

# Housing Strategy



2005 - 2010

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## Foreword

The Council has produced a comprehensive Housing Strategy for 2005 to 2010, setting out our priorities for the next 5 years. Members and senior managers at the Borough Council recognise that providing the residents of the Borough with a choice of good quality housing is vital.

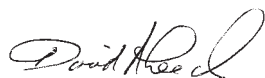
This is intrinsically linked to the Council's commitment to ensuring that areas of low demand are tackled through the Renew North Staffordshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder.

As the Renew programme continues to evolve over the coming 12-18 months, the actions and priorities timetabled within this Strategy may be subject to change. The Council will continue to ensure that residents are able to influence the Strategy through effective consultation.

This Strategy sets out the strategic delivery of housing services and ensures that all housing aspects are a fundamental part of the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan. The Strategy has been developed in line with national and regional priorities set out within the Communities Plan and the West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy, 'Putting Our House in Order'.

Through our continued support of partnership working the Council is working with key partners in the North Staffs Housing Alliance to develop a Sub-Regional Housing Strategy. The Council is keen to ensure that locally and regionally the needs of the areas outside of the Pathfinder Intervention Area are recognised and addressed. Within the Borough this includes mixed urban areas and a significant rural area.

The Council is therefore pleased that this Strategy is able to address the issues arising within the Housing Market Renewal Programme and key issues within our rural and wider urban mixed areas. Through this approach the Council is able to ensure that the views of all residents are considered.



Councillor David Leech  
Leader of the Council



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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is the largest of Staffordshire's eight districts, with a population of 122,030 (2001 Census). Although the number of residents is fairly stable it reflects the national picture of an ageing population with 22.16% aged over 60 and 16.91% aged over 65. 2.03% of residents are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, these are mainly concentrated in Keele, Seabridge and the Westlands.

Of the 52,107 residential properties within the Borough, 40,577 are owner occupied showing the preference for owner occupation. House prices vary greatly across the Borough with rural areas providing an opportunity to attract more affluent households into the Borough whilst simultaneously creating challenges to meeting local needs.

Aspire Housing is the main landlord with 8,977 of the 10,252 social housing properties in the Borough. Beth Johnson and Staffordshire Housing also have significant numbers of properties. Recent research has confirmed the over provision of social housing and through the establishment of the Renew North Staffordshire Pathfinder, the Council and our partners are looking to address this issue.

Although the current provision of social housing is able to meet the majority of housing need there remains a lack of supported accommodation to address the needs of vulnerable groups, many of whom face becoming homeless.

With diverse housing issues in the Borough, this Strategy looks to consider a wide range of options and adopt the most appropriate solutions to each problem.

All of the relevant Strategies can be viewed on the Council's website:  
**[www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)**

The Council's website has two awards for its accessibility: The first is the RNIB accessible website mark which means that the website is accessible to anyone regardless of their abilities or the technology they use. The Council's website also has the Internet Crystal Mark from the Plain English Campaign. This means that the language used will be easy to understand and act upon.

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## Our Vision

The vision for housing in Newcastle-under-Lyme is:

*'To ensure that present and future residents of the Borough have greater choice in being able to live in a home that is affordable, in good condition and adequately meets their needs'.*

Our objectives are:

1. To improve the sustainability of the local housing market
2. To prevent homelessness and to ensure support is available to vulnerable people
3. To meet the Decent Homes Standard by improving the condition and energy efficiency of homes across all tenures
4. To provide a greater choice of housing in response to residents needs

This Housing Strategy sets out how these objectives have been prioritised and which options have been considered within the four main chapters. Each of the preferred solutions chosen from the options appraisal is then carried forward to the action plan.



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# Key Messages

This section breaks down the key messages that are dealt with in this Strategy, which form the basis for the structure of the Strategy.

## Corporate Priorities

Improving housing quality and choice is a key corporate priority.  
Housing is also crucial to meeting other priorities:

- Reducing inequalities
- Improving the health of residents
- Improving the sustainability of the environment

## Regeneration and Sustainability

- Through the development of the North Staffs Housing Market Renewal Prospectus the Council aims to secure sufficient funding to implement a long-term programme of renewal
- Within Newcastle renewal will be focussed on the Area of Major Intervention; Knutton, Lower Milehouse and Cross Heath
- Through the work undertaken on the Galleys Bank Estate develop an approach to ex-coal board estates
- Through thematic approaches improve the largely social housing estates
- Improving the Town Centre to be a vibrant attractive area with both affordable and executive homes

## National and Regional Policy

- The identification of North Staffs as a Housing Market Renewal Area is key to national priorities
- The Council is committed, through the Homelessness Strategy, to deliver national homelessness targets
- The need for affordable housing within the rural area is recognised
- Through the development of a North Staffs Housing Strategy the Council will link directly to regional priorities
- The Council recognises the importance of specific Black and Minority Ethnic issues

## Social Inclusion

- Working in partnership with the Supporting People Programme to commission new services
- To develop an Older Persons Strategy to properly identify the best ways of meeting the specific needs
- To support the refurbishment of the domestic violence refuge
- To continue support for the development of supported housing for young people
- Implementation of the actions listed in the Homelessness Strategy will improve services for homeless people

## Decent Quality Housing

- To work with the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to ensure their stock meets the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- To improve the condition of housing within the Borough as directed by the Private Sector Renewal Strategy
- Utilising the new Housing Health and Safety Rating System
- Developing an Affordable Warmth Strategy and reducing fuel poverty are key priorities



### Diversity and Choice

- Recognising the area as low demand with low value housing
- Working towards identification of specific rural housing needs in partnership with RSLs and Parish Councils
- To promote sustainable home ownership
- To encourage any housing development to include high quality and executive homes
- Ensure residents are able to access private rented accommodation

### Investment and Delivery

- Securing the Housing Market Renewal Funding will be crucial to implementing key elements of this Strategy
- Ensuring the continuation of Approved Development Programme funding for a modest housing development programme of clearly identified priorities
- Continue securing a successful programme of Disabled Facilities Grants
- To target the Council's private sector investment complementary to the Renew investment

### Consultation

- To engage with residents through a variety of mechanisms including open days, public stands, the Council's website and newspaper 'The Reporter'
- To engage with a full range of stakeholders through the Housing Forum and Local Strategic Partnership
- To ensure that residents and stakeholders are able to easily comment on this Strategy through the comment form
- Through the Cabinet and scrutiny system ensure that Members are aware of the housing priorities and are able to have ownership of the actions listed within the Action Plan

## Built-up area / Larger villages

### Other settlements

**Borough boundary**

## Railway

### Main roads

## Motorway

Area with population over 3000

HMR area



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# Profile of the Borough

## Area and Population:

The Borough covers an area of 81 square miles and Newcastle's town centre is located 2.5 miles from the city centre of Stoke-on-Trent. The population of the Borough is 122,030 (Census 2001), with a gender split of 49% male and 51% female. Newcastle-under-Lyme is surrounded by the following local authority areas: Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Stafford Borough Council, Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council, North Shropshire District Council and Congleton Borough Council.

## Number of Dwellings:

There are 52,107 dwellings in the Borough (Census 2001). This is made up of 72.5% owner occupation (of which 44.8% are outright owners, 53.8% have a mortgage and 1.4% are in a shared ownership scheme), 20% social renting (from RSLs) and 7.5% private renting.

## Empty Properties:

The number of unoccupied household spaces/empty properties in the Borough across all tenures stood at 2.7% according to census data. There is a range of figures across the Borough: The lowest figure is 1.1% in Kidsgrove rising to 7.8% in Keele. The Borough has very few second homes or holiday homes.

## Property Types:

There is quite an even spread of property types in the Borough. The majority of properties are semi-detached and make up 44.9% of the housing stock. Detached and terraced properties form 24.3% and 21% respectively. Flats, maisonettes and apartments make up 9.7% of housing stock with the final 0.1% being other less conventional forms of housing such as temporary structures, caravans, etc.

## Average Property Price:

The average price for a property in the Borough is £125,256. The table below shows the average price of the different property types in the Borough in relation to national averages.

	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Flat/Maisonette
National Average	£230.709	£130.093	£107.238	£145.739
Newcastle Average	£199.858	£115.571	£82.979	£107.182
Differance in Averages	£30.851	£14.522	£24.259	£38.557

**Social Housing Rents:**

The average Aspire Housing rent in the Borough (per week) according to the 2002 Housing Needs Survey, ranged from £37.81 to £48.65.

**Average Aspire Housing Rents:**

Number of bedrooms	Average rent
1bed flat	£37.81
2 bed house	£43.23
3 bed house	£48.65
1 bed bungalow	£37.37

**Indices of Multiple Deprivation:**

The Borough has 23 wards in total. Two of these wards, Holditch and Cross Heath, are among the 10% most deprived in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2000. Silverdale and Chesterton are in the 20% most deprived wards in England. The Knutton and Cross Heath area of the Borough now has Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder status.

**Population Composition:**

98% of the population in the Borough is white, with 2% of the population made up of BME groups. This is a small BME population in comparison to the national picture where BME groups comprise 9% of the population.

**Population Predictions:**

The population of the Borough is predicted to rise slightly to 122,800 by 2015. This is an increase of 0.63% from the Census 2001 figure of 122,030. By 2025 it is predicted that the population will fall to 122,500. Predictions therefore indicate that the Borough's population will remain relatively stable over the next 20 years.



**Household Projections:**

According to the Newcastle-under-Lyme Housing Needs Survey 2002, 28% of all households in the Borough are single person households. There appears to be a growth in the proportion of single person households aged 60 and over compared to figures from the 1991 census. In addition to this 12.7% of single people were parents with children under the age of 15. The proportion of single parents appears to be much higher than was indicated in the 1998 Housing Needs Survey (6%) and the 1991 census (9%).

### Population with Limiting Long Term Illness (LLTI):

25,430 people in the Borough consider that they have a Limiting Long Term Illness, this equates to 20.8% of the population. Newcastle's figure is around 3% higher than the national average of 17.9%

### Unemployed People:

The Borough has 2,505 unemployed people (Census 2001), which equates to 2.8% unemployment. This compares quite favourably with the neighbouring authorities. Stoke on Trent has 4.0% and Stafford and Staffordshire Moorlands have 2.6% and 2.2% respectively.

### Average Earnings:

The average gross weekly earnings in the Borough according to the New Earnings Survey 2003 were £373.60. This is the lowest gross weekly earnings in Staffordshire. The highest average gross weekly earnings in the County are found in South Staffordshire with £427.60. 26.9% of people in the Borough earn less than £250 a week. This is the highest proportion in the County.

### Population 16-74 with no Qualifications:

The percentage of people aged 16-74 with no qualifications is 34.3% according to census information. However there is a very significant range of figures for the different wards in the Borough. In Keele for example only 3% of people aged 16 to 74 have no qualifications. Whereas the upper limit for the Borough is in Knutton and Silverdale with a figure of 48.9%.

### Number of Housing Commitments (up to Oct 2004):

The Staffordshire Structure Plan for 1996-2011 allocates 3,000 new dwellings to the Borough. Newcastle Borough last conducted a full update of housing commitment figures in October 2004. It stated that that we have committed to a potential 3,504 houses being built or converted. This means that we have an over provision on structure plan figures of 16.8%.

### Renew North Staffordshire:

The Renew North Staffordshire programme will help Newcastle-under-Lyme to address certain housing related problems that are evident in the area. Low demand in housing markets will be addressed and an increase in the types of dwellings and types of tenure will be introduced.

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# Corporate Context

The Housing Strategy Team works with partners and other Council Services to ensure that the Housing Strategy complements other strategies such as the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan. The Housing Strategy is not only guided by these documents but feeds into the development and setting of corporate priorities.

## Community Strategy:

The Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Strategic Partnership developed a new Community Plan in 2003, which outlines a clear vision for Newcastle-under-Lyme:

*"The many strengths of the Borough will be built on through partnership working to sustain it as a place where people want to live and work together. We will strive for sustainable development, better employment opportunities, safer communities, higher educational aspirations, a high quality built and natural environment, improved health facilities and a diverse cultural life, all of which will promote confidence and optimism within our different and diverse communities."* (Newcastle-under-Lyme Community Strategy, 2003).

The Community Strategy concentrates on 6 priorities, which were identified through the community planning process. They set out a challenging long-term agenda for change that if tackled successfully will bring about significant improvements to the quality of life for people living and working in the Borough. The community planning process which developed the Community Strategy engaged a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector bodies. This representation is replicated through theme groups, which have been established to implement the Strategy.

## Community Strategy priorities which link with the Housing Strategy:

*Helping Create Safer and More Confident Communities:* By creating safer and more confident communities the Community Strategy is contributing to designing out crime and anti-social behaviour to ensure that people feel more safe in their homes.

*Ensuring Equal Access to Learning and Cultural Opportunities:* This will enable residents to contribute more fully to the local economy, thus increasing community capacity and enhancing local communities.

*Enabling Communities to be Fully Involved in Decision Making and the Delivery of Services:* Strengthening community involvement in decision making will make the community more concerned about their own environment, with a positive effect upon the growth of communities.

*Ensuring Services, Information and Advice will be more Accessible, Joined Up and Responsive to the Needs of the Local Neighbourhood:* This can be linked to providing residents with easily accessible information that is relevant to their situation and help to improve their current housing situation.

*Giving the Opportunity and the Necessary Resources to Improve Residents Health, Well Being and Quality of Life:* Creating strong and efficient partnerships with the relevant housing associations will help to deliver the best level of service to the residents.

*Ensuring Every Resident in the Borough has an Affordable Home Suitable to his or her Needs and Live in a High Quality Environment:*

The main housing priority the community planning process identified 3 key outcomes for housing:

- Decent affordable housing is available for everyone that needs it
- There is a good range of housing tenures and types which encourages stability within the workforce
- People's housing enables the development of a more sustainable lifestyle

An LSP theme group has been established to cover all housing issues and deliver the 3 key outcomes listed above. This group is called the Housing Forum. Full membership details are included in the consultation chapter (page 74).

This Housing Forum encompasses all strategic housing issues, and acts as the main consultation body, which sets priorities and assists in the development of the Housing Strategy.





## Corporate Plan and Best Value Performance Plan

The Corporate Plan and Best Value Performance Plan 2004/05 sets out how the Council will deliver its mission statement, "To lead the Borough by developing a fairer, safer, more prosperous and sustainable community".

To meet this aim, 7 priority areas have been established;

- Reducing crime and the fear of crime
- Increasing prosperity and economic vitality
- Improving housing quality and choice
- Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities
- Improving the quality of life and health of residents
- Improving the quality and sustainability of the environment
- Making the best use of the Council's resources and improving efficiency

To ensure that progress is made towards meeting these priorities, each priority is linked to the relevant cabinet portfolio holder and an officers' working group.

The Corporate Housing Strategy Group, with membership from the Housing Strategy, Private Sector Renewal and Finance teams, is the key working group for the housing priority of improving housing quality and choice. To meet this priority area there are 3 subtasks;

- Improving access to housing for vulnerable people
- Working with our partners to improve housing conditions and the match of available housing to housing needs and aspirations
- Developing our strategic approach to housing at an area, sub-regional and regional level

The Corporate Housing Strategy Group through leading on the housing issues contributes to the majority of the seven corporate aims. Examples of how housing activities contribute to the corporate aims are listed below:

### Reducing Crime and the Fear of Crime

- Encouraging all RSLs to develop new homes to meet the Secure By Design standard wherever possible
- The Council continues to support the work of the North Staffordshire Domestic Violence Forum
- The Elizabeth House domestic violence refuge offers invaluable support to women and children fleeing violence. Each year the Council supports the service with a voluntary grant and the Council is supporting a bid to refurbish the property



- Through Home Assistance Grants the Council is improving the security and safety of vulnerable people's homes
- Through the Community Safety Partnership the Council takes action against the perpetrators of crime by seeking Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, to improve residents quality of life

## Increasing Prosperity and Economic Vitality

- The Council continues to support Beth Johnson in operating the Homebuy scheme to enable residents with limited income to become homeowners
- As the Borough is a low demand area the Council is keen to ensure that new housing development helps to balance the market

## Improving Housing Quality and Choice

- Through Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of the Council's housing stock, the Council has enabled private finance to be utilised by the transfer company to invest considerable resources into improving the condition of the housing stock
- The Council will be implementing a new Allocations Policy which allows applicants increased choice over where they wish to live
- The use of Renovation and Housing Repair Assistance Grants improves the quality of the poorest housing stock within the Borough

## Reducing Inequalities and Empowering Disadvantaged Communities

- Through operating a point based Housing Register the Council, in partnership with the RSLs, aims to ensure that applicants in greatest need are prioritised
- Through voluntary grants the Council supports a number of agencies to offer support and advice to homeless people, particularly those who are or face becoming rough sleepers
- The Neighbourhood Management Initiative focuses on the disadvantaged communities of Cross Heath, Lower Milehouse and Knutton
- The Council in conjunction with Parish Councils has adopted a programme of Parish Housing Needs Surveys to assess the need for rural housing

## Improving the Quality of Life and Health of Residents

- The Council is working with Staffordshire Housing Association and other partners to establish a leased boiler scheme
- The Council is working in partnership with Newcastle-under-Lyme Primary Care Trust to reduce the inequalities that affect homeless people when accessing health services

- Encourage vulnerable people to access Warm Front Grants through the EAGA Partnership
- The Council continues to support a large number of Disabled Facilities Grants enabling disabled residents to remain in their own home
- Within the Borough the Beth Johnson Handy Person Scheme is promoted to residents unable to deal with minor repairs and maintenance of their home

## Improving the Quality and Sustainability of the Environment

- Through the Housing Forum ensure that all RSLs are improving their stock in order to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- To support Renovation and Housing Repair Assistance Grants to improve sustainability and the environment in priority areas
- Investing in environmental improvements in priority areas to improve the overall quality of the environment
- The Planning and Housing Strategy Section work towards ensuring that new developments fit within the Local Plan framework



## Making the best use of the Council's Resources and Improving Efficiency

- Accessing Transitional Local Authority Social Housing Grant through becoming debt free
- Through undertaking a competitive tendering exercise followed by further negotiations with the current provider the Council has secured a Homelessness, Housing Advice and Housing Register Service that offers value for money
- Through the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programme the Council aims to maximise the resources available to deal with issues of low demand
- Through the Joint Commissioning Partnership the Council aims to encourage the provision of new housing development that is not only cost effective but offers innovation
- Through taking an analytical approach to assessing and supporting RSL bids for ADP the Council ensures that resources are effectively utilised

Further information on the Corporate Plan can be obtained from the Council's Best Value Section on 01782 742210 or from the Council's website ([www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)).

