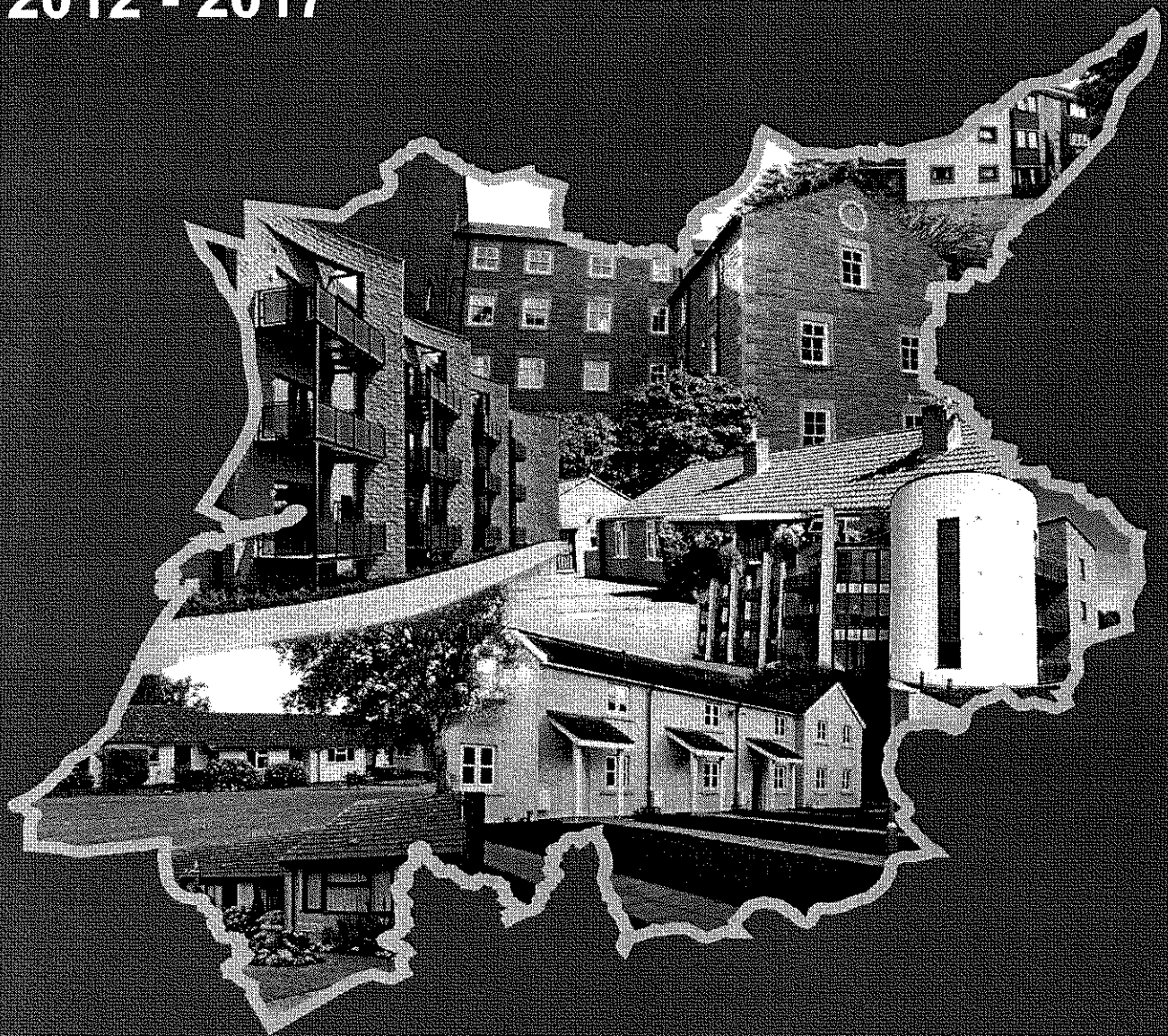


Lancaster District Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan 2012 - 2017



Date: February 2013

www.lancaster.gov.uk/housingpolicy

Foreword

Welcome to our new Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan, which sets out the council's plans for housing in Lancaster District from 2012 – 2017.

Lancaster City Council's vision is to promote sustainable growth bringing opportunities to improve the quality of life to its residents, help preserve our natural environment, protect our wonderful heritage assets and create vibrant and cohesive communities. Good quality housing is fundamental to this vision, and the standard of accommodation is pivotal to our health and wellbeing, aspirations and life-chances.

