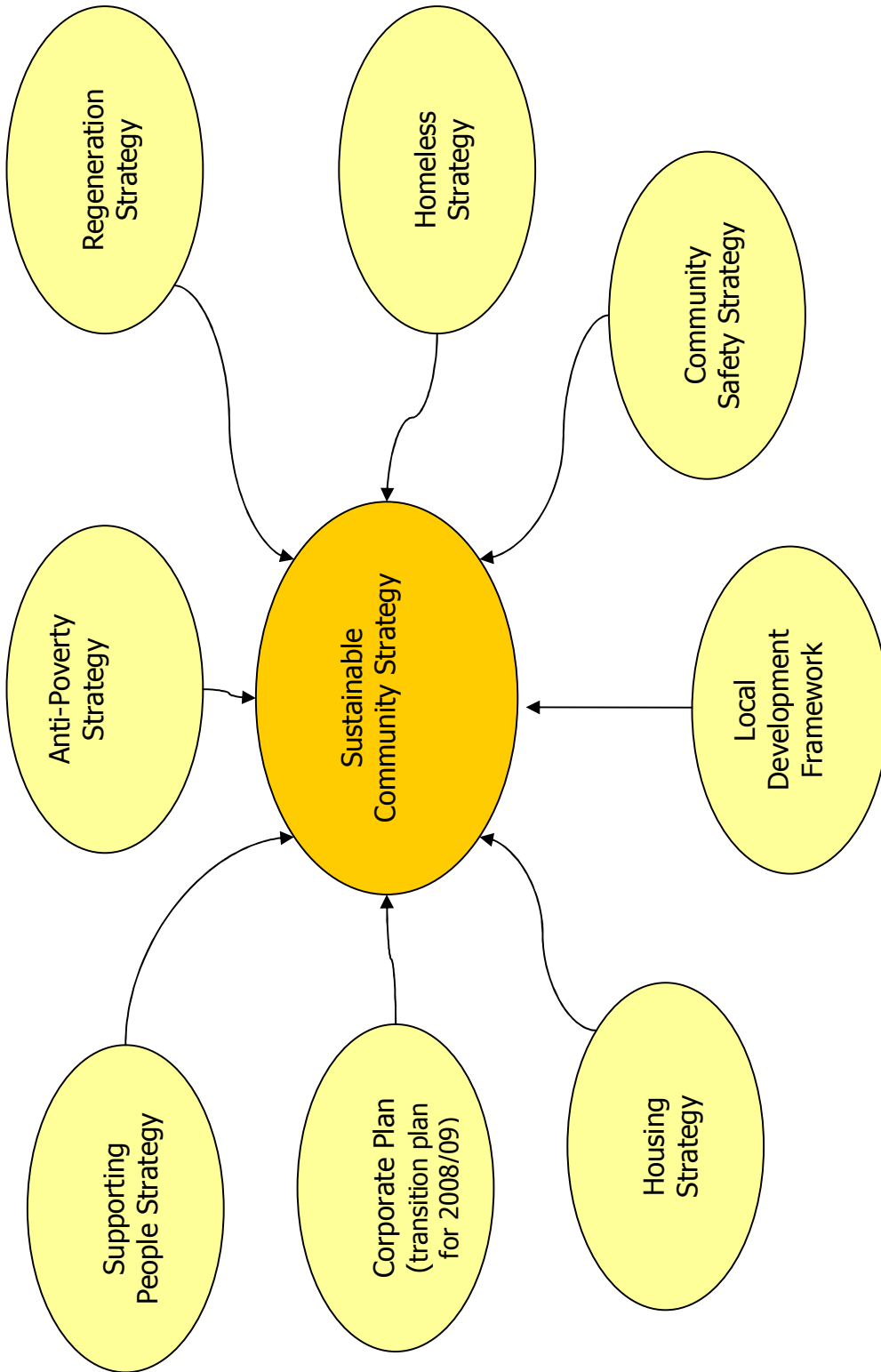
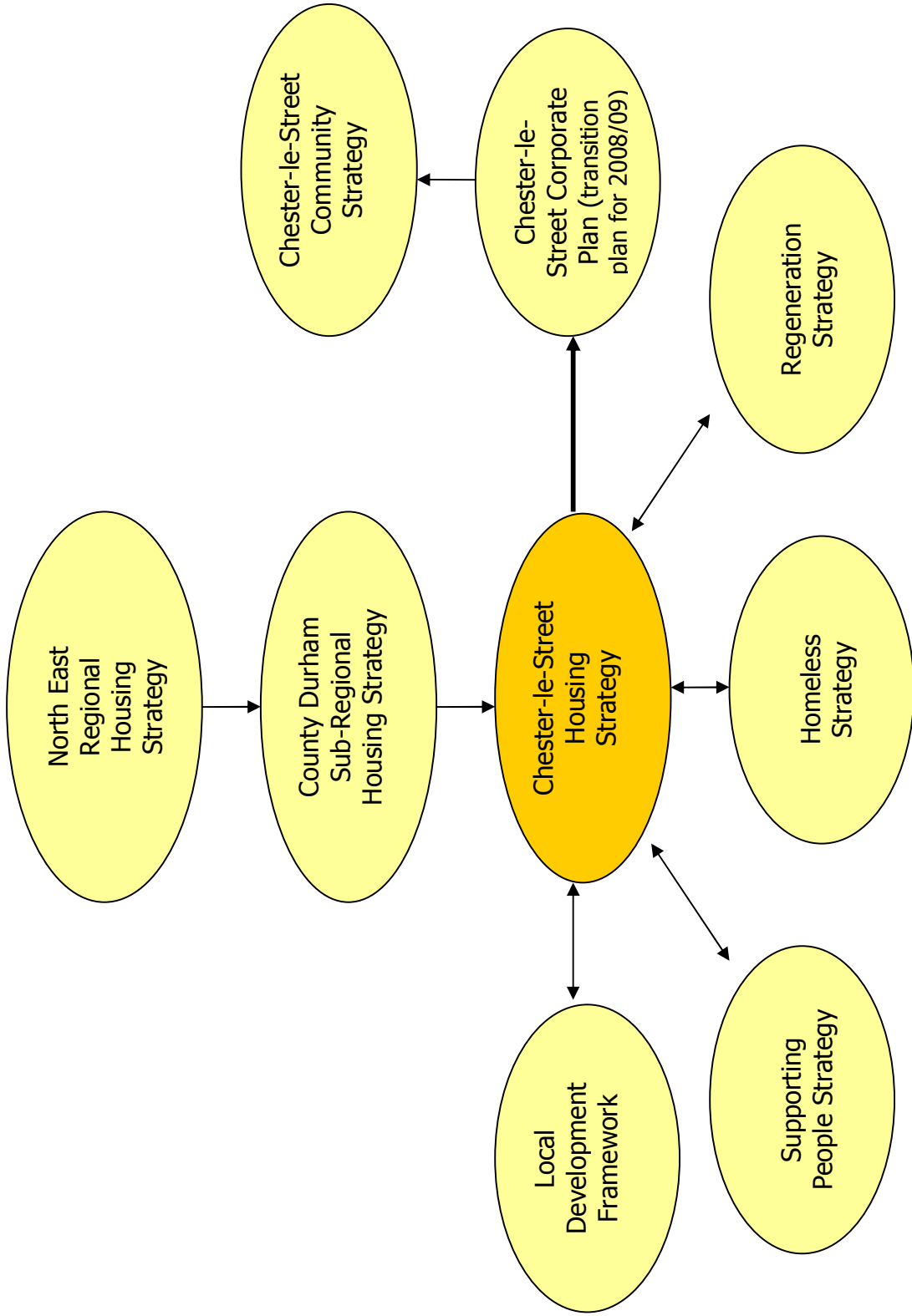


Diagram 2 – Context of Housing Strategy within the Chester-le-Street District



Section 4 - Partnership working

We cannot successfully deliver the objectives set within the Strategy without the help and support of our partners.