## Strategic Links

The flowchart illustrates how the Housing Strategy feeds into the range of internal and external strategies.



## Strategic Approach to Housing

In February 2000 the Council transferred its housing stock to Aspire Housing. This was the culmination of the most significant options appraisal ever undertaken by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council. The Council made the decision to transfer to a new Registered Social Landlord in order to maximise the resources available to deliver stock improvements whilst maintaining good local housing management.

The transfer also enabled the Council to concentrate its strategic housing role and develop a greater enabling function through a variety of partnerships. At the same time a review of the strategic housing function recognised the importance of links with planning by creating a new Planning and Housing Strategy Section. The convergence of the Strategic Planning and Housing Teams also reflects the national importance of Balancing Housing Markets in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

# Housing Service Aims and Objectives

The vision for housing in Newcastle-under-Lyme is:

'To ensure that present and future residents of the Borough have greater choice in being able to live in a home that is affordable, in good condition and adequately meets their needs'.

The principles that underpin our service delivery are;

- Equal opportunities
- Social inclusion
- Striving for quality services and continuous improvement
- Consultation and involvement of stakeholders
- A holistic approach to the creation of sustainable communities
- Accountability and openness
- Value for money

The role of the Housing Strategy Section is to work strategically and in partnership to intervene where the market is not able to deliver our vision, and target resources to meet priority needs.

## Our objectives are:

- 1. To improve the sustainability of the local housing market*
- 2. To prevent homelessness and to ensure support is available to vulnerable people*
- 3. To meet the Decent Homes Standard by improving the condition and energy efficiency of homes across all tenures*
- 4. To provide a greater choice of housing in response to residents needs*

The four objectives are considered in more detail on page 23. This includes an options appraisal that identifies the key actions, which are being prioritised to meet the objective. These actions are then discussed and carried forward to the relevant section of the Action Plan (page 83).

To ensure the vision and strategy for Newcastle-under-Lyme is always relevant and effective the Strategy will be updated every year. This update will appear in the form of a Housing Position Statement. In addition to the annual reviews there will be a full review of the Strategy every five years.

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# National, Regional and Sub-regional Priorities

## National Policy

The launch of 'Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future' in February 2003 sets out national priorities for housing and introduced the formation of a new single fund for housing investment. These key national priorities are disseminated into the 'Sustainable Communities in the West Midlands' document. The key housing challenges highlighted are;

- Tackle poor housing conditions in the social sector and private sectors
- Ensure effective action towards meeting the Decent Homes Standard in the social housing
- Improve more non-decent homes in the private sector, especially those occupied by vulnerable households
- Support urban and rural renaissance by arresting the shift of population from the conurbations to the rest of the region
- Tackle the problems of low demand
- Ensure optimal development of brownfield sites in urban areas
- Ensure provision of sufficient affordable homes in areas of shortage
- Tackle the factors that cause homelessness

The Sustainable Communities Plan proposed that these key national and regional policy objectives and targets were to be delivered through the new Regional Housing Boards and respective strategies.

ODPM have recognised the need for monitoring progress in meeting the national priorities set out in the Sustainable Communities Plan and in February 2004 'Making it happen the Northern Way' was published. This report sets out how stakeholders can capitalise on the many successes already under way, and build a bolder vision for long-term, sustainable growth.



## Regional Housing Strategy

Through the Regional Housing Board and Partnership a West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2003 has been produced. This takes into account other relevant strategies, especially the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy, adopted 2000. The Regional Housing Strategy clearly identifies regional priorities for investment and directs resource allocations from the Single Regional Housing Pot.

The Council is keen to ensure synergy of local and national priorities and has

taken the opportunity to engage in developing the West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy and the North Staffordshire Sub-Regional Housing Action Plan. The latter document focuses in more detail on local issues and will contribute to the development of further Regional Housing Strategies.

The Council is committed to strategic planning and through our continued support of partnership working, the Council and our key partners have commissioned on behalf of the Regional Housing Board, consultants ARUP to produce a North Staffs Sub-Regional Housing Action Plan. The North Staffs Sub-Regional Housing Action Plan aims to focus on more than the issues of low demand. The Council is keen to ensure that locally and regionally the needs of the areas outside of the Pathfinder Intervention Area are recognised. Within the Borough this includes mixed urban areas and a significant rural area. The recommendations within this Sub-Regional Housing Action Plan are now being reported to the Regional Housing Board and along with other research commissioned by the Board these priorities will feed into the development of future Regional Housing Strategies.

## Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

The current Development Plan which covers Newcastle Borough comprises several documents: The Regional Spatial Strategy (2004), the County Structure Plan (adopted 2001) and the Newcastle Borough Local Plan (adopted September 2003). A partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy in 2006 will provide guidance on housing requirements for the Borough.

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent County Council Structure Plan requires 3,000 new homes to be created within Newcastle Borough during the 1996-2,011 period, but it makes no minimum requirement for affordable housing. It does, however, acknowledge that "the provision for the affordable housing needs of the local community should be a fundamental consideration in the allocation of sites".

The Borough's Local Plan does not allocate particular locations for affordable housing. Nor does it establish thresholds for large housing developments to include some element of affordable housing. Instead it puts the emphasis on enabling the development of housing to meet a proven need to ensure it meets the needs of residents of the Borough.

The Council has recently adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on affordable housing which sets out where and how affordable housing should be provided, and the supporting evidence that will be required where exceptions are to be allowed in rural areas. There is also county-wide Supplementary Planning Guidance prepared in 2000 which sets an indicative level of affordable housing provision of 600 dwellings in Newcastle Borough in the period 1996 to 2011.



## National Planning Guidance - PPG 3 (2000)

This Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) for the planning of new houses sets out a blueprint for a new and better approach. It focuses on a new link to be made between planning and design to produce better living environments. The guidance emphasises the need for an approach of Planning, Monitoring and Managing, which should complement the requirements of the Renew Strategy discussed below.

Good design is central to creating more attractive living environments and is central to delivering sustainable development through;

- Making more efficient use of land
- Promoting better accessibility to local facilities and public transport
- Supporting crime prevention and community safety
- Creating more socially inclusive communities
- Promoting energy efficiency

## Housing Market Renewal

The key characteristics of low demand are evidence of voids or a risk that voids will increasingly occur, high turnover and a sense of community which is dramatically declining as long term residents leave and are replaced by residents who are unlikely to settle in the area. When the market fails there are many real risks including abandoned streets, loss of property investment, public service withdrawal as population numbers no longer justify a full range of public services and increasing incidence of petty crime and vandalism against vacant properties. These have all occurred in industrial conurbations in the North of England.



In 2002 the Government announced nine Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Areas to tackle issues of low demand and poor housing markets in key areas in the North and the Midlands. As part of this programme the problems within North Staffordshire were recognised and a significant area of North Staffordshire was approved as one of these Pathfinders. The North Staffordshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder is now being established with the aim to address the mismatch between supply and demand that has led to the failing housing market.

Although the North Staffordshire Pathfinder only covers 20% of the properties within Newcastle it remains a key part of this Housing Strategy. To reflect this importance the fundamental parts of the Renew Prospectus are outlined in the chapter on Regeneration and Sustainability (page 25).

## Homelessness Act

The Homelessness Act 2002 and Priority Needs Order enhance the rights of homeless people by extending the categories of priority need groups. The Council has embraced this change and improvements have been made to the service provided to people threatened with homelessness. The Council has moved towards a longer-term strategic approach, including the development of a Homelessness Strategy, which was published in July 2003, in line with the new legislation.

## Decent Homes

The establishment of the Decent Homes target for all social housing to meet the decency standard by 2010 shows a clear national commitment to improve the quality of social housing.

Poor housing affects older people and households with children under 16 years to a greater extent than others. Therefore it is particularly important for vulnerable social housing tenants to live in a home that meets this standard. Through the enabling role the Council will ensure that all Registered Social Landlords are able to bring their stock up to the decent homes standard.

## Housing Act

The Housing Act received royal assent on the 18th of November 2004. It addressed a number of different areas, these include;

Selective Licensing: This will help to create better communities by ensuring that landlords take more responsibility for their properties and the tenants within them. The Council may choose to initiate a licensing scheme if any areas in the Borough show signs that are outlined in the guidance from the ODPM.

Licensing of Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs): This will introduce a nationwide scheme of licensing to raise standards in HMOs. This is being done because HMOs are some of the highest risk properties in the housing market with some of the most vulnerable tenants. The Council will review its policies with regard to HMOs to ensure that they correlate with the most recent guidance on the subject. The larger properties with the highest risk HMOs will be licensed and the Council is aware that it has the ability to extend licensing to other HMOs.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System: This system replaced the Housing Fitness Standard (HFS). The new system is considered more effective and can be used as an inspection tool for surveyors. It identifies defects of dwellings but also enables the effects on the health and safety of potential occupants to be assessed. The Council will be utilising this new system to deal more effectively with hazards found in dwellings.

Home Information Packs: The packs will give the home buying and selling process more certainty because it requires the seller to provide key information about a property at the outset. This will reduce stress, the number of failed transactions and will give the process more clarity and transparency. The Council will work with relevant organisations to ensure that the rollout of Home Information Packs is as smooth as possible from 2007 when it becomes a requirement of the Act.

Right to Buy changes: The changes that have been introduced with regard to Right to Buy ensure that misuse of the process to acquire profit can not be done. The Council will be working closely with all its RSLs to ensure that the changes are introduced as smoothly and as effectively as possible. Information will be provided to ensure that potential buyers are informed of the changes to enable them to make an informed choice.

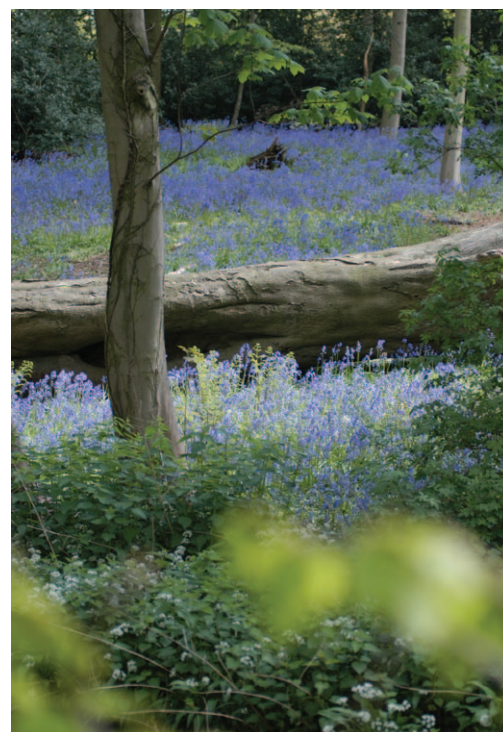
Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO): The orders will be used by local authorities to address the issue of long-term empty properties. It will allow the Council to essentially 'step into the shoes' of the owner of the unoccupied dwelling. The Council can use two types of order, the interim or final EDMO. When an EDMO is in force the Council takes over most of the rights and responsibilities of the relevant proprietor and may exercise them as if they were the relevant proprietor. The Council is currently preparing an Empty Property Strategy, this will help the Council to address the issues raised in relation to the orders.

## Rural

The Rural White Paper, 'Our Countryside The future - A fair deal for rural England' outlines the vision of creating;

- A living countryside with thriving rural communities and good access to services
- A working countryside, prosperous and diverse economy, high and stable levels of employment
- A protected countryside, environment is sustained and enhanced, which all can enjoy
- A vibrant countryside that can shape its own future, whose voice is heard by government at all levels

There are two main focuses of the white paper: to provide affordable housing in villages and towns for local people; and to give rural communities a more significant voice in their own affairs. The rural paper is of significance because the Borough has a considerable rural population. With regard to the aim of increasing affordable homes in rural areas, parish needs surveys will help to outline any areas in the Borough that have a demonstrable need for affordable homes.



The White Paper states that there will be £5m available to help 1,000 rural communities develop town or village plans that will aim to set out what people want their communities to be like. There is a strong Parish Council structure in the rural areas of the Borough and therefore there is a possibility that some of the rural parishes will apply for some of the funding available to create a village plan (DEFRA, Rural White Paper, 2003). Betley, Balterley and Wrinehill Parish Council has already commenced working on a Parish Plan.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) research programme 'Action in Rural Areas' highlighted the scale and nature of rural social exclusion. Housing is key to understanding rural divisions, however limited supply coupled with high property values means that most rural areas are unaffordable to local people on low and modest incomes. The Countryside Agency's 'State of the Countryside' 2003 report shows that roughly half of all rural residents (compared to one third of urban residents) would have to commit more than 50% of their income on mortgage repayments to buy an average house in their area. Isolation is another problem, employment opportunities are often hindered by a lack of transport and child care services. Problems are also aggravated by a low take up of benefit and lack of advice.

One solution is to provide more affordable rural housing. There are no nationally agreed estimates of rural housing need but the Countryside Agency has estimated the need for 10,000 new units of affordable rural housing each year over a ten year period.

## Supporting People

In April 2003 the Supporting People Programme became operational following extensive work to establish the new procedures for reviewing, funding and commissioning supported housing. The Council recognises the critical importance of supporting vulnerable people in the Borough and has continued to ensure that the services currently provided and those needed for the future reflect the needs identified.

A recent inspection of the Staffordshire Supporting People Programme has emphasised the need for using this new system to strengthen the links between providers as well as recognising the relationship between needs and prevention.

## Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BME)

The Race Relations Act Amendment (2000) extends the Race Relations Act 1976 to prevent discrimination in all functions of public authorities such as Local Authorities, Central Government and the Housing Corporation.

The earlier Act prohibited discrimination by public authorities in response to employment, housing, education and in the provision of goods and services. The amended Act extends this, by prohibiting discrimination on racial grounds directly or indirectly or by victimisation in the activities of all public bodies.



Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council will ensure compliance with the new provisions in consultation with BME communities; in particular relating to the employment of staff, hiring of consultants and the provision of goods and services.

In addition, A Race Equality Code of Practice for Housing Associations was introduced in 2002 alongside the Housing Corporation's new Regulatory Code; which applies to all stock transfer landlords. The code directs associations as to how they should develop their business so that race equality is promoted and how discrimination should be addressed. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council will work with our stock transfer landlord (Aspire Housing) to ensure that the new code is adhered to.



# Ranking of Priorities

The four objectives of this Strategy have been ranked in order of importance, with 1 being the most important. The ranking is based on analysis of the scale of the problem and availability of funding to address the problem. A more detailed analysis is contained within the relevant chapters.

Ranking	Objective	Scale of problem	Availability of funding
1	To improve the sustainability of the local housing market.	A substantial part of the urban area has been identified as low demand.	Initial 2 year funding for the Renew North Staffs has been secured.
2	To prevent homelessness and to ensure support is available to vulnerable people.	Failure to support vulnerable people leads to unsustainable tenancies and homelessness.	Lack of Supporting People funding.
3	To meet the Decent Homes Standard by improving the condition and energy efficiency of homes accross all tenures.	The levels of unfitnes are low in the private sector and most social housing meets the Decent Homes Standard, however, more should be done to improve energy efficiency.	RSLs are funding improvements to their stock and some capital grants are available for the private sector. Funding for energy efficiency schemes is available.
4	To provide a greater choice of housing in response to residents needs.	There are sufficient homes available, however, people want to live in the more desirable locations and types of properties.	Development capital is available through the Annual Development Programme.



# Options Appraisal

Each of the four objectives is considered in detail in the following four chapters. Each chapter begins with an appraisal of the options available to deliver the respective objective. To assess the options the Council has used the following assessment criteria and scoring mechanism.

Criteria	0	1	2
<b>Strategic Fit</b> The extent to which the option meets the Strategic Housing Vision and Objectives	Not met	Partially met	Fully Met
<b>Partners</b> The availability and choice of partners to deliver the option	None available	Some potentially suitable partners	Cabinet approved partners (Joint Commissioning Partners)
<b>Effect</b> The extent to which the option has the desired effect in meeting the objective	No effect	Partial effect	Significant effect
<b>Cost and Value For Money</b> If the costs are acceptable and funding is available	Financially unviable and no funding available	Acceptable costs and some funding available	Costs can be met by funding available
<b>Risk</b> The extent to which the option may fail	High risk of failure	Medium risk of failure	Low risk of failure
<b>Acceptability</b> The extent to which the option is acceptable to the Council, key partners and wider stakeholders	Unacceptable to the Council or partners	Partially acceptable to the Council or partners	Acceptable to the Council and partners

If the option partially meets the strategic housing vision then this scores 1 for strategic fit. Each option then has a total score for all the criteria. The options that score highest are highlighted as the preferred options which are to be pursued in parallel to meet the objective.

# Regeneration and Sustainability

Objective: *To improve the sustainability of the local housing market*

In deciding how to meet this objective the Council has undertaken the following Options Appraisal.

Options	Strategic Fit	Partners	Effect	Cost & VFM	Risk	Acceptability	Total	Comments
To demolish all low demand housing.	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	Large scale demolition is not acceptable to most residents and partners.
To selectively repair and demolish low demand housing.	2	2	2	1	1	2	10	This option is more acceptable and takes greater account of individual house condition and occupancy.
To invest Council resources into environmental improvements of poor housing environments.	1	1	2	1	1	2	8	Many of the estates in the Renew area have poor surroundings; depending on the revenue available environmental improvements will be a priority.
To support the extension of the Neighbourhood Management approach in the Renew area.	2	2	1	1	2	2	10	Building on the successes of the Neighbourhood Management Initiative Pathfinder within the Area of Major Intervention will be a priority. Extension into the wider Renew area will be dependent on finance.
To work with private developers to ensure that new housing developments are of the correct mix.	2	2	2	2	1	2	11	This emphasises the Council's enabling role and utilises the planning and housing policy link. It could help to create more mixed communities.
To increase the number of social homes in the Renew Area.	1	2	0	1	0	1	5	The Renew programme aims to increase diversity in housing type and tenure. Simply increasing the volume of social housing will not be beneficial.