The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan is intended to benefit everyone who lives in the Lancaster District and forms part of wider policy framework which focuses on the role of housing in meeting the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the district.

There are three main themes contained within the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan which are described as:-

Quantity – achieving sustainable growth in the Lancaster District
Quality – Regeneration priorities and improving the existing housing stock
People – meeting the housing needs of all parts of the community

These themes are underpinned by a range of key priorities for action, often through partnership working, and include the continued provision of market and affordable housing, investing in the existing housing stock, meeting our statutory duties around homelessness and providing appropriate housing to the most vulnerable people in the district.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the shaping of this Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan, which has been available for consultation between July and October 2012, with a stakeholder event on the 3rd July 2012. The responses from the consultation are summarised in section 5 of this document.



Councillor Karen Leytham:
Cabinet Member for Health
and Housing



Councillor Janice Hanson:
Cabinet Member for
Economic Regeneration
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Glossary

1 Glossary

This Glossary provides terms and references which will be of use whilst reading the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan. Some of the terms included within this Glossary supplement and compliment the definitions found within Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Affordable Homes Programme - The Affordable Homes Programme 2011-15 aims to increase the supply of new affordable homes in England. It is managed by the Homes and Communities Agency. The majority of the new programme will be made available as Affordable Rent with some for affordable home ownership, supported housing and in some circumstances, social rent. This definition will be reviewed at the end of the programme period.

Affordable Housing Viability Study - A study that tested the circumstances in which the district's housing market can deliver various levels of affordable housing by examining the influence of a range of affordable housing proportions and thresholds on viability.

Brownfield - Also referred to as Previously Developed Land (PDL). The regeneration of these sites is recognised as a priority within the local plan system although challenged within the current economic climate.

Communities - Are a group of social interacting people, this interaction may be due to the close proximity of where people live (i.e. within neighbourhoods) or groups of people that share the same common interests or values.

Commuted Sums – monies received by the council from market housing schemes that can be subsequently provided as grants to social housing providers to bring forward the development of affordable housing.

Concealed households - Family units or single adults living within 'host' households.

Conservation Area - An area which has been designated for its special architectural and/or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. It is recognition of the value of a group of buildings and their surroundings and the need to protect not just individual buildings but the character of the area as a whole.

Core Strategy - This is the key document within the local planning system, the document sets out strategic policy guidance on future development requirements and policy issues. Lancaster City Council adopted its Core Strategy in the summer of 2008.

Development Plan Document (DPD) - Spatial planning documents which are prepared by the local authority. They sit below the Core Strategy in strategic importance but remain subject to public consultation and independent Inquiry.

Both the Development Management document and Land Allocations documents are classified as Development Plan Documents.

Discounted market housing - Homes sold at a discounted price with the level of discount differing from scheme to scheme depending on house prices in the different locations, and according to eligibility criteria agreed between the council and the developer.

Extra Care Housing - Housing designed with the needs of older people in mind and with varying levels of care and support available on site. People who live in Extra Care housing have their own self contained homes and benefit from communal facilities being available. Properties can be rented, owned or part owned/ part rented.

Fuel poverty - Fuel poverty is determined when a home cannot be heated to a comfortable level by utilising 10% or less of the household's income. This means that choices must be made between warmth and other essentials. Fuel poverty can contribute to excess winter deaths, cold-related illnesses, high health care costs, and deteriorating housing conditions.

Greenfield - Is land which has not been previously developed on, Greenfield land is often but exclusively characterised by open countryside and agricultural land.

Gypsies and travellers - Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.

Homes and Communities Agency - The national housing and regeneration agency for England. Provides investment for new affordable housing and to improve existing social housing, as well as for regenerating land.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) - For the purpose of this document a HMO is defined according to the Use Class Order 2010. A property is an HMO if it is a small shared dwelling house occupied by between three and six unrelated individuals, as their only or main residence, who share basic amenities such as a kitchen and bathroom.

Housing Needs Survey - The Council's current evidence base on many homes are needed, (market and affordable), and the type and size of homes required. The survey was carried out in 2011 by David Coultie Associates and will be updated throughout the Local Plan period in accordance with relevant Government guidance.

Key Services - In a rural context key services include a Post Office, basic shop, primary school, and bus stop.

Lifetime Homes Standard - Ordinary homes designed to provide accessible and convenient homes for a large segment of the population from young children to older people and those with temporary or permanent physical or sensory impairments. Lifetime Homes have 16 design features that ensure the home will be flexible enough to meet the existing and changing needs of most households.