This section will list our partners at the role they currently play. In addition it will demonstrate how we will work together to deliver the objectives.

Consultation has also taken place when writing this Strategy and this section will also demonstrate what recommendations were needs based on the outcome of the consultation.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

Local Strategic Partnerships are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships bringing together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors; allowing different initiatives and services to support one another so that they can work together more effectively. A combination of organisations, and the community, working co-operatively as part of an LSP will have a far greater chance of success.

Durham Housing and Neighbourhoods Group (DHNG)

1.1 The Purpose of the Group is to:

act as the strategic partnership within County Durham for the consideration of housing and related policy issues to assist the development of more sustainable communities and to support the well being of County Durham.

2.1 Functions of the Group are to:

Provide a strategic policy advice function in relation strategic housing and neighbourhoods issues to:

- The North East Housing Board and Executive.
- County Durham Strategic Partnership.
- County Durham Local Area Agreement Interim Executive Board.
- County Durham Chief Executives Group.
- Strategic Advice to the new Unitary Authority.

Membership of the Partnership Board

The composition of the Partnership will comprise representatives of the following organisations:

- Strategic Housing Authorities in County Durham.

- Adult Social Care Authority for County Durham.
- County Durham Primary Care Trust.
- National Housing Federation.
- Market and Social Housing providers operating in County Durham

All members of the Partnership have a duty to promote the work of the Partnership.

Housing Strategy Focus Group

Membership of the group is:

Head of Regeneration (Chair)
 Head of Planning and Environmental Health
 Housing Strategy Manager
 Housing Strategy Officer
 Senior Environmental Health Officer

The aims of the Group are:

- To review all strategic housing issues which impact across the Council's Housing, Planning and Environmental Health functions
- To support the development of, and oversee the implementation of, the Housing Strategy and related strategic documents.

The Group members will be expected to:

- Work within their own organisations to develop mechanisms to ensure that the objectives of the Housing Strategy are delivered.
- Ensure that the Housing Strategy informs policy and strategy development within their own organisation.

Homelessness Action Partnership

The Homelessness Action Partnership (HAP) is a Strategic multi-agency partnership which aims to tackle and prevent homelessness. Furthermore it will work to ensure that homeless households or those threatened with homelessness will have access to decent accommodation with the appropriate support to assist them to live independently.

The membership of the HAP is made up of representatives from:

- The seven District Councils within County Durham
- Government Office North East
- National Housing Federation

- Probation Service
- County Durham Drug and Alcohol Action Team
- Durham and Districts Supporting People Partnership
- The ALMO or Housing Association from districts where the housing stock is not managed by the local authority

Registered Social Landlords (RSL's)

There are currently eight Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) with properties within the Chester-le-Street District Area. (see Appendix 2)

Meetings are held between key staff in the Housing Strategy team and the RSL to discuss the nomination procedure. The staff within the Housing Strategy Team will monitor the number of properties and nomination to and from the RSL's

Cestria is the largest RSL in the Chester-le-Street District and will manage the Waiting List and Homeless Decision making process on behalf of the Council, with Service Level Agreements in place to ensure that the council's statutory function is carried out.

Private Landlords

There are in the region of 850 Private Rented properties in the Chester-le-Street District. There are 38 of these members of the Private Landlord Association Scheme with 146 properties of which 80 are accredited. The Private Landlord Association Officer will continue to work with the Private Landlords to accredit the remaining properties. Furthermore work will continue to encourage more Landlords to join the scheme.

The Council recognises the role in which Private Landlords play in providing accommodation to meet the housing need within the district therefore we have:

- Continued to fund a Private Landlord Accreditation Officer through various funding streams.
- Established a Rent Deposit Scheme.
- Hold monthly meeting with the Landlords via the Accreditation scheme.
- Deliver training as required to the Private Landlords.
- Offer advice and support to Landlords and tenants through the Housing Options Team.

Section 5 - Vision and Strategic Objectives

VISION – Everyone within the Chester-le-Street District deserves a place they can be proud to call a home, at a price they can afford.

Chester-le-Street District Council will aim to provide high quality housing in:

- Design
- Choice
- Condition
- Affordability

The Strategy has **four Strategic Objectives** which are aligned to both the Regional and Sub-regional housing strategies which should achieve real outcomes for local residents within the District.

Objective 1:- Rejuvenating Housing Markets

Following the recommendations highlighted in the *Kate Barker's Review of Social Housing - March 2004* the Government has responded by creating **Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3)** which sets out the policy framework for delivering key housing objectives. The policy is designed to achieve the Governments proposed outcomes which include:

- High quality housing.
- Sufficient quantity of housing.
- Housing developments in suitable locations with access to job and key services.
- A flexible responsive supply of land.

Chester-le-Street District Council recognises that Housing is a key element of any sustainable community and this objective will ensure that the housing market is considered alongside other initiatives within the District.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment is currently analysing the entire housing market within the District and it will make recommendations regarding the quantity and quality of housing required for the area to suit the needs and aspirations of different households both now and into the future. The information will then be incorporated into the Local Development Framework which will consider the supply of land and match this against possible housing developments in suitable locations as well as considering jobs and other key services.

The Government have recognised that 27% of Carbon emission are generated from homes in the UK and whilst Chester-le-Street District Council already operate a planning requirement (introduced in 2007) ensuring that all new

housing developments have a minimum of 10% of its energy requirements met from renewable technologies the Government has now gone further and introduced the "The Code for Sustainable Homes" with the intention of achieving "zero emissions" for all new build properties by 2016. From the 1st May 2008 all new dwellings within the Chester-le-Street District require a "code assessment" to be carried out on the property. A certificate is then issued indicating the "star rating" that the property achieves. The code is assessed between levels 1 and 6 and properties which achieve a higher star rating will have lower levels of CO2 emissions (with level 6 achieving a zero carbon rating). Please note that the code is not mandatory on market housing at present and the building industry has been given two years to implement the code.

What we need to do (Action Plan)

Whilst we have a good understand of the current demographic and housing stock profiles for the District we still need a better understanding of housing need and current market dynamics within the District. Why do people rent, buy, sell or invest in the District? We need to understand what attracts people into the District or forces people to leave the area. This information will assist in identifying areas which can now be considered sustainable and more importantly identify areas where work needs to be targeted.

