Chapter 3

Managing the Housing Market:
Objective 1:
Enabling Regeneration and Affordable Homes

Objective 2:
Decent Homes in All Tenures

Chapter Outline

Having described the main features of Charnwood's housing market and identified the key issues which need to be addressed, it is essential the Council has plans and actions in place to influence the market.

Successfully managing the housing market will make a significant contribution to the Council’s vision for housing. This will have a major impact on the renewal and sustainability of its communities, neighbourhoods and on the delivery of the strategies and plans of its partners.

This chapter will:

● describe how the Council will manage the housing markets in Charnwood
● detail its plans for diversifying the housing market
● describe how this strategy contributes to and supports the wider strategies and plans that will help achieve sustainability for all its communities
● explain how the Council will provide a choice of homes and especially a choice of affordable homes
● detail plans to improve housing services and how it intends to meet the Decent Homes Standards for Private, Council and Registered Social Landlord owned homes
● show how the Council intends to support homeowners and landlords and
● explain how this strategy intends to manage student housing provision to release properties currently occupied by students.
Introduction

In 2003 the ODPM published the Sustainable Communities Plan. Its aim is to achieve decent homes in decent surroundings and neighbourhoods across the country and so aims to tackle low demand and abandonment in the North, whilst identifying the need for growth in the South to tackle housing shortages and sustain economic development. Because of this polarisation of emphasis and resources Charnwood, situated in the heart of the Midlands, will need to ensure it achieves the aims of the Sustainable Communities Plan without significant extra resources.

Issues facing the Borough:

- ensure housing services meet the needs and requirements of local people regardless of urban/rural locations
- understanding the needs of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities
- continued demand for homeless services
- large concentrations of student population in areas of Loughborough
- protecting the local environment
- perceptions of declining neighbourhoods, fear of crime
- improving community engagement

Charnwood Strategic Partnership - Charnwood Together

The Community Strategy is the vision of the Charnwood Strategic Partnership (CSP) ‘Charnwood Together’. The CSP comprises nearly 100 representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors to ensure that a holistic long-term plan for the Borough is developed on local priorities.

The first Community Strategy in 2003 provided a platform to join up the individual partnerships/agencies represented. The draft revised Community Strategy aims to build on progress to date and outlines a common direction that adds value to the community by delivering on a small number of collective improvement actions which otherwise would be difficult to achieve:

- People Matter – To nurture healthy and strong communities
Climate Change Strategy
The Council has adopted a Climate Change Strategy to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. Households are one of the most significant contributors to increased levels of greenhouse gases in Charnwood, predominantly through space heating. The levels of these gases can be greatly reduced through improved insulation and better quality housing. The aims of the Climate Change Strategy support the work towards the Decent Homes Standard and making affordable warmth accessible to every household.

The emphasis will now be on putting policy into practice. The adoption of the Climate Change Strategy will closely tie in with the ‘wider objectives’ contained within this Housing Strategy and will be built into future planning of work.

Local Plan
Securing sustainable development is at the heart of the strategy of the Local Plan and the emerging LDF. The plan seeks to maximise brownfield development potential and focuses necessary greenfield development on two strategic sites south of Loughborough and north of Birstall. This approach presents a sustainable solution to meeting the Borough’s development needs, which facilitates the delivery of more effective and viable public transport services along the A6 corridor between Loughborough and Leicester to the advantage of the wider travelling public.

Loughborough Town Centre Strategic Master Plan
A number of options are being considered that will help shape priorities and plans for the Borough to ensure thriving, sustainable and inclusive communities. The Loughborough Town Centre Strategic Master Plan is an example of involving communities and local stakeholders in developing a vision for their neighbourhood, assessing options, and agreeing priorities and plans to ensure the creation of balanced communities and student integration. It will also form the basis of the Statement of Community Involvement required under the new planning framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Strategy Proposed Priority Action Area</th>
<th>Housing Strategy Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work to reduce deprivation and inequalities in some of the most deprived communities in Charnwood by developing a co-ordinated programme of engagement, empowerment and life-skills delivery</td>
<td>Aims 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing the effects of alcohol harm</td>
<td>Aims 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver actions that contribute to creating stronger communities</td>
<td>Aims 1, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote local achievements and a sense of pride</td>
<td>Aim 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change – Leading by Example</td>
<td>Aims 1, 4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a Sense of belonging and liveable areas within neighbourhoods</td>
<td>Aims 1, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Loughborough Renewal Team</td>
<td>Aims 1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness, Growth and Learning</td>
<td>Aims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining the “Charnwood Partnership Cluster”</td>
<td>All Aims</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The draft Community Strategy can be accessed via www.charnwoodonline.net the community portal for the Borough.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Strategy Priorities</th>
<th>Action Plan:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research rural Issues: balancing needs, affordable housing, retaining village character, integrate new population within existing</td>
<td>Action 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide affordable homes</td>
<td>Action 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider student impact on housing market in Loughborough</td>
<td>Action 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

To understand local housing markets it is important to look at all sectors as a whole rather than concentrating on “affordable housing.” Considering all parts of the housing market and how people interact and move between tenures and areas is essential to ensuring opportunities exist across a range of housing solutions.

