

INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the Council's plans for improving the quality and accessibility of the District's private sector housing stock for South Derbyshire residents. It identifies priorities for action and sets out how the Private Sector housing team intends to contribute to the council's vision to provide 'good quality, affordable homes located in healthy, safe and pleasant environments' [Housing Strategy 2004-09]

In developing the document we have considered relevant national, regional and local policies and priorities together with statistical information derived from surveys of local housing conditions, energy efficiency, fuel poverty and housing needs. The views of our stakeholders have been taken into account following consultation on the draft policy.

The overall aim of our policy is to make the best use of available resources to deliver housing assistance, which is effective and proportionate to local housing conditions and need within our district and addresses the areas we have identified as key priorities.

The policy supersedes the PS Housing Renewal Policy 2006 and will become operational from 1st April 2008. Any private sector housing assistance provided by the council will be strictly in accordance with this Policy.

PART 1. DEVELOPING THE POLICY

The private sector housing function, within the council's broader strategic housing role can make an important contribution to the delivery of government policy at a local level.

National Policy Framework

Current government policy is about 'everyone having the opportunity to rent or buy a decent home at a price they can afford, in a place where they want to live and work'. The five year housing plan 'Sustainable Communities: Homes for All' published in 2005, sets out key aims to ensure that homes are decent, communities sustainable and that vulnerable people's housing needs are met.

In the latest housing green paper 'Homes for the Future: More Affordable more Sustainable' 2007, there is emphasis on increasing housing supply to meet rising demand; building new homes and making better use of existing ones (ie empty homes) in recognition that Britain's population is both increasing and ageing. There are proposals to provide more affordable homes to buy and rent and to reduce carbon emissions by building greener homes and making existing ones more energy efficient.

The Housing & Regeneration Bill introduced before the House of Commons in November 2007 will help deliver the commitments set out in the Housing green paper for more homes and greener homes, in mixed and sustainable communities.

The UK Climate Change Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent by early summer 2008 and will set a target for the UK to reduce carbon dioxide emissions (which contribute towards global warming and climate change) by at least 60% below 1990 levels, by 2050. Greenhouse gas

emissions from our homes are significant because they are responsible for approximately 15% of the UK's total carbon dioxide emissions. As a result the government will continue to support initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of new and existing homes.

A further driver for improving home energy efficiency is action to tackle fuel poverty. The Government's aim, restated in 'Fuel Poverty in England: The Government's Plan for Action'²⁰⁰⁷ is, as far as reasonably practicable, to eradicate fuel poverty in vulnerable households by 2010, with a vulnerable household deemed to be one containing children, or those who are elderly, sick or disabled. Fuel poverty in other households will also be tackled as progress is made on these groups, with a target that by 22 November 2016, as far as reasonably practicable, no person in England should have to live in fuel poverty.

Regional Policy Framework

At a regional level, the East Midlands have a Regional Housing Strategy to help guide and deliver national housing priorities in a way that is appropriate to our local region. The current Strategy was published by the Regional Housing Board in 2004 and identifies a range of policies to achieve its main objective 'to ensure that the existing and future housing stock is appropriate to meet the housing needs of all parts of the community'. The policies cover all aspects of housing including new housing and social housing. The following policies, within the Strategy document are specifically relevant to our work in the private sector:

Policy 5 – delivering decent homes and decent neighbourhoods: renewing and revitalising the private sector.

Policy 10 – Assisting people to maintain their independence for as long as they wish.

Policy 11 – Promoting healthy, safe and eco efficient homes

Policy 12 – Ensuring that in rural areas and market towns there is both an appropriate provision of quality homes to meet a range of housing needs and access to related services for vulnerable people of all ages.

The East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) has now assumed responsibility for the strategy and has begun the process of consultation and review. A new Regional Housing Strategy is expected to be in place by October 2008. A recent consultation 'options' paper has identified the following potential priorities for the new RHS;

- Affordability and access to housing
- Design quality and sustainable homes (including Decent Homes)
- Sustainable and cohesive communities
- Rural housing
- Housing for vulnerable people
- Planning for an aging population

Local Policy Framework

At a local level plans, policies and strategies are developed by the Council, other statutory bodies, voluntary sector organisation and partners to deliver against priorities on a sub regional and district wide basis.

The Local Strategic Partnership approved a five year Community Strategy for South Derbyshire in 2005 aimed at improving the economy, environment and quality of life throughout the district.

The 'Healthier Communities' theme identifies 'better support to vulnerable people and families to improve their health and well being' as a priority and action to reduce the number of vulnerable people and families living in non decent homes.

The Council's Corporate Plan forms the cornerstone of the Council's strategic aims and objectives for the district and identifies the following actions relevant to the private housing sector:

- Promote the availability of affordable and decent homes in the private sector, including rented property.
- Improve arrangements for dealing with adaptations to the homes of people with disabilities.
- Reduce the number of vulnerable households experiencing fuel poverty and tackle climate change by promoting improvements.

The local Housing Strategy is a broad document, which aims to achieve specific outcomes across the whole housing market, underpinning the Council's 'place shaping' role. This policy is one of a number of specific policies and strategies, which support and link into the wider Housing Strategy giving a more detailed focus on its key themes;

-work with stakeholders to maintain and improve the district's housing stock

- to ensure there is an adequate supply of homes to meet anticipated need, taking into account the demands of new industry coming into the area

- to ensure that vulnerable people have access to appropriate and stable housing

The strategy is in its final year and is currently under review. A new strategy will be published in 2009.

Summary

From this broad policy framework we can identify a number of common themes, which are relevant for our policy to address;

- Adequate supply of decent, affordable housing
- Greener homes to tackle climate change & fuel poverty
- Meeting the needs of vulnerable households, especially older and disabled people

We will now see how these match with our understanding of house condition and needs at a local level, informed by statistical information from the stock condition and housing needs surveys.

PROFILE OF THE PRIVATE HOUSING SECTOR IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE

STOCK CONDITION

The South Derbyshire House Condition & Energy Efficiency Survey was undertaken in 2004 and reports the incidence of unfit housing, non decent housing, disrepair and the energy rating of the district's private sector housing stock. The survey was conducted in line with DETR guidance and provides essential statistical information, which we must consider in development of our policy. A profile of the stock and some of the relevant information contained in the survey is summarised below:

Private Sector Housing Stock Profile		
Age of Property	Pre 1919	23.3%
	1919 - 1944	9.2%
	1945 - 1964	12.0%
	1965 - 1980	23.1%
	Post 1980	32.4%
Tenure	Owner Occupier	81.9%
	Private Rented	6.8%
	RSL	1.7%
	Council rented	9.6%
Building Type	Terraced	18.5%
	Semi detached	35.8%
	Detached	43.8%
	Flat	1.8%
Household Type	Single Pensioner	10.6%
	Couple Pensioner	9.9%
	Single Adult	11.9%
	Couple	34.0%
	Family	30.4%
	Lone parent	3.2%

Fitness (NB the Fitness Standards was replaced by HHSRS in April 2006)

3.5% of South Derbyshire properties were reported to be unfit, (this compares to 4.2% nationally) and a further 5.9% of properties were found to be defective.

main reason for unfitness

- **disrepair**
- **lack of adequate bath/shower & washbasin provision**

Properties most likely to be unfit

- **Private Rented dwellings** (6.8% unfit compared with 3.3% owner occupied dwellings)
- **Pre 1919 dwellings** (10.5% were unfit)
- **Vacant dwellings** (20.6% were unfit)

Decent Homes Standard

27.2% of South Derbyshire properties failed to meet the **decent home standard**.

Non decent property was most likely to be:

- **privately rented,**
- **pre 1919**
- **lone parent** or **vulnerable** households.

The main reason for failure was lack of thermal comfort (77%) and disrepair (30%)

Housing Health & Safety Rating System

The survey made an assessment of the housing stock using the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

Approximately **4.7%** of dwellings were estimated to require a **mandatory response** due to deficiencies identified using the HHSRS.

