Consultation Summary

In the consultation process for the development of the housing strategy, a number of methods were used to try and get as many opinions as possible on housing issues in Central Bedfordshire. These included a questionnaire and focus groups with Service Teams and Managers, Partner Organisations and service users. Consultation and involvement was undertaken with many colleagues within the Planning, Finance, Legal, Social Services, Health, Community Safety and Education functions within Central Bedfordshire.

On the 15th January 2010 Central Bedfordshire Council held a consultation on the proposed vision and strategic objectives of the new Central Bedfordshire Housing Strategy. The objective of the consultation was to get as many views as we could on housing in Central Bedfordshire. This was so that when developing and writing the strategies, we could be sure that the correct issues were addressed. The results of the consultation were taken into account when writing the strategies, and the objectives.

Stakeholders and partners were split into five groups with each one discussing one of following topics in a workshop session.

Housing Strategy Consultation Event 15 January 2010
Workshop Feedback and Further Consultation

	Issue	Issues to be covered
Workshop 1	Affordability, and Affordable Housing	• What does the SHMA tell us • What is the role of health partners in delivery especially in relation to extra care • The role of shared ownership still meeting need? • Issues affecting the availability of rural land for affordable housing
Workshop 2	Housing's part in transforming people's lives	• Where do housing outcomes overlap with outcomes on health and social care • Financial Inclusion • Are there possibilities for joint commissioning / joint delivery • What are the priorities between older people, families, those on low income, Young people, People Learning disabilities or those with Mental Health issues and other vulnerable groups.

		· Delivering extra care housing
		· What are challenges in provision of housing for older people
Workshop 3	Working together to get the best partnerships	· What are we doing well
		· Where are the dangers in partnership working
		· What are the barriers to fully engaging our partners
		· What can our partners deliver and how can we help them do this.
Workshop 4	Housing quality through best use of stock	· Is the private sector being fully utilised and what are the barriers for people accessing the private sector
		· How overcrowding can be addressed through best use of existing stock
		· Reducing Empty Homes
		· Ensuring homes meet the decent homes standard
		· Regeneration through growth
Workshop 5	Liveability, Place shaping and delivering sustainable development	· What sort of neighbourhoods communities thrive in terms of community safety, regeneration and sustainability
		· Homes to last a lifetime
		· Carbon neutrality

Some clear patterns emerged from the consultation process, particularly from the workshops. People were asked what they felt were the most important issues surrounding the topics used within the workshops. The issues that people felt were important showed very clear patterns and priorities. These are (in no particular order) – high house prices, high rents, lack of affordable housing, the need for more rural housing, local lettings, planning contributions and long waiting lists for affordable housing.

Key issues and responses emerging from each workshop are shown in the tables below.

Workshop 1: Affordability and Affordable Housing

What we do well	What can we do to improve	What problems must we overcome to reach our goals	What resources do we have to meet the our goals
Rural Exception Schemes	A planning approach that enables affordable housing	Opposition to urban growth and extension	Making best use of stock and land held by Central Bedfordshire Council

A structure in place to assist Rural delivery Responding to market conditions Broad Range of intermediate products Housing growth Supply of affordable housing Growth for rural areas and infrastructure	Flexibility in policies e.g. allocations, tenure mix Best use of stock New solutions to provide affordable housing in smaller rural communities e.g. true local need by incentives to release land Raising awareness and publishing affordable housing across departments A strategy that identifies ways to meet need Get the right balance of housing Link provision to the evidence base Joint thinking on planning for household growth Have joint agendas e.g. social care health, private Strategic planning in terms of location and individual circumstances Different models to take into account aspirations	Lack of joined up strategic thought and conflicting view points within departments Lack of transport infrastructure including public transport and local services Lack of land supply and its accessibility Identifying hidden housing needs Protecting villages and their character Local opposition to developments Financial constraints through limits on planning contributions Over emphasis on small urban areas Financial constraints in risk taking in current market Limited funding from Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Political uncertainty Ratio of tenure split	Review planning policy on financial contributions Make use of other assets such as land by incentivising agencies to bring land forward Develop a pipeline for housing delivery Demonstrate to the HCA what we can deliver Local letting policies A Policy on prioritising grants A policy framework that enables the most recent evidence base to be used Learning lessons from most recent experience i.e. housing downturn Transparent process' with agreed outcomes Review policy on rural schemes in terms of location (exceptions sites) Harmonisation of strategies so all partners agree outcomes

		Lack of social rented homes	
	Younger person provision		Partnership approach to avoid silo working
	Access to services and facilities		Joint work and innovation on allocations
	Use the private sector to meet need e.g. empty homes, private rent		Supporting HAs to develop mixed tenures
			Take into account future changes and market conditions
			Review stock profile to maximise supply of affordable housing