Local Housing Need - The housing requirements of existing and concealed households living with Lancaster District as evidenced in the 2011 Housing Needs and Demand Survey and other appropriate evidence.

Localism - Is a term used by the current Government to encourage local people and communities to take more ownership in local issues. In terms of planning playing a greater role in shaping the future for their own communities through the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

Local Development Documents - This is the collective terms for Development Plan Documents, including the Core Strategy, Development Management DPD, Land Allocations DPD, Area Action Plans, Proposals Maps and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Local Planning Authority - The statutory authority (usually the local council) whose duty it is to carry out the planning function for its area.

Market housing - Private housing for rent or for sale, where the price is set in the open market.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - A document published in March 2012 by the Department for Communities and Local Governments that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

Planning policy for traveller sites - A document published in March 2012 by the Department for Communities and Local Governments that sets out the Government's planning policy for traveller sites.

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) - Prepared by the former regional government agencies (in the case of this region 4NW or North West Regional Assembly). Regional Spatial Strategies provided planning guidance at a regional level and set a series of development targets for each local authority area. Following a change in Government in 2010 a decision was taken to abolish regional government agencies (including 4NW) and Regional Spatial Strategies - relying on a more local approach to planning through the local plan system. RSS documents at this time do still have limited validity as the move to abolish them moves through the courts. This process is now reaching its conclusions. The

evidence base work that underpinned the strategy will remain valid until the information it contains becomes out of date.

Registered Provider of social housing - The technical name for social landlords that are registered with the Homes and Communities Agency. Most are housing associations, but some are trusts, co-operatives and companies that own or manage affordable housing. Now referred to as Registered Providers (RP's). A distinction between this system and the old system of Registered Social Landlords is that a provider of social housing can now be either a non-profit organisation or a profit-making organisation.

Registered Social Landlord - The technical name for independent housing organisations registered with the Housing Corporation under the Housing Act 1996. Most are housing associations, but there are also trusts, co-operatives and companies. The term has now been replaced by Registered Provider of social housing.

Rural locations - For the purposes of this document rural locations are defined as Caton and Brookhouse, Halton, Hornby, Wray, Slyne-with-Hest, Silverdale, Galgate and all other locations outside of the urban locations (as specified in this Glossary).

Section 106 Funds – monies (commuted sums) collected from market housing schemes, held by the council, that fund grants to Registered Providers to develop affordable housing.

Section 106 Agreement - legally binding document or planning obligation that setting out specific requirements, and is normally used to secure on-site affordable housing on market housing schemes, or commuted sums.

Sheltered Housing - Housing specifically for older and/or disabled people. Includes a block or group of houses with resident or visiting scheme manager, and individual houses, bungalows and flats, which receive support from a mobile scheme manager or pendant (emergency) alarm service.

Stakeholders - Are groups, individuals or organisations which may be affected by or have a key interest in a development proposal planning or housing policy. They may often be experts in their field or represent the view of many people.

Supporting People – revenue funding provided by central government to provide tenancy related support services to vulnerable groups to allow them to live independently.

Travelling show people - Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old

age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above.

Urban locations - For the purposes of this document urban locations are defined as Lancaster, Morecambe, Heysham, Carnforth and Bolton-le-Sands. Although Bolton-le-Sands is not classed as an urban location in the adopted Core Strategy it is recognised as being a large sub-urban village by both the adopted the Core Strategy, and the (saved) Policy H10 of the adopted Local Plan.

Introduction

- 1.1. The District of Lancaster accommodates a population of 138,400 residents, making us the second largest District within Lancashire. The District contains the university City of Lancaster steeped in history, tradition and culture and features an array of listed buildings and heritage assets. The seaside resort of Morecambe and Heysham is situated along the delightful coastal strip with stunning views across Morecambe Bay with much improved beaches, promenade and stone jetty, full of potential and with a much improved tourism offer. The small town of Carnforth and service centre is situated within the northern part of the District nestled within a number of unspoilt rural settlements and areas of outstanding natural beauty.
- 1.2. Lancaster is the most northern District within the county of Lancashire, and to a large extent, has historically experienced high levels of self containment in relation to its housing market. However, with the emerging Energy Coast and M6 link proposals, there is the potential that this could bring about greater links and movement between our neighbouring authorities in Cumbria and Lancashire.
- 1.3. Whilst the District and its residents benefits from many wonderful heritage assets and breathtaking scenery and countryside, there are also pockets of acute deprivation in the urban areas of Lancaster and Morecambe, which contain identified Lower Super Output Areas within the areas of Poulton and the West End of Morecambe and in Skerton, north Lancaster.
- 1.4. This Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan aims to capture the extensive range of housing related issues through understanding the housing needs and requirements of our District, appropriate interventions, and how, by working with key partners, these can be achieved and planned for over the Action Plan period. A number of other related documents will form part of the overall framework to ensure our objectives are linked and met:-