The main hazards identified were:

- **excessive cold**
- **falls on stairs.**

The most hazardous dwellings were:

- **pre 1919** and
- **privately rented.**

Household Characteristics

3404 dwellings (10.6%) were occupied by **single pensioners**.

4062 households (12.6%) have special needs or a **disability**.

Approximately **6350** (19.8%) households are classed as **vulnerable**.

Energy Efficiency

The mean SAP rating (standard assessment procedure for energy efficiency) for houses in South Derbyshire was **47** (NB the lower the figure the worse the standards of energy efficiency)

- Properties with the worst standards of energy efficiency across the District were the Pre 1919 age band (SAP rating of **36**) and **Privately rented** dwellings (SAP rating of **39**)
- **RSL** and **owner occupied** with mortgage, had a much higher mean SAP rating of **50**.

73.9% of properties had **cavity walls**, but of these a total of **50%** had no cavity wall insulation.

90.4% of properties had **double glazing** although only **50.9%** of dwellings built before **1919** and **40.6%** of **private rented properties** had full double glazing.

Fuel Poverty

3 345 households (**10.2%**) are living in '**fuel poverty**' and spend more than 10% of their income on fuel. Households in **RSL** accommodation are most likely to be considered fuel poor, with **32.8%** of tenants considered to be in fuel poverty.

- **detached** houses and converted **flats** show the highest levels of fuel poverty.
- More than a third of **single pensioner** households are fuel poor
- **lone parent** and **special needs** households are more likely than average to suffer fuel poverty.

Overall households living in the least energy efficient homes (ie Sap rating below **30**) tend to be;

- **living alone,**
- have **special needs,** are
- **elderly** and have **low incomes.**

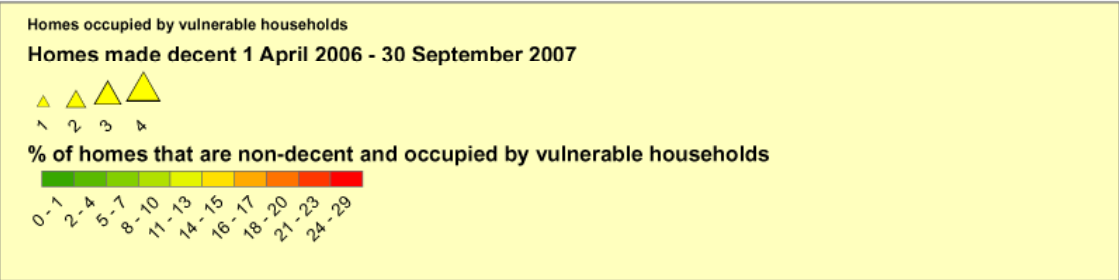
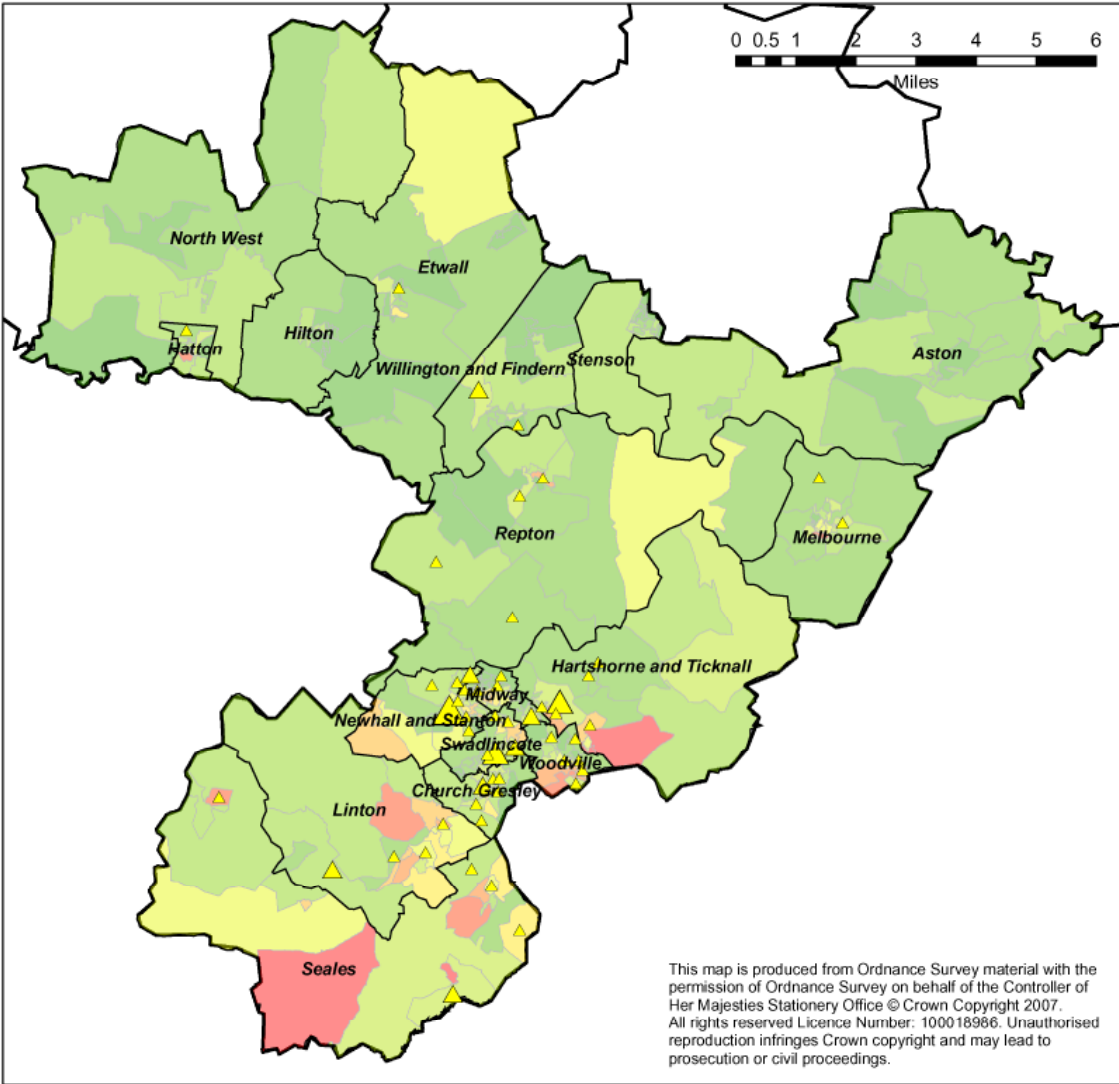
Updating Stock Information

The House Condition & Energy Survey is undertaken every five years, but in between times it is important for us to update the information wherever possible to ensure that our policy approach remains relevant to the needs of the district.

In early 2007 we commissioned an aerial thermal imaging survey to assess heat loss from properties across the district. The results were linked to the Councils Geographical Information System (GIS) and colour coded to give a map of the district with red, green or blue areas corresponding to properties with high, medium or low heat loss. This has enabled us to identify over 800 private sector properties requiring improved levels of insulation and will assist us to target energy conservation measures where they are most needed.

From 2006 we have worked with Hi4Em ('Housing Information for the East Midlands' an organisation funded by the Regional Housing Group) to map our activity to improve non decent homes occupied by vulnerable people.

South Derbyshire Private Sector Housing
Non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households
Homes occupied by vulnerable households made decent



The map shows the number of homes occupied by vulnerable households that were made decent as a result of our activity between 1 April 2006 and 30 September 2007 (by census output area). This has been overlaid on the mapped results of the House Condition Survey 2004 showing the proportion of dwellings that were non-decent and occupied by vulnerable households.

Housing Market & Needs

The District Council has an on-going programme of housing needs studies to focus on key areas of activity. A district wide housing needs study gives an overall picture of need and is complimented by both parish studies and specific needs studies such as black and minority groups and travellers.