The key to scoring the options appraisal is on page 22.

## Background

The Council and our partners recognise that sub-standard accommodation affects every one but especially people in poor health, people with disabilities and impairments and families with young children. The Council also acknowledges that poor quality housing can be present in all housing tenures and that a range of actions need to be undertaken to improve both private and social housing.

Newcastle has focussed on area based regeneration for several years and has successfully operated two Single Regeneration Budget programmes at Chesterton (completed in 2003) and Western Urban Villages (completed in 2004). The North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone strategies and action plans will build on this area based regeneration work and help to strengthen the local economy and infrastructure in the urban part of the Borough.

In 2001 a partnership assembled by the Borough Council was successful in

securing a Neighbourhood Management Initiative Pathfinder in Knutton and Cross Heath. This project has now had two delivery plans approved and is working through a series of topic groups, including one on 'Environment and Housing'. This includes representatives from the appropriate Council services. The partnership arrangements emerging through the Newcastle Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) will provide further opportunities for ensuring that the links are effectively made across service and strategic boundaries.

Within North Staffordshire the local authorities have worked together to address housing issues across the shared urban area. This cross boundary working has been evident in the development of joint strategies and investment in housing on the boundary. Working in this way has led to further collaboration and joint working.

## Research into Low Demand

In 2000 the partners of the North Staffs Housing Alliance and the Housing Corporation commissioned Birmingham University's Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) to carry out a study into 'Managing Changing Housing Markets' in North Staffordshire. This study provided evidence of serious problems of decline in Stoke-on-Trent and areas of economic disadvantage and pockets of difficult to let housing in Newcastle and Staffordshire Moorlands.

A second phase of the research was undertaken in 2001 to identify the nature, scale and risk associated with the sustainability of the housing market. The research found that there was an oversupply of housing with falling demand for social housing and continuing low house prices. Cross Heath, Chesterton, Newcastle Town and Silverdale were identified as requiring intervention to ensure sustainability.

This research has provided an ideal base upon which further research has been conducted by a range of consultants through the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, details of which are outlined below as part of the discussion of individual areas.

## Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder

In 2002 the Government announced nine Pathfinder areas including one for North Staffordshire. Utilising the information from the CURS research the respective councils agreed an 'Intervention Area' for North Staffordshire with the Office of the



Deputy Prime Minister in 2003. £2.6million was allocated to develop the prospectus and emerging strategy, including commissioning a consortium of consultants to undertake a major investigation into the housing market. The information collected provided invaluable information on the operation of the North Staffordshire Housing Market, which was used to formulate the Housing

Market Renewal Prospectus. The Prospectus sets out the strategy for a far reaching programme of intervention over an eighteen year period with detailed activities set out for the first two years. It was submitted in April 2004 and ODPM responded in July, agreeing a funding package of £860 million over the first two years. The programme has been named "Renew North Staffordshire".

The overarching aim of the Prospectus is:

*"To promote the restructuring of the North Staffordshire conurbation, thereby providing a highly competitive urban form which is capable of retaining its population within a green and landscaped environment and facilitates the growth of an economy which has employment and income levels comparable to the regional average."*

Beneath that are six specific aims, which have shaped the programme;

- To balance the supply and demand for housing in North Staffordshire
- To provide sustainable neighbourhoods
- To retain and stabilise the conurbation's population base
- To radically improve the environment of the conurbation
- To meet housing needs and promote social cohesion
- To provide a quality housing stock which increases competitiveness and links to wealth creation
- To reduce the incidence and fear of crime in the Housing Market Renewal target area

The programme of intervention includes the following elements;

- Areas of Major Intervention
- Renewal areas
- Small clearance areas
- Gap finance for the private sector
- Support for social housing to meet specific community needs
- Environmental improvements
- Neighbourhood management
- Thematic interventions in large social housing estates

The Intervention Area of 10,000 dwellings includes the main areas of greater deprivation in the Borough as well as the Town Centre. The prospectus sets out detailed proposals for four areas within the Borough, with more to follow. The Council has set up the "Newcastle Strategic Alliance", a partnership with the County Council and Aspire Housing, to oversee all the programmes and act as the link with the central Renew Team.

Details of the Renew programme as it applies to the key areas of the Borough are set out below. For each one, additional resources from Renew will be sought for programme delivery. However, it is the Council's intention wherever possible to mainstream the work through reprioritising. For each Renew programme area described below, appropriate planning documents within the statutory planning system will be prepared to help to guide the renewal activity.

## Areas of Major Intervention

The majority of the initial programme is to be targeted on the four areas of major intervention including one within Newcastle covering Cross Heath (including Lower Milehouse) and Knutton. These 1930s ex-Council estates remain stigmatised and difficult to live in despite various interventions. The Pathfinder will look to address the growing threat of over provision of certain stock types and tenures and make better use of the urban assets, such as the ease of access to Newcastle town centre, local services, potential sites for



development and access to open space. The work in this area will be tied into existing regeneration initiatives such as the Neighbourhood Management Initiative, which shares the same boundary.

As the area of major intervention Cross Heath, Lower Milehouse and Knutton have been the focus of a more detailed study that has led to the development of the Neighbourhood Action Plan (NAP).

This NAP contains;

- A SWOT analysis for the neighbourhood
- A regeneration plan which will result in a long term sustainable outcome.
- An investment profile
- A sequence of activity and investment
- An achievable 3-year spend profile
- Identification of appropriate delivery vehicles and partnership arrangements

The findings from the NAP have informed the Prospectus, which sets out a vision for both parts of the AMI.

For Cross Heath the vision is to:

*'Consolidate Cross Heath as a sustainable community with access to local services and well connected to Newcastle Town Centre'.*

- Reduce the overall number of RSL dwellings
- Create sites for potential mixed tenure residential developments
- Improve access to and quality of open space
- Improve permeability to the area, encourage movement and reduce the perception of isolation
- Increase in housing choice in terms of type and tenure

For Knutton the vision is:

'To re-image Knutton as a village to create a more balanced community'

- Reduce the overall number of RSL dwellings
- Improve the High Street environment and retain as a destination for providing community services and small scale retail to a local walk in catchment
- Improve access to and quality of open space
- Improve the relationship with the countryside
- Increase housing choice in terms of type and tenure

The programme for the first two years comprises limited acquisition and clearance, a housing stock condition survey, an analysis of housing needs for vulnerable groups and environmental improvements. Major work is also to be carried out on community involvement in formulating long-term vision and proposals and in neighbourhood management. These will build on the existing Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, which covers the same area as the AMI. The Council has named Aspire Housing as the main delivery agent.

## Ex-Coalboard Estates

### Galleys Bank Estate

The Galleys Bank estate has been highlighted in previous Housing Strategies and within the Renew Prospectus the estate is linked with a similar one at Biddulph, in adjoining Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. Both areas contain ex-coal board estates which comprise of defective and unmortgageable properties.

In 2003 the Council commissioned DTZ Pleda Housing Consultants to undertake a Community Visioning Project on the Galleys Bank estate. This work involved surveying the residents and relevant stakeholders to assess the sustainability of the estate and investigate potential funding sources and delivery vehicles. The report was produced in March 2004 outlined and assessed a variety of options. The conclusion was that the preferred option was to redevelop the housing rather than renovate and develop community facilities on the open used land. The redevelopment option was chosen as the preferred option as;

- There is demand for properties
- Residents want to stay on the estate
- Demolishing and redeveloping would resolve the problem of unmortgagability



- There would be an opportunity to redesign or remodel to tackle some of the problems identified through the consultation

To take this work forward and maintain the community focus Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle Council have agreed a collaborative approach to progress the options appraisal to master planning. Subject to approval by the Renew Board the respective Council's aim to commission the master planning for 2005/06 and beyond. The objectives of this master planning would include;

- Introducing residents to different rebuild design options
- Engaging the community through drop in sessions so that they can map out the possibilities available within different parts of the estate. This will help residents understand that the rebuilding of properties to the existing footprint will reduce the scope for improvements to the overall design of the estate
- Engaging the community in options available for bringing diversity of housing choice through property type and size onto the estate to help create a balanced housing market and sustainable neighbourhood
- Integrating the development of community facilities in consultation with the community and partnership with local agencies - e.g. consider the development of youth facilities in conjunction with local schools

The Renew Prospectus also notes the issues in other estates in the Borough (Parksite and Crackley) and will learn from lessons and action taken at Galleys Bank and Biddulph.

## Parksite Estate

Between 1999 and 2004 the Council invested £3million into the Parksite renewal project. Originally there were 250 defective and non-traditional houses on the estate and to date 98 of these have been fully modernised. This includes 24 properties, which have been fully rehabilitated through ADP funding. A small group of houses have also been subject to Compulsory Purchase Orders and the land is being utilised by Beth Johnson to build 8 elderly persons bungalows to meet the needs of the ageing population on the estate.



The Parksite programme is regarded as a success in terms of identifiable physical improvement to the fabric though the overall success in wider regeneration terms is more limited. However, the perception of the area is markedly improved, as evidenced by interest in new development by an RSL within the estate and by a private developer on the edge of the estate. The

future of the estate is to be kept under review with particular attention to two related initiatives. The first is the lessons to be learned from Galleys Bank, as discussed above; the other is the wider regeneration project for Silverdale as a whole through partnership work led by English Partnerships. This latter project is referred to below. It is also anticipated that neighbourhood management will be introduced, through Renew, in conjunction with any intervention action.

## Crackley

Originally a joint Council and British Coal Board estate, Crackley, on the edge of Chesterton was the subject of a comprehensive regeneration project during the period from 1992 to 2000. This tackled the problems of defective dwellings and associated social problems working in partnership with RSLs and the SRB programme for Chesterton. This has been regarded generally as a success, it radically improved the environment, both physical and social. However, some doubts remain over the efficiency and sustainability of the investment made. The estate is part of a wider area that continues to display various characteristics of deprivation.

The remainder of the village is the subject of one of the Renew programmes, though this does not currently include Crackley. However, it may be possible to use neighbourhood management as a way of monitoring and sustaining the benefits deriving from the work that has already taken place.

## Madeley

The former coal board estate in Madeley, which is outside the Pathfinder Intervention Area, has 40 out of the 100 Cornish houses remaining defective and not mortgagable. Unlike other similar areas this estate does not show any significant signs of abandonment and is within an attractive rural area. The Council plans to utilise the report from the investigations at Galleys Bank to inform the approach to be taken at Madeley.

## Chesterton

Through the initial Pathfinder funding, Aspire Housing appointed a Community Architect "to assess the future sustainability of the area and produce a high level masterplan, in consultation with the community, to reinvigorate the housing market and contribute to urban renewal." The choice of Chesterton for such a study was based on the early findings of the work on the Newcastle Area Development Framework commissioned by Renew.

The resulting report identified key strengths and weaknesses in the village and had a strong emphasis on the need for community participation. The consultants found an interested and engaged community who were keen to come forward with ideas for future development of their village.

The report identified a number of projects over a seventeen year period, and the findings were used to inform the process of formulating the prospectus, which

identifies specific projects for phase 1 (2004-2006). The prospectus intends that activities in Chesterton will provide a pilot for the renewal of other "urban villages" such as Silverdale. The phase 1 projects include environmental improvements, a retail study, a housing needs study (for vulnerable groups) and a stock condition survey. The prospectus also identifies resources for planning and delivery, which would include the additional community participation recommended by the study.

### Town Centre

The health, vitality and attractiveness of the Town Centre can be seen as a keystone in regeneration of the wider area. Whilst not competing with Hanley, Newcastle provides a wide range of retail and entertainment facilities and is a focus for community identity within the Borough. Within the area defined for the project, all of which is within easy walking distance of the centre, there are about 1,200 residential units, some of which are within, or adjacent to, the central shopping area.

The historic development of the town has left a classic pattern of a market centre located at the convergence of six main radial roads. This creates the "gateway" quality of the area, and emphasises its importance in terms of visual impact.



The Renew programme for Newcastle Town Centre is part of a generic intervention on "town centre living". The prospectus notes both the potential of the Town Centre and the incidences of poor quality. It defines the resulting strategy thus:

"Renew will pump prime a strategy to support Town Centre living by focussing on the following;

- Providing a balance of both high quality and affordable housing
- Achieving a high quality of design
- Creating an attractive and effective gateway to the town
- Raising the profile of the town centre to provide an exemplar of town centre living
- Providing valuable lessons for other locations within the HMR area
- Acting as a catalyst for renewed confidence across a wider area."

To make the town centre a sustainable housing location there could be a number of interventions funded through the Pathfinder and complementary funding sources. These interventions could include:

- Small clearance areas

- Rehab of terraced properties
- Identification of potential (re)development sites, land assembly (including CPOs where appropriate) and preparation of development briefs
- Minor improvements to back alleys and the possible consideration of heritage features
- Living over the shop - further identification of possible developments within the inner ring road, including refurbishment of rear areas of shops worthy of preservation
- Remodelling of some social housing to cater for other parts of the market, such as young executives and hospital key workers
- Youth projects to target potentially anti-social behaviour associated with a predomination of single person flats and the presence of clubs and take-aways
- Enhancement scheme for small businesses in gateway locations

## Other Areas

The Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder will deliver substantial improvements within the areas discussed above. The lessons learnt can be rolled out to neighbouring areas within the Renew boundary to ensure best practice is utilised.

Further work will be needed to assess and strengthen the housing markets in Poolfields and Silverdale. In Silverdale this will be linked to the 'Silverdale Vision' development of the former colliery site through working with English Partnerships.

Another area of change is likely to be around the Newcastle College site, instigated by the college's plans for reprovion and expansion. This has the potential to make physical links (including roads, footpaths and green spaces) to the Knutton/Cross Heath area of major intervention.

The Council is keen to ensure that opportunities are taken to use potential funding to help to secure the sustainability of all housing areas and to help to deliver the outcomes of the Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan.

## Future Strategic Direction

The development of the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Prospectus and long-term vision for the area will affect all areas of Council activity and the formulation of its priorities. The Prospectus sets out an indicative programme for the period to April 2005, and it is for this that the ODPM has agreed funding. A further submission will be made towards the end of 2005 to set out a programme for the following four years (2006 - 2010).

The four year programme will necessitate an adjustment of the priorities within this Housing Strategy. For example if considerable demolition is involved, as part of market restructuring, this would affect the demand for both social and private housing in all areas. It could also potentially create a need for an

adjustment to the housing allocation set out in the Structure Plan, which is already being reviewed at regional level.

In addition to the overarching strategic links with the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone, links will need to be made with other strategies and delivery plans.



# Social Inclusion

**Objectives:** *To prevent homelessness and to ensure support is available to vulnerable people*

In deciding how to meet this objective the Council has undertaken the following Options Appraisal.

Options	Strategic Fit	Partners	Effect	Cost & VFM	Risk	Acceptability	Total	Comments
To provide Disabled Facilities Grants enabling people to stay in their own home.	2	2	2	1	1	2	10	Enabling people to stay in their own homes is vital and the Council sees this option as a key priority in terms of social inclusion.
To develop a fully comprehensive homeless prevention service.	2	2	2	1	2	2	11	As this option scores highly, Officers presented it to the Council. The Cabinet decided that the contract for the homelessness service would not include this higher level service based on financial restrictions.
To improve accessibility of the Homelessness, Housing Advice and Housing Register Service.	2	2	2	1	2	2	11	The Council has signed a new contract with Aspire Housing to deliver the service with a new independent identity.
The Council pays providers directly to deliver more support services.	1	2	2	0	1	1	7	The Council does not have sufficient revenue to deliver this option.
To support providers to develop new support services to ensure that people sustain their tenancies and do not become homeless.	2	2	2	1	2	2	11	As the majority of this type of funding comes from Supporting People which has a very limited budget there are limited opportunities.
The Council pays the rent arrears of people facing eviction to prevent them becoming homelessness.	1	1	1	2	0	0	5	This option is not politically acceptable and the Council does not have revenue resources

The key to scoring the options appraisal is on page 24

# Supported Housing

The Supporting People Programme funds all housing related support services including a wide range of supported housing schemes within the Borough. The County Council now manages this programme, though the Borough Council continues to be actively involved. As well as the involvement of Council staff in the Officers Board, a nominated Council Member serves on the Commissioning Body, which is the programme's ultimate decision making body.

The Supporting People Team based at the County Council, in partnership with the District Councils, Health and Probation, has developed a 5-year Supporting People Strategy which was completed in March 2005 and submitted to the ODPM following approval by the Commissioning Body. Through a partnership approach this 5-year strategy will prioritise the Supporting People funding to meet the greatest identified housing support needs. Future commissioning of services will need to include linked revenue and capital bids.

The Council has agreed to support the Supporting People team in their approach to identifying support needs and producing the 5 year Supporting People Strategy. The diagram below illustrates the seven steps that the Supporting People Team are going to use to complete the identification of needs.



With limited new funding available for the commissioning of new services, key stakeholders have identified that highly supported services to assist residents with complex needs will be difficult to finance. This issue is considered further within the 5-year Supporting People Strategy. The priority groups requiring these housing related support services are discussed below.

## Older People

As people are living longer, older people are representing an increasing proportion of the population. Within the Borough 16.91% of people are aged over 65.

The Council recognises that whilst the housing requirements of older people may change they still often wish to remain in their own homes and as part of the local community. A number of older people may require more specialised housing, especially when it becomes more difficult to maintain homes or when their health needs change. Social Services have identified 2,500 people living in Newcastle aged 75 and over who have a limiting long-term illness and poor health. The development of extra-care housing would meet some of these needs although it has to be recognised that the majority of these people may not want this service. This type of service needs to be considered with Social Services, health, other service providers and older people.



