

PRIORISATION FOR HOUSING THEME

Compiled by Mary Ridgway, South Hams District Council

Background

Partnership working is well established in the Housing Sector. The DSCS provides an opportunity to build on the links within the Housing sector and to strengthen the links with other sectors and disciplines.

1. Who We Are - The Housing Partnerships in Devon

One consultee called for clearer identification of the partners in the development process of this strategy.

Devon Strategic Housing Group has led on this theme to date and comprises all the Devon Districts, the 2 Unitaries, the County, Registered Social Landlord representatives and representatives from the main funding body, the Housing Corporation. DSHG has recently merged with the Rural Housing Partnership which widens its influence and brings closer engagement with the voluntary/community sector through the Rural Community Council and RSL partners. Devon's Housing partnerships are diverse and increasingly are required to work across District and County boundaries with much of the policy framework being set at the regional level, particularly with regard to investment.

The launch event for this new, broader partnership is 19th July 2007 which fitted well with the original timescale of 2 August for the interim decision on priorities. It is anticipated that this event which will draw in a wide range of stakeholders could be used to inform the housing priorities for the DSCS.

We would therefore ask that some flexibility is built into the DSCS process for the Housing theme in order to allow results from the 19th July Annual Housing Forum event to inform the priorities and linkages, particularly the more detailed actions and initiatives taken forward through the DSCS.

2. What We Area Being Asked To Do - Government's Housing Policy Goal

Affordable Housing is high on the list of government priorities. The PPS3 statement below summaries government policy and follows considerable consultation (e.g. Work from the Commission for Rural Communities) and would appear to reflect the mood of the public and captures some of the feedback points made to the consultation on the DSCS evidence base for the Housing theme. The priorities within this theme reflect this policy objective

Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Housing p6

'Strategic housing policy objectives

9. The Government's key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. To achieve this, the Government is seeking:

HOUSING THEME

WHAT WE NEED TO DO:

Issue One - Increasing Housing Delivery

Why was the high level strategic issue chosen? (using evidence base and theme lead's expertise on subject area)

There is a severe housing crisis in Devon which has long term implications for the sustainability of our communities and for many of the other themes in this strategy. This is evidenced clearly by the housing affordability ratios for Devon.

What We Need To Do:

<p>1. Increase the Supply of All Housing</p>	<p>To address the imbalance we need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve the increased delivery levels identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Housing Market Assessments. • Adopt a whole market approach (social rent, low cost housing, intermediate, open market and private rented) which requires an increase in cross-disciplinary and inter-authority partnership working. • Ensure ownership of the problem by both public and private sectors and a commitment to jointly address the issue
<p>2. Maximise the funding available for new housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is limited and it is important to make best use of all the funding streams available (e.g. Regional Housing Pot, LA grant, Second Homes Funds, RSL subsidy, s106 contributions). • Funding must be used as efficiently and effectively as possible. This requires improvement in the joint working between sectors, local authorities and departments within local authorities to maximise the resources available and ensure that existing assets are used for the widest community benefit.
<p>3. Match Up the Capital and Revenue Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities for capital funding for housing for vulnerable client groups need to be aligned with the revenue funding necessary to ensure service delivery and the financial sustainability of such housing..
<p>4. Improve Consistency in Policies and in the Capacity to Deliver</p>	<p>Support is needed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the consistency in Local Authority policies, practice and evidence base used, • Enable greater sharing of good practice between Devon's Local Authorities and, • Facilitate their engagement in a wide range of partnerships.
<p>5. Minimise delays and barriers to delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be successful in bids for capital funding from the Regional Pot, housing schemes must be 'oven ready' and only bids that demonstrate certainty of delivery will be supported. • It is therefore critical that the necessary infrastructure (highways, transport, health, schools etc) is frontloaded to deliver sustainable housing solutions. • It is critical to achieve coordination between authorities, disciplines and sectors to ensure this certainty and to minimise delays that could jeopardise funding This is particularly important in a two tier Local Authority structure where a range of protocols between the key agencies are needed to ensure delays in delivery are minimised.

