

For Insertion in the Sustainable Communities Strategy Summary of the Central Bedfordshire Housing Strategy Housing 2010

House prices over the last few years have followed national trends in rising disproportionately to earnings. The current economic climate has meant that house prices have fallen slightly but have had little impact on making houses more affordable. There is a linked risk of homelessness due to the economic conditions and a key objective of a housing strategy will include prevention of homelessness.

Central Bedfordshire is part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth area with an increase in population and jobs expected for the area. This means around 60,000 additional homes are needed by 2031 in Central Beds. Much of the housing growth is being delivered through the planned sustainable urban extensions focused on Bedford in the north and Luton, Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard in the south.

Housing plays an important role in meeting the corporate objectives of Central Bedfordshire Council in the following ways: -

- Meeting the housing needs is key in ensuring an ageing population is cared for and supported.
- Housing is a key factor in the feeling of stability for children and ensures that they can take full advantage of education because they are settled in a stable home.
- Housing contributes to effective community development and community cohesion by good planning, design and also ensuring mixed tenure developments which promotes inclusion.
- The provision of decent homes is a key government target because it has been recognised as forming an important part of healthily lifestyles and general wellbeing.

What is the Strategic Housing Role?

Government has defined a council strategic housing role as:-

- Assessing and planning for housing need across all tenures by regularly reviewing and updating data sources
- Make best use of existing stock to meet need, through greater local discretion in access and lettings of social housing stock to make it more mixed in terms of type, size, affordability and tenure
- Plan and facilitate new housing supply to meet local priorities for dwelling size and location.
- Plan and commission housing support services which link homes and housing support services
- Improve current stock include review of sheltered housing is fit for purpose.
- Ensure effective housing and neighbourhood management through partnership working

6 key objectives have been identified for the Housing Strategy 2010 and these are:

Key Strategic Objective 1: Deliver successful and sustainable development

Assessing current and future need for affordable housing and demand for market housing. This will be in the form of continuous tracking and analysing key trends and dynamics in housing markets.

- Identifying housing priorities reflecting trends and views of local people and stakeholders.
- Ensure opportunities to deliver new housing units are maximised and working with partners and stakeholders to ensure suitable housing is delivered.
- Ensure the opportunities to maximise rural housing delivery are explored and accessed.
- Policies in 2 Local Development Frameworks, the Core Strategies and Development Management Policies (DPD) are delivered.
- Assess the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travellers and ensure site improvement and provision to meet those needs.
- To ensure work with Partners, developers and stakeholders results in the provision of lifetime and accessible homes.

We are required to report on NI 154 through the Local Area Agreement on the number of net additional homes delivered. Although there is no specific requirement to report on affordable homes it is still a focus of the work of the housing strategy to ensure the delivery of affordable homes. The latest data on housing delivery is:

- In 2008/09: 935 new homes with 218 affordable homes
- In 2009/10: 711 new homes with 270 affordable homes

This table shows the number of housing units the LDF and Core strategy have set as a target.

Central Bedfordshire house building trajectory	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
North area	777	1213	1076	720	400
South area	902	945	671	841	555

Key Strategic Objective 2: Delivering Regeneration alongside growth

Central Bedfordshire Council owns and manages 5219 units of socially rented homes concentrated in the South of the area. Following LSVT stock transfer, 6175 units of socially rented homes are owned and managed by Aragon Housing Association in the North of the area, around 83% of the total Registered Social Landlord (RSL) stock in the North of the area. To fulfil our role we will:-

- Through a combination of review and strategic assessment of housing stock appraisals options, develop a Business Plan for the council's housing stock that will sustain Decent Homes standards and deliver neighbourhood renewal;
- Work with RSL partners to ensure high standards of socially rented stock are maintained.
- Make best use of existing stock through monitoring and dealing with overcrowding, under occupancy and empty homes.
- Reduce the carbon footprint in homes across Central Beds and contribute to the targets of NI 186 by providing advice and in some cases assistance to improve the energy efficiency.
- We will encourage developers and RSL's to build more energy efficient homes.

Key Strategic Objective 3: Accommodation is safe, healthy. Accessible and affordably warm

The updated desktop stock condition projection commissioned in November 2009 showed that generally the private sector housing stock was in good condition. The average percentage of dwellings not meeting the decent homes standard in England is 36% whereas in Central Bedfordshire it is lower at 28%. The projection highlights the main areas in which council resources need to be directed to improve the housing stock. As a result of this the council will: -

- Complete a review of major adaptations to include a focus on preventative measures.
- Implement an Accessible Housing Register and develop a policy framework that protects investment in making homes accessible.
- Continue to provide advice and assistance to vulnerable households to alleviate fuel poverty to meet the NI 187 target.
- Carry out enforcement work to ensure housing standards are legally compliant.
- Consider options for supplementing desktop stock condition data to provide intelligence on which to base policy decisions.

Key Strategic Objective 4: Strengthen partnerships; create the council's strategic housing approach

- Establish a robust Strategic Housing Partnership including a Tenants and Leaseholder Forum and Stakeholder Group within the LSP structure.
- Develop with partners the council's strategic Housing approach through a combination of policy and Strategy development; Service Review, inspection and peer review.

- With Partners, develop a set of relevant TSA standards for all social landlords in Central Bedfordshire, championed by the Central Bedfordshire Tenants and Leaseholders Forum.
- Develop a strategic plan for the Housing led regeneration of priority estates and neighbourhoods.
- Work with partners and stakeholders to strengthen the housing role in support of the Community Safety agenda.

Key strategic Objective 5: Providing Housing Options

- Deliver the Council's Homelessness Strategy and Renewal Policy
- Develop the potential of Choice Based Lettings within an enhanced Housing Options approach.
- Promote financial inclusion and economic well-being; developing an approach to tackle worklessness and area based deprivation, as part of an enhanced Housing Options approach.

Key Strategic Objective 6: respond to the Housing Needs of Older and Vulnerable people

Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to transforming people's lives by ensuring that there is choice and control for those who need to access services. With this in mind the following objectives have been identified: -

- Work with partners and stakeholders to identify the housing needs of vulnerable people through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Supporting People Needs Assessment.
- Ensure any intervention takes place at an early stage as a preventive measure against later more involved and costly assistance.
- The provision of significant number of new extra care units
- Ensure the need for extra care for older people is monitored and policies are developed to deliver appropriate units through influencing planning policy and maximising opportunities to secure extra care housing schemes in strategic locations across the authority.
- Work with partners and stakeholders to ensure support services are provided for vulnerable people to ensure they are able to live independently.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Housing Strategy contains further information on the identified priorities and the evidence underpinning the set priorities. The full Housing Strategy can be viewed here **(Insert Link)**