Issues facing the Borough:

- an increasing elderly population with particular housing needs
- certain areas within the Borough suffer from higher levels of deprivation\(^1\)
- changes in age profiles which could impact on the economic environment. The main economically active age group (30-44) shows a significant decrease up to 2016
- changes in housing demand
- urban flight issues from the three cities and beyond
- stock imbalance in supply and demand

In February 2004 the Housing Market Assessment Manual was published. This manual reiterated the importance that all Councils need to have a better understanding of their local housing markets and how they operate at a sub-regional level.

Few Boroughs have self-contained housing markets, therefore Councils will need to collaborate to define housing market areas. The East Midlands Sub-regional Action Plan recognises this and to inform the development of this strategy, the Council has recently undertaken an HMA of the ‘local’ housing market incorporating Charnwood, Leicester, Harborough, Blaby, Oadby & Wigston, Hinckley & Bosworth, Melton and North West Leicestershire and Rushcliffe. This information will be used to feed into the regional HMA to be undertaken at a later date.

Further analysis of the data is required to identify locations where a shortfall/surplus of affordable stock exists, however, initial findings are detailed below:

Demographic Change

There is a large increase in single person households through a combination of elderly people living longer, separation and divorce and young people forming single person households which result in much higher household numbers compared to population growth.

It is evident from the HNS (2005) that around 80% of new forming households are looking to occupy one or two bedroom units, which represent only 30% of the housing stock. The impact of the stock imbalance is to create further difficulty for new forming households attempting to access the housing market in Charnwood.

Further analysis of the stock imbalance will need to be carried out to address the shortfall of smaller affordable houses and modern flats. However, it is not sustainable or deliverable in market terms to build all new stock in one or two sectors of the market. As part of this provision, the Council will need to encourage sustainable development using a wider ‘neighbourhood’ approach to stock mix, principally using existing service provision, schools, shops, medical services etc as a basis.

Migration Patterns

The HNS (2003) indicated there were a number of reasons for the inward and outward migration patterns affecting the Borough. These are important in terms of identifying trends and the impact this will have on the market balance.

Out-migration patterns from Charnwood revealed that the vast majority (48%) of those migrating out of the Borough moved to Leicester. Smaller numbers relocated to neighbouring district councils both within the County and in Nottinghamshire. Employment/access to work, family and better shops/leisure facilities were the most significant reasons for movement out of the Borough for existing households. For concealed households moving away, choices were focused, as might be expected, mainly

\(^1\) 2004 Indices of Deprivation
on better employment and education facilities.

In-migration patterns indicated the largest proportion of people migrating to the Borough were from Leicester (43%), and again the other districts in the County were the source for incomers. A review of the data from the HNS (2003) of those people who had migrated to Charnwood from elsewhere shows that the most important reasons for moving to the Borough were that they wanted to buy, to be nearer to relatives, and for retirement reasons.

In-migration patterns closely mirror those shown in out-migration, and clearly demonstrate that the housing market within Charnwood is greatly influenced by activity at the sub, sub-regional level. The emphasis on strategic working at this level is therefore wholly appropriate to assist with meeting housing needs within the Borough.

Keyworkers
Research was undertaken by the Council during 2004 to assess the needs for a keyworker strategy in Charnwood. The purpose of the report was to consider whether, given recent house price inflation, the cost of accommodation in Charnwood is such as to deter key workers from moving to or remaining in the Borough and, if so, what options are available to address the problem.

The research concluded that at present there is no significant evidence of key workers suffering particular hardship in Charnwood or indeed vacancies arising in “key” professions directly as a result of house prices within the Borough. As a result, there is no justification in diverting resources at present from elsewhere towards this group. There is evidence to suggest that within the region the majority of “key” workers earn above the regional average salary and are in a stronger position in the housing market than other workers in the region⁶.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Strategy Priorities</th>
<th>Action Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closer consideration of the type and size of housing provided locally</td>
<td>Action 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for ageing population</td>
<td>Action 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Worker provision</td>
<td>Action 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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⁶ Can Work Can’t Buy, Steve Wilcox, revised edition May 2003 Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Chapter 3 – Managing the Housing Markets

OBJECTIVE 1 – Enabling Regeneration and Affordable Homes

Aim 3 – Delivering Affordable Housing

Introduction

Given the issues relating to accessibility to housing and the impact of house prices, the provision of affordable homes should be a cornerstone of the housing strategy. There are three main ways of providing new affordable housing:

• Social housing schemes funded by the Housing Corporation;
• Section 106 planning gain housing;
• Schemes funded with assistance from the Council’s enabling grant.