Housing Market

During the last 3 years there has been a 73% increase in the cost of a terrace property in South Derbyshire; 19% more than the average for the East Midlands. Properties in the north and in the rural parishes are generally more expensive than the central urban area around Swadlincote.

The key factors for future price movements and development of the market, and the consequent effects on the need for affordable housing, would appear to be:

- The continuing extent of immigration from Birmingham and the West Midlands, in turn dependent on the quality of transport links
- Pressures in the Derby market
- Pressures in the rural parishes, (population less than 3,000)
- The general affordability of housing influenced by interest rates and income to mortgage borrowing ratios.

The economy is at present, relatively stable. Changes in the economy such as higher interest rates, affecting both employment and people's ability to repay mortgages may well increase the level of homelessness in the district. The need for affordable housing becomes increasingly prevalent in a buoyant economy both to meet the need of those wishing to enter the housing market and those that struggle to stay in the market.

Housing Needs

The Supporting People Programme seeks to improve the planning and delivery of Housing Related Support Services. The Programme went live in April 2003 and approximately 900 people in South Derbyshire have received housing related support funded by the Supporting People Programme at an approximate cost of £1.4 million (2006/07). Of these the vast majority (83%) are older people.

Data from the 2001 Census indicates that just fewer than 17% of the population in South Derbyshire is of retirement age (60 for women, 65 for men). This is below the U K and East Midlands figure of 18%. South Derbyshire also has a lower proportion of those aged 75 and over, at 6.8%, compared to the UK and East Midlands at 7.5%.

There are some variations across electoral wards. The four wards with the highest proportion of residents over 75 are Etwall, Melbourne, Repton, Hartshorne and Ticknall.

Looking to the next ten years, forecasts anticipate every housing authority in Derbyshire must expect at least a 20% increase in the number of people over retirement age living in the area. South Derbyshire can expect to see a significantly higher increase than the other districts of around 37%.

If the expected trend for people to live longer continues, it is likely to increase demand on current supply of Sheltered Housing and Private Older Person Accommodation also the need for disabled adaptations, sensory devices and preventative technologies.

Summary

The House Condition & Energy Survey helps us to identify some key considerations for our policy:

- Results show that the majority of dwellings require action on an **individual basis** rather than through block improvement or renewal areas.
- In determining a suitable localised policy to implement an appropriate package of measures, targeting dwellings by **tenure, age** and **vulnerable** household groups may prove beneficial.
- More specifically, account could be taken of those categories where the highest incidence of unfitness and disrepair as well as low energy efficiency has been identified these are:
 - **PRIVATE RENTED PROPERTY**
 - **PRE 1919 PROPERTY**
 - **VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS**
 - **SINGLE PENSIONER HOUSEHOLDS**

Information from the housing market & needs studies highlight a need for more **affordable housing** especially in rural areas and an **ageing population** that will increase demand for suitable accommodation and adaptations.

A further consideration in the development of our policy is the national legislative framework, which provides a range of mandatory and discretionary duties and the tools with which to deliver our policy objectives.

Legislative Framework

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002

The order repeals previous prescriptive legislation concerning housing renewal grants and provides local authorities with a greater degree of flexibility to deal with poor condition housing, both in terms of the interventions available to them and their ability to work in partnership with others.

Authorities are permitted to offer grants to homeowners within a framework of locally determined criteria and have the power to provide assistance through loans and equity release products or a combination of both.

Assistance may be provided for;

- Repair, improvement and adaptation of a dwelling
- Demolition of a dwelling and help with rebuilding costs
- Alternative accommodation, which supports an improvement in living conditions, particularly where the authority intends to compulsorily purchase the existing accommodation or alternative accommodation is a better option than repairing or adapting the existing property.

The authority can offer assistance to any persons (ie owner/occupier, landlord or tenant) directly or through a third party such as a Home Improvement Agency.

The Order requires local authorities to publish a 'policy' setting out how they intend to use their new freedoms to provide assistance for housing renewal.

South Derbyshire District Council formally adopted their first Private Sector Renewal Policy in July 2003 and this document represents a subsequent amendment.

The Housing Act 2004

The Housing Act 2004 is a significant piece of legislation, which takes forward the provisions contained in the Housing Green Paper (2000). The main provisions of the Act are summarised below:

Housing Health & Safety Rating System

Part 1 of the Act replaced the existing 'Fitness Standard' contained in the Housing Act 1985 with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. The new system is intended to help authorities prioritise their intervention based on the severity of health and safety hazards in the home. It also adapts and extends the powers of enforcement currently available to authorities to tackle poor housing conditions.

Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation

Part 2 of the Act introduces a mandatory scheme to licence high risk Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's of 3 or more storeys, occupied by 5 or more people). There are also powers to extend licensing to other categories of HMO, subject to consultation and approval by the appropriate national authority.

Selective Licensing of other residential accommodation

Part 3 permits local authorities to introduce selective licensing to deal with problem housing such as areas of low demand or areas suffering from anti social behaviour.

Enforcement and Additional Control Provisions

Part 4 contains provisions for enforcement action in respect of licensable property, overcrowding in non licensable HMO's and introduces the power for local authorities to take over the management of long term empty properties.

Home Information Packs

There is a new requirement under part 5 of the Act for sellers or estate agents to produce a home information pack before marketing any residential property for sale.

Other housing provisions

Part 6 establishes Tenancy Deposit Schemes to safeguard deposits paid in connection with assured shorthold tenancies and strengthens the rights of park home owners including eligibility for disabled facilities grant to all those occupying caravans as their only or main residence.

The Decent Home Standard

In order to be 'decent' a home should be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities. The Government has defined a dwelling that meets the 'Decent Homes' standard as one that:

1. Meets the current minimum standard for housing

The Housing Health & Safety Rating System, as set out in the Housing Act 2004 is the statutory minimum standard for housing. Homes containing one or more Category 1 hazards will fail the decent home standard .

2. It is in a reasonable state of repair

The property will fail if;

- one or more **key** building components are old, and because of their condition need replacing or major repair or,
- two or more of the **other** building components are old and because of their condition need replacing or major repair.

[Key components are defined as including external walls, roof structure and covering, windows and doors, chimneys, central heating boilers, gas fires electrical wiring installation etc. Other building components are those having a less immediate impact on the integrity of the dwelling].

3. It has reasonably modern facilities and services

The property will fail if it lacks 3 or more of the following:

4. A reasonably modern kitchen (20yrs old or less)
5. A kitchen with adequate space and layout
6. A reasonably modern bathroom (30yrs old or less)
7. An appropriately located bathroom and WC
8. Adequate insulation against external noise
9. Adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats.

4. It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

In order to meet this criterion the property must have both efficient heating and effective insulation.

Efficient heating is any gas /oil/LPG or solid fuel **programmable** central heating or electric storage heaters or similarly efficient heating system.

The level of insulation specified in the decent home standard varies depending on the type of heating installed. For gas or oil programmable central heating it is considered a minimum of 50mm depth will suffice.

For other types of heating 200mm depth of insulation is considered necessary.

The final consideration for the development of our policy is the level of resources available. This will dictate the range and scope of our interventions in the private sector;

RESOURCES

Capital Programme

The 2008/09 capital programme for private sector housing is set out below, together with approximate funding for 2009/10 and 2010/11:

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Disabled Facilities Grant	£333,000	£166,000	£166,000

All budget spend is monitored on a monthly basis.

NB: To cover the cost of delivering the Disabled Adaptation Service a fee of 10% will be charged for the administrative services provided by the Council.

East Midlands Regional Housing Group Supplementary Allocation

South Derbyshire District Council has bid for additional funding from the Regional Housing Group to deliver other private sector housing initiatives outside of the DFG programme. A successful outcome will secure funding to provide discretionary assistance to deliver against our priorities.

PART 2 IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES & TARGETING ASSISTANCE

In this section we will use the information reviewed in Part 1, to identify key priorities and objectives for our policy and set out the guiding principles and approach we will adopt in their delivery.