6. Ensure Supply in Rural Area and support Innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of funding for new housing is focused on the growth points and larger urban areas. Funding for rural areas is more limited and innovations that deliver housing without grant or with reduced grant need to be supported. • Strategies and actions underpinning delivery must be sufficiently rural proofed.
7. Be clear about WHERE the housing goes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where housing is delivered is critical to the creation of sustainable communities and it is important that we have the right tools to determine the spatial priorities for investment and to ensure appropriate supply in the right locations. • Delivery of affordable housing depends on effective use of the planning system e.g. the Local Development Frameworks and section 106 agreements. Viable sites, with planning permission, are required within appropriate timescales in order to meet the needs of all sections of the community and to deliver a mix and choice of housing across all tenures.
8. Make Better use of the Housing we already have	Increasing delivery is not the only solution we need joint strategies to make best use of the existing housing stock in Devon – see Issue 3
9. Tackle Low Incomes	We need to make links with economic strategies to address the impact of the low wage economy that prevails in many parts of Devon, where low incomes inhibit entry to the housing market.

Why the particular contributory (linked) issues have been chosen? (using the evidence base and the theme leads' expertise on their subject areas)

Housing is a cross cutting issue with strong linkages to all of the themes within the DSCS.

There is still a debate needed on the risks presented by the possible fragmentation of the Housing Theme for vulnerable Adults, Children and Young People and Older People and the absence of information on these themes makes it difficult for the Housing theme to make the appropriate connection in these key areas where Housing has very strong links.

- **Children and young people** - The provision of affordable homes, built to a decent standard, are key components in successful health and education outcomes for children and young people. Access to housing, as well as measures to prevent homelessness and offer housing advice targeted at the client group is an important factor in reducing homelessness and keeping young people within family structures. Provision needs to be informed by a clear understanding of young people's housing needs and the wider family, lifestyle and education issues that are often contributory factors in homelessness.
- **Culture** - The quality and design of both new homes and new housing schemes helps reinforce Devon's sense of place –its landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage. The quality of design also influences people's experience of their community, environment and wellbeing.

- **Economy** - A balanced housing market is crucial to the retention of skilled and key workers and to support the economic growth forecast for Devon. In order to deliver the housing it is essential that the infrastructure requirements are also addressed. Matching housing delivery and infrastructure provision is essential for a vibrant SW economy
- **Environment and Energy** – From 2008 all new housing funded via the Regional Housing Pot must meet the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 and the draft RSS proposes increasing this requirement to level 4. This will contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions. In addition, greater efficiency in energy and water use can help tackle fuel and water poverty. A clear understanding is needed of any potential cost implications of the increase in these standards and the balance that is required between quality and quantity of housing developed given the context of limited funding. Innovative design and procurement solutions should be encouraged and best practice shared.

The desire to reduce dependence on the private car and to encourage more sustainable modes of travel underpins planning and economic development strategies. Making housing available at those locations where economic growth is expected to be greatest produces the opportunity [in the longer term] of a better balance between homes and jobs, reducing long distance commuting and offering the potential to maximise use of sustainable transport, thereby cutting overall emissions of carbon dioxide.

Increased delivery of housing will also need to be tested for its impact on the environment at the local level, with appropriate assessment and mitigation measures put in place.

- **Health** - Improving the quality and affordability of housing will deliver a range of health outcomes particularly for children and young families, older people. Homelessness is a significant factor affecting health e.g. The health issues for babies and children in bed and breakfast accommodation are well established. Lifetime homes that are designed to be adaptable to the changing needs of the occupier over a lifetime can make an important contribution to people's opportunity to retain independence by staying in their own homes and receiving care and support.
- **Older people** - The Housing needs of older people have an important impact on the costs of health and care provision and greater investment is needed in the development of suitable housing such as extra care and sheltered housing, maintaining and improving the existing stock and developing range of housing support services for older people. There needs to be strong linkages between the older persons theme and housing theme to ensure that not only is the right type and amount of older persons housing provided but that this sits alongside a comprehensive understanding of the existing stock availability and suitability for older persons.
- **Rural issues** - The sustainability of many of Devon's rural communities is threatened by lack of access to both affordable and entry level housing for those working in the rural economy, increasing travel to work distances for rural workers, weakening family and community networks and increasing overcrowding and the poor housing conditions of those households on low to moderate incomes. There is a need to address the aspirations of rural communities for affordable housing that arises through the community planning process.
- **Safer Devon**- Well designed space, security of homes and the development of balanced and mixed communities all make an important contribution to

Safer and Sustainable communities. Housing is a key partner within the Safer Communities partnership and BVP1225 sets clear targets in this area.