Housing policies will be developed to reflect the findings to ensure we meet the housing needs of the future. We also need to make sure that the Housing Market within the District is stable, demand for the area is high and that properties are of a decent and high standard.

Action Point 1 Obtain an up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the Chester-le-Street District: **Lead person DHNG by June 2008.**

Action Point 2 Maintain communication with Registered Social Landlords and keeping up-to-date with current waiting list information: **Lead Person Housing Strategy Manager/Officer Ongoing.**

Action Point 3 Forge links with Major Estate Agents in the District to obtain information on the District's current housing dynamics: **Lead Housing Strategy Manager/Officer Ongoing.**

Action Point 4 Update of Neighbourhood Profiles to understand the District's demographic profile and Index of multiple deprivation measures: **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Officer Annually.**

Action Point 5 Information made available to residents on housing options within the District. This will include RSL accommodation, Private Rented, Owner Occupation, Affordable Housing Schemes and housing for the elderly and vulnerable groups: **Lead Housing Strategy Manager by September 2008.**

Action Point 6 Continued work with Private Landlords to ensure their properties are well managed and making sure tenants successfully maintain their tenancies: **Lead Officer Private Landlord Accreditation Officer Ongoing.**

Action Point 7 Encourage Landlords to be members of the Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme: **Lead Officer Private Landlord Accreditation Officer Ongoing.**

Action Point 8 Carry out ad-hoc research to determine the aspirations of people throughout the District e.g. why people want to move etc. **Lead Housing Strategy Manager/Officer - Ongoing.**

Action Point 9 Identify and analyse any housing-related research which could impact on the Chester-le-Street District: **Lead Housing Strategy Manager/Officer - Ongoing.**

Action Point 10 Identify a minimum code level target for all new properties built in the Chester-le-Street District is currently being discussed: **Lead Officer Environmental Officer Ongoing.**

How will we know when we are there?

- All Housing to become part of a mixed sustainable community.
- Identify places where people want to live and a price they can afford.
- Understand the Housing needs and markets in the District.

Objective 2 Affordable Housing – providing quality and choice

As indicated earlier the Government had already identified “affordability” as a key issue which were mentioned in reports such as ***Quality and Choice; a decent Home for all published - April 2000***, the ***Kate Barker’s Review of Social Housing - March 2004*** and most recently the Housing Green Paper ***“Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable - July 2007.***

The Government’s response is to incorporate “affordability” within the delivery of **Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) as follows:-**

“A mix of housing that is affordable”

PPS3 defines both social rented housing and housing which is sold below the current market prices or rent levels. It is aimed at those people who cannot access or afford housing at current market prices.

In response to these recommendations Chester-le-Street District Council ensures that any new housing development with 15 houses or more will offer a minimum

of 30% affordable housing. (Please note that a current review of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is currently taking place and the recommendations may affect the percentage of affordable housing allocated in the future). The Council along with partnering organisations have already successfully implemented a number of new affordable housing schemes in settlements such as Pelton Fell, Sacriston and Birtley with the aim of providing up to 167 new homes to people within the District who cannot access housing at current market prices.

In order to deliver the mixed communities as advocated in PPS3 the Council will not support any planning application that does not show 'pepper-clumping' of the affordable housing units.

The Council will expect the design of the affordable units to be built to a high standard and should be of similar size and quality to those offered on the open market. Furthermore, it expects that the affordable units will be offered with the same facilities e.g. car parking spaces.

To ensure that the housing is delivered to those most in need the Council has an Affordable Housing Policy. The objective of this Policy is to contribute to the creation of sustainable communities by ensuring that a proportion of affordable homes for sale, within new private developments, are allocated to those people with the greatest need, in a fair and transparent manner at an affordable price.

The Government has also requested that the Council monitors the number of affordable homes with a new national indicator as follows:-

NI 155 – Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)

From March 2008 any affordable housing schemes which are funded through Government grants will be expected to achieve a minimum code level 3 standard as measured using the "Code of Sustainable Homes".

What we need to do (Action Plan)

We will ensure that there is a mix of tenure types throughout the district and that these are accessible by all. The affordable housing policy will be adhered to and reviewed to ensure we are meeting the needs of local people.

Action Point 11 – Ensure market intelligence is used to inform future LDF policy on Affordable Housing. Thereafter to continue to liaise with Planning Services to ensure the aims of this Policy (and the LDF) and taken into account in planning decisions for future housing developments: **Lead Housing Strategy Manager/Officer Ongoing.**

Action Point 12 Review Affordable Housing Policy: **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager Annually Ongoing.**

Action Point 13 Ensure all Planning Applications of over 15 dwellings include 30 % affordable housing: **Lead Officer Head of Planning Ongoing.**

Action point 14 Ensure the design of new affordable housing meets the same standard as those on the housing market: **Lead Officer Head of Planning Ongoing.**

Action Point 15 Ensure that the Affordable Housing in pepper-clumping on any new Housing Developments **Lead Officer Head of Planning Ongoing.**

Action Point 16 Investigate the strengths and weaknesses of current Affordable Housing Schemes in the District: **Lead Housing Strategy Manager/Officer.**

Action Point 17 Monitor the “code of sustainable homes” levels being achieved on new homes built within the District: **Lead Housing Strategy Manager/Officer – December 08.**

How will we know when we are there?

- All households will have access to housing that meets their needs at a price they can afforded
- All future developments will have an agreed percentage of affordable homes

Objective 3 Decent homes – improvement and maintenance of existing housing

The Government identified in 2001 there were 1.6 million (57%) vulnerable households living in decent accommodation private accommodation in the UK. It responded by introducing **Public Service Agreement (PSA) 7** which aimed to make all homes with vulnerable households in the private sector decent by 2010. The target was to make 65% of homes decent by 2010 and 75% by 2020. (A vulnerable household is a household that receives one or more of a number of income-related or disability benefits i.e. income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit, attendance allowance). Whilst PSA7 does not currently appear within the new set of Performance Indicators it is still part of the Governments agenda to make all homes decent.

The minimum “Decent Homes” standard for both social and private housing is set to ensure that homes:

- Are free from serious risks to health and safety (the Health and Housing Safety Rating System).

- Are in a reasonable state of repair.
- Have reasonably modern facilities and amenities.
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

Whilst the majority of homes within the Chester-le-Street District are in good condition the new Housing Safety Rating System has identified that 3352 private dwellings contain a Category 1 or Category 2 hazard (Private Stock Condition Survey Feb 2008). Whilst the Council already offers a grant facility to help the most vulnerable households to refurbish their properties a new regional loan scheme is soon to be introduced to the North East which will provide further financial assistance to make homes decent.

From an environmental perspective the Government has introduced three new performance indicators which will have an effect on existing housing within the District. These include:-

- NI186 - CO2 reduction per capita across the District.
- NI187 - Fuel Poverty Indicator.
- NI188 - Adaptation to climate change.