The Council aims to ensure that the right type of affordable housing is provided in the right places to meet the needs of the Borough. Issues facing the Borough:

• the Borough needs 470 new dwellings per annum between 1996 and 2016 to meet the County Structure Plan requirements7
• 279 new homes need to be available each year for people who cannot afford to obtain suitable accommodation in the open market
• residential property prices have risen much more rapidly than local incomes
• price rises have been particularly steep for the smaller properties which usually give access to the market for ‘first time buyers’
• public funding for affordable housing in Charnwood is limited due to regional allocations
• the opportunity to obtain affordable housing from planning gain agreements is constrained by the number and size of sites coming forward for development and by the nature of those developments
• there is a steady loss of existing affordable homes as Council tenants exercise their ‘Right to Buy’
• the large number of students in Loughborough places additional pressure on accommodation in the town

The Housing and Planning System

A greater choice of housing will be delivered through the closer integration of housing and planning strategies.

The Council’s Housing and Planning teams have worked closely together on the following projects:

• Joint working on the preparation of affordable housing policies contained in the adopted Borough of Charnwood Local Plan;
• Negotiation of affordable housing provision in association with planning applications on allocated and windfall housing sites.
• Supporting the drafting of an SPD to provide further guidance on the provision of affordable housing in accordance with adopted Local Plan policies.

Planning for Diversity and Choice in the Housing Market

The Borough of Charnwood Local Plan provides for a variety of housing sites capable of accommodating a range and mix of housing types and tenures to meet the Borough’s housing needs in accordance with PPG3. Sites range from apartment developments on urban infill sites to developments in rural settlements to secure much needed affordable housing. By securing appropriate contributions through Section 106 agreements the plan has supported the development of amenities that contribute to successful and attractive neighbourhoods including high quality open spaces, health and education facilities, balancing the allocation of sites for housing with economic and employment opportunity.

During 2005, the Council adopted a SPD outlining options to address the impact of the concentration of student rented accommodation on the housing market in Loughborough. Supplementary guidance has also been published to guide the redevelopment of part of the University Campus, which will include provision for additional managed student bedspaces.

7 Charnwood Borough Council Adopted Structure Plan
This forms part of a wider proposal by the University to provide a further 2,500 bedspaces on Campus.

Plans for Affordable Housing
In the light of the needs already described, the Council is putting in place plans to maximise the amount of new affordable housing which is provided in the Borough from the resources available. The Council is also keen to tailor this new provision to the identified needs in terms of tenure, size, type and location.

- Housing Corporation Grant
The Council seeks to maintain a constructive relationship with the Housing Corporation and with its 12 ‘Preferred Partner’ RSLs. There is frequent contact with the Corporation and with those RSLs wishing to develop in the Borough. Recognising the increasingly competitive environment in which RSLs work, the Council intends, in 2005, to intensify its relationship with a small number of the Preferred Partners through a Development Group.

The Housing Corporation’s Affordable Housing Programme for 2004-06 allocated £5.7 million to schemes in Charnwood. These are expected to produce 143 new affordable homes, 83 of these being for rent. In preparation for the 2006-08 Programme, the Council is already in discussion with the Corporation and Preferred Partners about a variety of potential schemes.

Once RSL developments are complete, the Council maintains its interest through Service Level Agreements which cover the standards of management of the homes, and through the nominations agreements which are negotiated during the development process. RSL performance is monitored regularly through the RSL liaison forum.

- Planning Gain
The SPD on Affordable Housing was adopted in September 2005. It is a key part of the Council’s plans for planning gain agreements to produce more affordable housing. The SPD increases the target for affordable housing on eligible sites from 15% to 30%. It also clarifies the Council’s expectations about funding, tenure mix, design, long-term management and Section 106 agreement conditions. In effect, the SPD should strengthen the Council’s negotiating position with developers. However, the success of these actions is dependent on the amount and type of residential development undertaken. Indications at present suggest that the level of development is likely to be lower than it has been in recent years.

Negotiations in 2004/05 were conducted under the existing Local Plan Framework and its target of 15% affordable provision on all sites above the threshold. Eleven planning gain agreements were concluded during the year enabling the provision of 123 affordable homes.

The Council is currently providing Enabling Grant to support the following schemes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Affordable Homes for Rent</th>
<th>Grant £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Wesley Close, Mountsorrel (Raglan HA)</td>
<td>10 houses</td>
<td>465,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larkin Lane, Loughborough (Raglan HA)</td>
<td>6 bungalows (including 1 with special disability adaptations)</td>
<td>360,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grays Court, Barrow-upon-Soar (Touchstone HA)</td>
<td>10 bungalows</td>
<td>355,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link Road, Anstey (Riverside HA)</td>
<td>8 houses</td>
<td>283,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 34 new homes 1,463,000
• Council’s Enabling Grant
The Council is committed to a continuing programme of Enabling Grants and has set aside up to £1 million per annum in future years. Several schemes are in the process of development. These include surplus garage sites where the schemes will offer environmental improvements as well as affordable housing. Negotiations are also underway with an RSL Partner and the Parish Council in Quorn, a village where the need for affordable housing greatly exceeds supply, to build new affordable homes.

• Other key plans
The Council intends to work collaboratively across the County, to share policy development and good practice on affordable housing through the Leicestershire Development and Strategy Officer Group, the Development Plans Forum, Development Control Officers Forum, and the County Housebuilders Forum.