- **Stronger Communities** - Access to an affordable home is a significant factor in community cohesion, health and education opportunities. Housing Authorities work closely with their Housing Association partners to improve the management of social housing stock and neighbourhoods. Ensuring a mix of housing is a key component in the creation of sustainable, cohesive communities.
- **Transport and Access** - Access to housing within reasonable proximity to place of work is important in reducing the high average travel to work distances in many parts of Devon. Better understanding of the links between the sustainability of rural communities, housing provision and transport is needed in order to inform planning and investment priorities.

How the findings of the Evidence Base Theme Reports, Check For sensitivity to equality has informed the issue

- The equality issues identified in the Red Door Associates are acknowledged and discussion is needed as to which theme some of the gaps identified are best addressed e.g. Travellers and Gypsy sites, Migrant workers. We need to be very clear as to how Housing issues for vulnerable groups, older people and young people are addressed in the separate themes that have been developed for those groups.

How the contributions made during the public consultation of the evidence base have been integrated within/dealt with?

- The analysis of comments show strong support for increasing delivery and a whole market approach i.e. to look across all sectors not just social housing.
- There is a call for particular emphasis on rural housing solutions to offset the bias towards provision in larger urban areas and to address the lower incomes in many rural areas. There is also support for the continuation of the Rural Housing Enabler programme in Devon to enable delivery.
- Many of the points raised relate to more detailed issues that can be dealt with as actions under the umbrella of the strategic issues identified. e.g. A call for more consistency in s106 negotiations and prioritisations of such contributions for affordable housing.

Issue Two - Reducing Homelessness

Why was the high level strategic issue chosen? (using evidence base and theme lead's expertise on subject area)

The shortage of good quality, affordable housing is a significant cause of homelessness and overcrowding.

What We Need To Do;

1. Prevent Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities are required by government to reduce the number of statutory homeless acceptances and to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. In order to deliver against these targets Devon needs to increase the housing options for households who are
-------------------------	--

	homeless or threatened with homelessness. This requires Local Authorities to develop partnerships to continue to increase and improve current homelessness prevention initiatives and work to increase access to alternative accommodation e.g. private rented sector.
2. Improve and Join up the Services for the client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness need access to the right kind and level of support to enable them to sustain accommodation independently. • More inter-agency working, particularly between Local Housing Authorities and Social Services is required to ensure homeless people have access to consistent levels of advice, support and referrals across Devon.
3. Improve access to settled accommodation in the private and public sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we are to reduce homelessness we must ensure that a high proportion of the new affordable homes benefits homeless people while maintaining sustainable communities • Joint working can help promote strategies that enable more alternative accommodation e.g. in the private rented sector.
4. Provide Support to enable tenancies to be sustained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate, cross authority links between Supporting People services such as floating support and homelessness strategies are needed to ensure that homeless households are given sufficient support to enable them to sustain their tenancies
5. Deliver solutions for Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable young people to stay close to their communities and social networks. • Enable young people to sustain their tenancies. • Improve joint working between Local Authorities and County services for Children and young people to improve homelessness prevention initiatives. • Provide more housing options for young people particularly in rural areas.

Why the particular contributory (linked) issues have been chosen? (using the evidence base and the theme leads' expertise on their subject areas)

- **Children and young people** -. Provision of new housing for young people is an important factor in reducing homelessness in young people. There is an important rural dimension in that the provision of housing solutions in the localities where they arise may help to retain younger people in their rural communities, close to social networks and support.
As part of the homelessness prevention work we need to examine the support needs of young people to enable them to sustain tenancies or to remain within the family home, this calls for resourcing of more joint working and development of protocols with Supporting People, the Children's Trust and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board.
- **Economy** - Retention of young people is essential for a vibrant rural economy. The prevention of homelessness can help stop the drift of younger

people to the city. The provision of solutions in the localities where they arise may help to retain younger people in their rural communities, close to social networks and support.