Strategic Context

- 1.5 The last Housing Strategy prepared for the District was published in 2005; setting out the District's housing priorities up until 2009. At that time, the housing strategy function transferred into the Regeneration and Planning Service's Planning and Housing Policy Team. The new structure has ensured that housing strategy staff can engage fully with colleagues in all aspects of planning and development management in relation to planning applications, negotiating for affordable housing on new development, determining the right mix of housing that is appropriate for the District, and in advancing planning and housing policies and strategies to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- 1.6 Since the last Housing Strategy was produced, nationally and globally, we are facing massive challenges in the housing and financial sectors which have directly impacted upon the construction industry in relation to house building and dwelling completions, and the availability of finance and mortgage products to developers and prospective home owners alike. Locally, dwelling completions within the Lancaster District fell to 99 in 2011/2012, of which 58 units were affordable housing.

Housing regeneration was identified as a key corporate priority in Lancaster City Council's Corporate Plan 2011-2014 and in October 2011, Cabinet were asked to reaffirm that the strategic housing regeneration priorities for the foreseeable future are:

- a) To increase the supply and delivery of affordable housing schemes;*
 - b) To complete existing unfinished schemes in the West End; and*
 - c) To bring empty properties back into use.*
- 1.7 A mandate was obtained to produce a new Housing Strategy and Action Plan in 2010, (referred to in the Service Business Plan 2010/2011). In order to progress this, Lancaster City Council commissioned a new Housing Needs Survey early in 2011 which acts as the main evidence base, informing much of the strategic housing agenda as well as the strategic objectives and desired outcomes set out within this Action Plan.
- 1.8 The Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership, which brought together a number of public, private, community, voluntary and faith sectors, developed and published a Community Strategy which set out a common vision to improve the wellbeing of our District residents. Although the LSP was disbanded in 2012, a number of thematic groups still continue to meet. The Planning Policy Team is currently represented on the Lancaster District Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

Working in partnership with other local authorities

- 1.9 We acknowledge the importance of strong partnership working with other local authorities. To build upon the established strategic partnerships with other Lancashire authorities, the Council joined with the Mid-Lancashire local authorities in central Lancashire, which include Preston, South Ribble, Chorley and West Lancashire, to produce a Mid-Lancashire Housing Strategy and Local Investment Plan. This Mid-Lancashire partnership was initially established in response to the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) approach to funding referred to as "the Single Conversation". However, a key priority of the current government has been to disband regional structures and establish more local decision making processes. We continue to work with our partners in Lancashire in relation to housing policy and strategy, we form one of the twelve two-tier authorities of Lancashire through the Supporting People programme, and a draft Affordable Warmth policy has been produced with partner local authorities on the Fylde Coast, which forms the North Locality Footprint for joint working with the Primary Care Trust and the emerging Clinical Commissioning Group.

HCA's Affordable Homes Programme Framework 2011 - 2015

- 1.10 The Council, as a stock retaining authority, is a provider of social housing, and a strategic enabler of new build housing provision through Registered Providers of Social Housing. A key partnership in the delivery of affordable housing provision is our relationship with the HCA, who on behalf of central government, direct and allocate funding to support affordable housing schemes nationally. In the wake of the Comprehensive Spending Review, there have been radical changes to the funding mechanisms available to providers of social housing along with other proposed social housing reforms which could have far reaching implications locally and nationally. These proposed reforms were published in 2010 and form part of the Localism Act, impacting upon security of tenure, tenure types, housing finance mechanisms and housing benefit changes.
- 1.11 Ahead of the Localism Bill getting Royal Assent, in February 2011, the HCA announced their Affordable Homes Programme Framework document 2011-2015 which sets out the new delivery model for achieving 150,000 new affordable homes over the programme period, along with separate funding for other products including Empty Homes, Mortgage Rescue, Firstbuy and Homelessness Change Grant. The replacement tenure for social rent is "affordable rent" which places greater challenges upon Registered Providers in securing the funding where far lower grant rates apply and charging higher rent (up to 80% of market rents) in order to deliver affordable housing schemes in the future, with the ability to create fixed term tenancies should they chose to.