The Government has emphasised the need to enable older people to choose the housing they want to live in, as in the past some older people have had to live in housing that is unsuitable for their needs. To make the best choice of housing, older people need accurate, up to date information and advice. The Government has identified housing advice and information as a priority for improving older people's choices. Providing choice and trying to meet the aspirations of older people will be considered through the Supporting People Reviews and possible remodelling of older peoples housing services. Older people's housing choices will be directly addressed via the preparation of an Older Person's Housing Strategy that is currently underway.

The Beth Johnson Home Improvement Agency (Staying Put) makes a vital contribution by providing advice for older residents and by repairing, improving and adapting their properties. The agency also provides a handy person scheme plus a gardening and decorating scheme which enables low cost maintenance to be carried out on homes. In the last few years the Handy Person and Hospital Discharge Schemes have helped, on average, 300 older people each year stay in their homes within the Borough.

## Domestic Violence

Domestic violence has a huge effect on the lives of people and their communities. IMPACT (the North Staffordshire Domestic Violence Strategy 2001-2004) focuses on women, not because they are the only victims of

domestic violence but because they are most frequently the victims. Women are also usually the main carers for children and as such violence to women has a huge impact on children within violent households. It is therefore recognised that most service provision will be targeted at women.

In order to meet the objectives identified within the North Staffordshire Domestic Violence Forum's IMPACT strategy, nine specific task groups have been established. One of these groups is a housing task group, which will develop an action plan to introduce new social housing initiatives and policies, develop protocols, increase Registered Social Landlord involvement and work towards ensuring access to emergency housing is available to women with older male children and other under-represented groups. The group plans to link all North Staffordshire Housing Strategies and Supporting People Plans to ensure that services are provided on a North Staffordshire basis.

At present within the Borough there are two schemes which provide accommodation for women fleeing domestic violence. Arch North Staffs manage Elizabeth House which provides 15 bed spaces and Tolkien House provides 6 bed spaces for women and children who require a safe and supported environment to enable them to leave a violent partner.

Elizabeth House is a traditional Victorian house that is split into separate rooms utilising shared facilities. The property has now reached a critical point where repair costs are escalating and alternative provision must be considered. In view of this, Arch and the Council have utilised the Joint Commissioning Partnership to investigate the most appropriate option for the future delivery of the domestic violence refuge. Through assessing the implications of refurbishment compared to new build the decision was taken that refurbishment was most appropriate. The key reasons for this being that they have an established and accepted site, which based in a conservation area, can not be redeveloped into a modern scheme. Staffordshire Housing Association have, in partnership with the Council and Arch, made a successful development bid to refurbish the refuse.

## Learning Disabilities

The Council has been an active member of a multi-agency sub group tasked to develop a Staffordshire Accommodation Strategy, for the Staffordshire Learning Disability Partnership Board. The strategy's main objective is "to enable people with learning disabilities and their families to have greater choice and control over where, and how, they live" as set out in the Governments White Paper "Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century."

One area that the Strategy has highlighted is the issue of the number of people living with older carers. A survey carried out within the Staffordshire Social Services Day Services in 2002 highlighted that nearly a third of people attending those services are living with family carers over the age of 60. In Newcastle there were 36 people living with a family carer aged 60 - 70 years old and 22

people living with a family carer aged over 70. This indicates that a large proportion of people live with older carers, many of whom will need help with accommodation options in the next few years. This is reflected within the Accommodation Strategy that supports the development of services to meet current and anticipated need, particularly through the development of "supported ordinary housing schemes".

In previous strategies the Council has prioritised the re-provisioning of Orchard House which is a supported housing scheme for people with learning disabilities. The preferred Registered Social Landlord, Focus have now secured funding from the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme to develop specifically designed bungalows.

## Mental Health

Housing is central to ensuring good quality care for people with mental health problems. Providing accommodation with an appropriate level of support is often the best way to enable people to live in their own communities. Housing meets physical needs and provides an important base for independent living. Once stable accommodation has been secured, support services can be provided that meet additional needs.

The Council recognises that housing agencies and support services must work together in order to meet their statutory duties and the needs of their clients. Housing and Social Services often have the same clients, since many are vulnerable people with support and housing needs.

It is important that the accommodation provided for people with mental health problems is of good quality and in an area that is known to them, to ensure the provision of effective community care and support services. An assessment of the needs of the person with mental health problems must be undertaken at an early stage by both Health and Social Services. Within the Borough people with mental health issues are either offered supported housing within the 29 units provided by the Lyme Trust or social housing with floating support provided by the Lyme Trust, Rethink or Potteries Housing Association.

## Young People

The 2001 Census identified that there are 8,019 young people living in the Borough between the ages of 15 to 19. The Council recognises that the housing needs of young people are diverse, ranging from the requirement of affordable housing to support with transitions from leaving care. The needs of young people within the Borough is also a cross cutting issue identified by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The number of young people leaving home each year can be predicted through a variety of sources, firstly by monitoring the number of young people under 18 years old registered on housing waiting lists within the Borough. Also through



information provided by the variety of advice services that operate in North Staffordshire.

Following on from the results of the 2002 Borough wide Housing Needs Survey and in line with the changes in the Homelessness Act 2002 the Council commissioned ARCH North Staffs to develop a young persons advice service. This consisted of 4 advice sessions each week in locations around the Borough. In addition, Connexions provide integrated advice and guidance for all young people aged 13 to 19. Connexions work with a number of agencies to ensure that young people with housing requirements are helped or referred to the relevant agency.

The Council has also developed a Youth Homelessness Forum, which is well attended by partner agencies. The purpose of the forum is to bring together agencies to identify and address the key issues affecting young homeless people in the Borough and to develop a coherent strategy for the prevention and resolution of youth homelessness that fits within local, regional and national strategies. Part of the forum's brief is to develop a young person's protocol in line with the responsibilities of the Children Leaving Care Act and Homelessness Act.



The Council recognises that the accommodation and support needs of young people leaving institutional care and other young people deemed vulnerable are often complex and not within the remit of any one authority. The Council, Staffordshire Social Services and the Youth Homelessness Forum have developed a multi-agency protocol, which will be used by all practitioners dealing with 16 or 17 year olds who may be faced with homelessness. This protocol is intended to assist agencies to work together to develop local strategies to bring about the co-ordinated and joined up services required to meet the needs of these young people.

Through joint working with the Leaving Care Team it is anticipated that there will be 5 care leavers aged 16 requiring supported housing each year. Although eligible care leavers have different funding streams available to them, the relevant agencies within Newcastle are keen to ensure that both care leavers and young people leaving home are able to access appropriate accommodation and the necessary support.



For some young people the freedom of their own home and new found independence can result in some forms of anti-social behaviour to the neighbourhood and higher levels of support may be required, particularly out of office hours. The dedicated young person's floating support scheme which is operated in Newcastle by Potteries Housing Association is able to provide low level support to six young people enabling them to learn the basic skills to maintain an independent tenancy. There is also the Novas Overtures scheme which provides 20 spaces of medium supported accommodation for 16-24 year olds.

Through the Youth Homelessness Forum the need for a 24 hour supported scheme was identified which could meet higher support needs including those which occur out of normal office hours. Through the joint commissioning process Beth Johnson Housing Association were awarded ADP funding and Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG). Unfortunately the scheme has not been developed due to Supporting People pipeline funding not yet being awarded, even though transitional capital funding offered by ODPM on the cessation of LASHG was available. It is anticipated that this scheme will receive financial support in 2006.

## Teenage Pregnancy

The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy for North Staffordshire 2001-2010 identified the wards of Chesterton, Clayton, Holditch, Silverdale and Newcastle Town as the areas with the highest incidence of teenage pregnancy. Most young mothers have their family supporting them and prefer to remain in their family home until they are 18. For those requiring supported accommodation Gingerbread provides two units of floating support and people with high support needs can be referred to the purpose built scheme in Stoke-on-Trent. The Novas Overtures scheme in Newcastle currently accommodates single young people aged 16-24 years old. Potentially this service could accommodate teenage parents although this would need to be negotiated within the Supporting People contract.

## Ex-Offenders

Ensuring that prison leavers are able to access accommodation is important as research shows that they are more likely to re-offend if they become homeless or occupy insecure or temporary accommodation. The Council appreciates that the re-housing of ex-offenders is an extremely sensitive issue, requiring careful consideration and planning, balancing both the needs of the ex-offender and the perception of the neighbouring community.

Staffordshire Probation Service operates a countywide accommodation scheme employing two full time Accommodation Officers. The main purpose of their role is to co-ordinate and maintain access to a range of emergency and short and long-term housing provision for offenders. In addition, they provide advice and practical support to a team of Probation Officers with designated housing casework responsibilities and ensure that as many offenders as possible are

accommodated according to need. The Probation Accommodation Officer for Newcastle receives around 100 referrals for accommodation each year, 40% of these are aged between 16 -24 years old. Studies have shown that 90% of prolific offenders are substance misusers, this is being addressed through a fast track treatment service for persistent offenders. Although successful, mainstream funding is an issue which partners are trying to address.

The new Joint Allocations Policy looks to address the problems prison leavers are faced with when trying to access social housing by removing blanket exclusion policies and assessing applicants on an individual basis. In accordance with the Homelessness Strategy the Council will monitor the number and types of applications from ex-offenders, in order to ascertain if they are successful in being eligible for social housing within the Borough.

## Substance Misuse

It is well known that homelessness and drug and alcohol misuse are linked, with many misusers becoming homeless due to their dependency. Often substance misusers have difficulty in maintaining their tenancy and suffer from a loss of family support networks. Within Newcastle the O'Connor Centre specialises in the rehabilitation of those individuals experiencing chemical dependency, through an abstinence based day care programme.

Through the links to crime and disorder and community safety the Council is involved in the development of a fast track drug treatment service for persistent offenders.



## Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

The Borough has a relatively small population of Black and Minority Ethnic population of 2.03% (2001 Census). Although this section of the population is small it remains an important issue. The highest concentrations of BME groups in the Borough appear in Keele where 10.8% of the population is made up of BME groups. Other areas such as Seabridge, Westlands, Town, Thistleberry and Porthill have BME populations ranging from 4.3% in Seabridge to 3.0% in Porthill. These BME concentrations reflect the University, Hospital and more affluent suburban areas.

It is recognised by providers that all housing services need to be accessible for all ethnic groups including those who do not speak English. The vast majority of ethnic residents speak English and are able to access all housing services without utilising any additional assistance, where such help is required Language Line is used. The specialist BME support provider Blue Mountain could be used in the Borough, they are currently developing their services with the support of Staffordshire Housing Association.

## Asylum Seekers

The Council's Housing Advice, Homelessness and Housing Register Service which is currently contracted out to Aspire Housing utilises Language Line for customers who do not speak English. Within Newcastle the Asylum Seekers and refugees originate from a wide range of countries and speak a variety of languages so it is not practical to have all literature produced in every language. Instead Language Line offers each individual the best service.

## Physical Disabilities

The Council works in partnership with Social Services, Newcastle Primary Care Trust and the Beth Johnson Home Improvement Agency (Staying Put). The agencies 'One-stop' team offers a seamless service providing practical help, advice and support to vulnerable individuals. Through the assessment of needs and aspirations, applicants are prioritised for Disabled Facilities Grants. This considers if the work is required in order for a care plan to be implemented and if it will enable the disabled person to remain in their own home as independently as possible. All the grants are mandatory and applicants are means tested for a maximum grant of £25,000. In some circumstances grants awarded to social housing tenants are insufficient to cover the total costs and often the Registered Social Landlord meets the additional costs. The table below shows the number of grants and their values distributed in the Borough between 2001 and 2005

Disabled Facilities Grants	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Number of grants	61	61	70	65
Value of grants	£389,000	£380,000	£407,000	£400,000

The Council's Joint Allocation Policy also prioritises disabled people to enable them to be nominated to Registered Social Landlords with adapted properties suitable to the applicants needs.

## Equal Opportunities

The Council is committed to equal opportunities and has signed up to a corporate Equality Policy. As part of this commitment the Council has ensured that all people have access to housing by providing fair and equal treatment to all residents, regardless of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age or disability. Through the Housing Register this involves objective assessments and equal treatment to all residents together with a sensitive response to the special needs of groups and individuals. Residents with disabilities, sight problems or any other difficulties, who require help are encouraged to contact the Council for appropriate assistance.

## Homelessness

The Homelessness Act 2002 (Priority Needs Order) enhances the rights of homeless people by extending the categories of priority need groups. These are:

- 16-17 year olds (except those who are relevant to Social Services)
- Care Leavers who are 18 to 21
- People considered vulnerable as a result of fleeing violence
- People who are vulnerable as a result of being in the armed forces, serving time in prison or from a care background

The needs of these groups and all other homeless people in Newcastle are being addressed through the Homelessness Strategy published 2003.

The Homelessness Strategy was formulated on the findings of the review that the Council conducted on homelessness and homelessness services in the area. Due to the nature of homelessness in North Staffordshire the three local authorities worked in partnership to conduct the review. The process was based on engaging and consulting with housing providers, voluntary sector agencies that support homeless people and other statutory services through reference groups focussing on a wide variety of homeless groups.

The Homelessness Strategy aims to:

- Prevent homelessness
- Ensure that sufficient accommodation is and will be available to meet the needs of people in the Borough who are or may become homeless
- Secure the satisfactory provision of support services for people who are homeless, may become homeless or who may have been homeless and need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again

The objectives of the strategy are:

- To ensure a comprehensive housing advice service is available to all residents of the Borough, providing the appropriate support and assistance wherever possible
- To maximise all services in the Borough, which could assist in the prevention of homelessness
- To ensure there is a joined up multi-agency approach to homelessness in the Borough
- To continue to keep the use of bed and breakfast at a minimum and ensure that it is only used on an emergency basis
- To ensure that emergency accommodation is of good quality and meets a high standard
- To provide assistance to rough sleepers and the hidden homeless and work towards the eradication of these problems
- To ensure that the support needs of applicants are identified and they receive appropriate advice and assistance

- To identify the gaps in the supply of supported housing and work in partnership with Supporting People to address the unmet demand for supported housing
- To encourage applicants with support needs to utilise floating support schemes
- To ensure that there is access to affordable housing where there is a recognised need.
- To promote sustainability in all sectors.

To achieve these aims the strategy considers and prioritises actions for four key areas:

## 1. Advice and Prevention

The Council acknowledges that in many cases homelessness can be prevented through timely and accurate advice and information.

The statutory homelessness and advice service is complemented by a variety of voluntary organisations and specialist services. The Homelessness Strategy also identifies the role of the education services and advising young people of their housing options.

The Council has identified the need to improve the sign posting and accessibility of homelessness services particularly for young people and those from the rural areas of the Borough. Also the Council has recognised the need to monitor the requirements for people who do not speak English.

As previously mentioned, the Council acknowledges the need to take more robust action against landlords who illegally evict tenants and to explore the feasibility and possible establishment of an accredited landlords scheme. Other work continuing in the Borough includes further development of the multi-agency joint youth protocol, the investigation into the possible use of mediation services and other homelessness prevention schemes.

## 2. Emergency Accommodation

In response to government guidance the Council aims to keep the use of emergency accommodation to a minimum. If it has to be used it should only be used for that purpose i.e. on an emergency basis and it is not suitable to be used on a long-term basis. Although the aim is to keep emergency accommodation to a minimum, the Council acknowledges that it is essential to ensure that the type of accommodation offered to a person who is homeless is suitable. With this in mind, the Council plans to inspect emergency accommodation to ensure it meets the standards required by the Environmental Health Team.

At present the Council does not own or manage any temporary accommodation or hostel facility and the Strategy has identified the need to investigate the future needs of the Borough in conjunction with the Supporting



People Strategy.

### 3. Supported Accommodation

The Strategy identifies that in some situations prior to moving into permanent accommodation, some people may need additional support to enable them to sustain accommodation and to prevent repeat homelessness. The Supporting People Programme differentiates between short and long-term housing related support services; that is those which are not anticipated to last longer than 2 years.

The Council will work in partnership with the Supporting People team to prioritise the supported housing requirements and investigate the feasibility of making the floating support schemes more flexible so people with a greater variety of needs can be helped throughout the Borough.

### 4. Permanent Accommodation

The provision of permanent accommodation is essential in fulfilling the aims and objectives of the Homelessness Strategy. The Council recognises that it can be delivered through all sectors, including the private rented sector. There is an acknowledgement that not only is there a requirement to address the availability of permanent housing, but also the sustainability of individual tenancies and the housing market overall. To achieve this the Council plans to review the success of furnished tenancies schemes for homeless people, develop better monitoring of nominations to Registered Social Landlord stock and ensure that homeless households are accessing appropriate housing. Also there are plans to investigate the need to develop a rent deposit/guarantee scheme.

Funding streams identified to meet the actions within the Strategy are statutory service funding, voluntary organisation grant funding, Homelessness Directorate Funding, Supporting People, development funding and the private sector.

A copy of the Homelessness Review and Strategy is available from the Housing Strategy Section or from the Council's website ([www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)).

Since producing the Homelessness Strategy the Council has commenced further work with the Newcastle Primary Care Trust (PCT) to investigate improving the health of the homeless. This is identified within the Newcastle PCT Delivery Plan, which the Council is helping to deliver. It is intended that this work will concentrate on helping homeless people with no fixed abode access essential health services.



## Delivery of a Comprehensive Service

The Council identified within the Best Value Improvement Plan that the Homelessness, Housing Advice and Housing Register services should be re-tendered when the current contract came to an end in March 2004. Prior to the re-tendering the Council commissioned Newbury King consultants to review the services and assist the Council in undertaking an options appraisal.

Considering all options the Council decided to re-tender all three services under one contract to maintain the holistic service. Through using a menu approach to tender the service the Council took the opportunity to investigate the potential to develop a more pro-active and comprehensive advice service. To help assess the cost effectiveness of tenders a shadow bid was produced, this showed that the tender received did not offer value for money.

A new contract was not awarded through the tendering process and the Council undertook further contract negotiations with the current provider, Aspire Housing. In September 2004 the Council and Aspire Housing signed a new contract to ensure the delivery of the best service at an appropriate cost thereby demonstrating value for money.