Further research is needed to develop a BME Strategy to identify and prioritise affordable housing provision for existing and new ethnic and faith based communities and the supported housing needs of vulnerable people and groups.

Affordable Housing Targets
Through the combination of sources available, the Council’s targets for the provision of new affordable homes in the Borough are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Target No of New Affordable Homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for strategy</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The targets are based on past performance, reviewed in the light of existing plans and likely trends. Actual performance depends on a great many decisions taken by a variety of different partners. Individual developers, and potential developers, have a major role, as do individual RSLs. The Housing Corporation’s approach is crucial and both Planning and Housing Services of the Council are involved.

Many decisions are outside the Council’s direct control and its role is primarily as an enabler, seeking to encourage developers and RSLs to provide the affordable homes which are needed. The Council’s influence is strongest in deciding how to use its own Enabling Grant. It is also involved directly in negotiating planning gain agreements with developers. The SPD on Affordable Housing, currently out for consultation, will help to strengthen the Council’s position in these negotiations. However, many other decisions about affordable housing are made without direct Council involvement. In these instances, the Council can only build good relationships with its partners and hope to exert an influence indirectly.

The Council is confident about its current targets and will work, where possible, to exceed them. However, the gap between these targets and the annual need for 279 new affordable dwellings, identified by DCA, is significant. A shortfall in provision is almost inevitable. The Council is committed to maximising the number of new affordable homes in the Borough but, in present circumstances, does not expect to be able to eliminate the predicted shortfall within the life of this Strategy. The complexities of the housing market, and the direct influence of national and regional priorities will further restrict the opportunities to bridge this gap.

Rural Housing
Charnwood includes 25 settlements with populations of less than 3,000. Here the supply of property is very limited and prices are often high. These settlements present particular problems and opportunities. At a policy level, the Council seeks to set up mechanisms that will enable affordable housing to be provided in appropriate cases. At a detailed level, the Council tries to establish the position in individual settlements and to work with others to meet any needs which are identified. Elements within the Council’s approach are as follows:
where appropriate, the Local Plan allocates land for residential development in villages and these allocations include an affordable element. New affordable homes are expected in Wymeswold and Burton-on-the-Wolds using this approach.

- if ‘windfall’ developments arise (which are above the threshold size), the Council negotiates the inclusion of affordable housing. For example, an agreement has been signed recently for a site in East Goscote.

- the adopted SPD seeks to reduce the threshold in rural areas so that all future developments of 5 or more dwellings will require an affordable element.

- the Local Plan provides for the declaration of ‘exception’ sites for affordable housing in rural areas.

- the Council grant aids the Leicestershire Rural Housing Enabler (LRHE) project and is represented on its Steering Group.

- the Council sponsors Village Housing Need Surveys in conjunction with Parish Councils. A report was published for Wymeswold in 2004. As a result of direct involvement of Parish Councils, reports for Woodhouse and Burton-on-the-Wolds are expected in 2005. A continuing programme of Surveys is planned.

The Council is committed to working with Parish Councils, the LRHE and RSLs to follow up any needs identified in the Surveys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Strategy Priorities:</th>
<th>Action Plan:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More flexibility in housing provision</td>
<td>Action 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase affordable housing targets on new developments to 30%</td>
<td>Action 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More specialists housing</td>
<td>Action 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The Decent Homes Standard (DHS) was introduced by the Government in July 2000, to "ensure that all social housing meets set standards by 2010," This standard was extended in the 2002 Spending Review to include the private sector although specific targets were not announced until February 2004.

Decent Homes must meet all the following four criteria:

- Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- Be in a reasonable state of repair
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

The Council has completed a Stock Options Appraisal (SOA) to ensure it will meet the DHS for its own stock within the timescale and has decided to set up an ALMO to manage the stock. The Council considered the view of the SOA Steering Group that three options (stock retention, ALMO and LSVT) were all possible but each posed different challenges.

An analysis of the options and a thorough financial appraisal was undertaken by the Group which concluded that the use of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) was not a viable option; stock retention would only be feasible by using all Right to Buy (RTB) receipts and other HRA surpluses and could have a significant impact on the Council's other capital schemes; stock transfer (LSVT) would only be financially feasible with Government support of £34m and could place significant pressure on the General Fund. Therefore, ALMO was considered to be the most appropriate delivery vehicle to achieve Decent Homes, and was the option most supported by the tenant's representatives.

The targets for private sector housing are that 65% of vulnerable households should live in decent accommodation by 2006 and 70% by 2010. The ODPM has estimated that in Charnwood 60.5% of vulnerable households living in the private sector are in non-decent accommodation.

The House Condition Survey currently being undertaken will further refine the ODPM estimates and provide a more accurate assessment of vulnerability levels within the Borough and help identify priorities and target resources. This document will be made available at a later date.

The regional housing board has indicated that there may be funding available to assist Councils in delivering the Decent Homes targets in the private sector, and the Council will bid for any additional funding that might be available through this route in order to improve conditions for the most vulnerable residents in the Borough.