- **Environment and Energy** –greater efficiency in energy and water use can help tackle fuel and water poverty in lower income households, multiple debts including fuel and water debts can be a contributory factor to loss of tenancy.
- **Health** - Homelessness is a significant factor affecting health e.g. the health issues for babies and children in bed and breakfast accommodation are well established.
- **Older people** – When the information is available we need to check that the older persons theme picks up on homelessness issues facing older people.
- **Safer Devon-** We need to understand better the links between homelessness to domestic violence and the need to develop and implement effective protocols to enable the provision of safe housing and support services both in the long and short term.
- **Transport and Access** - providing permanent/ temporary accommodation outside of the rural areas places vulnerable people away from their support networks.

How the findings of the Evidence Base Theme Reports, Check For sensitivity to equality has informed the issue

- The high level strategic objectives to reduce homelessness should cover the more detailed points raised regarding specific initiatives or actions needed e.g. safe housing in situations of domestic violence, understanding of migrant workers housing needs and monitoring the impact of new government homelessness prevention measures.

How the contributions made during the public consultation of the evidence base have been integrated within/dealt with?

- Separate comment from Exeter City by email strongly supports inclusion of Homelessness reduction as an issue and they would particularly like to see the reduction in youth homelessness highlighted. Exeter use the work done on the LPSA target for reducing homelessness among young people as an example of the benefits of partnership working. There is a strong call for better alignment of Supporting People strategies and contracts to ensure provision of emergency accommodation and facilitation of referrals of young people to supported accommodation as well as a call for more work on the 'pathways' for young people to settled accommodation.

Issue Three – Making More Efficient Use of Existing Stock

Why was the high level strategic issue chosen? (using evidence base and theme lead's expertise on subject area)

Solutions to the use of the existing stock can be regarded as the 'green' alternative to new build. Making better use of what we have is the other side of the coin to building more Housing and is equally important to increasing the supply of housing. This is supported by the feedback on the evidence base and consultation with DSHG partners.

What We Need To Do:

<p>1. Make best Use of the Social Housing Stock</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve joint working between Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords to ensure efficient social lettings policies. ▪ Improve joint working between Local Authorities, Supporting People, Housing Associations and housing support providers, to develop effective strategies for moving people on from supported housing schemes to greater independent living. ▪ Encourage downsizing within the social housing stock e.g. develop a pool of funding to provide incentives and support for the release of under occupied homes. ▪ Increase the use of choice based lettings schemes ▪ Commission work to look at alternative uses of redundant 'sheltered housing' schemes across Devon.
<p>2. Make best Use of the Private Rented Stock and iOpen Market Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop joint actions for improving access to the private rented sector. ▪ Develop actions for managing the impact of second homes and holiday lets in those communities that are worse affected. ▪ Monitor the numbers of empty homes to ensure that they do not exceed that level required for the market to operate efficiently. ▪ Build effective links with the private sector housing ▪ Improve private sector housing conditions (see Issue 4) There is a strong link between LAs use of the private rented sector in homeless prevention strategies and the need to improve the quality of the private rented sector and make better use of the stock.

Why the particular contributory (linked) issues have been chosen? (using the evidence base and the theme leads' expertise on their subject areas)

This paper cannot comment on the housing needs of older persons or young people as we have not yet had sight of the priorities for those themes. However, theme leads experience would suggest that issues such as Housing Benefit thresholds for young people in private renting is creating difficulties and a substantial piece of work is needed to underpin a robust partnership approach to housing options for older people across Devon.

- **Economy** - maximise the use of the whole housing stock is important for a healthy economy
- **Environment and Energy** – maximise existing stock is the green alternative to new build and reduction in carbon emissions

- **Transport and Access** –existing stock often has better access to existing infrastructure and improving existing stock is an efficient way to improve access.