Guiding Principles

The following general principles will guide the practical delivery of our policy;

- All private sector housing will be assessed using the Housing Health & Safety Rating System
- we will aim to achieve the Decent Home Standard in all cases as a minimum.
- The responsibility to maintain a private sector dwelling rests with the owner not the council, however it is recognised that poor housing has an impact on health and a level of protective investment is required for those most in need.
- the provision of financial assistance by the council will be determined using the current test of resources calculation or eligibility to receive an income related benefit, priority will be given to the most vulnerable groups.
- we will seek to improve the energy efficiency of all private sector homes and reduce the carbon footprint for the district.
- we will aim to provide a service which is easy to access, clear and unambiguous with the minimum amount of bureaucracy
- we will continuously review the effectiveness of our policy in consultation with stakeholders

Our Approach

The approach we will adopt to deliver our key priorities is threefold;

- **enabling** to support private sector households,
Our enabling role within the private housing sector will include provision of carefully targeted financial assistance to the most vulnerable who do not have access to the resources they need to improve or repair their home. This will include mandatory DFG to help fund disabled adaptations in the home or assistance with relocation where this is more appropriate. A Capital Release Loan product will be offered to non vulnerable households as an alternative to grant assistance to encourage self financing of repairs and improvements. We will provide comprehensive advice and support to the sector using a range of media including home visits and telephone contact, leaflets and promotional material and our corporate

website.

▪ **ensuring standards** through regulation

We will ensure good housing standards through statutory enforcement and will seek to reduce the number of homes in the district that pose a risk to the health & safety of the occupants (i.e homes with Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System). Our enforcement activity will be undertaken in accordance with the five principles of better regulation; proportionate, targeted, accountable, transparent and consistent . Details are contained in a separate policy (the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2007) which is available on request or from the council's website. We will also ensure standards by supporting self regulation in the private rented sector encouraging landlords to commit to meeting or exceeding legal standards and to follow good practice. Our landlord forum, training events and accreditation scheme will support this commitment.

▪ **building effective partnerships** to maximise the effect and scope of our activities.

We will seek wherever possible to work in partnership or collaboratively to help deliver our key priorities and objectives and assist others with linking or cross cutting agendas, to deliver theirs. We propose to develop a 'working together protocol' which will help define and formalise our working relationship with a range of internal and external partners including;

Building Control & Planning
Housing
Revenue & Benefits
CVS
Spirita Care & Repair
Fire Service
Derbyshire Housing Aid
Home Improvement Trust
Private landlords & Agent
DASH
Hi4EM
Social Services
PCT

KEY PRIORITIES & OBJECTIVES

We have identified three priority areas where we intend to focus our actions and resources;

Key Priority 1: Improving the quality and supply of housing in the private sector, especially for vulnerable groups

- objective 1. improving the quality of private rented homes
- objective 2. improving the quality of owner occupied homes
- objective 3. improving access to good quality housing for vulnerable people and preventing homelessness

Key Priority 2: Assisting older, disabled and vulnerable people to live independently in their own home

- objective 1. Addressing the need for disabled adaptations
- objective 2. providing safe, healthy and decent homes for vulnerable people

Key Priority 3: reducing fuel poverty and promoting energy efficient homes

- objective 1. provide assistance to remove households from fuel poverty
- objective 2. promote home energy efficiency improvements in private sector homes

Our key priorities and the range of interventions we propose to address them are considered in more detail below:

KEY PRIORITY1: Improving the quality and supply of housing in the private sector, especially for vulnerable groups

The District's location, character and transport links make it a desirable place to live and these factors make it relatively expensive to buy or rent a home, particularly in rural areas where poorer households are often unable to access affordable accommodation. As a result, many vulnerable households live in poor quality homes that do not meet their basic needs and which can impact adversely on their health and quality of life.

Objective 1: Improving the quality of PRS

The private rented sector offers some of the poorest housing conditions in the district and often houses vulnerable groups such as lone parents, the elderly and those on low incomes or benefits. We aim to promote the decent home standard as a minimum standard in privately rented accommodation through the provision of education, incentives and enforcement;

Landlord forum

We have consulted landlords at two recent events held jointly with neighbouring East Staffordshire Borough Council and North West Leicestershire District Council, to help us identify a successful way to engage them. We have received feedback that an educational forum featuring regular training events and a newsletter to disseminate essential information would be welcomed. We intend to work with DASH to promote and run two forum events a year to provide essential training for local landlords and promote self regulation and improved standards in the private rented sector. These events will be supplemented with a bi annual newsletter containing information and advice relevant to the private rented sector and advertising forthcoming forum events. The newsletter will be circulated to the 300+ landlords and agents on our database.

Accreditation scheme

We have opted to join the East Midlands Regional Landlord Accreditation Scheme which will offer local landlords the opportunity to become accredited. The core scheme will be managed by DASH on our behalf although verification of standards of accommodation will be undertaken in house. Landlords will have to complete a minimum level of training and declare their full portfolio of properties for verification that they comply with minimum standards relating to conditions and management standards. We will aim to enhance the scheme with a package of incentives which we can offer accredited landlords as the scheme progresses.

Enforcement:

Poor housing and managements standards (where the landlord shows an unwillingness to cooperate or improve) will be addressed through enforcement action, in accordance with the private sector housing enforcement policy. Landlords subject to legal action will be charged a fee to cover the Council's administration cost and as an additional sanction, will be excluded from any beneficial schemes which might otherwise be available.

Licensing:

Houses in multiple Occupation (HMO) cover most types of accommodation where there are groups of people living together and sharing amenities, who do not constitute a single family. HMO's attract specific attention because the risks to the health and safety of the occupants tend to be statistically higher than for single occupancy homes. The Housing Act 2004 has introduced a new regulatory framework making it mandatory for certain types of HMO to be

licenced. These are buildings of three storeys or more, occupied by more than one household and 5 or more persons, where there is sharing of an amenity such as a bathroom, WC or cooking facilities. Although there are currently no buildings which meet the licensing criteria within South Derbyshire, a licensing scheme has been adopted and is available. We are aware that there are a small number of other multioccupancy buildings within the district, predominantly self contained with little or no sharing of amenities, which do not fall within the licensing criteria. Such accommodation is considered to be higher risk than comparable single occupancy buildings and as a result are inspected annually by the Council, to ensure proper provision of fire safety and good management standards.

Objective 2: Improving the quality of Private Owner Occupied housing:

Owner occupied homes are subject to the same housing standards as privately rented accommodation although the council is less likely to consider enforcement action as the most appropriate tool to bring about an improvements in standards.

Owner occupiers have a responsibility to maintain their own homes, however it is recognised that many older, disabled or vulnerable people lack the resources and support to improve their living conditions and quality of life.

Grants & Loans

Where funding becomes available we will continue to offer a safety net of grant assistance to those at risk and most in need. Owners with adequate resources or equity available in their property will generally be expected to fund work themselves.

Capital Release Loans for homeowners are now available through out partner Home Improvement Agency Spirita Care & Repair and the Home Improvement Trust. The scheme know as 'Houseproud' is intended to assist homeowners who have considerable equity value in their homes but lack sufficient capital to fund essential repairs and improvements. A range of repayment options, are available to the client and the Council will assist by funding the 'set up' or arrangement fee for the loan.

Information and Advice

We intend to provide an alternative range of support measures for non-vulnerable owner/occupiers as follows:

- Home visits on request for disrepair, home safety or energy efficiency advice.
- Advise and information on the Council's Website
- Homeowners pack providing useful advice and information on maintaining their home

Objective 3: Improving access to good quality housing for vulnerable people and preventing homelessness

There are significant barriers to good quality housing for vulnerable groups and low income families who cannot afford to buy a home and in many cases cannot find the deposit up front to access a decent home to rent. Whilst there is much emphasis within the broader housing strategy of ways to achieve affordable housing through new supply, this policy focuses on initiatives which can contribute to improving access, standards and supply using existing housing stock within the private sector;

Rent deposit scheme

This scheme is available for vulnerable residents who are homeless or potentially homeless and unable to afford the deposit for a rented property. The Council will pay a deposit of up to £500

or one months rent on behalf of the prospective tenant and later recoup the money through weekly instalments of an agreed amount.