Issues facing the Borough in the Social Sector:

- The largest proportion of council owned homes are found in Loughborough Shelthorpe Ward (25.1% of all homes) and Loughborough Hastings (23.6%).
- 37% of council owned homes are non-decent (April 2004)
- The investment required to meet and maintain decent homes until 2010 is £32 million. The Council is currently preparing an ALMO bid to ensure that the decent homes standard is met on time.
- The Borough has 15 RSLs which have provided 2089 homes.
- Nationally 21% of RSL owned homes were estimated to be non-decent (Summer 2004)

Meeting the Decent Homes Standard for Council Owned Homes

Meeting the Decent Homes Standard for council owned homes by 2010 is a key priority for this strategy. As a national floor target the LSP now monitor progress towards the achievement of Decent Homes.

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8 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2004
Stock Options Appraisal and Progress to Date

The SOA has followed a detailed Project Plan agreed with the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM) and the Community Task Force (CHTF) including:

- completion of a stock condition survey
- established the Stock Options Appraisal Steering Group (SOASG) comprising of tenants, leaseholders, Members, trade unions and staff to oversee the appraisal process
- appointed TPAS as the independent tenant advisors and
- set aside significant resources to fund and complete the review process

A 10% stock condition survey was completed in March 2003 and the table below shows the current DHS position:

Decent Homes Standard – Summary Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No of Dwellings</th>
<th>Leasehold</th>
<th>Sold since 2003/4</th>
<th>Demolished since 2003/4</th>
<th>Non-Decent</th>
<th>% of Stock Non-Decent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/1/03</td>
<td>6231</td>
<td>219</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2718</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1/05</td>
<td>5987</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>174</td>
<td></td>
<td>2227</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table below shows the HRA stock profile as at April 2005.

HRA Stock Profile (April 2005) – Analysis of Stock Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Bed</th>
<th>2 Bed</th>
<th>3 Bed</th>
<th>4+ Bed</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Stock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedsit</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>378</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>1767</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2394</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maisonette</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bungalow</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>564</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>2269</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>2628</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5989</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Council has recommended setting up an ALMO and it has an accurate picture of the investment needs of its homes. A summary of the investment required achieving and maintaining the Decent Homes Standard is available in the HRA Business Plan at www.charnwood.gov.uk

The Investment Strategy for council owned homes is currently being developed, to reduce non-decency within the stock. The 2004/05 Public Sector Capital Programme brought 127 council homes up to the Decent Homes Standard and reduced the level of non-decency from 39% to 37%.

A further £3m will be invested in council homes during 2005/06 bringing a minimum of 300 homes up to the Decent Homes Standard. A similar level of investment is planned for 2006/07. The Public Sector Capital Programme will continue to reduce non-decency in council homes.

A Procurement Strategy is being planned to enter into a partnership with contractors and suppliers to deliver decent homes by 2010. A contract with Contract & Public Services (CPS) and other partners is ongoing and will be reviewed, now that the decision to select the ALMO option has been made. The procurement process will take into account the requirements of the Gershon efficiency agenda and the need to seek Best Value through successful partnering arrangements.
Delivering Quality Housing Services
Managing the housing market successfully also requires plans and actions to develop and improve the quality and choice of housing services to meet the current and future needs of customers and communities. The delivery of quality housing services will have a significant influence on creating and maintaining sustainable communities and upon wider successful neighbourhood management, including achieving a qualifying inspection rating to enable the Council to secure additional resources via the ALMO route.

During the period of this strategy, the Council will develop options and proposals covering the following priority services areas:

- **Choice Based Lettings**
The Council currently has Local Lettings Policies in place on a number of estates within the Borough. The Council’s Allocations Policy is currently under review with a view to introducing a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for the allocation of all social housing in the Borough. An initial report will be presented to Cabinet in October 2005 with a view to meeting the Government’s 2010 target.

- **Anti-social Behaviour**
The Council in partnership with Leicestershire Police facilitates an Anti-Social Behaviour Steering Group. The group addresses issues at a local level sharing information to address particular issues as they arise. The group has now been extended and RSL partners are becoming more involved.

- **Housing Advice**
The Council discharges its statutory housing advice function in partnership with the Bridge Housing Advice Centre. The Council provides £91,000 funding per year and a Service Level Agreement has been negotiated. The Bridge Housing Advice Service has the Legal Services Commission Quality Mark for its casework.

- **Services for BME and Faith Groups**
The Council is committed to ensuring that services are accessible for all members of the community.

The Council commissioned a BME Housing Needs Survey in 2002, however, due to limitations in the sample size a far larger and more representative survey will be undertaken during the lifetime of this strategy.

Housing Services along with all other departments in the Council, have produced an Equalities Action Plan to ensure that services are accessible and appropriate to BME and faith groups.

The Council part funds the Charnwood Racial Equality Council (CREC) who provide advice and information about racial discrimination and equal opportunities. The CREC are also part of the Ekota Project that provides advice and information on a range of issues including Housing for the Bangladeshi community.

There are eight Supporting People funded housing support services that are able to signpost service users to appropriate community and faith groups where appropriate covering a range of client groups including homeless families, older people and families and individuals with general support needs.