Although these services are statutory the Council views the housing advice and housing register aspects of the service as helping more than just those facing homelessness. The delivery of a comprehensive housing advice service is crucial to assisting all residents to access the most appropriate accommodation for their circumstances. In terms of social inclusion the service is able to help the full range of client groups thereby ensuring that people are able to access specialist or general needs accommodation.

# Decent Quality Housing

**Objective:** *To work towards meeting the Decent Homes Standard by improving the condition and energy efficiency of homes across all tenures*

In deciding how to meet this objective the Council has undertaken the following Options Appraisal.

Options	Strategic Fit	Partners	Effect	Cost & VFM	Risk	Acceptability	Total	Comments
To provide grants for all private sector housing which fails to meet the Decent Homes Standard.	2	1	2	0	1	1	7	Although this would be effective the Council does not have sufficient capital resources to consider this option.
To work with the RSLs in the Borough to ensure that their stock meets the Decent Homes Standard.	2	2	2	1	1	2	10	The Council fully recognises the importance and through monitoring progress is confident that social housing in the Borough will meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.
To operate schemes to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the Borough.	2	1	2	1	1	2	9	Although the Council has directly managed schemes in previous years it is fairly resource intensive and the Council would prefer to be a partner in schemes operated by other agencies such as Beat The Cold.
To provide advice to ensure residents are able to access grants from energy efficiency schemes.	2	1	1	2	1	2	9	When residents contact the Council for assistance the Council refers people to national schemes where it is relevant, thus maximising on funding available from all sources.
To selectively demolish homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard.	2	1	2	0	0	0	5	Through the Renew programme this option will be considered in more detail. The option delivers the objective but is not as acceptable and provides greater risk than the option to improve the housing.

The key to scoring the options appraisal is on page 24

## Stock Condition

In 2002 the Council commissioned David Adams Partners to undertake a Stock Condition Survey. This involved inspecting a sample of 2,000 properties selected to be representative of all dwelling types and tenures i.e. owner occupiers, private rented, other tied accommodation and registered social housing.

Headline facts from the Stock Condition Survey;

- An estimated 1,580 dwellings in the Borough are unfit, representing an average unfitness rate of 3.0% across the Borough. This is below the national average of 7.5% and the regional average 5.6%
- Rates of unfitness are not evenly spread across the Borough but are concentrated in the pre-1919 stock, which has a rate of unfitness of 13.9% (962 dwellings)
- 1,052 dwellings were vacant and 8% of the vacant dwellings were unfit
- The rates of unfitness in the owner occupied and the private rented sector are both 3.6% compared to less than 1% in Registered Social Landlord dwellings
- 3,752 dwellings (7.2%) of the total housing stock, although not unfit suffer from poor repair and require remedial works in excess of £3,000. These are concentrated in the inter and early post-war stock and are primarily in the owner occupied and the Registered Social Landlords' sectors
- The total number of houses assessed as unsatisfactory either through unfitness or disrepair is 5,400 (10.4%) and the minimum cost to remedy unfitness and poor repair dwellings is estimated to be £53 million
- The introduction of The Housing Health and Safety Rating System by Central Government will increase the rate of unfitness to 6.5% (3,298 dwellings) and the failure in the pre-1919 stock would rise from 13.9% to over 18%
- Poor housing conditions are associated with households in economic and social disadvantage. Houses that are unfit or in poor repair are likely to be occupied by low-income groups, predominately the elderly

This data has directly informed the Council's Private Sector Renewal Strategy. The Council recognises that the introduction of the Housing Health & Safety Rating System will alter the way that houses are assessed and will therefore alter the outcomes of future surveys.

The stock condition surveys in the Borough will be updated by the Private Sector Renewal Section. The next set of stock condition surveys will be correlated with the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programme and will help to inform decisions made in relation to the programme. Stock condition surveys will be conducted at regular intervals to ensure that housing stock information is up to date.

Full copies of the Stock Condition Survey are available from the Private Sector Housing Section on 01782 742564 or from the Council's website ([www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)).

## Delivery of Good Quality Housing

As part of the strategic housing function the Council is keen to ensure that Registered Social Landlords operating in the Borough provide good quality housing to our residents. The Council is monitoring Registered Social Landlords to ensure they meet Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

One of the main reasons for transferring the Council stock to a new RSL was to improve the standard of the homes by utilising the different funding arrangements. If the Council had not undertaken the comprehensive options appraisal and decided to transfer the stock then a much lower percentage of homes within the Borough would be of a decent standard. The table below shows each RSL's achievement to date in terms of meeting the Decent Homes Standard.

RSL	No. of stock	Stock decent	%
Anchor	107	107	100
Aspire	8977	7631	85
Beth Johnson	530	530	100
Bromford	34	34 (estimate)	100 (estimate)
Choices	1	1	100
Focus	2	2	100
Housing 21	30	30	100
New Era	6	6	100
Northern Counties	43	43	100
Riverside	2	2	100
Sir John Offley	8	8	100
Staffordshire	403	403	100
Touchstone	28	16	57
William Sutton Trust	81	58	72
<b>Total</b>	<b>10252</b>	<b>8871</b>	<b>86.5%</b>

## Prioritisation within the Private Sector

In July 2003 the Council approved the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy (2003-2006) that directs investment in the Private Sector. In addition to the Strategy the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy was approved, this policy was produced to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order which came into force in July 2002. It provides flexible and wide ranging powers to provide assistance for housing renewal based on local circumstances and need. The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy highlights 5 key priority areas:

### 1) Area Based Renewal:

Area based renewal is a key priority in the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy. The Council has focussed on area based renewal of ex-coal board estates over several years. Within the Borough there are 4 key ex-coal board estates within the Borough: Parksite, Crackley, Galleys Bank and Madeley.

Further information on these estates is listed within the Regeneration and Sustainability chapter (page 25).

In addition to these areas there is also a focus addressing problems with pre-1919 housing. Through the stock condition survey it has been identified that unfit dwellings are concentrated geographically in the wards of May Bank, Porthill, the Town and Silverdale & Parkside.

The Council is therefore targeting resources towards the pre-1919 houses within the Priority Neighbourhood Areas, starting with May Bank, Porthill and the adjacent ward of Wolstanton. This complements the work of the Renew Programme which targets the areas where sustainability needs to be addressed.

## 2) Improvement of the Condition of Rented Housing:

The main objective is to secure a better quality, better managed private rented sector by raising the standard of good and well-intentioned landlords whilst making poorer quality landlords better. It also focuses upon continuing to monitor and encourage RSLs to improve housing conditions for tenants.

## 3) Meeting the Needs of Older People, Disabled People & Vulnerable Groups:

A key element in the Strategy to deal with older people, disabled people and vulnerable groups is the Beth Johnson Home Improvement Agency 'Staying Put'. The agency provides practical help, advice and support to vulnerable individuals and groups on their housing options.



One of the key actions arising from the Strategy is to support the HIA and undertake reviews on its performance, whilst targeting financial assistance towards older people, disabled people and vulnerable groups.

## 4) Energy Efficiency in the Home:

The Council's broad aim is to increase the energy efficiency of all housing within the Borough.

More specifically the Council aims to;

- Raise average energy rating of housing in all tenures
- Cut carbon dioxide emissions to help create a healthier living environment for residents
- Reduce domestic energy use by 23% between 1996 and 2011
- Reduce fuel poverty in the Borough

In line with this strategy the Council is currently working with Stoke City Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to develop an Affordable Warmth Strategy.

5) Reduction in Long Term Vacant Dwellings:

There are two distinct types of vacant dwelling;

- Transitional Vacant: Usually for sale or re-occupation and/or modernisation, these are necessary for mobility of the housing market
- Problematic Vacant: Usually these houses are often in poor condition and can be empty for over 12 months

Efforts therefore should be focused on addressing the problematic vacant housing. Part of the focus on problematic vacant housing is through the creation of a formal Empty Property Strategy. Although this was identified as a priority the introduction of Housing Market Renewal has taken precedence, particularly as the Renew projects will also deal with vacant housing in low demand areas.

Full copies of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy and Housing Renewal Assistance Policy are available from the Private Sector Housing Section on 01782 742564 or from the Council's website ([www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)).

Home Repairs Assistance and Renovation Grants

In 2003/04 the Council provided 140 grants mainly to owner occupiers. These grants continue to be targeted at those who cannot afford to undertake the work themselves, the table below shows the breakdown of recipients.

Since the introduction of the Regulatory Reform Order, the Council is continuing to give grants while it investigates introducing loans.

Type of recipient	Home Repairs Assistance Grants	Renovation Grants	Disabled Facilities Grants	Total number of grants
Elderly on benefit	26	6	0	32
Non-elderly on income related benefits	13	5	0	18
Disabled	0	0	83	83
Other	0	7	0	7
Total	39	18	83	140

Advice

Where possible the Council encourages private owners to repair and maintain their homes in good condition. To assist private owners the Council not only provides grants but gives advice. In 2003/04 Council gave advice to 320 home owners. However, the Council recognises that in the case of many rented properties and Houses in Multiple Occupation enforcement action is required. In 2002/03 the Council served 30 statutory notices to remedy disrepair and nuisance and 11 notices requiring the installation of fire safety improvements in



Houses in Multiple Occupation. This represents a high proportion, as there are only 43 houses in multiple occupation in the Borough.

Although Keele University offers a high percentage of student's campus accommodation there remains a significant student population occupying private rented accommodation. There are currently 284 shared houses occupied by students. Keele University operates a registration scheme for student accommodation that enables the inspection of high-risk private sector student accommodation.

The Council is keen to ensure availability of good quality private rented accommodation. Beth Johnson manages properties as part of the 'Housing Association as Managing Agents' scheme.

## Defective Housing

Housing identified as 'defective' represents a significant problem in a number of areas in the Borough. These are dealt within this strategy under the Regeneration and Sustainability chapter (page 25).

## Energy Efficiency

The Council is committed to working to meet the 23% reduction in domestic energy use from 1996 to 2011. In 2002/03 there was an energy efficiency improvement of 1.2%, giving an overall improvement of 12.5%. In 2003/04 the trend of improvement continued with an improvement of 2.8% taking the overall improvement to 14.5%. Given the current rate of improvement the target will almost certainly be achieved. Work in this area should therefore be maintained and if possible increased.

## Previous Performance

Over the past three years the Council has been the lead partner in the North Staffordshire Healthy Homes HECA Action scheme. Through educating health workers on the health and financial benefits of being energy efficient, health workers are able to refer clients in need of home

installations to Beat The Cold. Following a home visit Beat The Cold are able to action the Home Improvement Agency to install the measure or refer the client for a Warm Front grant. Over the past year these measure(s) have included the installation of loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and boilers.



The Council also promoted the Being Energy Efficient (BEE) scheme, which operated in six local authorities in Staffordshire with support from Scottish Power. Through visiting schools and community centres the community based marketing and promotions scheme targeted those who are 'fuel rich' and able to purchase measures to improve their domestic energy efficiency. Through these talks discounted insulation measures and 'A rated' white goods were promoted.

## Current and Future Activity

The Council is continuing to use the procedures and success from the Healthy Homes Scheme to implement an area focussed scheme. The Health Through Warmth Scheme is being initiated in the Borough; the referral system comes through doctors who will refer patients aged over 70 living in the Kidsgrove area of the Borough who could benefit from increased energy efficiency measures in their home. The two main types of measure used will be cavity wall insulation and loft insulation. NPower are involved in the scheme and are covering all administration costs, while three utility companies will be providing match funding through their Energy Efficiency Commitment.

Since 2003 the three North Staffordshire Councils have been working in partnership with EAGA and Staffordshire Housing Association on a scheme that provides a long term loan to purchase a more energy efficient boiler. The scheme will provide a new gas central heating system with radiators for homes without central heating. This is aimed at vulnerable people living in the private sector unable to afford modern and efficient heating systems. The project will have numerous positive impacts, including, reducing fuel cost, providing warmer homes, reducing carbon emissions and helping to eliminate fuel poverty. This scheme is also trying to utilise potential training opportunities linking into the Jobs for Warmth project.

An information leaflet/mail-shot will be distributed throughout the Borough via a local free newspaper. This leaflet has been created in partnership between the Council and a private company and will offer information on how to be more energy efficient.

The Council is working with EAGA Partnership to encourage the take up of Warm Front Grants through a mail-shot informing private sector households of their entitlement to grants. The Council is promoting the scheme by sending out leaflets with all private sector correspondence.

For further information on energy efficiency and the most up to date Home Energy Conservation Act Progress Report please contact the Housing Strategy Section on 01782 742455 or the Council's website ([www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)).



## Affordable Warmth

The Council is committed to developing an Affordable Warmth Strategy in partnership with the two other North Staffordshire Local Authorities: Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. This strategy has been developed using consultants to drive the process forward and to ensure key stakeholders are engaged, in order that a multifaceted approach is undertaken. The North Staffordshire Affordable Warmth Strategy has been subjected to extensive consultation and was approved by the Council in April 2005.

# Diversity and Choice

**Objective:** *To provide a greater choice of housing in response to residents needs*

In deciding how to meet this objective the Council has undertaken the following Options Appraisal.

Options	Strategic Fit	Partners	Effect	Cost & VFM	Risk	Acceptability	Total	Comments
The Council builds more houses.	2	1	2	0	1	1	7	The Council has transferred its stock to an LSVT company so it can focus on the enabling role.
RSLs develop new homes to meet identified need.	2	2	2	1	1	2	10	Needs careful consideration in light of low demand. There may be a need for more rural housing that is being identified through the Parish Needs Surveys. The Council does have preferred delivery partners.
The RSLs adapt/convert their current accommodation to meet needs.	2	1	2	1	1	2	9	This option is dependent on RSL investment and funding for conversions is not readily available.
The Council and RSLs review their allocations policies.	2	1	1	2	1	2	9	The Council is introducing a new Joint Allocations Policy with Aspire and looking to improve the nominations agreements and procedures.

The key to scoring the options appraisal is on page 24

## A Balanced Housing Market

Traditionally, the main concern in terms of diversity and choice has been to ensure appropriate provision of affordable housing options. Whilst this is still a key priority, in areas such as North Staffordshire, where house prices are low and there is a problem of low demand, there is a need to act across the whole of the housing market. Clearly, the main target for public authority intervention will be in affordable provision, because this is an area where the market alone cannot be expected to provide. However, in conjunction with its Housing Strategy, the Council can help to ensure a balanced housing market through development monitoring, land-use planning policy and managed release of potential housing land.

## Affordability

The term 'affordable housing' includes both 'low cost' housing - housing available through the market at a low price, and 'social housing' - available at a subsidised or otherwise assisted rent or purchase arrangement through a housing association or other 'social' landlord. As reported in the Council's Housing Development Monitoring Report, an assessment was made in 1997 of a threshold price for what could be deemed "low cost" in the Borough in relation to local average earnings. This was a figure of £40,000, which raised annually by the rate of house price rises now stands at £82,000.

Overall the Borough is an area of low cost housing with no shortage of low priced housing on the open market and the Local Plan recognises that any identified needs for affordable housing will therefore be for social housing.

Although prices in the Borough remain about 66% of the average for England and Wales, the rise of the last year, around 26%, has been higher than the 14% average rise in England and Wales. More details of house price profiles can be seen in the Housing Development Monitoring Report available from the Council on 01782 742453 or the Council's website ([www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)).

## Availability of Social Housing

For many people the availability and access to social housing is important as it provides affordable and decent accommodation, which may not be readily available in the private sector. There are 10,252 social properties within the Borough, which represents 19.5% of the housing stock. Although the Council no longer manages any housing stock it plays a vital role in enabling people in housing need to access social housing.

When assessing the provision and requirements for social housing the number of 'Right to Buy' losses need to be considered along with additional social housing. In 2002/03 there were 209 social homes sold to their tenants and 314 in 2003/04. At the same time there has continued to be a steady acquisition and new build social housing programme. In 2002/03 these totalled 50 properties and in 2003/04 they totalled 43. This means that there is a loss

of 159 and 271 social properties in the respective years. Between LSVT and 2004 the average loss of social rented properties is 165 per year.

On 31st March 2004 there were 2,448 households on the Council's housing register, of these the vast majority 2,128 required a 2-bedroom property. 1.04 % of the households on the housing register are from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups, which is similar to the population within the Borough.

The table below shows the number of Registered Social Landlord lettings including those, which were allocated, to the households, which were nominated by the Council.

	2001/02	2002/03	2003/4	2004/05 anticipated
Total Registered Social Landlord lettings	1035	1117	1212	1100
Lettings through Local Authority nominations	846	997	941	850

## Accessing Social Housing

The Homelessness Act 2002 has removed the requirement for Local Authorities to operate a housing register and directs authorities to look at methods of providing greater choice. Through discussions with Registered Social Landlords to which the Council makes nominations, the Council has considered a variety of options to offer greater choice.

With the requirement to have an allocations scheme, which identifies priority applicants and a procedure, which continues to meet statutory duties and assist those in need, the Council has taken the policy decision to retain a housing register. Importantly the operation of the housing register will continue to provide strategic information on housing need within the Borough.



This policy allows applicants the freedom to choose where they wish to live. Applicants are provided with information about the availability of accommodation in all areas and lettings information indicating the availability of property types/sizes by area over the past few months, to help to make an informed choice. Preference is given to those with a local connection with Newcastle-under-Lyme (i.e. applicants who have lived in Newcastle for at least 6 months or who have lived in Newcastle for three out of the past five years). The Council amended the Allocations Policy to incorporate the necessary changes in line with the Homelessness Act 2002 and has also taken the opportunity to embark on a comprehensive review to produce a new Joint Allocations Policy in partnership with Aspire Housing.



To assist consultation the draft policy was published through the Council's website and 'The Reporter' which is a free newspaper delivered to every household within the Borough. Aspire Housing's Tenants Panel was also consulted, highlighting preference for local connection and recommending further investigation into restrictions on lettings to those with a history of anti-social behaviour and 16-17 year olds. All comments have been considered and the method of prioritising applicants has been finalised allowing the Council to approve the Allocations Policy in March 2004. The policy was implemented in June 2005 following alterations to the computerised housing register.