- 1.12 The Council, whilst accepting that affordable rents and fixed term tenancies does not allow prospective tenants to enjoy the same benefits as current social housing tenants, recognise that this new tenure is the only mechanism available to secure future affordable housing provision over the next four years and possibly beyond. To this end, Lancaster City Council has supported bids from 7 partner Registered Providers to provide a range of affordable housing schemes within the Lancaster District, which are detailed on page 13.
- 1.13 Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping within the District has historically been an ongoing concern to the Council, due to limited provision of temporary accommodation and the difficulties faced in barely meeting our own statutory responsibilities. To reduce homelessness and rough sleeping requires adequate resources, suitable hostel accommodation and developing a holistic approach in re-integrating this vulnerable group back into mainstream services and society as a whole. As a result of this, the Council took the opportunity to bid for HCA Homelessness Change Programme Grant in May 2011, to secure capital funding to provide hostel accommodation for single homeless people over 25. The bid was successful, enabling the Council to move forward with this project, which is detailed further in the "People" Section of this document.

Objectives/Purpose

- 1.14 The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan will consider the local context around housing provision and delivery and bring together a number of key Corporate and Service priorities, drawing on local evidence and information, and how these may be delivered. It will also inform our partners about our priorities and how we intend to approach these. The purpose of the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan is to create an accessible and barrier free approach to improving our communities and to better meet the housing and support needs of existing residents. The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan contains three overall thematic sections "quantity, quality and people", that is:-
1. Achieving sustainable housing growth
 2. Improving quality: sustainable communities and decent housing
 3. Meeting a broad range of housing needs within the community

Quantity

2. Quantity

Achieving Sustainable Growth in the Lancaster District

- 2.1. The Council seeks to achieve an average annual requirement of 400 dwelling completions per annum as set out in Policy SC4 of the adopted Core Strategy. This is based upon a requirement for 7,200 new dwellings over the period 2003/4 up until 2020/21. The target was initially set having regard to the Regional Spatial Strategy and local evidence. Whilst the Regional Spatial Strategy has subsequently been revoked, the Council is in the unique position in the North West of being only one of a small number of authorities to have an adopted Core Strategy. The implication of this is that to a large extent the authority has already localised a number of issues with the Core Strategy being supported by a local evidence base, community engagement and a local sustainability appraisal, all of which were supported by an Independent Planning Inspector. References to Regional Strategies are therefore to an extent largely factual with a local approach adopted in the Core Strategy and supported by local evidence. It was for this reason that the authority is still working to these targets at present and the latest evidence available from the Housing Needs Survey 2011 support this approach, but will again be reviewed through the preparation of the Local Plan.

Local Evidence - Key findings

- 2.2 The Lancaster District Housing Needs Survey 2011 was carried out by David Couttie Associates and provides a range of detailed information about the District's housing needs and requirements. Over 3,000 residents completed questionnaires along with 200 face to face interviews. The Survey also brought together a wide range of local housing and financial data and housing market stock analysis. The Housing Needs Survey also sought to identify the trends in the demographic and economic characteristics which can impact on the housing market, the implications of balancing supply and demand, potential barriers to accessing housing, the mix of market and affordable housing required, target levels required for affordable housing and to consider any issues that relate to specific household groups.
- 2.3 The Housing Needs Survey revealed that the average property price within the Lancaster District in 2010 was £153,124 with sales falling by 14.4% since 2009 and by 35% from 2007. Income requirements for one and two bedroom properties ranged from £13,800 to £33,900 per annum, and similarly, income requirements to pay private sector rents ranged from £16,000 to £23,000 per annum. Analysis of concealed households living in the District indicate that 45.5% have an income of less than £15,000.00,

which means they are unable to access housing without relying on some degree of subsidy.

Demographic Change

- 2.4 Over the period 2008 to 2033, the population is forecast to increase by 19,200 people, which is an increase of 13.8%, and for those aged 65 and above, this group is expected to grow by 61.8%. Furthermore, there will be significant increase in those over 85, representing 138%, with these households needing support services, adaptations or specialist accommodation. The Survey showed a net migration of 2,500 households moving into the District, and of these, 800 were elderly people needing the support of their family. 50% of those migrating into the District lived outside Cumbria or Lancashire. Over the next three years, 25% of existing households and 38% of concealed households plan to move out of the District. The main reason cited was employment/access to work.