- **Improving the Quality of Services to Tenants and Leaseholders of Council Owned Homes**
The Council aims to achieve an improved two star housing service by the next Audit Commission inspection in January 2006. Key plans have been agreed and adopted to achieve this aim which include a Service Delivery Plan 2005-6 confirming performance targets for the day to day management of council homes and including the achievement of the Decent Homes targets and an Action Plan to address specific issues raised by the Audit Commission during the CPA inspection in May 2004.

- **Tenant Participation**
CCLATA is the principal tenant consultative body and is also the umbrella Group under which the Borough’s localised tenants and residents association sits. CCLATA is a key partnership organisation in relation to the Council’s landlord function but is also increasingly being involved in the Council’s wider strategic role.

The core group of tenants and leaseholders, who have been involved in CCLATA and the SOA Steering Group during the SOA process, has progressed significantly in its awareness and understanding of housing issues as a result of the in-depth analysis demanded by the process itself. Also the Tenant Empowerment Strategy and the Communications Strategy, developed as part of the SOA process, will be the basis for the revised and updated Tenant and Leaseholder Compact for Charnwood, developed in partnership with CCLATA, to be published during 2005.
The Council has identified a number of priority areas for action for developing tenant management and participation:

- Meeting the Decent Homes Standard
- Make best use of stock
- Partnerships to deliver repairs and maintenance
- Lower running costs for tenants/energy efficiency
- Anti-social behaviour and designing out crime
- Improved service delivery

A key outcome of the SOA process has been the development of a wider range of methods to contact and engage tenants, including local newsletters, postal questionnaires, focus groups, local open meetings and telephone surveys.

The table below outlines the various means used by the Council to communicate with tenants depending on the type and content of the message and how many tenants it needs to contact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Example use by CBC</th>
<th>Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td>Housing News SOA Special edition Oct 2004</td>
<td>Guarantees that all tenants receive the message, whatever the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Press and Radio</td>
<td>Media release on SOA issued 21 Feb 2005</td>
<td>Reaches those, who take the newspaper or hear the radio etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Meetings</td>
<td>Series of open meetings to update tenants of proposals on 6 PRC estates 2003/04</td>
<td>Opportunity for those attending to hear info first-hand and ask questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face discussions and focus groups</td>
<td>3 focus groups held March 2005 to test opinion on SOA</td>
<td>Opportunity to explore topics in more depth with a selected group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefing Sessions</td>
<td>Series of briefings to ACT/CCLATA on housing management and finance topics</td>
<td>Capacity building opportunity for targeted audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays and Exhibitions</td>
<td>Series of displays at various locations to explain proposals for PRC homes 2002/03</td>
<td>Visual explanations more comfortable and meaningful for many people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Follow-ups to recent surveys and test of opinion on SOA carried out by telephone to boost returns</td>
<td>Targeted audience, achieves immediate response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Actively developing Housing section of CBC website with a range of information and hyperlinks on topics such as SOA and PSL scheme</td>
<td>For tenants with access to this medium a wide range of information available, inc. how to pay rent, report repairs, apply for a transfer, read Housing policies, Housing Strategy, Stock Options Appraisal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further details of how the Council involves tenants and others can be found in the Consultation Chapter of the HRA Business Plan.
• Disabled Adaptations
The Housing Department employs its own Specialist Occupational Therapist to provide a disability and adaptation service to Council tenants and potential applicants to enable the elderly and people with disabilities to live in the community for longer. The service works in close partnership with Leicestershire County Council to provide carefully planned adaptations alongside tailored care packages. The service also maintains a disability database, which enables existing adapted properties to be allocated more appropriately, making more efficient use of properties and meeting the longer-term needs of residents.

The Council also contributes to the Leicestershire Joint Adaptations Group established in 2001.

The Specialist Occupational Therapist service has been cited as an example of good practice nationally and received the Department of Health ‘Runner Up’ Social Care Award (2000) for cross boundary working.

Meeting the Decent Homes Standard for RSL Owned Homes

RSLs contribute good quality homes and services to residents in Charnwood. They are also required to meet the Decent Homes standard for their own stock. RSLs are subject to a detailed regulatory framework laid down by the Housing Corporation and have for many years been required to make financial provision for the future repair and improvement of their stock. All RSLs with stock in the Borough have confirmed that current levels of non-decency are minimal. For those RSLs who have identified stock that may require work to meet the 2010 Decent Homes Standard plans have been put in place to achieve this.

The RSL Liaison Group, made up of Council officers and RSLs with stock in the Borough, will monitor progress in achieving the Decent Homes Standard, share best practice on the management and maintenance of social housing and examine how RSL investment in their homes can complement wider regeneration investment and plans.
Aim 4 – Providing Decent Homes: Private Sector

Issues facing the Borough in the Private Sector:

- Identifying non decent homes occupied by vulnerable people
- Raising awareness of non decency issues
- Developing strategies to encourage owners to meet decent homes standard
- Reduce the number of empty homes
- High demand for smaller properties
- Impact of student housing in Loughborough

Meeting Decent Homes in the Private Sector

Private Sector Housing Strategy

The Council’s strategies for supporting the Private Sector are contained in the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy adopted in April 2004 and involve several themes. A House Condition Survey is due to report in late 2005, and as a result of the findings the current policies may be revised, although it is intended to run until April 2009. The Policy is under regular review and was modified this year to allow Renovation Grants to be paid in some additional circumstances outside the Priority Areas and to align Home Repair Assistance more closely with the definition of “vulnerable”.