The scheme offers tenants access to private rented housing which they might otherwise be excluded from through lack of savings or income and a pre tenancy inspection ensures that it meets with current housing standards. The landlord benefits from the scheme by access to an assisted housing benefit service and a deposit paid in full, which can be retained at the end of the tenancy should any losses or damage be incurred by the tenant.

Private Sector Leasing Scheme

We propose to work jointly with the council's housing department to develop and operate a voluntary leasing scheme, targeting empty home owners who may be willing to let their properties but do not want the hassle of managing a tenancy themselves. Properties secured through the scheme will be brought up to the decent home standard and leased on a fixed term basis from the owner and let to homeless and other vulnerable people on the Council's Housing waiting list. The arrangement will provide the owner with an agreed rental income for the duration of the lease and provide good quality accommodation at an affordable rent for those in need.

Information and advice

In addition to our activities supporting landlords to improve the quality of private rented accommodation we also wish to support tenants with a range of information and advise to assist them to find and remain in suitable accommodation. Tenants will be able to access information on the corporate website and from a range of advisory leaflets on tenancy matters and information including;

- List of accredited landlords (subject to progress on the landlord accreditation scheme)
- List of landlords who accept housing benefits
- List of landlords who let at affordable rents.

Key Priority 2: Assisting older, disabled and vulnerable people to live independently in their own home

Older, disabled and vulnerable people often live in the worst housing conditions and lack the resources and support to improve their living conditions and quality of life. Policies of care in the community and social inclusion mean that more older people require help to continue living safely and independently in their own homes. We will give this client group priority, offering a safety net of grant assistance to repair, improve or adapt their homes.

Objective 1: Addressing the need for Disabled adaptations

The Council has a mandatory duty to provide Disabled Facilities Grant to fund alterations to a disabled persons home so that they are able to gain access safely and use all the normal facilities of their home or care for others living there who are disabled. Disabled adaptations given through DFG are consistently effective, producing significant health gains and preventing accidents or admission to residential care. Such adaptations also benefit the recipient by improving quality of life and independence. Disabled children and their siblings benefit in development, education and social contact and carers suffer less stress and have reduced likelihood of back injury.

The council has made significant improvements in the disabled adaptation service since 2006, improving the both the quality of the service and our response times. The challenge for the

service is maintain and wherever possible, improve service delivery within a regime of increasing demand and limited budget.

At a strategic level, we propose to explore opportunities through the LSP and LAA's to secure funding contributions from our health and social services partners on the basis that adaptations offer a means to invest in the life chances of disabled people. We will also consider the use of S106 agreements as a means of providing new build housing options (suitable for disabled people) within new housing developments.

At an operational level, we will introduce the following measures to help us meet rising demand;

1) Revised protocols to provide clear guidance on the range of adaptations which can be funded through mandatory DFG. The protocols describe our local interpretation of the 'purposes for which grant may be given' as prescribed in the Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 and remove the eligibility for electric scooter stores, dropped kerbs, hardstandings, additional WC's and secure garden fences except in specified circumstances of need. This will help to reduce ambiguity for service users, Social Services and our own staff, whilst ensuring that strictly essential needs are met (see annex 1).

2) A new discretionary Relocation Grant will be introduced to offer a disabled person the choice to move home in circumstances where:

- The Council has been advised by social services that a person has a need that makes him or her eligible for a disabled facilities grant;
- In the Council's opinion the disabled person's existing accommodation is not suitable to be adapted;
- The disabled person is willing to move to alternative accommodation;
- The total cost to the Council of all assistance (including any disabled facilities grant to adapt their new home) will be no more than the cost of adapting the disabled person's existing accommodation.

The Relocation Grant will cover the cost of –

- removal expenses;
- carpets, window coverings and white goods;
- estate agent's & legal fees;
- redecoration;
- security measures; and
- any other necessary costs.

The grant will be funded from outside the ring fenced DFG budget and as a consequence will be subject to the availability of external funding awarded to the Council from the regional housing group or other sources.

3) We will adopt a priority system to prioritise cases according to urgency and risk. Work is already underway to develop a county wide system in partnership with DCC social services. The system when adopted, will permit the allocation of resources more fairly and effectively than the present system which operates primarily in date order of referral from social services.

Objective 2: providing safe, healthy and decent homes for vulnerable people

We propose to offer support and assistance to improve living conditions for vulnerable households, working in partnership with other agencies wherever possible to maximise and coordinate resources.

Grant Assistance:

We will provide financial assistance for works of repair and improvement including adaptations,

security and energy efficiency measures through the Home Repair Plus grant scheme. Target households will be over 60 years or disabled and in receipt of an income related benefit. The scheme will be delivered in partnership with our Home Improvement Agency Spirita Care & Repair who also have access to charitable funding and can offer other forms of assistance such as welfare benefit checks and the Houseproud Loan. The scheme will be subject to the award of bid funding from the Regional Housing Group.

Handyperson Scheme:

South Derbyshire Safer Homes handyman scheme provides help with the installation of security measures for vulnerable households and we will continue to support this scheme. We are currently negotiating Derbyshire County Council for additional funding or resources to expand the scope of this scheme to provide a full handyman service including small items of repair, maintenance and home safety.

Key Priority 3: reducing fuel poverty and promoting energy efficient homes

The Council is committed to achieving the Government's aims to reduce harmful CO2 emissions and to reduce fuel poverty, which results in potential ill health effects.

Objective 1: Assistance to remove households from fuel poverty

Insulation and Heating for Vulnerable Households

We will continue to work with Defra who operate the Government funded Warmfront scheme to deliver works of home insulation and heating to vulnerable households. Targeting of eligible households for referral to Warmfront, through advertising, mail outs and home visits by Council staff, will be much improved this year using the results of the aerial I R Thermal Imaging survey undertaken in 2007. The resulting heat loss map enables us to identify properties in the district, which are poorly insulated and losing a lot of heat. We propose to refine this further using the Hi4Em mapping facility to cross reference high heat loss addresses with DWP data and exactly target vulnerable households eligible for Warmfront, who are likely to be 'non decent' through lack of thermal comfort or in fuel poverty.

We will also continue existing partnership arrangements with a range of reliable EEC funded installers, operating locally, such as Heatsavers to refer priority groups for free loft and cavity wall insulation.

Rural Landlord Initiative

We intend to forge a new partnership in the private sector for 2008/09 and beyond to help vulnerable households and those in fuel poverty. Hi4Em mapping and local information has led to us identifying the need for partnership working with the private rural estates of which there are five, together with the National Trust, operating portfolios ranging from 10 to 100+ properties in rural parts of the district. The stock is uniformly old, often in poor repair, poorly insulated and hard to heat. Such properties are often occupied by older, long standing tenants on regulated tenancies with low expectations or young people who wish to stay in their local village but are unable to afford to buy. In many cases the tenant is vulnerable. We wish to engage with the private estate landlords to secure their investment in repairs in return for insulation, heating and security measures. The scheme will aim to address fuel poverty and non decency for vulnerable tenants in rural areas and involve further partnership working with Warmfront, Heatsavers and the Council's Safer Homes handyman.

Objective 2 : Promote Home Energy Efficiency Improvements in Private Sector Homes Home Insulation Schemes

We will continue to support and fund one or more home insulation schemes in partnership with the main energy providers. The existing **British Gas Scheme** is part funded by British Gas in partnership with the Council and offers home insulation measures to all private sector households within our district. Applicants can access discounted loft and cavity wall insulation through the scheme and are entitled to a £100 Council tax rebate on completion of the works.

Carbon Footprint Village Project

The first Carbon Footprint Village Project has been completed successfully and we propose to roll out the project to a further village in 2008/09. The purpose of the scheme is to promote awareness of climate change and support and encourage households to reduce their carbon footprint through behavioural changes and the installation of home energy conservation measures.