The Council is keen to ensure that people in housing need are able to access social housing that not only meets their needs but also their aspirations. The Council has a range of nominations rights with Registered Social Landlords operating in the Borough. Over the forthcoming year the Council, through the housing register service, aims to improve the nominations procedure and the monitoring of housing allocations, thereby ensuring that the Council is fully utilising the nominations agreements to ensure people are housed more appropriately.

## Housing Need

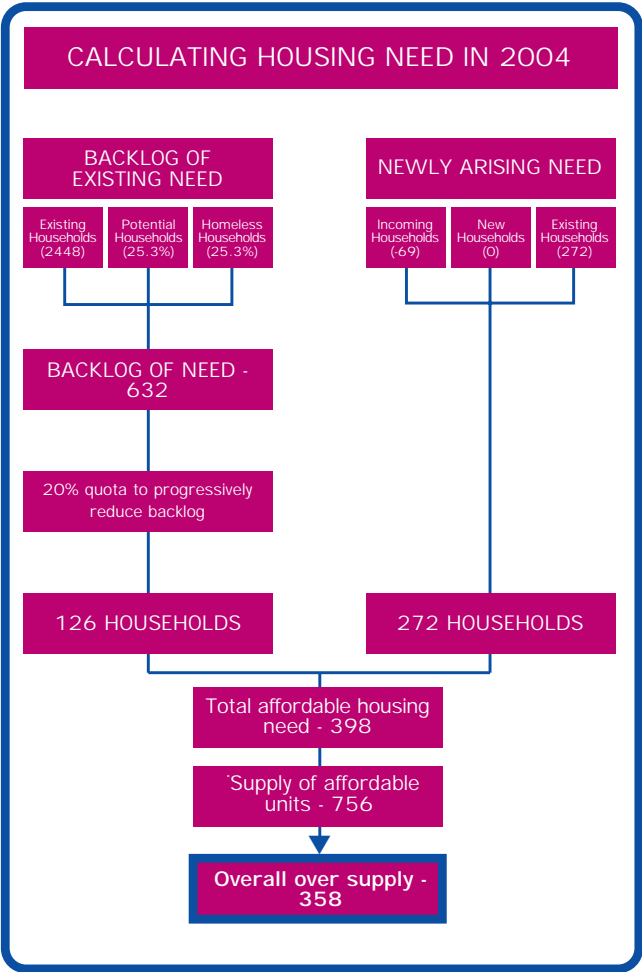
In January 2002 the Council commissioned Outside Research and Development to undertake a Housing Needs Survey to inform the Council of people's preferences and needs. To make the survey more accessible and accurate the Council decided to use interviews rather than postal surveys. In total 2,150 resident households were interviewed. Of these, 250 were in the Neighbourhood Management Initiative area of Cross Heath and Knutton representing a higher sample rate. To ascertain the views of the key stakeholders six in-depth face-to-face interviews and a focus group were also undertaken. These focussed on older people and single homelessness as they were identified as priority client groups.

Copies of the full report and executive summary are available from the Council's Housing Strategy Team.

Government guidance on Housing Needs Surveys is that the results remain valid for up to 5 years, at which time further research should be undertaken. In line with this guidance the 2002 Borough-wide Housing Needs Survey continues to provide relevant information and the Council will look to commissioning a new survey in 2007. The Council has undertaken a Vulnerable Housing Needs Survey to help to update information on vulnerable groups as part of the Renew North Staffordshire programme. The results of the survey were completed in May 2005.

## Key Headline

The headline conclusion to the 2002 Housing Needs Survey was that there was a growing surplus of affordable housing in the Borough, estimated at over 660 properties per year.



In order to make the best use of the information collected through the survey further analysis has been undertaken using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The method of calculation, which is based upon the Government model is updated annually to produce a new housing need figure. For 2002 the oversupply of affordable units was 703 and for 2003 there was an oversupply of 776. In 2004 the oversupply has fallen to 358. This has been caused by a significant rise in the number of Right To Buys and a decrease in the number of RSL lets.

## Our Priorities

Although there is a surplus, it does not mean that the supply fits the demand either in location or housing type. Additional affordable housing is required in locations where house prices are significantly higher than average but people on low incomes still need to live there for work or family commitments. It can also help to achieve diverse and sustainable communities through appropriate mixes of types of housing and tenure.

## Identifying Rural Housing Need

The issues of rural housing are recognised at the national, regional and local level. Provision of social housing is often insufficient and does not cover the range of types of homes required. The need for rural housing in Newcastle is recognised within the Regional Allocations Strategy under the heading of rural renaissance.

Although the Housing Needs Survey did cover households in the rural areas, the numbers of people responding are often statistically invalid and do not represent

the range of needs. This data can therefore only provide a broad indication of need. A programme of Parish Needs Surveys has therefore been embarked on. The process for these is set out in the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing produced in February 2004. An extended period for consultation with residents and key partners was undertaken and the SPG was adopted in September 2004.

The intention is that each survey will be carried out in partnership with an RSL. The provisional programme is set out below. Due to development opportunities arising some of the surveys have been brought forward since the Interim Housing Strategy 2003 was produced.

Year survey to be undertaken	Parish Council	Rural Joint Commissioning Partner
2003	Audley	Aspire
2003	Whitmore	Beth Johnson
2004	Betley	Beth Johnson
2004	Loggerheads	Beth Johnson & Aspire
2004	Mow Cop & Dales Green	Aspire
2005	Keele	Staffordshire Housing
2005	Madeley	Staffordshire Housing
2006	Chapel & Hill Chorlton	Touchstone
2007	Maer	Touchstone

Where a Parish Housing Needs Survey has demonstrated housing need the Council is keen to support appropriate, modest developments of social housing. The Council and the Housing Corporation have selected four Registered Social Landlords who are part of the Joint Commissioning Partnership to provide this rural housing. These four partners will be supported for Approved Development Programme funding. In particular, partners will be encouraged to use the Forward Allocation Pool to reserve funding as rural housing development can take longer with potentially more issues needing to be addressed prior to building taking place.

All partners recognise that rural housing is difficult to deliver and requires the commitment of considerable resources and time. A recent example of the success of new social housing within the rural area is the innovative energy efficiency scheme developed by the Beth Johnson Housing Group in Audley. This scheme was permitted as a rural exception site (as specified in the Local Plan) and was developed in partnership with the Parish Council. The scheme opened in 2003 and provides valuable family housing and elderly bungalows.



## Identification of Special Housing Needs

The Council recognises the difficulties in identifying the specific needs of vulnerable people, some of whom do not themselves recognise that they require support to live in a home of their choice. This need is therefore identified through partnership with referring agencies such as Health, Social Services, housing providers, voluntary support groups and the Supporting People programme.

Through the development of the Supporting People Supported Housing Strategy the Council and all its partners aim not only to identify housing related support needs but to prioritise them across the County. The Strategy was completed and submitted to the ODPM in March 2005. The specific needs of vulnerable people within the Borough are addressed within the Social Inclusion chapter.

## Adaptation/Conversion of Accommodation

The Council will work closely with all of its RSLs to identify opportunities to adapt or convert properties for tenants whose lives would benefit from a change to their accommodation. This will also have a positive impact on the housing stock in the Borough in terms of choice of housing. The adaptation or conversion of accommodation should mean that there will be better choice available in the Borough.

## Promoting Higher Quality Housing

As a low demand area North Staffordshire has limited opportunities for residents to access higher quality executive accommodation. This is particularly evident in the urban area as executive housing is only present in the suburban areas of the Westlands and Seabridge.



In line with the economic development of the Town Centre the Council is keen to ensure that potential new housing developments include higher quality accommodation, which is able to meet the aspirations of more affluent residents. This reflects the city centre living approach that has been developed in cities such as Manchester and Birmingham. Private developers are now exploring the options to build similar executive schemes in towns such as Newcastle. In 2003 the Council gave planning permission for the development of executive flats with self contained facilities including a health suite in a location on the town centre ring road with excellent pedestrian access to the town centre retail and entertainment facilities. As opportunities arise the Council will be discussing with private developers the potential to develop further higher quality housing at other key gateway sites.

## Promoting Sustainable Home Ownership

The Council is keen to ensure that residents not only have the choice of rented accommodation but are able to consider home ownership where this is their aspiration. To enable people to consider this as an option the Council promotes the Homebuy Scheme run by Beth Johnson. Through the housing advice service people in housing need who are able to fund a 75% mortgage are referred to the Homebuy Scheme. This enables people to purchase, through the open market, a private home utilising a Beth Johnson loan for 25% of the purchase price. There are no monthly repayments or interest charged for the loan, the loan is repaid at 25% of the current property price.

There were three Homebuy allocations in 2002/03 and a further three allocations were completed in 2003/04. Progress was restricted slightly in 2003/04 due to maximum purchase price limits being set by the Housing Corporation, these limits have now been raised making purchases more feasible. There are currently 4 applications approved for 2004/05 and there is currently one applicant approved for 2005/06. All of these allocations were made to housing register applicants who purchased a terraced house in less expensive areas; these included Maybank, Porthill and Chesterton.

Due to the maximum purchase prices set by the Housing Corporation the scheme is restricted to less expensive urban areas. Beth Johnson now have a larger allocation and have dedicated additional resources to operate the scheme. With this in mind it is anticipated that Homebuy allocations within the Borough will continue at a slightly higher rate.

## Shared Ownership

The consideration for the development of subsidised shared ownership and low cost purchase housing has to reflect the availability of low cost housing on the open market. At this current time such schemes would have limited benefits for many people in the urban area. Where house prices are higher in the rural areas such schemes may be considered. However, in such rural areas where development opportunities are very limited and the Council wishes to secure affordable housing which will remain accessible to people in housing need, the development of social housing will normally be the preferred option.

## Accessing Private Rented Accommodation

The Council acknowledges the importance of the private rented sector in meeting the accommodation requirements of residents in the Borough. The Green Paper 'Quality and Choice: A Decent Home For All' (2000) contained proposals to promote a healthy private rented sector by taking steps to retain good and well intentioned landlords, and help them to raise their standards further. After taking into account the responses to the Green Paper, the Government re-affirmed its intention to promote the role of private renting in its Housing Policy Statement 'The Way Forward for Housing' (2000).



The Council has identified in both the Homelessness Strategy and the Private Sector Renewal Strategy the need to investigate the feasibility of a private landlord's accreditation scheme. Within the Borough Keele University operates a voluntary accreditation scheme, however it is specifically connected to student accommodation and is not open to other private landlords. The Council recognises that an accreditation scheme would be beneficial to the community and would help to increase the supply of good quality accommodation, to the benefit of existing tenants and potential tenants who may not have considered renting privately in the past. It would also help to foster better landlord-tenant relationships and reduce the need for intervention by Council Officers. Therefore the Council has begun to research the feasibility of a scheme within the Borough.



In addition to exploring the potential of an accreditation scheme the Council also acknowledges that accessing private rented accommodation within the Borough may be dependent on the household being able to afford the initial rent deposit and first months rent (which is often required in advance of the property being let). Partners have highlighted that this issue particularly affects young people trying to secure accommodation. The requirement of rent deposits was also highlighted within the Homelessness Strategy and the Council has undertaken to investigate the potential to operate a rent guarantee scheme and possibly link it to a future accreditation scheme.



# Investment and Delivery

**Principles:** *Accountability and openness and value for money*

## Introduction

Since the 2002 Housing Strategy Update there have been significant changes to the way in which the Government funds housing investment, primarily the move to a more regional approach through the formulation of the Regional Housing Strategies that direct the Regional Housing Funds. The most significant change which affects the implementation of this Council's Housing Strategy has been the abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG). The impact of this is discussed below.

## Links to Capital Strategy

In July 2004 the Council approved a new Capital Strategy for 2005/06. The strategy sets out how resources are to be targeted to each of the Corporate Plans priority themes. The Council's latest Capital Programme is listed below and shows significant resources are directed to the priority theme of 'Improving housing quality and choice.'

Priority themes for investment	£000's
Reducing crime and the fear of crime	391
Increasing prosperity and economic vitality	3,812
Improving housing quality and choice	8,660
Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities	270
Improving the quality of life and health of residents	1,695
Improving the quality and sustainability of the environment	124
Making the best use of the Council's resources and improving efficiency	1,506
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,458</b>

## Capital Receipts

In 2000, when the housing stock was transferred, the Council decided not to use the capital receipts arising from the disposal for capital purposes but to retain them to generate investment income for debt servicing and other residual costs relating to the Council's remaining liabilities in respect of the former Housing Revenue Account. This policy has continued, even though the Council has now become debt free. The only way in which these capital receipts are used for capital purposes is through an internal leasing system, whereby the receipts are used in the first instance to finance capital expenditure which is repaid from service revenue accounts over a number of years (normally 4-5).

The Council receives a share of the receipts arising from the preserved Right to Buy arrangements. It has been agreed that the majority of receipts will continue to be used to support private sector housing initiatives such as renovation grants, as prioritised within the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2003-06 and outlined within earlier sections of this Strategy.

## Debt Free Status

In response to the abolition of the current system of Local Authority Social Housing Grant the Council made the decision to go debt free ensuring that the current commitments to support the development of social housing could be honoured. Through the Council becoming debt free the Registered Social Landlords have been able to access Transitional Local Authority Social Housing Grant through the Housing Corporation.

The Council is committed to retaining the debt free status achieved in 2002/03. Other than specific grants, all financing will be from capital receipts (not external borrowing). As part of the Government's Sustainable Communities Action Programme the Council has been given a provisional capital allocation (revenue) of £1.067m for 2005/06. This means extra government funding is provided through the Revenue Support Grant, either to cover the cost of borrowing up to the allocation amount or the loss of investment income if capital receipts are used.

## Council Funding Process

A funding decision has to follow the specific process that the Council has in place for any decision. Any capital or revenue funding needs to be ratified by cabinet. This is done by submitting a report to cabinet to seek their approval on the matter. Once approval is received from cabinet the funding process can begin.

## Resources

### ● Right To Buy Receipts

Useable capital receipts are increasing due to the increase in preserved Right To Buy sales from tenants transferred to Aspire Housing.

### ● LASHG

The Council has become debt free to enable RSLs to access the transitional LASHG. The figure in the expenditure table represents commitments made prior to March 2003 that were due to be delivered over the following 2 years, and additional transitional LASHG allocated through the Housing Corporation by the Regional Housing Board.

### ● Disabled Facilities Grants

Budget set for 2004/05 is set at £400,000 with the Council contributing £160,000, based on the grant continuing to attract 60% funding from the Government. It is estimated that this level of funding will deliver 65 grants via Staying Put, the Home Improvement Agency. The investment through Disabled Facilities Grants is due to continue at £400,000 for the forthcoming years.

### ● Home Improvement Agency

The Borough Council continues to support the Beth Johnson's 'Staying Put' Home Improvement Agency. The support for the Home Improvement Agency includes match funding from Newcastle Primary Care Trust and Staffordshire County Council.

### ● Approved Development Programme

Realistically the Joint Commissioning Partnership recognises that opportunities for ADP support to be given are reducing as large amounts of general needs housing is not required within the Borough. However rural and supported housing remain a regional priority and as the Renew programme develops there will be increasing opportunities for ADP funding within the Intervention Area. Within the table below the 2004/05 figures represent schemes that have already received approval and the 2005/06 onwards proposed figures represent the potential for new schemes to be given approval. The increase in funding for 2007/08 and 2008/09 represents the anticipated start of the delivery of Renew projects.

### ● Private Sector

The largest proportion of the private sector budget is allocated for area-based renewal on the Parksite estate, £570,000 for 2003/04 and 2004/05, with an additional £148,000 for other areas.

The budget for renovation grants for 2005/06 is set at £640,000 and is planned to continue at a similar level for 2006/07 and future years.

The budget for Home Repair Assistance Grants was set at £150,000 for 2004/05, this is also set to continue at a similar level for 2005/06 and future years.

### ● Renew Funding

The Council has already committed £5 million to complement the Renew investment package. The exact areas of expenditure will not be finalised until the delivery plans for each area have been developed further.

The resources and expenditure tables below show the key programmes. Further information is available in the Housing Investment Programme, which can be obtained from the Housing Strategy Section on 01782 742455. Please note that the proposed resources are based on a realistic assessment of resources available but do not carry any guarantee as most of the external funding bodies do not plan their programmes beyond the next couple of financial years.

### ● Section 106 Agreements

The Council has not needed to use section 106 agreements with regard to delivering housing through the planning system. There is not a perceived need for affordable housing in the Borough and therefore section 106 agreements have not been needed. The majority of sites allocated in the Local Plan have received consent, but the Council will be regularly reviewing the use of section 106 agreements in the future if the development environment changes and it is felt that they may be of use.

## Resources

	2003/04 out-turn	2004/05 planned	2005/06 proposed	2006/07 proposed	2007/08 proposed	2008/09 proposed
Capital						
Transitional/ LASHG	£702,000	£177,000	£0	£0	£0	£0
ADP	£838,181	£900,000	£900,000	£900,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000
Capital	£884,000	£790,000	£790,000	£790,000	£790,000	£790,000
receipts						
DFG's	£407,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000
Revenue						
General Council Revenue	£37,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,868,181</b>	<b>£2,297,000</b>	<b>£2,120,00</b>	<b>£2,120,000</b>	<b>£2,220,000</b>	<b>£2,220,000</b>

## Expenditure

	2003/04 out-turn	2004/05 planned	2005/06 proposed	2006/07 proposed	2007/08 proposed	2008/09 proposed
Capital						
Transitional/ LASHG	£702,000	£177,000	£0	£0	£0	£0
ADP	£838,181	£900,000	£900,000	£900,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000
Private sector renewal grants	£884,000	£790,000	£790,000	£790,000	£790,000	£790,000
DFG's	£407,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000
Revenue						
Support for HIA	£37,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,868,181</b>	<b>£2,297,000</b>	<b>£2,120,000</b>	<b>£2,120,000</b>	<b>£2,220,000</b>	<b>£2,220,000</b>

## Renew North Staffordshire Funding

### Direct Renew Funding

The table below outlines the direct revenue and capital Renew funding identified in the Prospectus for the full 15 year programme. A full breakdown of these costs is available in Table 24 of the Market Renew Prospectus, March 2004, which is available from Renew North Staffordshire on 01782 232024.