The strategy has three distinct goals:

- To address physical improvements to dwellings
  The first thrust of the policy is to address areas of housing known to include both high levels of unfitness and high levels of multiple deprivation. The areas identified (Priority Areas) include all of Lemyngton and Hastings Wards in Loughborough. These areas also include the highest proportions of pre 1919 stock, the largest BME populations and a large proportion of first time buyers’ properties. Properties in this area are eligible for Renovation Grants (subject to qualifying criteria) and offer assistance intended to deal with unfitness and non-decency. Renovation grants are not cash limited but are means tested and must be repaid if the house is sold within ten years.

- To offer assistance to those individuals most in need and who have fewest choices in relation to their accommodation

The second thrust recognises that there are properties outside the priority areas which have urgent repair issues, which the householder may be unable to afford. In these circumstances, vulnerable people may obtain assistance with essential repairs, which will deal with identified risks.

- To target specific issues where individuals might be at risk
  Elderly people or those with children at home and in receipt of means tested benefits or people in receipt of specified disability benefits qualify for a range of Home Repair Assistance to help deal with specific risk related housing defects.

Only one grant is allowed in each category within a five-year period. The categories are:

- Wind Weatherproof and Safe (Maximum £1500)
- Essential Services (Max £2000)
- Minor Adaptation (not for work eligible under Disabled Facilities Grant but including repair to previous adaptations (Max £1000)
- Central Heating (a means tested grant for those not eligible for Warmfront)

Private Sector Assistance Given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of properties</th>
<th>Value (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003/4</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the three main strands of the private sector strategy, there are a number of complementary initiatives targeted at specific issues:

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

DFGs to enable people to continue to live in their own homes are the only remaining statutory grants. Demand is high reflecting the increasing age of the population. The budget for this is continuously under severe pressure. As a result no discretionary grants under this heading have been paid for several years although it is hoped this may be possible in the future. The Council has been involved in a joint exercise with Social
Services and the other District Councils in Leicestershire to achieve uniformity of service standards to deliver adaptations. The report identifies changes to working methods and service delivery targets.

**Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants paid**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Value (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003/4</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Access to Assistance**

The Council is currently in discussion with Home Improvement Agencies (HIA) in the area with a view to making their services available to residents. This is subject to suitable financial support being available. The main provider of such support, Supporting People, has indicated that no bids can be considered for the time being so alternative funding will be required. It is planned to have access to a HIA within three years.

**Leicestershire Safe at Home Scheme**

The Council introduced a Handy Van scheme in 2004 through the Charnwood Community Safety Partnership in partnership with Help the Aged, North West Leicestershire District Council and Care and Repair (West Leicestershire Ltd) to provide security measures for the over 60's. During 2004/5 171 installations were carried out.

**Dealing with Unfitness**

Unfitness is tackled mainly in the Private Rented Sector under the Housing Acts and has been reported on annually as part of the National Best Value Performance Indicator 62 where the Council has performed consistently within the top quartile. Currently there are 2159 unfit properties in the private sector, and it is estimated that 28% are contained within the priority areas identified above.

**Empty Homes**

The Council takes a proactive approach to dealing with Empty Homes. As part of the Empty Homes Procedure the Housing Standards Team:

- identifies all properties vacant for over 6 months
- contacts all owners of properties vacant over 2 years

The long-term vacancy rate of properties in Charnwood is lower than the national average of 3.6%. This is partly as a consequence of the area being relatively prosperous and the high demand for properties, particularly in Loughborough where there is a large demand for student accommodation.

**Caravan Sites**

Licence conditions are under review for all sites within the Borough. Those for residential sites were completed following consultation in 2004/05; the remainder will be revised during 2005.

**Student Housing Issues**

At present there are approximately 5500 students in private rented accommodation, mainly within a small geographic area of Loughborough. This has a significant impact by removing over 1000 traditionally first time buyer properties from the market. The high concentration of student properties in a small area also makes the area unattractive for family occupation. Environmental Health Services and Planning Services are jointly working to examine options including the...
Health Services and Planning Services are jointly working to examine options including the additional licensing of HMOs under the Housing Act 2004 to apply more controls in these areas. A programme of inspections of all HMOs (which will include student properties), along with enforcement of the Management regulations in these properties is likely to be the most practical option, rather than simply just licensable HMOs under the new Housing Act 2004. Proposals from the University to create more bed spaces on campus over the next ten years may increase vacancy rates within this section of the private renting market and this is being closely monitored.