A number of schemes are currently ongoing in this District to tackle these issues. The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) requires the Council to reduce the Energy Consumption of its housing stock by 30% across all housing tenures over a 15 year period. The scheme was introduced in 1996 and the 11th annual HECA report indicated that the District had achieved a reduction of 25% and is looking to achieve 28% by the next revision of this report. Schemes which have been implemented to reduce energy consumption include "COSY" an insulation scheme available for people over 60 or a family with a child of 5 or under and "Warm Front" a Government funded grant of up to £2,700 towards a new heating system as well as cavity wall and loft insulation which has been distributed to residents in receipt of income-related benefits and Disability Living Allowance. In February 2008 the COSY scheme was replaced by a company called "Go Warm" which is a Government-backed partnership involving Chester-le-Street District Council, Scottish Power, the National Grid and DEFRA - the scheme continues to offer cavity wall and loft insulation to owner occupiers and private landlords.

Chester-le-Street District has also written an Affordable Warmth Strategy titled "Warm and Healthy homes" which was launched in 2004 to tackle fuel poverty. Since its introduction the strategy has helped over 5,000 residents in the District reduce their fuel bills.

Over 46% of the 4294 Council's own stock was classified as non decent before it was transferred to Cestria Community Housing. The Council made a promise to all tenants via the *Formal Consultation Offer Document* that a five year £67 million pound improvements programme would begin after transfer to make all

social properties decent within the District. The Government has introduced a National Indicator to monitor this progress as follows:-

NI158 - “% of Decent Council Homes”.

What we need to do (Action Plan)

We need to understand the current situation with the condition of public and private sector properties within the Chester-le-Street District and look at ways of assisting to improve housing stock to a decent standard.

Action Point 18 Draft an action plan with the Environmental Health section based on the findings of 2008 Private Stock Condition Survey: **Lead Housing Strategy Manager/Officer by July 2008.**

Action Point 19 Work with the Regional Loan Steering Group to develop the regional loan scheme: **Lead Officer Environmental Health/Housing Strategy Ongoing.**

Action Point 20 Promote the availability of the Disability Facility Grants: **Lead Officer Environmental Health Ongoing.**

Action Point 21 Set up the reporting mechanisms to capture the three new environmental Performance Indicators: **Lead Officer Environmental Officer – July 2008**

Action Point 22 HECA to achieve 30% reduction in energy consumption by 2011: **Lead Officer Environmental Officer - Ongoing.**

Action Point 23 Measure the progress and success of the “Go Warm” initiatives: **Lead Officer Environmental Officer - Ongoing.**

Action Point 24 Monitor the future performance of the “Affordable Warmth Strategy”: **Lead Officer Environmental Officer - Ongoing.**

Action Point 25 Monitor the Council’s offer document against Cestria’s actions and deliveries; **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager Ongoing.**

Action Point 26 Monitor the PI Indicator 158 % of Decent Council Homes with Cestria’s actions and deliveries: **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager Ongoing.**

How will we know when we are there?

- Public Sector Homes will have been improved to a decent homes standard and beyond in many cases

- Owner Occupiers will have access to the means to maintain and improve their homes
- Private tenants will occupy properties that have received investment from their Landlords to improve their homes

Objective 4 Meeting specific community and social needs

The aim of this objective is to meet the housing needs of a diverse range of individuals. Looking at both the long-term and short-term needs of residents which can be resolved with appropriate advice or assistance for example:

- **SOCIALLY EXCLUDED** - the provision of homes and services to meet the housing needs of those people experiencing or at risk of social exclusion.
- **HOMELESS PEOPLE** - the provision of services that can prevent homelessness and effectively respond to the needs of the homeless.

Homelessness

The Homelessness Act 2002 required Councils to carry out a review of homelessness and homelessness services in their area, and to then formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on this review. The Council complied with this part of the 2002 Act by producing its first Homeless Strategy in July 2003. The 2002 Act also requires local authorities to formally review their homelessness strategies at least every 5 years and the Council completed this in 2007.

The Homeless Strategy seeks to:

- Identify the groups at risk from homelessness in the Chester-le-Street District.
- Identify the current and likely future levels of homelessness and its causes.
- Map the supply of homelessness provision in the District.
- Identify gaps in provision then work with partners to develop services and increase provision.

Whilst the Council has statutory responsibilities to deal with homelessness, it cannot solve the challenges and problems of homelessness alone, nor can it deliver all of the services that are needed to give support, assistance and advice to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It is therefore essential that we have strong and established partnerships that are effective with both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Teenage Parents

Britain has the highest rate of teenage births in Western Europe. In 1998 there were around 41,000 conceptions to under 18s in England, resulting in 23,600 live births.

In June 1999 the Government produced a National Teenage Pregnancy Report with two main goals:

- To halve the rate of conceptions among under 18 year olds in England by 2010 and to set a downward trend in conception rates for under 16s.
- To reduce long term social exclusion for teenage pregnancy and their children.

Guidance from the Teenage Pregnancy Unit stated that ten year strategies (to include three year action plans) should be produced at local authority level. A County Durham Strategy was subsequently developed

To secure partnership working a county wide Steering Group and sub groups were established for County Durham with representatives from Housing, Health, Education, Social Services and the Voluntary Sector.

Offenders

Offenders and returning prisoners experience difficulties in gaining housing. Historically:

- Many housing providers were reluctant to accommodate offenders.
- Prisons have largely focussed their attention on security.
- The Probation Service has been reliant on the voluntary sector for offender housing.

The development of the **HARP** protocol in the North Of England has been a joint venture between local authority housing departments, the voluntary sector, the prison & probation service and GONE. The aim of the protocol is to provide a regional framework to plan for the housing needs of returning prisoners.

Substance misuse

Nationally Policy stresses the importance of improving access to aftercare service and move –on accommodation for problematic drug users. This could include supported housing which would deliver planned interventions. The County Durham Drug and Action Team (DAAT) are a member of the Homelessness Action Partnership and as such working closely with the Council.

Chester-le-Street Council has in addition to the DAAT the “New Leaf Project”. This project is a tenancy support programme for individuals who engage in substance misuse and can provide help and support to an individual to assist them in sustaining a tenancy/

Children leaving care

Care leavers with accommodation and support needs require CYPS, strategic housing authorities and housing providers to work together in their best interests. This need for co-operation is recognised in legislation and its accompanying guidance (see appendix two for further information on the *Housing Act 1996*, *Homelessness Act 1996*, *Housing Act 2004*, *Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2006*, *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000*, and *Children Act 2004*). This guidance highlights an expectation from government that CYPS and strategic housing authorities forge proactive links with each other to ensure they can comply fully with the inter-relating pieces of legislation.

Subsequently the Council are working with Social Care and Health to deliver a County Wide Leaving Care Protocol. This protocol is an agreement that is designed to ensure that CYPS, the seven strategic housing authorities, and housing providers within County Durham work together to ensure that the accommodation and support needs of care leavers are met. It outlines each agency’s respective role and responsibilities to achieve successful transition to independence among this group.