Workshop 2: Housing's Part in Transforming People's Lives

What we do well	What can we do to improve	What problems must we overcome to reach our goals	What resources and tools do we have to meet our goals
Providing monetary advice to clients	Outreach Services for leisure provision	Lack of joined up strategic thought and conflicting view points within departments	Telecare
Plain English Tenancy Agreements	Provide more choices for Older People	Lack or real ambition and vision to make changes	Multi-Disciplinary Working
Domestic Violence provision and advice	Create employment opportunities close to where you live	Resistance to change	Effective One-stop shop
Partnership Working	Provide accommodation for Young People in Central Beds	Lack of forward planning	Effective Outreach
Encouraging active		Limited financial resources	Remove resistance to importing best practice
			Community Focus

participation for Older people Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Delivering Outcomes for Vulnerable People Delivering a Youth Work Agenda	Improve move-on arrangements Multi-agency Outreach programs Better information and Advice and Advocacy Support Increased involvement of Service users Expanded re-ablement/move on services Build more life-time homes Integration of Services and joint working		Tackling inequalities agenda Using Existing assets Forward thinking and innovative ideas Value and use the Voluntary sector Support services and resources for vulnerable young people

Workshop 3: Working together to get the Best Partnerships

What we do well	What can we do to improve	What problems must we overcome to reach our goals	What resources do we have to meet our goals
Choice Based lettings (CBL) Domestic Abuse work Telecare service Neighbourhood Improvement Plans	Have clear Strategic and Operational structures Have good communication across the board Work with honesty and trust Evaluate and audit work and targets	Lack of trust between partners Keeping Control of projects Continuity of partnerships Policy restrictions Using staff and other resources effectively	Complete a piece of work to model good partnerships and show examples of good practice Move people and resources to areas where they are best suited Identify others that can deliver the strategy and targets

Anti Social Behaviour work	Working together instead parallel to one another	Lack of focus and capacity in terms of time	Set matching priorities with partners
Credit Union	Relinquishing control to the best resources to meet targets	Limited financial resources	Give clear timescales for things to work
Joint funding	Working without jargon and using plain English	Lack of clarity of targets	Pool resources and external funding
Working with customers	Create a good knowledge base	Not having clear and identified contact points	Secondments for staff to other organizations and partners to create an understanding of how partners work
	Have common systems/ using systems well	Political environment and bureaucracy	
	Influence progress and outcomes	Too much change without giving good initiatives time to deliver	Use private sector and voluntary Organisations
	Getting the right organisations and individuals leading projects	Short term thinking	
	Services users at decision making bodies	Lack of information distributed and communication breakdowns	
	Have strong leadership		
	Information sharing flexibility		
	Compromise to reach a common goal		
	Establish common goals and targets		

Workshop 4: Housing quality through best use of stock

What we do well	What can we do to improve	What problems must we overcome to reach our goals	What resources do we have to meet our goals
Good at statutory interventions giving grants and inspections. We are good at responding to very poor house conditions for tenants where they are drawn to CBC attention. Focus is on RSL stock and our own	Funding help for all owner occupiers. A free service in getting work done to owner-occupier's homes. A major promotion of equity release products for owners with interest free loans. Eliminate fuel poverty by providing totally free loft and cavity wall insulation to all homes where there is none. Web based access by locality to all housing related services, traders, product offers advice. Council to use its buying power to negotiate discounts on fuel prices for poor households. Fully funded empty homes programme using a combination of incentives for owners, advice and information and grants and loans should include use of CPO powers and purchase of properties by negotiation for onward sale to RSLs.	Limited capital resources Limited revenue budgets for staff and for empty homes scheme. Insufficient evidence base - much better information down to parishes' level and realistic target actions are needed. Lack of illness /morbidity statistics to see if health service can support housing inputs for sick or vulnerable. Council policies lack in forcing owners to release empty properties to the council and leave them empty. Lack of political and officer will to use CPO powers through lack of knowledge. Lack of political will to provide loans to landlords in return for nomination rights.	Dealing with fuel poverty in the worse homes in selected wards by a combination of grants, loans and advice to meet NI 187. Develop a comprehensive plan to deal with empty homes including advice, information, enforcement, grants and loans to landlords to bring properties back into use and resources to deliver a small Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) programme. Develop a comprehensive information base on stock and its better use including detailed energy efficiency, insulation and heating information, householder income, health and social care needs by ward.

Fully funded rent deposit scheme.	
Landlord's accreditation scheme for all landlords.	
Better communication with parishes' access to newsletters and parish notice boards to send out key messages.	
Provide a user friendly service for older people to help with loft insulation and heating were the private sector will not help.	