Advice & Information

We propose to use the Local Authority Energy Partnership Promotional Bus throughout the year to provide education, advise and to promote energy saving schemes to the wider district audience. We particularly aim to promote home energy efficiency to households in the more rural and isolated areas of the district.

In addition we will continue to offer comprehensive advise and information through our leaflets and the website.

We will seek to promote energy conservation 'good practice' through the specification of high standards of insulation and energy efficient heating systems in all grant schedules of work.

Further details of the full programme of home energy conservation work is available in the Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2006.

DELIVERING ASSISTANCE

The main initiatives we propose to make available in 2008/09 are set out below.

An action plan to achieve our priorities together with target timescales is detailed in section x.x

HOME REPAIR PLUS GRANT (Subject to funding availability)

Key Outcome: Older, disabled or vulnerable owner/occupiers and private tenants assisted to live independently in their own homes.

Home Repair Plus Grants are delivered on the Council's behalf by Spirita Care & Repair our partner Home Improvement Agency.

Qualifying Works:

- **internal and external repairs,**
- **improvements to meet the decent home standard**
- **disabled adaptations**
- **security measures,**
- **energy efficiency measures**

Eligibility:

Over 60 years old or disabled and in receipt of an income related benefit.

(not available to Council or RSL tenants)

Maximum Amount:

£6000

(A grant of up to £10,000 may be approved in exceptional circumstances subject to agreement by the Agency and the Private Sector Housing Manager).

Fees & Charges

All reasonable fees incurred ie Building Regulation fees may be included in the grant up to the maximum amount.

Grant Conditions:

No more than two separate applications can be made in any three year period.

A 5 year grant condition period will apply (the grant will be registered as a local land charge)

The grant is conditional upon:

- Completion of the work to the satisfaction of the Council within 12 months of approval
- the property will be the applicant's main or only residence for the duration of the grant condition period
- The property will be maintained in a 'decent condition' for the duration of the grant condition period
- The property will be adequately covered by 'Buildings Insurance' for the duration of the grant condition period

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT:

Key Outcome: Homes occupied by disabled people adapted to enable them to continue to live there with carers or independently, with more dignity.

Qualifying Works:

- to facilitate access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling,
- making the dwelling safe for the disabled occupant and others residing with him,
- facilitating access by the disabled occupant to a room used as the principal family room,
- facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing a room used for sleeping,
- facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for a room in which there is a lavatory,
- facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for a room in which there is a bath or shower and wash hand basin,
- facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant,
- improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant,
- facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of, or providing an additional means of control,
- facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling in order to enable him to care for a person who is normally resident in the dwelling.

NOTE: Further guidance on eligible adaptations and the Council's Protocol relating to such works are appended at Annex 1

Eligibility

Registered or registerable disabled

Max amount:

The grant is subject to a standard test of resources calculation except for families of disabled children who are exempt.

Maximum grant is £25,000

The Council will use discretionary monies to top up mandatory DFG to a maximum of £25K where the applicants contribution is greater than that determined by the test of resources.

Fees & Charges

Mandatory DFG will be subject to a 10% administration fee

All reasonable fees incurred ie Building Regulation fees may be included in the grant up to the maximum amount.

Grant conditions:

- eligible works are carried out in accordance with any specification the Council decides to impose
- Completion of the work to the satisfaction of the Council within 12 months of approval
- for the duration of the grant condition period, or such shorter period as his/her health and other relevant circumstances permit, the dwelling will be the only or main residence of and will be occupied by the disabled occupant.

HOUSEPROUD EQUITY RELEASE LOAN

The Houseproud Scheme will be operated by Spirita Care & Repair on behalf of the Council using the Home Improvement Trust as the loan provider. A variety of loans are available the three main options are:

- capital release loan
- interest only loan
- capital and interest repayment loan

Key Outcome: An alternative means of funding (in the absence of grant assistance) to enable older owner/occupiers to carry out major repairs and improvements.

Qualifying Work:

- works of repair or improvement and adaptations where other funding is not available or appropriate

Eligibility:

Private Sector householders (freeholder or leaseholder) who are:

- aged 65 years or over
- under 60 years of age with a disability

Householders who may be eligible are:

- applicants not in receipt of benefit, who cannot afford the works
- applicants for grant where the cost of the works exceeds the maximum grant allowed
- grant applicants who wish to fund other reasonable, but non eligible works and cannot afford to do so.

Maximum Amount

The amount of loan offered will be based on the cost of the agreed works, the applicant's personal circumstances and equity available in their home. Loans typically vary from £3000 to 30% of the value of the property.

Fees & Charges:

- A schedule fee
- Administration costs of the loan provider
- Legal costs in confirming ownership and registering any relevant charges

Cost up to a maximum of £500 will be met by the Council.

Loan Conditions:

These will be attached to the loan by the loan provider, the Home Improvement Trust and may vary according to the type of loan product applied for. Houseproud loans will be secured as first charge on the applicant's property

Conditions will be provided to the applicant in writing before any agreement to proceed with the loan is made.

Application Process:

The loan is facilitated by our partner Home Improvement Agency Spirita Care & Repair.

ENFORCEMENT

The Housing Act 2004 introduces a new statutory minimum standard for housing called the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This system is a risk based assessment, involving consideration of 29 separate hazards. Where hazards are identified in a property, scores are assigned to the hazards based on the risk they present to the potential occupant. Scores in excess of 1000 points will render a hazard 'category 1' requiring mandatory action. Scores below 1000 will render a hazard 'category 2' where action is discretionary.

A new range of enforcement action to deal with identified hazards under the Housing Act 2004 is available as follows:

- Improvement notice
- Prohibition order
- Hazard awareness notice
- Emergency remedial action*
- Emergency prohibition order*
- Demolition order*
- Clearance area*

(* not available where a property exhibits category 2 hazards only)

The Council will seek to reduce the number of homes in the district that pose a risk to the health and safety of the occupants (i.e. suffer from category 1 hazards) and will take enforcement action where necessary and appropriate in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Policy.

ACTION PLAN

Priority 1: Improving the Quality & Supply of Housing in the Private Sector			
Objective	Action	Outcome	Target
Improving the quality of private rented homes	<p>1) Set up a landlord forum to promote information and training to private sector landlords</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold 2 forum events per year • Publish biannual landlord newsletter <p>2) Adopt and promote Landlord Accreditation Scheme in partnership with DASH</p>	Landlords encouraged to improve standards in private rented accommodation through education and self regulation.	
Improving the quality of owner occupied homes	<p>3) Promote and publicise Houseproud loan scheme to owner occupiers and make scheme guidance widely available</p> <p>4) improve advice to homeowners; Publish advice pack for home owners providing information on home maintenance and range of help available</p>	Non vulnerable homeowners (who are not eligible for grant), offered alternative assistance to help improve and maintain their home.	
Improving Access to good quality housing for vulnerable people and preventing homelessness	<p>5) Set up Voluntary Leasing Scheme in partnership with the Housing Department to link with the choice based letting scheme. (see Empty Homes Strategy 2008)</p> <p>6) Provide information and advice for tenants via website and leaflets including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent deposit scheme • List of accredited landlords • List of landlords who accept benefits • List of landlords who offer affordable rents 	<p>Empty homes leased to the Council on a fixed term basis, for let to homeless and vulnerable on council's waiting list.</p> <p>Tenants better informed about letting property and assisted to access suitable accommodation using rent deposit scheme</p>	

Priority 2: Assisting Older, Disabled & Vulnerable People to Live Independently in their own Home			
Objective	Action	Outcome	Target
Addressing the need for disabled adaptations	<p>7) Introduce revised protocols providing guidance on the purposes for which DFG may be granted and keep under review</p> <p>8) Liaise with Derbyshire County Council to introduce a prioritisation system for disabled applicants, to identify those most at risk</p> <p>9) implement relocation grant scheme (subject to funding)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicise scheme through leaflets and website • Agree procedure with social 	<p>Mandatory DFG limited in scope, strictly in accordance with statutory provisions</p> <p>Funding for disabled adaptation allocated to those most in need</p> <p>Alternative funding used to help disabled clients relocate to more suitable accommodation requiring</p>	