Area	AMI out-turn	Town Centre planned	Ex-coal board estates	Peripheral Estates (including Silverdale)	Chesterton	Galley's Bank/ Biddulph East
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Revenue	3,933	224	125	3,834	405	856
Capital	17,814	6,139	7,782	52,021	12,075	20,342

## Phase One Planned Expenditure

Project	Capital Expenditure Value in £000's		Project	Revenue Expenditure Value in £000's	
AMI	04-05		AMI	04-05	05-06
Voluntary Purchase	£309	£464	Stock Condition Survey	£100	
Clearance	£188	£281	Vulnerable Housing Needs Study		£10
Environmental Improvements	£150	£350	Resident's Friend	£30	£30
			Consultation	£30	£30
			Neighbourhood Wardens		
			Master Planning	£50	£50
			Community Architect	£30	£30

Project	Capital Expenditure Value in £000's		Project	Revenue Expenditure Value in £000's	
Newcastle Town Centre	04-05		Newcastle Town Centre	04-05	05-06
Group Repairs	£100	£150	Consultancy	£70	
Environmental Improvements		£100			

Project	Capital Expenditure Value in £000's		Project	Revenue Expenditure Value in £000's	
Chesterton	04-05		Chesterton	04-05	05-06
Environmental Improvements	£75	£175	Vulnerable Housing Needs Survey		£65
		£100	Retail Study	£30	
			Stock Condition Survey		£30
			Community Consultation	£20	£50

Project	Capital Expenditure Value in £000's		Project	Revenue Expenditure Value in £000's	
Galleys Bank/ Biddulph East	04-05		Galleys Bank/ Biddulph East	04-05	05-06
Site Acquisition	£20	£165	Master Planning	£30	£70£50
Property Acquisition	£90	£90			

Please note that these project proposals do not include the additional staffing requirements that are to be funded from the Renew Planning and Delivery Budget.

## Mechanisms for Delivery

### Social Housing Development Priorities

The Council and our partners recognise that the development of large-scale general needs social housing is not a priority. Over the forthcoming years our attention will be focussed upon three areas:

1. Rural housing

The provision of small-scale social housing to meet local needs identified through the relevant Parish Needs Surveys.

2. Regeneration

All housing schemes will be considered in line with the Renew Strategy.

3. Supported Housing

The Council recognises that although there is a need for supported housing within the Borough that it is difficult to deliver such schemes when revenue funding is not available. Through the development of the Staffordshire Supporting People Strategy the Council aims to ensure that Newcastle's needs are recognised and prioritised for any funding that becomes available in future years.

Approach to Site Identification

The Housing Strategy will conform to national guidance in the identification of potential areas and sites for development (Planning Policy Guidance 3). A systematic 'search sequence' will be employed. This begins with the re-use of previously developed land and buildings (Brownfield sites) within urban areas. It then moves on to areas on the urban fringe and concludes with new developments 'around nodes in good public transport corridors'. This will therefore ensure that any proposed development in the Borough will be situated in the most effective position for all parties. It also supports the current trend in city living and increasing the mix of uses in town centre buildings and areas as outlined in Planning Policy Statement 6.

Delivery Partners

Since stock transfer the Council has reviewed the way in which grant support is given to Registered Social Landlords to develop social housing within the Borough. In 2002, the Council in partnership with the Housing Corporation undertook a rigorous selection process to select 7 Joint Commissioning Partners who were chosen for their commitment to strategic partnership working, their development expertise and innovation, their track record of good management and maintenance of housing. In April 2004 one partner decided to withdraw from the Joint Commissioning Partnership as they wanted to lead in the development of growth areas in the south of England. The 6 current partners and their areas of development are listed below.

	Regeneration	Rural	Supported	General Needs
Aspire	✓	✓	✓	✓
Beth Johnson	✓	✓	✓	✓
Choices			✓	
Focus	✓		✓	✓
Staffordshire Housing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Touchstone		✓	✓	



The Council aims to deliver development priorities through supporting these Joint Commissioning Partners to bid for Annual Development Programme funding and other opportunities such as Regional and Pathfinder funding for appropriate developments. The Council is currently working with the Renew Team and Joint Commissioning Partners to establish the most effective ways of delivering the range of Renew interventions. This will include the preference being given to RSLs losing stock through intervention.

The Council is keen to ensure that the Joint Commissioning Partnership can be utilised to its full advantage to deliver any new service, including any new supported housing scheme commissioned through the Supporting People Programme.

The Council acknowledges that the Housing Corporation's Preferred Partnering Arrangements impacts on the operation of the Joint Commissioning Partnership. However, as all of the 6 partners wish to remain active in the Borough through either the traditional route or the new partnering arrangements it has been agreed that the Joint Commissioning Partnership should continue.

## Performance on social housing priorities from the 2001 Housing Strategy

Scheme	RSL	Spend and funding source	Targets	Outcome
Town Centre Rehabs	Staffordshire Housing	£ 240,000 ADP	Rehab of 5 houses	Completed July 2003
Market Stability across boundary with Stoke	Staffordshire Housing	£100,000 ADP	2 houses in Basford	Completed June 2003
Rural rehabs- Joint Commissioning 2002 - part of regional allocation 2003 - part of the regional allocation 2004	Beth Johnson	£96,123 ADP	2 houses in Loggerheads and Betley	Completed September 2003
		£131,756 ADP	2 houses in Loggerheads	Completed Spring 2004
		£150,000 estimate ADP	1 house in Loggerheads 1 house in Madeley Heath	Completed Spring 2005
Bradwell Lane	Staffordshire Housing	£124,854 ADP	6 flats on a small scale brown field site	Completed September 2003
Acquisition Programme (2000-2003)	Aspire	£1,560,000 LASHG	60 units over 3 years in high demand, rural and regeneration areas	58 properties completed
Parksite Rehabs	Beth Johnson	£348,844 ADP	Rehab of 5 houses	Completed September 2003
Stretton Road	Beth Johnson	£202,231 ADP and additional RCGF	New build 8 bungalows	Completed Spring 2004
Town Centre	Beth Johnson	£548,859 Transitional LASHG	Refurbishment of flats over shops and new build housing	Completed July 2004
Young Persons Scheme	Beth Johnson	£559,338 ADP and LASHG	Provision of highly supported accommodation	Scheme has not been developed due to Supporting People pipeline funding not being awarded

ADP - Annual Development Programme  
 LASHG - Local Authority Social Housing Grant  
 RCGF - Recycled Capital Grant Fund

# Performance

Best Value Performance Indicators relating to housing.

Indicator Description	Target 2003/04	Our Performance 2003/04	Target 2004/05	Our Performance 2004/05	Target 2005/06
<b>BV62</b> The proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of action by the LA	4.0%	4.07%	4.2%	3.9%	4.4%
<b>BV64</b> The number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned to occupation or demolished during the year as a direct result of action by the LA	22	28	24	23	26
<b>BV183</b> The average length of stay in					
a) B&B accommodation and	a) 1week	a) 0.35weeks	a) 1week	a) 1.2weeks	a) 1week
b) hostel accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need	b) 2weeks	b) 2.5weeks	b) 12weeks	b) 2.6weeks	b) 12weeks
<b>LI22</b> Number of unfit homes per 1000 dwellings	12.8	12.75	12.2	12.2	11.6
<b>LI23</b> Percentage of new homes built in the year which are affordable housing	No target set	7.1%	No target set	8.8%	No target set
<b>LI25</b> Percentage of new housing developed through rural exception policy	No target set	0%	No target set	0%	No target set
<b>LI26</b> Percentage of new homes permitted on previously developed land	95%	97.5%	90%	100%	90%

(Source: NBC Corporate Plan & Best Value Performance Plan 2004/05)

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# Consultation

## The process

To ensure this Strategy reflects the views of service providers and service users the Council has utilised a variety of consultation processes throughout the development of the Strategy.

## Key Stakeholders

As highlighted in earlier sections the main group that sets the priorities for the Housing Strategy is the Housing Forum, which is one of the theme groups for the Local Strategic Partnership. This group discussed a wide range of housing issues, these were prioritised and further improvements highlighted at further meetings.

Other groups that meet regularly to discuss specific housing topics have also contributed to this Strategy. For instance the Joint Commissioning Partnership which includes the Housing Corporation and the six preferred Registered Social Landlords has focussed on housing needs and the development of social housing to meet this need, particularly in the rural areas. In terms of specific client groups the Council participates in a range of groups including the Housing and Care Forum and the Learning Disabilities Partnership. Through these meetings the Council is able to gain the views of other agencies working with specific client groups.



## RSL Tenants

Through tenant panels RSLs operating in the Borough are able to gain the views of their tenants on housing services provided to them. This information can then be used by the RSL and the Council to alter local service delivery. For example when the Council was drafting a new allocations policy each RSL with stock in the Borough was consulted and they in turn were able to discuss the changes with their tenants. Aspire's tenants panel provided valuable comments on the changes to the allocation policy and questioned details within the policy such as housing young people. In response to this the RSLs were able to discuss with the tenants the availability of support services such as floating support and the use of introductory tenancies.

## Residents

The Council's newspaper 'The Reporter' is delivered to every household within the Borough and is used to advertise housing services and proposed changes to housing policies. Similarly the Council's website is used to provide easily

accessible electronic versions of all housing documents. During the development of new strategies the Council advertises when the draft strategy is available for public consultation and which is the most appropriate officer to contact for further information. For example The Reporter and the website were used to advertise the draft Homelessness Strategy and enabled residents to participate in the consultation process.

The Council's Housing Strategy Section participates in a range of open days throughout the year, through which the Housing Strategy and housing services are promoted. For example during open days the Housing Strategy Section aims to increase awareness with school children on the functions and responsibilities of the Council's strategic housing role. Other open days have included promoting energy efficiency schemes and the importance of energy efficiency to older residents who are often eligible for grants to improve home insulation.

During the consultation on the draft Housing Strategy the Council has a display in the main reception area advertising the consultation process. The display highlights the main priorities and actions proposed within the draft strategy. Draft strategies and comment forms are also available for people to consider the strategy in more detail.

## Members

Through the Cabinet and scrutiny system Councillors are able to question and change the priorities and actions proposed in the draft Housing Strategies. Councillors are able to ensure that the views of their local residents are represented. Councillors are often the first person that a local resident will contact when they have issues around service delivery, for example when a resident is in housing need the Councillor may contact the Homelessness and Housing Advice Service to seek further advice on the options available to the resident.

Through the experience of using the service Councillors are then able to recommend procedural changes and alter housing policies.



## Regional Participation

To ensure that this strategy is in line with the regional and sub-regional priorities the Council participates in a range of partnerships and attends specific conferences to participate in consultation events. This includes attending the regional conferences to discuss regional priorities. National, regional and sub-regional issues are also debated at the Staffordshire Policy Officers Group, where the local authority officers are able to discuss new ideas and share best practice. As an active member of the North Staffordshire Housing Alliance the Council is also able to directly influence the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy and consult other alliance members from the private, public and voluntary sector on the actions included in this strategy.

# Partners Involved

The partners listed below are all involved in the development of this strategy and other related policies through their membership of the Housing Forum. All draft strategies are sent directly to members for consultation.

- Age Concern

Ark

Beth Johnson HA

Choices HA

Connexions

Disability Solutions

Housing Corporation

Newcastle CAB

Newcastle Fire and Rescue

North Staffs Landlords Association

Police

Potteries HA

Prime Focus

Rethink

Salvation Army

Social Services

Staffordshire County Council

Supporting People Team
- Arch North Staffs

Aspire Housing

Chesterton Community Forum

Community Education

Directorate of Health Promotion

Gingerbread Centre

Lyme Trust

Newcastle CVS

Newcastle LSP

North Staffs YMCA

Poolfields & Mayfield Residents Assoc.

Primary Care Trust

Probation

Riverside HA

Shelter

Staffordshire Buddies

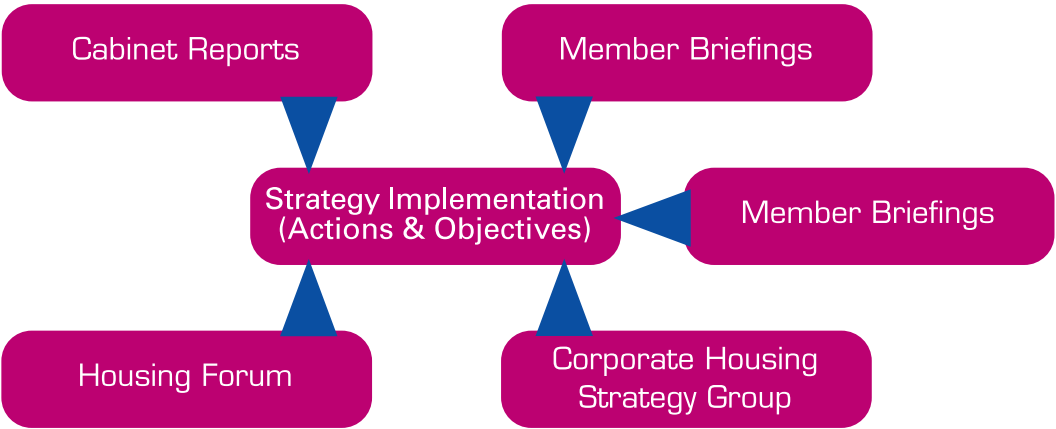
Staffordshire HA

Touchstone HA

These partners are also able to monitor the progress of this Strategy and other related strategies such as the Homelessness Strategy through their participation in the Housing Forum. To do this the action plan will form a key item on the Forums agenda, then if new ideas arise or progress on an issue is slow then these can be addressed in partnership with all the relevant agencies.

# Monitoring of the Strategy Implementation

The monitoring of the Housing Strategy actions and objectives can be illustrated using the diagram below.





This diagram shows how the Housing Forum and the Corporate Housing Strategy Group help to monitor the implementation of the Housing Strategy and assess whether targets and objectives are being met in accordance with the Housing Strategy. In addition to this members are kept up to date with progress of the Housing Strategy by cabinet reports and members briefings.

## Monitoring Quality of Services & User Satisfaction

The Council in conjunction with key partners undertakes a range of customer satisfaction surveys on a wider range of issues. For example through the Homelessness and Housing Advice Service the Council in partnership with Aspire conducts surveys of people who have used Newcastle Housing Advice. The results of these surveys are fed into service improvement plans to ensure that the service improves.

## Changes to this Strategy

Consideration has to be given to all recommendations made by consultees and a number of changes have been made throughout the Strategy.

In particular, there is more emphasis on the Renew programme and the potential radical changes this may make to housing in the Borough. Through written consultation housing providers which own stock within the Renew Intervention Area are keen to ensure that the Housing Strategy and Renew Strategy are interlinked to deliver compatible services.

Partners have highlighted that there is a continuing need for a rent guarantee scheme, this is recognised within the Homelessness Strategy.

Consideration is also given to future changes to the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme and the implications for the Joint Commissioning Partners have been acknowledged throughout this Strategy.

# Progress on the 2002 Strategy Update

**Objective 1:** To meet the Decent Homes Standard by improving the condition and energy efficiency of homes across all tenures

Priority Action	Resource	Target date	Strategic links	Outcome or Progress to date
To establish a shadow Board for the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder	Renew North Staffordshire	2003	Private Sector Renewal Strategy	The Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Board has been established.

**Objective 2:** To prevent homelessness and to ensure support for vulnerable people

Priority Action	Resource	Target date	Strategic links	Outcome or Progress to date
To review the homelessness, housing advice and housing register service	Borough Council	April 2003	Homelessness Act 2002	Consultants completed the review and the information was used to inform the new service specification and contract.
To monitor and review the Supporting People Programme	Borough Council, County Council, PCTs, Probation	April 2003	Supporting People	Programme inspected by Audit Commission 2003.
To consider future provision of supported housing in line with Supporting People Strategy	Borough Council, Joint Commissioning Partners, Housing Corporation	April 2003	Supporting People Programme	The 5 year Supporting People Strategy was approved in March 2005.

### Objective 3: To meet the Decent Homes Standard by improving the condition and energy efficiency of homes across all tenures

Priority Action	Resource	Target date	Strategic links	Outcome or Progress to date
To analyse the Stock Condition Survey	Borough Council	Oct 2002	Private Sector Renewal Strategy	Information used to inform the development of the Private Sector Housing Strategy, which was adopted in July 2003.
To prepare and adopt a new Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy	Borough Council	April 2003	Regulatory Reform Order 2002	Strategy was adopted in July 2003.
To review the policy on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)	Borough Council	Sept 2002	Private Sector Renewal Strategy	New policy adopted.
Assess the impact of the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System	Borough Council	Oct 2003	Regulatory Reform Order 2002	Impact was assessed in the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy, progress will now occur after the Housing Bill has been adopted.
Introduce a new inspection and regulation regime for caravan sites	Borough Council	April 2003	Private Sector Renewal Strategy	All sites are inspected at least once every three years.
To prepare and adopt a new Private Housing Enforcement Policy	Borough Council	July 2003	Regulatory Reform Order 2002	Policy adopted in 2003.
To ensure that RSLs adequately invest and address issues relating to their stock.	Borough Council and all RSLs	2002	Decent Homes Standard	Monitoring of the percentage of social housing meeting the decent homes standard.
To consider and tackle the problem of absentee landlords	Borough Council	2003/04	Private Sector Renewal Strategy	The Council is continuing to investigate the potential benefits of an Accredited Landlords Scheme. A new post has been created in 2005 to deliver this Accredited Landlord Scheme.