Gypsy/Travellers

Consultants were appointed by the Durham Housing and Neighbourhood partnership to carry out a research project in May 2006, with the overall objective to gain a robust indication of accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travellers and the appropriate mechanisms for meeting these needs, including analysis of:

- The type of accommodation needed
- The demand for permanent sites
- The demand for alternative housing options
- The need for the expansion and/or improvement of existing sites
- The need for transit sites to meet seasonal, commercial and irregular demand
- The geographical gaps in provision
- The affordability of existing and proposed accommodation options.

Following this research County Wide Sub Group has been established to try and tackle the issues raised in the research.

Older People

In response to the Governments national strategy for Housing in an Ageing society titled "***Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods - Feb 2008*** the Council will set out to understand the accommodation needs and aspirations of the older community within the Chester-le-Street District and match this with the current local services available which will allow older people to maintain their independence and quality of life.

What we need to do (Action Plan)

Action Point 27 Continue with Homeless Forum meetings quarterly to develop with partners service for vulnerable Groups: **Lead Officer Housing Options Manager - Quarterly.**

Action Point 28 Participate in the Gypsy & Traveller Sub Group to enhance and deliver services for the Gypsy and Traveller Community: **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager.**

Action Point 29 Adhere to the HARP protocol ensuring we are pro-active in assisting this group find accommodation and advice: **Lead Officer Housing Options Manager Ongoing.**

Action Point 30 Develop a local protocol with prisons to offer advice and support to prisoners and staff: **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager December 2008.**

Action Point 31 Be a pro-active member of the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board: **Lead Officer Ongoing.**

Action Point 32 Work locally with the local Teenage Pregnancy Group to deliver services to reduce the conception rate amongst this group: **Lead Officer Housing Options Manager Ongoing.**

Action Point 33

Continue to work with Supporting People Commissioning Group to deliver services to the most vulnerable groups: **Lead Officer Housing Options Manager Ongoing.**

Action Point 34 Expand the availability of information on Housing Options/Choices for residents of Chester-le-street: **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager July 2008.**

Action Point 35 Identify the vulnerable groups within the district: **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager March 2009.**

Action Point 36 – Look to identify suitable Gypsy Sites as part of the LDF: **Lead Officer Regeneration Manager. – Jan 2010.**

Action Point 37 – Carry out research to under the needs and aspirations of older person's accommodation requirements within the District: **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Officer – Dec 08**

Action Point 38 – Identify socially excluded groups within the Chester-le-Street District: **Lead Officer Housing Strategy Officer – Dec 08**

How will we know when we are there?

- Support available to those groups that wish to remain in their own accommodation
- Reduction in socially excluded people
- People at risk of Homelessness receive the correct advice and assistance

Section 6 - Consultation Process

Government guidelines emphasis that consultation is required with as many residents and stakeholders as possible when the Housing Strategy is being reviewed. A questionnaire was therefore drafted by the Council and each question was chosen on the basis that it fitted with the Regional and sub-regional housing objectives mentioned below.

- 1/ Rejuvenating the Housing Stock.
- 2/ Provide Quality and Choice.
- 3/ Improvements and maintenance of existing housing.
- 4/ Meeting specific community and social needs.

A total of 860 questionnaires were sent out with 109 returned (13%)

Organisation	Number sent	Number received	% of total
Community/Tenants panel member	35	33	94%
Ward Councillor	33	11	34%
Housing Association	8	2	25%
Private Landlord	41	4	9%
Resident/Tenant	750	18	2%
Not Stated	N/A	41	0
TOTAL	860	109	13%

Some of the key conclusions are listed below:

- A need for more affordable starter homes for first time buyers and families who cannot currently get on the property ladder.
- The rented sector is failing to provide a good mix and quality of rented properties in the District.
- The most popular tenure types requested are 2 bedroom bungalows and 2 bedroom terrace houses.
- People's perception of prices for different tenures varies.
- There are no real issues with second home owners in Chester-le-Street.
- Low demand and abandonment is limited in the District.
- Transport links, health facilities, employment prospects and retail outlets were all indicated as needing improvements.
- Other issues raised include ASB, repairs and maintenance, parking, house affordability, traffic congestion and calming measures, leisure, recreation and road investment.

A full response to the survey is available in **Appendix 1**

Section 7 - Monitoring and Reviewing

The purpose of this Section is to set out how the Council will review and update the Strategy in the future. Chester-le-Street District Council will:

- The Housing Strategy team will continue to work with partners and stakeholders to oversee the implementation of the strategy ensuring that it is reflected within relevant local plans and strategies.
- Undertake an Annual Review of the strategy.
- Report six monthly to the Scrutiny Panel.
- Conduct an Annual Sample Survey to residents and partners.
- Monitor and review new Performance Indicators to understand progress.
- Use information provided by the Housing Investment Programme Statistics, the Local Development Framework Monitoring Report and other relevant sources of information relating to housing.

Appendix 1 – Market Research Consultation Report

Introduction

As part of the process to update the Chester-le-Street Housing Strategy a questionnaire has been issued to seek the views of residents and key stakeholders throughout the Chester-le-Street District. This is in response to the Housing Strategy guidelines set out by the Government which specifically states the importance of engagement with the Community and this document will provide evidence in support of this request.

It is hoped that the findings from this questionnaire will help to understand the community's views regarding the current Housing Situation in the District and this feedback will be incorporated into the final Housing Strategy document.

Methodology

A questionnaire was drafted by the Council – each question was chosen on the basis that it fitted with the objectives of both the Regional and sub-regional housing strategies so the Council can then understand the similarities and differences between regional/sub-regional plans and what actually needs to be delivered at a local level, the objectives include:-

- 1/ Rejuvenating the Housing Stock.
- 2/ Provide Quality and Choice.
- 3/ Improvements and maintenance of existing housing.
- 4/ Meeting specific community and social needs.

The questionnaire was dispatched by post on the 13th August 2007 with a covering letter and a pre-paid envelope stating a deadline of the 7th September 2007 and sent to the following groups and individuals:-

Ward Councillors	=	33
Community Groups	=	21
Tenants Panel Members	=	6
Voluntary Group	=	1
Tenants & Residents	=	750
Private landlords	=	41
Registered Social landlords	=	8
TOTAL	=	860

No incentives were given for the document's return and the questionnaire remained anonymous.

All returns were compiled using M/S Excel.

Questionnaire Responses

1/ Which organisation do you represent?

A total of 109 questionnaires (13%) were returned. An excellent response was received from the community and voluntary groups and tenants panel members. It is suspected that a number of those respondents who did “not state” their group were either individual residents or councillors.

Organisation	Number sent	Number received	% of total
Community/Tenants panel member	35	33	94%
Ward Councillor	33	11	34%
Housing Association	8	2	25%
Private Landlord	41	4	9%
Resident/Tenant	750	18	2%
Not Stated	N/A	41	0
TOTAL	860	109	13%

2/ Which ward do you currently live in or represent?

A response was received from all wards within the Chester-le-Street District. Nearly 40% of these respondents live or represent Chester Central, Chester East, Pelton and Lumley.