Student Housing Accreditation Scheme
The Council’s Private Sector Housing Team worked closely with Loughborough University to establish the Accreditation Scheme for privately rented student properties within Charnwood. As well as ensuring all properties meet the statutory minimum standards, the scheme ensures greater safety standards, both in terms of fire safety and security, as well as improved minimum amenity standards. At present the scheme includes 248 properties.

The scheme is currently being reviewed jointly with the University Accommodation Team, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue, and Leicestershire Constabulary to address changes to legislation in the Housing Act 2004.

It is proposed that the inspection procedure for accredited properties (which is currently undertaken by the University) will be jointly undertaken – with the Private Sector Housing Team carrying out property inspections in relation to health, safety and amenity standards and the University concentrating on furniture provision, facilities and décor.

Private Sector Leasing (PSL) Scheme
The Private Sector Housing Team inspects all properties prior to acceptance onto the Council’s PSL Scheme. The scheme enables the Council to lease properties from private landlords, which are then used as temporary accommodation for homeless families and families threatened with homelessness. This initiative has been funded via the Council’s Homelessness Prevention Fund. However, as the portfolio of properties increases the scheme should become self-financing. The scheme has already been successful in securing 6 properties with negotiations currently underway to secure an additional 10 properties. The annual target for 2005/6 is 20 properties.

Decent Homes in the Private Sector
The Ready Reckoner provided by the ODPM estimates that there are 2,750 non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households in Charnwood, which would require the identification and improvement of 300 houses by the end of 2006. When the House Condition Survey reports later this year the Council will be able to confirm the locations of areas where there are properties in this sector and further develop strategies to meet the targets. It is, however, recognised that nationally the most common single reason for failing the standard is that a property fails to provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. Energy efficiency measures are therefore high on the Council’s agenda as illustrated below.

- promoting Energy Efficiency through the Warm Front Scheme
- a successful in-house discount scheme and a partnership with British Gas
- developing a scheme in partnership with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to involve their front line staff in identifying residents who would benefit from the above schemes and referring them to relevant schemes
- grant aid is being made available to include dealing with non-decency when dealing with unfitness within the priority areas where there are many vulnerable residents
- the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy outside Priority Areas is targeted at vulnerable households and will deal with items of serious disrepair where there are risks to the occupiers. This will in many cases also impact on the levels of non-decency
Introduction

Fuel poverty is the ‘inability of a household to afford adequate warmth’\(^{10}\). It is a combination of low household income, inadequate and expensive forms of heating and poor insulation standards. The Council is committed to the eradication of fuel poverty and the provision of Affordable Warmth for its residents, irrespective of tenure, by 2010. The Council aims to achieve this by:

- raising awareness and providing energy advice
- improving energy efficiency within Council owned homes
- encouraging and assisting where possible improvements within the Private Sector

Issues facing the Borough:

- An ageing housing stock which conformed to lower building regulations and is therefore less energy efficient
- Unwillingness in private housing landlords to pay up front for energy efficient measures with long payback periods
- Lack of up to date information on the Private Sector
- Identifying and interacting with vulnerable people

The Council is working towards meeting the Government’s key energy efficiency targets through the Energy Action Plan and Affordable Warmth Policy in the following areas to:

- Reduce Fuel Poverty
  The Government aims to eradicate fuel poverty by 2010. The Council is committed to reduce fuel poverty by achieving at least the minimum levels of thermal comfort required to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard in the 6,000 dwellings that form the Council’s housing stock. In addition, energy efficiency promotion is a main element of the drive for Decent Homes in the private sector.

- Reduce Domestic CO\(_2\) Emissions
  To meet the domestic CO\(_2\) reduction targets the Council is promoting to all Borough residents the benefits of increased home insulation, low energy lighting and more fuel-efficient central heating boilers including:

- energy efficiency advice to all enquirers
- an upgrade and updating service for all the mediums for giving advice
- advice on the Government Warm Front Scheme, British Gas Keep Warm and Well and Able to Pay Scheme a discounted insulation scheme “Heat Charnwood” in partnership with Enact Energy Management Ltd

To ensure access to schemes, the Council and its partners advertise widely, including mail outs to people identified as eligible from Council records, and attend promotional events.

Future Actions

- Instigate HECAMON (Home Energy Conservation Act) monitoring of housing stock to verify current energy efficiency levels
- Initiate a formal partnership with the Charnwood and North West Leicestershire PCT called “Keep Warm & Well”. The scheme will require front line care workers to be trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of individuals living in fuel poverty and refer to the Council to apply for assistance
- Promote and actively encourage the use of renewable energy systems in private sector dwellings. Provide a clear explanation of the technology and how it can be incorporated in to homes. Form links or partnerships with manufacturers and installers to bring discounts under, and in addition to the Government’s Clear Skies grants
- Explore the possibility of surveying and issuing SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) energy rating certificates to homeowners. This would potentially provide:
  - Income to cover database operating and licensing fees

provide a service, which may tie in with the Home Buyers Report
allow the Council to extend the private sector energy database allowing for more accurate reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Strategy Priorities:</th>
<th>Action Plan:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High quality maintenance</td>
<td>Action 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrading home insulation</td>
<td>Action 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installing efficient appliances</td>
<td>Action 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>