Objective 4: To provide a greater choice of affordable housing in response to residents needs				
Priority Action	Resource	Target date	Strategic links	Outcome or Progress to date
To analyse the Housing Stock Survey	Borough Council	2003	Local Strategic Partnership targets	SPSS has been used to analyse the survey results, further detailed analysis is limited by the statistical validity.
To agree a system for reporting, monitoring and updating housing needs information	Borough Council	2003	Local Plans	Housing Needs Model updated for 2002, 2003 and 2004.
To explore ways of increasing choice for rural communities	Borough Council	2003	Housing in rural England - Housing Corporation	Discussions with the Rural Joint Commissioning Partners have led to the agreement of the rolling programme of Parish Needs Surveys. The first 3 surveys have been completed.
To commit to 20 units through the LASHG programme	Borough Council and Aspire Housing	April 2003	Capital Strategy	14 properties purchased 2002/03; therefore total of 54 completed over 3 year programme. No further acquisitions due to the abolition of LASHG.

# Action Plan 2005 - 2010

The Action Plan breaks down each objective in the Housing Strategy into key areas, this therefore helps to assess progress towards the objectives and target dates. The Housing Strategy Team are responsible for tracking progress against the Action Plan. This will be done by creating an Annual Housing Position Statement, which will outline progress made for the year.

Objective 1: To improve the sustainability of areas in low demand						
Corporate Priority	Strategic Action	Milestones	Resource	Corporate and wider links	Target date	Progress to date
Improving housing quality and choice	<b>Area of Major Intervention</b> To undertake a Stock Condition Survey	To complete the survey on the private sector stock focussing on Knutton	Renew North Staffordshire - £35,000 revenue for new staffing. Borough Council - £4,140 revenue for existing staff commitment. Aspire Housing staff commitment £20,000 revenue.	Renew North Staffs	2004/05	The final report for the AMI was completed by April 2005.
Improving the quality and sustainability of the environment	To undertake a Housing Needs Study of vulnerable groups	To ensure that the needs of vulnerable people are recognised within the AMI			2004/05	The report was finalised in May 2005.
	To consult residents, appoint a residents friend and undertake master planning for the AMI	Appointment of residents friend by 2004/05 Commencement of master planning by 2004/05			2004 - 2009 and beyond	Stoke Citizen's Advice Bureau has been appointed to act as the residents friend for the AMI.
	To commence voluntary purchase of low demand housing	To voluntary purchase 6 properties in 2004/05 and 9 properties in 2005/06	Capital of £309,000 for 2004/05 and £464,000 for 2005/06		2004 - 2009 and beyond	
	To commence clearance	To clear 8 properties in 2004/05 and 12 properties in 2005/06	Capital of £188,000 for 2004/05 and £281,000 for 2005/06			

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Corporate Priority	Strategic Action	Milestones	Resource	Corporate and wider links	Target date	Progress to date
Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities	<b>Galleys Bank</b> To complete the options appraisal and commence the master planning for Galleys Bank (this is to be done in conjunction with Biddulph East)	To have consultants commissioned to commence the master planning by 2005/06	Renew North Staffs £7,000 revenue for new staffing. Borough Council - £4,140 revenue for existing staff commitment £100,000 revenue for masterplanning		March 2004-06	In March 2004 Consultants produced an options appraisal. The Council is continuing to discuss with the Renew team and the ODPM how Galleys Bank can be included in the Renew Prospectus Update.
Improving the quality and sustainability of the environment	To start purchasing properties and sites	To purchase 4 houses by 2005/06				
Reducing crime and the fear of crime	<b>Chesterton</b> To use a Community Architect to engage with the residents of Chesterton to decide how to regenerate the area	To have a high level master planning report by March 2004	Renew North Staffordshire - £7,000 revenue for new staffing. Borough Council - £4,140 revenue for existing staff commitment Revenue for consultancy and surveys of £195,000.		March 2004	Community Architect produced the report in March 2004.
Improving the quality and sustainability of the environment	To commission more detailed studies on the private sector housing condition, the needs of vulnerable residents and a retail study	To have the stock condition survey completed by 2005/06			2004-2009 and beyond	The survey is due to commence in May 2005.
		To have the vulnerable housing needs study completed by 2005/06				The report was finalised in May 2005
	To commence environmental improvements	To have the first phase of improvements completed in 2004/05	Capital of £250,000		2004-06	

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Corporate Priority	Strategic Action	Milestones	Resource	Corporate and wider links	Target date	Progress to date
Improving housing quality and choice	<b>Town Centre</b> To consult with all key stakeholders and residents on the Town Centre	To commission consultants by March 2004	Renew North Staffordshire - £7,000 revenue for new staffing.	Renew North Staffs	2004-06	The Council decided to undertake this work in-house rather than commission consultants. Public consultation was undertaken through an exhibition in April 2005.
Improving the quality and sustainability of the environment	To undertake group repair schemes on older terraced housing	To complete the first group repair scheme by 2005/06	Borough Council - £4,140 existing staff commitment		2004-06	The Council is due to complete the group repair scheme in 2005/06.
	To improve the environment of the area	To undertake the first environmental improvements by 2005/06	Revenue for consultancy of £70,000. Capital for group repairs of £250,000. Capital for environmental improvements of £100,000		2005/06	
Improving housing quality and choice	To co-ordinate the implementation of the Renew Prospectus for Newcastle	To appoint a Newcastle Co-ordinator by December 2004.	Renew North Staffordshire - £14,000 revenue for new staffing. Borough Council - £4,140 revenue for existing staff commitment	Renew North Staffordshire, Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy	2004	The Council has appointed a new team of 5 dedicated Renew staff to ensure that the programme is properly co-ordinated and implemented.
Improving the quality and sustainability of the environment	To review the Council's investment policies in line with an agreement of the Renew Prospectus	To direct the Council's investment as approved in the Area Action Plans as they are developed			2004-09	The implications are already being considered within this strategy, the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy and the Council Capital Strategy.

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Objective 2: To prevent homelessness and to ensure support is available to vulnerable people						
Corporate Priority	Strategic Action	Milestones	Resource	Corporate and wider links	Target date	Progress to date
Improving housing quality and choice	To consider and prioritise the need for supported housing in line with the development of Supporting People 5 Year Strategy	That the needs of vulnerable Newcastle residents are identified within the Supporting People Strategy.	Borough Council - £828 revenue funding through existing staffing commitment, Joint Commissioning Partners, Housing Corporation	Supporting People Programme	2004/05	The Council has participated in the Supporting People consultation roadshow to ensure that the needs of vulnerable Newcastle residents are reorganised. The Supporting People Strategy was submitted to ODPM in March 2005.
	To commission new supported housing in line with this Strategy and as funding becomes available	That when the Supporting People Team announces additional funding that the Council commissions new services previously identified			2005/06	
Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities	To work with Elizabeth House to investigate options and secure funding to refurbish the refuge building	To undertake a tendering exercise to find a suitable development partner	Borough Council - £828 revenue of existing staffing resources, Housing Corporation Capital funding through the Approved Development Programme	Homelessness Strategy, Community Safety Partnership, Domestic Violence Strategy, Supporting People	Refurbishment completed by 2006	The Council has supported Staffordshire Housing Association to make a capital bid to refurbish Elizabeth House in partnership with ARCH. Bids were made to the Homelessness Directorate's Domestic Violence fund and the Housing Corporation's Annual Development Programme. The bid for Homelessness Directorate funding was successful and the work is timetable to be undertaken in 2005/06.
Improving the quality and sustainability of the environment		To bid for capital funding to refurbish the refuge - Autumn 2004  To commission the refurbishment in partnership with ARCH North Staffs - Spring 2005  To secure temporary accommodation whilst the work is being undertaken - 2005/06  To complete the refurbishment - 2007	Homelessness Directorate of approx £580,000, ARCH North Staffs, Staffordshire Housing Association capital funding of £68,000			

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Corporate Priority	Strategic Action	Milestones	Resource	Corporate and wider links	Target date	Progress to date
Improving housing quality and choice  Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities	To work towards the completion of actions highlighted within the Homelessness Strategy (A full Action Plan is available within the Homelessness Strategy)	To create a group to drive forward the Action Plan	Borough Council - £5,520 revenue of existing staffing resources, Social Services, housing and support providers	Homelessness Act 2002	2003-08	The 3 authorities have formed a group and meet quarterly to review progress of all 3 Homelessness Strategies.
	To raise awareness of the homelessness services available to rural people	To visit 2 Parish Councils per year			2004/05	Whilst undertaking Parish Housing Needs Surveys the Council has been promoting the homelessness services in conjunction with Aspire.
	Identify and develop training programmes for relevant agencies to improve joint working and service provision	To develop a training plan with the relevant organisations			2004/06	Training has commenced for agencies on the new multi-agency youth homelessness protocol.
	To improve monitoring of services provided to homeless people	Implementation of monitoring form for all service providers by 2005			2004/06	Each voluntary organisation that receives a grant from the Council provides quarterly statistical returns.
	Ensure that all emergency accommodation used by the Borough Council is inspected	All emergency accommodation is inspected every year			Annually	Commencing 2004.

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### Objective 3: To meet the Decent Homes Standard by improving the condition and energy efficiency of homes across all tenures

Corporate Priority	Strategic Action	Milestones	Resource	Corporate and wider links	Target date	Progress to date
Increasing prosperity and economic vitality Improving the quality of life and health of residents	To adopt a North Staffordshire Affordable Warmth Strategy	To seek Cabinet approval in December 2004	Borough Council - £1,380 revenue met through existing staffing. £3,000 revenue for the consultants funded through the energy efficiency budget	Home Energy Conservation Act 1995	December 2004	The three North Staffordshire Local Authorities appointed a consultant to assist in the production of the strategy. The Strategy was approved by the Council in March 2005.
	To conclude the Healthy Homes Scheme	That the budget for the scheme is fully spent by 2004/05	Borough Council, Stoke CC, Staffs Moorlands DC, Scottish Power	Home Energy Conservation Act 1995	2004	Across North Staffordshire the scheme has delivered £133,000 of energy efficiency improvements (including management costs).
	To establish a Boiler scheme for private sector tenants	To launch a low cost loan scheme to enable private sector tenants to buy a boiler system by December 2004  To install 50 boilers in North Staffs by 2006	£2,760 revenue of existing staffing resources from Borough Council, Stoke CC, Staffs Moorlands DC, EAGA Partnership, Staffordshire Housing, £90,000 revenue	Home Energy Conservation Act 1995	2004-06  2006	All parties have signed an agreement and a waiting list of suitable applicants has been established. The costs of the boilers remain an issue and the Council is currently working with the partners to consider ways to reduce the costs.
Improving the quality of life and health of residents	To support the Health Through Warmth Scheme	To install energy efficiency measures to 140 homes	Capital £30,000 and £1,380 revenue of existing staffing resources from Borough Council, Local GPs, Beat The Cold, Utility Companies are to match fund, plus NPower are paying the admin costs £15,000	Home Energy Conservation Act 1995	March 2005	The referral procedures and delivery mechanisms are tried and tested through the success of the Healthy Homes Scheme. By March 2005 the scheme had delivered 50 energy efficiency measures including cavity wall insulation and loft insulation.
Increasing prosperity and economic vitality Improving the quality of life and health of residents	To increase the take up of the Warm Front Grants	To complete a targeted mail shot to 4,000 residents on benefits by 2005	Borough Council and EAGA Partnership, £500 revenue from existing Borough Council staffing commitment	Home Energy Conservation Act 1995	2004/05	Leaflets advertising the scheme are now included with all correspondence with private sector landlords and tenants.

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#### Objective 4: To provide a greater choice of housing in response to residents needs

Corporate Priority	Strategic Action	Milestones	Resource	Corporate and wider links	Target date	Progress to date
Improving housing quality and choice	To commission a new Borough wide Housing Needs Survey within 5 years of the existing survey	To undertake specific area needs surveys through the Renew North Staffordshire programme	Borough Council £60,000 revenue for consultants fees.	Supporting People	2007/08	The last housing needs survey was completed in 2002.
Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities		To seek a Cabinet approved budget for the full Borough survey by 2006	Borough Council revenue for existing staff commitment			
		To commission consultants to carry out a Borough wide survey by 2007				
Improving housing quality and choice	To undertake a rolling programme of Parish Housing Needs Surveys	2003 Audley Whitmore	Borough Council - stationery £1,260 & Staffing £2,560, Parish Councils, Rural Joint	Section 106 Supplementary Planning Guidance	2003 - 2007	Parish Surveys in Audley and Whitmore are been undertaken in 2003/04. The results have been analysed and reported to the relevant Parish Council.
Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities		2004 Betley Loggerheads Mow Cop	Commissioning Partners - stationery £1,260 & £225 Revenue absorbed through existing staffing			The Loggerheads and Mow Cop / Dales Green surveys were completed in 2004 and 2005.
		2005 Keele Madeley				
		2006 Chapel Hill and Chorlton				
		2007 Maer				
		Once the completed surveys have been received they can be analysed and recommendations made within a report				

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Corporate Priority	Strategic Action	Milestones	Resource	Corporate and wider links	Target date	Progress to date
Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities	To commit resources to working with the Supporting People Team to ensure that the needs of vulnerable client groups are recognised and prioritised within the Staffordshire 5 year Supporting People Strategy	In the consultation process  To have Newcastle recognised within the draft strategy	Borough Council - £1,380 Revenue through existing staff commitment  County Council, support providers	Supporting People	2004/05	The Strategy was approved by the Council in March 2005.
Improving housing quality and choice	To adopt a new Joint Allocations Policy	To seek Cabinet approval then establish a new housing register, application form and alter the computerised points system	Borough Council - £4,140 revenue through existing staff commitment, all RSLs	Homelessness Strategy and Homelessness Act 2002	2004/05	Planned to begin with the new housing register contract in September 2004. Cabinet approved the policy in March 2004.
Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities	To monitor and improve the nominations procedure	To review the Joint Allocations Policy in 2006/07  To establish proper recording mechanisms	Borough Council - £1,380, all RSLs	Homelessness Strategy	2004/05	To begin with the new housing register contract.
Improving housing quality and choice	To produce an Older Person's Strategy	To gain the views of the key stakeholders  To consult on a draft strategy during 2004  To adopt the strategy in March 2005	Borough Council - £5,520 revenue met through existing staffing	Housing Strategy	2004/05	Initial discussions have begun with stakeholders.
Reducing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities						

### Tracking Progress on the Action Plan

Government Office priority to outline what arrangements are in place to track progress on the Action Plan	To ensure that progress is made against the objectives and actions set out in the Action Plan	Annual housing position statements to be completed each year	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council staff	Housing Strategy	Ongoing	The current system works well; there is a Housing Forum and a Corporate Housing Strategy Group. Minutes from this meeting are sent to Chief Officers. Members are also informed via cabinet reports and members' briefings.
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# Glossary

ADP	Approved Development Programme
ALMO	Arms-Length Management Organisation
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
B&B	Bed & Breakfast
BBU	Bed & Breakfast Unit
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CIH	Chartered Institute of Housing
CPO	Compulsory Purchase Order
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CURS	Centre for Urban and Regional Studies
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
DHS	Decent Homes Standard
EAGA	Energy Action Grants Agency
EDMO	Empty Dwelling Management Orders
EU	European Union
HA	Housing Association
HC	Housing Corporation
HFS	Housing Fitness Standard
HIA	Home Improvement Agency
HIP	Housing Investment Programme
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
HMRP	Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder
HNS	Housing Needs Survey
HOMES	Housing Organisations' Mobility & Exchange Services
HRA1	Housing Revenue Account
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
IT	Information Technology
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LA21	Local Agenda 21
LASHG	Local Authority Social Housing Grant
LGA	Local Government Association
LLTI	Limiting Long Term Illness
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
LSVT	Large Scale Voluntary Transfer
NAP	Neighbourhood Action Plan
NMI	Neighbourhood Management Initiative
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPS	Planning Policy Statement

PSA	Public Service Agreement
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure (for energy-efficiency rating)
SP	Supporting People
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats analysis
TA	Temporary Accommodation

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# Contact Details for Relevant Strategies

All of the relevant Strategies can be viewed on the Council's Website:

[www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)

The Council's website has 2 awards for its accessibility. The first is the RNIB accessible website mark, which means that the website is accessible to anyone regardless of their abilities or the technology they use. The Council's website also has the Internet Crystal Mark from the Plain English Campaign. This means that the language used will be easy to understand and act upon.

If you wish to discuss the content of any of this or any other strategy please contact the lead officers.

## Housing Strategy

Joanne Basnett

Principal Housing Strategy Officer

Tel: 01782 742451

E-mail: [joanne.basnett@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.basnett@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)

## Homelessness Strategy

Caroline Abel

Housing Strategy Officer

Tel: 01782 742456

E-mail: [caroline.abel@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:caroline.abel@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)

## Allocations Policy and Housing Needs Survey

Neil Macleod

Housing Strategy Officer

Tel: 01782 742468

E-mail: [neil.macleod@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:neil.macleod@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)

## HECA Reporting and Affordable Warmth Strategy

Robin Fletcher

Housing Strategy Officer

Tel: 01782 742455

E-mail: [robin.fletcher@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:robin.fletcher@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)

## Private Sector Renewal Strategy and Stock Condition Survey

Mike O'Connor

Principal Environmental Health Officer (Housing)

Tel: 01782 742564

E-mail: [mike.o'connor@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:mike.o'connor@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)

# Comment Form for Newcastle's Housing Strategy 2005

Please complete this form and return it to:

Joanne Basnett, Principal Housing Strategy Officer;  
Regeneration and Planning Services, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council,  
Civic Offices, Merrial Street, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 2AG.

Alternatively please email your comments to:  
[joanne.basnett@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.basnett@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)

Name:

Organisation:

Telephone:

Do you agree with the Council Priorities?

Which issues should be given greater priority? Why?

Does the format of the Strategy enable you to find the subject areas you are interested in?

Is the layout of the Strategy easily readable and accesible?

Do you feel that the Strategy considers all the possible options for housing problems in the Borough?

Is the Strategy based on a realistic assesment of the resources available to the Council and its partners?

If you would like to discuss the Strategy in more detail and would like us to contact you to arrange a meeting, please tick the box.