Chester Central	11	10%
Chester East	11	13%
Pelton	11	12%
Lumley	10	4%
Grange Villa & West Pelton	8	4%
North Lodge	7	3%
Edmondsley and Waldrige	7	8%
Chester West	7	5%
Chester South	6	6%
Kimbleworth & Plawsworth	6	7%
Bournmoor	5	4%
Ouston	4	2%
Urpeth	4	4%
Sacriston	4	4%
Chester North	4	2%
Pelton Fell	2	1%
Not stated	2	1%

3/ Do you agree or disagree that your ward is meeting the needs and aspirations of the current residents in terms of the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not stated	Total
Starter homes for first time buyers	11	29	38	15	16	109
Housing for vulnerable people	10	32	35	9	23	109
Sheltered housing	10	44	26	6	23	109
Adapted bungalows	16	43	24	8	18	109
Social housing	10	37	29	8	25	109
Executive housing	14	38	25	5	27	109

When the number of respondent are analysis (taking out the "Not Stated" element) the following results occur:-

The wards ARE meeting the needs and aspirations of the following:-

- Sheltered housing (63%)
- Adapted bungalows (65%)
- Social housing (56%)
- Executive housing (63%)

The wards are NOT meeting the needs and aspirations in terms of the following:-

- Started homes for first time buyers (57%)
- Housing for vulnerable groups (51%)

Whilst housing for vulnerable groups is just over 50%, the evidence regarding starter homes for first time buyers is more robust.

Unedited Comments received included:-

As far as I am aware all new accommodation built in the past 3/5 years have been priced above the affordable price bracket.

Housing in Chester-le-Street area is designed for the 'purchases' only market - mainly executive style homes or apartments / retirement accommodation. There are a large number of families who cannot afford to purchase this type of property.

Need for more social housing e.g. relatives (of ex-residents) who want to stay in village have a wait a long time for a house.

There are no Council houses in North Lodge.

Affordable rented property for young people.

4/ Do you agree or disagree that your ward is meeting the needs and aspirations of the current residents in terms of the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not stated	Total
Good choice of quality homes	18	40	30	9	12	109
Good design of current home	14	50	19	8	18	109
Good choice of location	17	51	21	3	17	109
Good selection of private rented accommodation	6	34	38	11	20	109
Good design of neighbourhoods	8	39	31	10	21	109
No areas of low demand or/and abandonment	13	26	36	7	27	109
Residents wish to remain living in ward	10	44	19	2	34	109

When the number of respondent are analysis (taking out the "Not Stated" element) the following results occur:-

The wards ARE meeting the needs and aspirations of the following in order of importance:-

- Good Location (74%)
- Residents want to remain in ward (72%)
- Good Design of current home (70%)
- Quality Homes (60%)
- Good design of Neighbourhood (53%)
- No areas of low demand (52%)

The wards are NOT meeting the needs and aspirations in terms of the following:-

- Good selection of rented property (55%)

Unedited Comments received included:-

The regenerated area of Pelton Fell is forcing people into the Avenues and they have brought with them the same problems as when they lived in Pelton Fell. The council's solution to regenerating appears to be "move one bad apple to another area to spoil and it will go away. This is only the spoiling the area and disrupts the lives of 'decent' people living in our area.

There are areas of my parish where rented property changes hands 2/3 times a year because of ASB.

Residents don't stay long in our ward.

Small ghetto areas within social housing.

Not just the housing which needs to be addressed. It is whole social structure, i.e. doctors, community centres, to be more welcoming + youth clubs are a must

5/ If your ward suffers from areas of low demand or abandonment from the above question can you please specify the neighbourhood(s) affected in more detail (comments left unedited)?

Bournmoor Gardens left to rot same as houses (Bournmoor).

Avenues (x 7) – especially 3rd Ave (x2) and 4th Ave (x3) (Chester-le-Street).

My address is Jacques Terrace. It did go down hill but seems to be improving (Chester-le-Street).

Lots of families do not stay very long in village because of lack of facilities (Edmondsley).

Warriors Arms between the club & pub, it is in a disgusting state (Great Lumley).

The area of low demand I refer to is The Oval and The Brooms (Ouston) (x2).

Kings Lane (Pelton).

The Avenue in Pelton always has houses boarded up and police are regularly visiting certain houses. It is always strewn with rubbish (Pelton).

We live in Pelton Fell. Most houses need refurbishing (Pelton Fell).

The old Coop building on Plawsworth Road could be turned into flats/ apartments and land at the bottom of John Street/ Water Street (Sacriston).

Holly Crescent (x 2), one bedroom bungalows need to be demolished (Sacriston)

Cross Lees (Sacriston)

Lingey Close + Charlaw Close areas, 100% worse since the 'Open Plan' areas were changed (Sacriston).

Sacriston has suffered years of Local Government neglect. Recently the renaissance has made an improvement but not enough. Old Co-op could be improved and roads from plawsworth carry too much heavy traffic, a ring road is needed (Sacriston).

6/ In order to meet the needs and aspirations of your ward in the 20th Century do you agree or disagree that the following types of housing will be required in the future?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not stated	Total
3 Bedroom Detached Houses	19	47	19	4	20	109
4 Bedroom Detached Houses	10	36	29	8	26	109
3 Bedroom Semi-Detached Houses	21	53	10	4	21	109
2 Bedroom Terrace	20	54	10	2	23	109
3 Bedroom Terrace	22	50	13	3	21	109
2 Bedroom Bungalow	42	43	10	1	13	109
3 Bedroom Bungalow	23	36	18	5	27	109

When the number of respondent are analysis (taking out the “Not Stated” element) the following results occur:-

All types of housing have been highlighted as required to meet the needs and aspirations of the ward in the 20th Century. The list below indicates the level of importance placed against each tenure type:-

- 2 Bedroom Bungalows (89%)
- 2 Bedroom Terrace Houses (86%)
- 3 Bedroom Semi- Detached Houses (84%)
- 3 Bedroom Terrace Houses (82%)
- 3 Bedroom Detached Houses (74%)
- 3 Bedroom Bungalows (72%)
- 4 Bedroom Detached Houses (55%)

The results are indicative of other research which shows a shortage of 2 bedroom bungalows and 2 bedroom terrace houses within the District. Interestingly a high importance has been placed on 3 bedroom semi-detached properties.

Unedited Comments received included:-

The is enough housing within area

More assisted living options

More 1 bedroom bungalows (x 2)

Secure housing for elderly residents seems to be in very short supply. I can't remember any new ones being built at all. Unmarried mothers seem to be a priority - elderly are ignored.

Lack of eco-friendly housing.

More 3 and 4 bed family homes not necessary detached

Accommodation for single people (affordable)

7/ Do you believe that there is suitable land available to build new homes within your ward?

Yes	33
No	66
Not stated	10

Over 67% of respondents believe that there is no suitable land available to build new homes.

8/ - If you answered "yes" to the above question can you give details of where this land is located?