How the findings of the Evidence Base Theme Reports, Check For sensitivity to equality has informed the issue

The Red Door report refers to the inequalities of access to the private rented sector and supported independent living for disabled and elderly people as well as the impact of the new homelessness prevention initiatives on vulnerable groups. LAs are required to make use of the private sector in their homeless prevention strategies and this does imply a need to develop clear joint strategies to improve housing conditions and housing support services in the private sector particularly the private rented sector.

How the contributions made during the public consultation of the evidence base have been integrated within/dealt with?

The draft evidence base summarised this issue as:

‘The increase in demand for affordable housing is unlikely to be met by increasing supply alone. Strategies and joint working is needed in order to make better use of the existing stock. This will involve reducing the amount of long term empty homes, monitoring the level of Right to Buy Sales, having efficient social lettings policies, encouraging the development of good quality, well managed, private rented sector and developing appropriate policy responses for managing the impact of second homes and holiday lets and enabling appropriate move-on from supported housing schemes’.

Comments on the Housing theme show strong support for this approach calling for joint action to reduce under occupation, encouraging downsizing through a pooled fund, strategies to reduce empty homes, support for the increased use of choice based lettings schemes, commissioning of work to look at alternative uses of redundant ‘sheltered housing’ schemes and a call for more emphasis on strategies to improve private sector housing conditions.

Issue Four - Achieving Good Quality Homes.

Why was the high level strategic issue chosen? (using evidence base and theme lead's expertise on subject area.

If we increase Supply it is important that the supply is of good quality. Poor quality housing can contribute to homelessness. By 2010 government requires that 70% of vulnerable households in the private sector will live in decent homes

What We Need to Do:

<p>1. Improve the quality of New Build Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If more housing is to be built, at higher densities it is important to mitigate the impact of development on the environment and climate change through good design and improvements in energy efficiency. Recent CABE research identified the SW has having poor quality housing design. ▪ Promote good practice such as the use of Design Codes and Design Review Panels, increase the percentage of new affordable housing meeting the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 and increase the number of new homes built to lifetime homes standards. ▪ Promote the use of sustainable materials and modern methods of construction. ▪ Disseminate learning from exemplar projects so that the development of sustainable housing can be made more cost efficient and therefore incorporated into volume delivery of housing. ▪ Ensure that public agencies lead by example in the commissioning of their own developments.
<p>2. Improve the Quality of Existing Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvements to existing homes can make an important contribution to greater energy efficiency. This can be achieved by ensuring all homes in the social sector meet the Decent Homes standard by 2010 as required, by working jointly to increase the proportion of homes in the private sector that meet Decent Homes Standard. ▪ Tackle the poor quality of private rental accommodation through Supporting People and Home Improvement Agency targets. ▪ Develop stronger links with the work on affordable warmth and private sector renewal work. ▪ Ensure all housing in the social sector meets Decent Homes Standard by 2010.
<p>3. Agree Funding Priorities</p>	<p>This calls for partnership working across Devon and joint agreement on the priorities for investment between new build and funding for Decent Homes. At present this is determined regionally but more work could be considered on pooled capital funding and making better linkages between capital investment and revenue funding for support services particularly Supporting People funding.</p>

:

Why the particular contributory (linked) issues have been chosen? (using the evidence base and the theme leads' expertise on their subject areas)

- **Culture** - The quality of existing homes also helps reinforce Devon's sense of place –The quality of regeneration and improvements also influences people's experience of their community, environment and wellbeing.
- **Economy** - Regeneration whether urban or rural must involve improvement in the housing stock. Housing initiatives to bring stock back into use can be important drivers in regeneration e.g. through Community Land Trusts
- **Environment and Energy** – Strong links between improving existing stock and reduction in carbon emissions.
- **Health** – strong link between decent homes and health outcomes
- **Safer Devon and Stronger Communities** – delivering stock improvement in the private sector can contribute to wider regeneration objectives, improving the sense of security both within home and community
- **Transport and Access** –existing stock often has better access to existing infrastructure and improving existing stock is an efficient way to improve access.

How the findings of the Evidence Base Theme Reports, Check For sensitivity to equality has informed the issue

In there analysis of gaps the quality of stock was not mentioned.

How the contributions made during the public consultation of the evidence base have been integrated within/dealt with?

Consultees comments called for more emphasis on improvements to the existing Housing stock. These points have been incorporated.