<p>Providing safe, healthy & decent homes for vulnerable people</p>	<p>services to offer option to disabled clients</p> <p>10) Implement Home Repair Plus Grant in partnership with Spirita Care & Repair (subject to funding)</p> <p>11) Work with Derbyshire County Council to increase the scope of the existing handyperson scheme</p>	<p>little or no adaptation.</p> <p>Older, Disabled and vulnerable people assisted to live safely and independently in their own homes</p>	
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Priority 3: Reducing Fuel Poverty and Promoting Energy Efficient Homes

Objective	Action	Outcome	Target
<p>Assistance to remove households from fuel poverty</p>	<p>12) Utilise results/mapping of aerial thermal imaging survey and DWP data to target assistance at households likely to be in fuel poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mail out to occupiers of poorly insulated homes and assistance offered <p>13) Set up a scheme with Rural Estate Landlords to improve heating and insulation standards and assist rural tenants in fuel poverty or at risk</p>	<p>Vulnerable households and households in fuel poverty assisted to take up free heating and insulation through Warmfront and Heatsavers.</p> <p>Improved thermal comfort for rural tenants in hard to heat homes. Risk of fuel poverty reduced.</p>	
<p>Promote Home Energy Efficiency in Private Sector Homes</p>	<p>14) Promote the range of schemes to provide discounted loft and cavity wall insulation to homeowners, providing up to date information on the best deals and encouraging uptake</p> <p>15) Roll out second 'Carbon Footprint Village Project' in a South Derbyshire Village</p>	<p>More private sector homes insulated to current standards resulting in energy savings (and reduced carbon footprint for the district)</p> <p>Village supported to reduce its carbon footprint through behavioural changes and energy conservation measures.</p>	

General Actions

Objective	Action	Outcome	Target
<p>Improving the private sector housing service</p>	<p>16) Draft 'Working together' protocol to define better working relationships within the council and with external partner agencies</p> <p>17) produce an updated suite of information leaflets covering private sector housing services</p> <p>18) update website to provide full information on private sector housing services</p>	<p>Responsibilities defined and clarified. Better understanding and joined up working between agencies, partners and stakeholders.</p> <p>Public better informed about our services and the help we can offer</p> <p>Website area seen as a useful resource by the public</p>	

KEY STANDARDS

An important element in ensuring delivery of our Private Sector Housing Policy is performance management. Service delivery is measured by national targets and local performance indicators. Information on housing renewal activity and performance indicators is reported to the Council's Housing & Community Services Committee quarterly.

National Performance Indicators

As part of the '2007 Pre-Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review', Communities and Local Government (CLG) has published 'The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators'. This document sets out a 198 new national indicators against which all single tier and county council Local Strategic Partnerships' performance will be measured. The former BVPI's framework will be discontinued as a result, however PSA's will stay.

It is not yet known what our new targets will be although it is likely that there will be a performance measure relating to decent homes. In the mean time we will continue to report on our local performance indicators;

LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

We have adopted the following local performance indicators to measure key areas of our service: -

- Percentage of Service Requests responded to in 5 working days (%)
- Percentage of customers rating service as 'good' or 'excellent' (%)
- Percentage of grant budget spent (%)
- Number of Non Decent homes occupied by vulnerable, (no. of homes) made 'decent'
- Percentage of private sector homes vacant for more than 6 mnths (%)
- Percentage of DFG adaptations completed within ODPM (%age compliance) guideline maximum of 42 weeks
- Average number of weeks for Social Services referral of DFGs. (No. of weeks)
- Vulnerable Households receiving energy efficiency improvements (No. of hseholds)
- Tonnage of CO2 reductions arising from the above (Tonnes of CO2)
- Annual contribution towards HECA target (%)

Service Standards:

- We aim to respond to enquiries and requests for service within 5 working days
- Service standards for grants are contained within each grant procedure.
- Summary procedures and target timescales for grants are contained in our information leaflets and on the council website.

Customer Feedback

In order to provide an appropriate, high quality service we require feedback from our customers. Customer Satisfaction questionnaires are issued to all service users to give them the opportunity to comment on the service they received. We will listen to our customers views and wherever possible respond to feedback, making positive changes to our service if this appropriate. We also ask our customers to complete equality and diversity information to help us monitor whether our service is accessible to all.

Consultation, Review & Appeals

This Policy has been developed and informed by;

- the South Derbyshire House Condition & Energy Efficiency Survey 2004 and the South Derbyshire Housing Market & Needs Study 2002
- Housing Strategy 2004/09
- Consultation with stakeholders including elected members and representatives from the PCT and Health Authority, Voluntary Organisations, Private Landlords, Housing Associations and other partner organisations.

Responses were sought on whether the basis of the policy is sound and the proposed interventions relevant, appropriate and proportionate to the needs of the district.

We will review the policy annually to ensure its continued relevance and publish any significant revisions.

It is anticipated that the policy will be fully redrafted in the third year to incorporate the findings of the subsequent house condition and energy survey.

APPEALS

Appeals concerning the operation of this policy document shall be considered by an appeal panel consisting of the Environmental Services Manager and Private Sector Housing Manager. The purpose of the panel is to ensure consistency of decisions and consider the merits of individual or unique cases.

Appeals must be submitted in writing and detail the circumstances and specific ground on which the appeal is based. Appeals will only be permitted on the following grounds:

- The policy has been incorrectly applied
- The case in question is exceptional and justifies an exception to the rules or parameters set out in the policy document.

Appeals will not be considered on the grounds that the appellant disagrees with the spirit or meaning of the rules or parameters set out in the policy document and the Council's Formal Complaint procedure should be followed in such cases.

Appeal submissions will be considered within 14 days of receipt and the appellant will receive a written response, giving reason(s) for the decision made.

ANNEX 1

Disabled Facilities Adaptation Protocol

All applications for Disabled Adaptations must be supported by the appropriate referral from an Occupational Therapist or Community Careworker. The final decision will be based on compliance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

Eligible Works

The purposes for which mandatory disabled facilities grants may be given are set out in section 23(1) of the 1996 Act. They fall into a number of categories;

Facilitating Access and Provision

In considering applications for grant towards such works, the presumption should be that the occupant should have reasonable access into their home, to the main habitable rooms within the home – namely the living room and bedroom, and to a bathroom or shower room in which there are suitable facilities for washing and/or showering.

Making a dwelling or building safe

Grants can be given for certain adaptations to the dwelling or building to make it safe for the disabled person and other persons residing with them. This may be the provision of lighting where safety is an issue or for adaptations to minimise the risk of danger where a disabled person has behavioural problems which cause them to act in a boisterous or violent manner damaging the house, himself and perhaps other people. Where such need has been identified, DFG is available to carry out appropriate adaptations to eliminate or minimise that risk.

Room usable for sleeping

While in some cases a living room may be large enough to enable a second room to be created, this will not be possible in smaller homes. An extension to provide a room should only be considered when the authority is satisfied that the adaptation of an existing room in the dwelling is not feasible in the particular circumstances.

Bathroom

The disabled person should have access to a washhand basin, WC and a shower or bath.

Facilitating preparation and cooking of food

Eligible works include the rearrangement or enlargement of a kitchen to ease manoeuvrability of a wheelchair and specially modified units to enable the disabled person to use these facilities independently.

Heating, lighting and power

This provides for the improvement of an existing heating system or provision of a new system where none exists. The DFG should not be used to install heating in rooms which are not normally used by the disabled person. The installation of central heating to a dwelling should only be considered where the wellbeing and mobility of the disabled person would otherwise be adversely affected.

This section also provides for works to enable the disabled person to have full use of heating, lighting and power controls in the dwelling, for example, the relocation of power points.