Workshop 5: Liveability, Place shaping and delivering sustainable development

What we do well	What can we do to improve	What problems must we overcome to reach our goals	What resources do we have to meet our goals
Urban design of recent developments e.g. Stotfold S106 Strategy in place Partnership working Existing developments working well	Promote civic pride and community sprit. Reduce isolation of rural communities. Secure accommodation for those in housing need. Develop more affordable housing. Have network of local services.	Lack of accessibility to services. Resistance to change and modern development. Not enough involvement by large stakeholders.	Learning lessons from existing communities. Infrastructure in place first: Integrated Planning. Local Community Groups input with community and developer dialogue. Making use of local intelligence.

	Have mixed communities with interaction between different groups including Inter- generational. Accessibility for all too local services. Sustainable development e.g. Life time homes, Home working units.		

Analysis of feedback from the Consultation

One of the key messages coming out of the consultation was that there is a large need for new affordable housing, especially rural housing and lifetime homes. The responses point to a high (and increasing) demand for affordable housing, a growing population particularly in relation to the older age groups. Furthermore, there were mixed opinions on the need for additional gypsy and traveller pitches.

Other issues arising from the consultation were the following:

- Better access to quality homes
- Ensuring sustainable development
- Increase supply and access to affordable housing
- Tackling empty homes
- Adequate housing and appropriate healthcare is available for our Black and Minority Ethnic, Gypsy and Traveller communities
- Prevent and tackle homelessness
- Ensure older people and vulnerable groups have access to a range of housing and housing related services

General points on the Housing Strategy were that it was ambitious; needed specific and measurable targets and actions; should contain less jargon; should demonstrate links to other strategies and be monitored and reported regularly. These points have now been addressed in the draft strategy.

Taking into account all of the above, we have developed a vision and 4 key priorities, which encompass what we hope to achieve as a direct outcome of the new Housing Strategy.

Key Strategic Priorities
1. Economic development and sustainable communities
2. Using council controlled land assets to aid the delivery of growth and housing
3. Meeting the accommodation and support needs of Elderly and Vulnerable People
4. Providing housing options for the whole community

The Housing Strategy was drafted with these 4 Key Strategic Priorities as key themes and action plans within each theme. An Equalities Impact Assessment was drafted and went through the Equalities Forum on the 17th June 2010 and then again on the 30th September 2010.

Second Consultation Process

The second consultation on the draft Housing Strategy started on the 4th January 2011 and went on for 12 weeks until the 31st March 2011. A formal consultation was open to the entire public and this included a web based questionnaire, attending a number of meetings, including a Citizen's Panel and Tenants Panel and various other meetings. The draft Housing Strategy was also available in all Libraries across CBC. Two open days were also held one at Priory House, Shefford and one At Watling House, Dunstable were the public were invited to come in and voice their opinions and ask questions. There were 131 consultation response. Along with the Public Consultation 7 schools in total were consulted. This included 4 Middle Schools and 3 Upper Schools in the CBC area. There were 189 responses from Upper school pupils.

The webs based questionnaire consisted of questions regarding the Key Strategic Priorities and if respondents were in agreement with the Priorities.

The results below show that the majority of respondents were in favour of the Key Strategic Priorities.

Priority 1: Economic development and sustainable communities

Encourage economic growth through the provision of new homes in sustainable locations with access to local employment.

Q2.How far do you agree or disagree with priority 1			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	40	31	31
Agree	61	47	48
Neither agree or disagree	18	14	14
Disagree	6	5	5
Strongly disagree	3	2	2
Total	128	98	100
Missing	3	2	
Total	131	100	
% Strongly agree + Agree	79		

Priority 2: Using council land to aid the delivery of growth and housing

Ensure land and resources are maximised to deliver housing in rural and urban areas.

Q3.How far do you agree or disagree with priority 2			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	33	25	26
Agree	59	45	46
Neither agree or disagree	21	16	16
Disagree	8	6	6
Strongly disagree	7	5	5
Total	128	98	100
Missing	3	2	
Total	131	100	
% Strongly agree + Agree	72		

Priority 3: Meeting the accommodation and support needs of Older Persons and Vulnerable People

Provide housing options for the vulnerable and those most in need.

Q4.How far do you agree or disagree with priority 3			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	61	47	47
Agree	60	46	46
Neither agree or disagree	5	4	4
Disagree	2	2	2
Strongly disagree	2	2	2
Total	130	99	100
Missing	1	1	
Total	131	100	
% Strongly agree + Agree		93	

Priority 4: Providing Housing options for the whole community

Ensure a variety of housing options are available for all to meet demand and tackle homelessness.

Q5.How far do you agree or disagree with priority 4			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	44	34	34
Agree	69	53	53
Neither agree or disagree	10	8	8
Disagree	4	3	3
Strongly disagree	2	2	2
Total	129	98	100
Missing	2	2	
Total	131	100	
% Strongly agree + Agree		88	