Next to Bournmoor School (Bournmoor) (x2)
 Lambton (Bournmoor)
 Kell's, Cragside, 12th Avenue (Chester-le-Street)
 Linget Farm, John Street (Chester-le-Street)
 Land beside Allotment down from Cross Lanes (Chester-le-Street)
 Land behind Mafeking Terrace (Chester-le-Street),
 In middle of Pine Street, Stone Row and behind Front Street (Chester-le-Street)
 The area 'down from Chester Health Centre', by the Whitehill Club (Chester-le-Street)
 Old 4th Ave (Chester-le-Street)
 Along Holmside Road, (Edmondsley)
 There is land opposite Baytree Terrace (High Hold)
 Some parts of The Wynd could be used (Pelton)
 Waste land behind Acorn Close (Sacriston)
 Land running pararell with 'Ashford Drive' to Deneside (Sacriston)
 Sacriston old colliery land and land near Fellforth Way (Sacriston)
 Land between Aged Miners Homes and Deneside (Sacriston)
 Holmeside Road past bungalows (Sacriston)
 West Pelton is surrounded by empty land (West Pelton)
 Between Waldrige and Chester-le-Street and down towards Chester Moor (Waldrige) (x2)
 Area near Waldrige Fell (Waldrige)
 Whitehill Farm and various brownfield spots for infill development (?)

9/ - What price banding do you consider "reasonable" and "affordable to potential home owners within your ward for the following types of tenure?

	Below £60,000	£60,000 to £80,000	£81,000 to £100,000	Above £100,000	Not stated	Total
3 Bedroom Detached Houses	8	18	25	40	18	109
3 Bedroom Semi-Detached Houses	8	32	23	23	23	109
2 Bedroom Terrace	36	38	13	3	19	109
2 Bedroom Bungalow	27	27	27	10	18	109

The key price which is considered reasonable and affordable is as follows:-

A 3 bedroom Detached house is expected to sell for over £100,000.

A 3 bedroom Semi-detached should sell between £60,000 and £80,000 although this price does rise which may indicate the price difference between a privately owned semi-detached and an ex Council house.

A 2 bedroom Terrace should sell between £60,000 to £80,000.

A 2 bedroom Bungalow is evenly split between £60,000 to £100,000.

Unedited Comments received included:-

I am a single parent of twin boys - we had to leave or privately bought property / sale (owned by my ex partner), since I have struggled to keep a roof over our 'heads'. (If I was working and gained full time employment my average wage would be £12,000 - £13,000 – 3 x would be £39,000 of which I may obtain a mortgage. The majority of my 'neighbours' could never afford to buy a property. So where would they live??

Council flats below £60,000.

10/ Are you aware of any rural housing issues regarding second home owners which could be affecting the supply and price of property in your ward?

Yes	7
No	95
Not stated	7

The majority of respondents are not aware of an issue with second home owners in their neighbourhood.

11/ Do you agree or disagree with the following improvements which will benefit your community?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not stated	Total
Improved transport links	47	37	11	3	11	109
Road Access	23	38	24	1	23	109
Employment Prospects	40	36	14	1	18	109
Retail outlets	41	34	12	2	20	109
Health Facilities	38	38	13	1	19	109
Educational Facilities	30	40	13	3	23	109
Community groups	29	45	16	1	18	109

When the number of respondent are analysed (taking out the “Not Stated” element) the following results occurred in order of importance:-

- Improved transport link (86%)
- Health Facilities (85%)
- Employment Prospects (84%)
- Retail Outlets (84%)
- Education Facilities (81%)
- Community Groups (81%)
- Road Access (71%)

Unedited Comments received from respondents included:-

More Youth Clubs (x2).

Open spaces central to developments.

Leisure space.

Play/recreation area.

An ice rink would provide a place for entertainment - majority of people.

Speeding through Edmondsley - traffic control measures needed. Community Hall needs to refurbished.

More transport to Chester-le-Street.

Facilities to remove cars from streets.

Drain improvements so existing housing doesn't get flooded.

12/ Do you have any other comments which would you like to be seen taken into considered within the Chester-le-Street Housing Strategy?

(Please note that the following comments have not been edited)

Clear out anti-social tenants.

Car security garages have never seen a community support patrol. Camera on Twizell Crossroads? Anti-social behaviour, illegal motorcyclists (ASB)

Yes, our village greens are disappearing and this is causing feuds. People need space to play, relax and integrate. Please, please give us back our village greens and spaces central to estates.

Review the existing rented homes and make sure they are up to standard. My bathroom is still in the 1960s. I am an invalid and need some help. I need a shower stall. Please help! No else seems to be listening.

Do the repairs / maintenance within a reasonable time.

I would like to see all council house gardens tidied up by tenants and be made to keep them tidy

More considered parking.

Parking on estates is causing traffic problems. Speed restrictions on all roads within area. Since the new drinking laws have come into force drinkers have come into the street and Lumley has become noisy, congested & littered. To some this atmosphere is intimidating & this situation needs to be addressed.

Many of the new houses are too small for your old furniture.

Better maintenance of hedges. Faster response times for repairs & maintenance. Chester-le-Street is dying as a place to shop. There are too many charity shops / empty units. Chester is a town that is used to commute from.

I strongly agree with this questionnaire which is being delivered to tenants. Please continue with any questionnaires for important decisions such as this. Road access to this area is inadequate and not suitable for modern day families. (ie cars) sometimes 2 per home. The easiest way to alleviate this major problem (which causes congestion) is to convert some street to one way only. Not too difficult and reasonably inexpensive.

The 'majority' of people do not wish to be tenants in Council properties (like myself) - they are being forced into situations of poverty through no fault of their own). As less and less Council social housing becomes available this is a MAJOR concern. It is unrealistic to think or plan to build houses for people to own 50% of them. I investigated this option and it is an expensive way of owning half a house. It is not the solution. 'Decent' families are suffering and so unfortunately are the children involved.

Stop using the flats in Kings Lane as a dumping ground for heroin addicts and ex convicts and there won't be as many complaints.

Home prices to be kept low. Public transport should introduce more routes so that traveller's can have more access towns.

Traffic calming measures needed throughout village. Planning restrictions should be enforced vigorously. Public spaces and rights of way should be protected. There is a big problem with dog fouling and children which ride on unlicensed motorbikes (mini). Lack of youth facilities.

We need more 2 bedroom houses in this area to be allocated to more needy people e.g. people living in caravans etc. I know of two people living like this who have had points removed instead of finding them suitable houses. People from other areas are being moved here when there are not enough houses for people who have lived here for all their lives.

Car parking facilities are needed for Hylton Terrace residents. There is spare land at the top of the street. Also the back lane at Hylton Terrace is private as previous tenants bought the land but never aren't any signs to show it is private and lorries and vans use it daily.

I Would like to see more green belts in Chester-le-Street. Chester-le-Street Council seems focused on building on every bit of land that becomes available. Let's have some space!

Play areas for young people not swings and roundabouts. Designated for playing sports, football, cricket etc.

If there are any available plots of land, then affordable houses should be built for the young people of Chester-le-Street. Stop wasting money on stupid looking arches in the market place!!!

I would like to see new doors and windows made available for Jubilee Close bungalows. The windows and door frames are rotting away.

Better use of community group services.

More homes for single people.

Parking outside/ new our homes should be an improved. Cleveland Avenue is a major road now we should have a wider road / car parking area for tenants.

A major problem of Hilda Park is the parking. Could something be done to encourage people to block pave these front gardens and ease the congestion.