Dependent residents

This provides for works to the dwelling to enable the disabled person better access and movement around the dwelling in order to care for another person who resides there.

The following tables provide information on how The Council will deal with Disabled Facilities Grant Applications for the following adaptations:-

- a) Ramps / level access (including access to gardens)
- b) Hardstanding
- c) Extensions
- d) Second WC
- e) Scooters
- f) Fences
- g) Sound proofing

However, decisions on whether works are needed and if mandatory grant should be awarded in specific cases are matters for the Council in consultation with Social Services in accordance with the provisions in Part I of the 1996 Act and will be based on individual circumstances.

Adaptation type	a) Ramps / Level Access
Relevant legislation	Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 Section 23 (1) "Facilitating Access" to and from the dwelling
SDDC Policy	<p>The Council will consider an application for a ramp (either major or minor) from a person who is wheelchair dependent or has a permanent/substantial/complex disability, as assessed by an OT or CCW.</p> <p>If a ramp is requested to drive a scooter into a property, the person must be otherwise reliant on a wheelchair to get them into / out of their home (see d) scooters).</p> <p>If a person is eligible for a ramp, the Council shall only provide one ramped access into / out of a property. If a ramp has already been provided at the front or rear of the property and provides adequate disabled access to the highway, any request for a second ramped access will be refused. The purposes for which mandatory disabled facilities grants may be given as set out in Section 23 (1) of the 1996 Act are limited to the access to and from the dwelling or the building therefore access to the garden is not considered eligible for mandatory grant aid.</p>
Examples	Mrs X is a wheelchair user and has requested a ramp at the rear of her property to provide access to her garden. Access to the garden is not considered mandatory and therefore is not eligible for grant aid.

Key

OT = Occupational Therapist

CCW = Community Careworker

Adaptation type	b) Hardstanding
Relevant legislation	Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 Section 23 (1) "Facilitating Access" to and from the dwelling
SDDC Policy	<p>The Council will assess each application for a hardstanding on it's individual circumstances and will accept an application to provide hardstanding only when no other options are available.</p> <p>The following questions must be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is a disabled parking bay feasible?</i> - If alternative parking is available and is accessible from the dwelling, a hardstanding will not be provided. • <i>Is the disabled person the driver of the vehicle?</i> – If the disabled person is not the driver and can be picked up and dropped off outside the dwelling, a hardstanding will not be provided.
Examples	<p>Examples of eligible circumstances:</p> <p>Mrs X is the driver of her own vehicle which she uses to take her children to school etc. Her disability prevents her from walking any distance. There is no parking close to the property and a request for a disabled parking bay has been turned down by DCC because it is too close to the junction.</p> <p>Mr X is a wheelchair user who requires level access out of his property and up to the roadside. The cost of ramping at the front of his property is high due to the difference in levels. Providing a hardstanding means only level access is needed out to his door to where his car can be parked and the cost is comparable</p>

Key

OT = Occupational Therapist

CCW = Community Careworker

Adaptation type	c) Extensions
Relevant legislation	Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 Section 23 (1) "Facilitating Access to and Provision of" the principal family room, a room for sleeping, a shower room (including WC & WHB), facilities for preparation and cooking of food.
SDDC Policy	<p>The Council will only consider an application to extend a dwelling after the following alternatives have been fully investigated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to first floor via stairlift • Access to first floor via through floor lift • If access to the first floor is not possible, alterations to the existing space within the dwelling to provide a ground floor bedroom or bathroom <p>Alterations to existing space includes the use of the dining room, sub-dividing large rooms (e.g. lounge/diners) and any other ground floor space other than the principal family room and the kitchen.</p> <p>Applicant should also be encouraged to consider relocation to a more suitable dwelling and grant funding can be made available to assist in the costs involved (i.e. removal costs, solicitors fees, adapting the new property).</p> <p>If, after the Council has made a decision to use space within the dwelling, an applicant still wishes to build an extension, the Council may offer grant aid to the value of the eligible scheme, allowing the applicant to pay the difference and build an extension.</p>
Examples	<p>Mrs X requires ground floor bedroom and bathroom. She is not able to use a stairlift and there is no suitable space for a through floor lift. On the ground floor there is a kitchen and a lounge/diner. The Council offered grant aid to sub-divide the lounge into two rooms, providing the bedroom and a small extension on the side of the house to provide a shower room.</p> <p>Mr X requires a level access shower and access to his bedroom, the existing bathroom can be converted but he is not able to use his stairlift anymore. There is an attached garage that could be converted or it could also be possible, with some internal alterations, to install a through floor. When the costs of each option were compared, converting the garage to provide ground floor bedroom and bathroom was comparable with converting the existing bathroom and providing a through floor lift. Mr X was given the choice and decided to go ahead with the conversion of the garage.</p>

Key

OT = Occupational Therapist

CCW = Community Careworker

Adaptation type	d) Second WC
Relevant legislation	Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 Section 23 (1) "Facilitating Access to and Provision of" the principal family room, a room for sleeping, a shower room (including WC & WHB), facilities for preparation and cooking of food.
SDDC Policy	The Council will not consider application for a WC where there is already one at the property that is accessible to the disabled person.
Examples	<p>Example for case where second WC is eligible:</p> <p>Mr & Mrs X have a disabled child who requires ground floor bedroom and bathroom. The feasibility visit has shown that it is not possible to provide access to the first floor as the child is unable to use a stairlift and there is no where suitable for a through floor lift. A second WC is provided as part of the new ground floor bathroom.</p>

Key

OT = Occupational Therapist

CCW = Community Careworker

Adaptation type	e) Scooters
Relevant legislation	Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 Section 23 (1) "Facilitating Access" to and from the dwelling
SDDC Policy	<p>If a disabled person uses a scooter and would otherwise be wheelchair reliant, the Council will consider applications for level access i.e. ramping (see "a) Ramping / Level Access)</p> <p>Charging facilities / storage</p> <p>The Council will not accept applications to provide scooter storage or charging facilities unless the disabled person would otherwise be eligible for an electric wheelchair.</p>
Examples	<p>Examples of eligible circumstances:</p> <p>Mrs X is wheelchair reliant but chooses to use a mobility scooter, which she has purchased herself. She requires a ramp at the front of her property to provide her with suitable access into and out of her home.</p> <p>Example of ineligible circumstances:</p> <p>Mr X chooses to use a mobility scooter to get around outside of his home. However, he is able to manage small numbers of steps and walk short distances. He has requested a ramp at the front of his property to enable him to get his scooter into his home. The Council would not consider grant aid for the ramp as Mr X is able to access into and out of his home without his scooter or a wheelchair.</p>

Key

OT = Occupational Therapist

CCW = Community Careworker

Adaptation type	f) Fences
Relevant legislation	Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 Section 23 (1)
SDDC Policy	<p>The Council is unable to consider any applications for the provision of fencing around a dwelling.</p> <p>The purposes for which mandatory disabled facilities grants may be given as set out in Section 23 (1) of the 1996 Act are limited to the dwelling or the building and access to/from it.</p>
Examples	Mr & Mrs X have a severely autistic child who has a tendency to escape from both the dwelling itself and from the garden. This poses a risk of danger to the child. Mandatory grant aid would fund 'reasonable' works to help prevent the child from escaping from the dwelling itself, for example, window locks, safety glass, but would not fund the erection of fencing to prevent escape from the garden.

Key

OT = Occupational Therapist

CCW = Community Careworker

Adaptation type	g) Sound-proofing
Relevant legislation	Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 Section 23 (1) "Making a dwelling or building safe"
SDDC Policy	<p>The Council will not consider applications for sound-proofing.</p> <p>The Council can only consider adaptations intended to protect other occupants of the household where there is a risk of danger, for example, if the disabled person has behavioural problems which cause them to act in a boisterous or violent manner, damaging themselves, the house or other persons.</p> <p>This does not include sound proofing to protect other occupants from excess noise as this does not pose a risk of danger as described in the 1996 Act.</p>
Examples	N/A

Key

OT = Occupational Therapist

CCW = Community Careworker