More control on anti-social behaviour.

There are no old people's retired homes in Lumley.

More carefully observe control over problem families being relocated to the village.
Build more houses for rent.

Car ports needed in new houses.

If CDC can waste £1m plus on an arch why cant they spend the public and Government money by developing a ring road around Sacriston to stop the enormous amount of traffic through the village. Plawesworth Road is now a hazard.

13/ Conclusions from Market Research Consultation Report

1/ The report highlights a need for more affordable starter homes for first time buyers and families who cannot currently get on the property ladder. Some residents believe that whilst housing is being built in the District much of it is designed for the executive market and many families cannot afford to purchase this type of property. Building more Council Housing or affordable rented properties have been suggested.

2/ The rented sector is failing to provide a good range of rented properties in the District where people who cannot afford to buy properties will look. Not only is the range poor but the price of a quality rented property can also be as high as a mortgage resulting in many individuals living on lower incomes in sub-standard accommodation.

3/ Low demand and abandonment is occurring in isolated areas of the District. The Avenues in Chester-le-Street have been mentioned more than once as well as areas of Sacriston. There are specific areas of low demand highlighted in Edmondsley, Great Lumley, Ouston and Pelton.

4/ The most popular tenure types requested are 2 bedroom bungalows and 2 bedroom terrace houses. This comes as no surprise as a recent analysis of the Housing Waiting list indicates the large demand for these types of property. What is more surprising is the large number of respondents who would like to see more semi-detached properties which indicates more family requirements and whilst Chester-le-Street has a large number of semi-detached properties than other places in County Durham the affordability issue must be considered.

5/ It would appear that there are pockets of land availability for development. The key areas which were highlighted include Bournmoor (next to the school), Lambton and the corridor between Waldrige, Chester-le-Street and Chester Moor. Smaller pockets of land have also identified in Edmondsley, High Hold, Pelton, Sacriston, Waldrige and West Pelton.

6/ People's perception of prices for different tenures varied accordingly highlighting that as prices rise many people perceive the increases as acceptable and in accordance with the property on offer. It is therefore acceptable that a large detached house will be over £100,000 but a semi-detached should be sold lower at £60,000 to £80,000 (this may be the current market price for a Council property), Terrace Houses will also sell for a similar sum. The price for a bungalow varies between £60,000 to £100,000 but it is expected that properties are more expensive as they cover more land surface.

7/ There are no real issues with second home owners in Chester-le-Street.

8/ Transport links, health facilities, employment prospects and retail outlets were all indicated as needing improvements. Again this is no surprise to the outlying towns and villages who have evolved from the self-sustaining days when mining was the main employer and brought the community together. Many of these villages now rely on transport links to work, shop and access community services. Whilst the question on leisure and recreation was not asked it highlighted that open spaces and places for youngsters to play such as ice rinks and youth clubs were also important issues to consider. Whilst question 11 is a more generalised question relating to the regeneration of the District it is one of the major determining factors when people look to buy or rent a home and in many cases the services are as important as the house itself.

9/ There was an excellent response to question 12 which asked the respondent if they had any other comments to make and whilst this stretched to two pages various themes emerged to include ASB, repairs and maintenance, parking, house affordability, traffic congestion and calming measures, leisure, recreation and road investment.

Housing Associations with properties Chester-le-Street District

LOGO	Housing Association	Property Type	Number	Area
	Accent North East is a subsidiary of Accent Group, managing some 3,000 properties across the region in 15 local authority areas. They have a healthy development programme of affordable rented, shared ownership and direct-for-sale housing.	3 bed house 2 bed house	3 1	Fencehouses (1) Grange Villa (1) High Handenhold (1) Fencehouses
	Two Castles Housing Association have been providing good quality affordable housing in communities across the North for 40 years. They own and manage more than 3,300 properties for rent and low cost sale to single people, families and retired people. Their aim is to enhance the quality of residents' lives and support the regeneration of communities through their work.	2 bed bungalow	17	Perkinsville
	Durham Aged Miners Associations mission is to be the best social housing provider of retirement housing in the North East. They currently have over 130 sites in the North East the core being in the former coalfield areas. Waiting lists are open to the general public and points are awarded for the ability to cope in current housing, colliery service, years on list and age.	One and two bedroom bungalows	21 20 12 6 6 6 6 6 6 10	Nettlesworth Sacriston Lumley Chester Moor South Pelaw New Lambton West Pelton Chester-le-Street Pelton Lane ends Pelton Fell

LOGO	Housing Association	Property Type	Number	Area
	<p>Johnnie Johnson Housing believe in developing homes and communities that people are happy to live in. They are proud of their track record of successfully delivering high quality, affordable homes.</p> <p>The development team at Johnnie Johnson Housing works closely with local authority partners, builders and landowners to provide good quality, affordable housing across the country, in conjunction with local needs and strategies.</p>	<p>One Bed Flats</p> <p>One Bed Bungalows One & two Bed Bungalows</p>	<p>24 16 12 36</p> <p>9 6 5 6</p>	<p>Great Lumley Dunmoor Court CLS Chester-le-Street Boulmer Court CLS</p> <p>Boulmer Court CLSt Dunmoor Court CLS Great Lumley Edmondsley</p>
	<p>Places for People focuses on creating places where people choose to live – whether that means providing brand new communities or transforming existing neighbourhoods into vibrant, popular area to live and work.</p> <p>They can provide a range of housing solutions, specialist care and support services, employment and training opportunities, financial services and other community services.</p>	<p>1 bed flat</p> <p>2 Bed Bungalows</p>	<p>18</p> <p>18</p>	<p>Sacriston</p> <p>Daleside, Sacriston</p>
	<p>Nomad Homes, based in Newcastle was established in 1974. They are now one of the leading providers of affordable housing in the North of England, operating across nineteen different local authorities. They manage over 3,000 properties for single people, couples, families and older persons</p>	<p>1 bed flat</p> <p>2 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed houses (shared ownership)</p>	<p>12 8 5 10 15 18</p>	<p>Pelton Chester-le-Street</p> <p>Pelton Chester-le-Street</p> <p>Pelton Chester-le-Street</p>

LOGO	Housing Association	Property Type	Number	Area
	Home is one of the leading providers of affordable housing, care and support, and is committed to creating thriving communities where people want to live and support those who need it.	2 bed flat 3 bed house	16 9	Chester-le-Street Chester-le-Street
	Three Rivers has become a leading housing provider in the North East of England over the years. Their aim is to become the best housing association in the North East providing good quality, affordable housing and housing support with customer-centred services in attractive neighbourhoods where people want to live.	1 bed flat 2 Bed Bungalows 2 bed houses 3 Bed Bungalows 4 Bed houses	23 6 17 14 1 5	Morningside court Sacriston Chester-le-Street Pelton Pelton Pelton Pelton
	Cestria Community Housing Association was set up as part of the stock transfer process. They are the main providers of affordable rented housing within the Chester-le-Street district and work closely with the Council and other partners to meet housing and regeneration needs across the district. They currently own around 4,300 homes.			Various areas through out the district