Future Housing Delivery

- 2.5 The Housing Needs Survey 2011 revealed an annual shortfall of 592 market housing units, and 339 affordable housing units, based on need evidenced through the Survey and taking into account turnover supply. This demonstrates that whilst the target set in the Core Strategy will remain at 400 completions per year, the need is significantly greater. Nevertheless, this has to be balanced with what is realistically and sensibly achievable. To this end, the Council is preparing a Local Plan for the District which in addition to the already adopted Core Strategy will include three new Development Plan Documents (DPD's), a Development Management DPD setting out the criteria against which most routine planning applications will be determined, a Land Allocations DPD, which will identify and prioritise sites necessary to meet the future development needs of the district and identify those natural and built assets should be protected and enhanced, and an Area Action Plan for Morecambe to guide regeneration and development proposals in Central Morecambe. The proposed DPD's have already been subject to detailed and wide-ranging consultation. Further consultation on the Draft Documents commenced in October 2012, this will be followed by further refinement and consultation of the documents with a formal 'Publication' version of the documents scheduled for consultation in Spring 2013 and adoption envisaged in late 2014.

TABLE 1 – HOUSING COMPLETIONS

Year	Overall completions	Affordable Housing completions
2003/04	556	30
2004/05	348	44
2005/06	253	73
2006/07	182	43
2007/08	350	27
2008/09	330	45
2009/10	121	29
2010/11	79	29
2011/12	99	58
TOTAL	2318	378

- 2.6 The emerging Local Plan will help to outline what is expected from the development industry in terms of on-site affordable housing provision, and since the housing strategy function has transferred to the Regeneration and Planning Service, the monitoring of affordable housing is monitored more closely and the occurrence of early stage discussions and negotiations for market housing schemes should ensure that in future the affordable housing target will be met.

Addressing Under-occupation

- 2.7 The Housing Needs Survey reveals that there are high levels of under-occupation within the market housing sector (56% of owner-occupiers with no mortgage), 15% under-occupation within the private rented sector and 9% under-occupancy in the social rented sector (which equates to 500 tenants). As a result of this, the Council needs to consider the aspirations of these households, to provide suitable housing offers in the coming years. The key recommendations stemming from the Survey is that future housing delivery should provide a mix of housing types and sizes. New market housing needs to address demographic change as well as the current and future growth of the frail elderly. On this basis, the Survey suggests that 60% of future housing provision should be one and two bedroom dwellings, and 40% are three and four bedroom dwellings.

- 2.8 Furthermore, identifying the aspirations of existing social housing tenants would potentially create much needed vacancies with this sector. The implementation of the Council's new Choice Based Lettings Scheme "Ideal Choice Homes" in October 2011 aims to increase the potential to increase choice and improve mobility for social housing tenants both through bidding for properties, having one central point of access for mutual exchanges, and increasing housing options by including private sector vacancies and intermediate housing products. Raising awareness and improving the information and options available to social housing tenants is critical to making best use of the social housing stock particularly in the advent of the proposed welfare benefit reforms which will directly impact upon households who under-occupy properties and reduce their housing benefit entitlement. In broad terms, the Housing Needs Survey recommends that new provision should be split between one and two bedroom accommodation, and three and four bedroom accommodation. There is already a significant demand for one bedroom accommodation in the social housing sector, and the increase in demand for existing social housing tenants directly affected by the welfare reforms could substantially increase demand, particularly where social landlords have used under-occupation policies for the better management of their housing stock.

Affordable Housing

- 2.9 The receipt of the Affordable Housing Viability Study in 2010 from Adams Integra provided the Council with new evidence on the ability of the District's housing market to deliver various levels of affordable housing. This was achieved by examining the influence of a range of affordable housing targets and thresholds on the viability of sample schemes. The Study led the Council to prepare an Affordable Housing Practice Update which described the process for negotiating affordable housing. This document was implemented in January 2011 and replaced the previous version published in 2008 following receipt of the 2007 update of the Housing Needs Survey.
- 2.10 A comprehensive consultation process supported both the preparation of the Affordable Housing Viability Study, and the preparation of the Affordable Housing Practice Update. A key stakeholder group was established that met three times during the preparation of the Study and the Practice Update. The stakeholder group comprised residential developers, planning agents, land agents, and registered providers of social housing, all of which operate in the district. The Council is currently preparing a Meeting Housing Needs SPD and the preparation of this document is underpinned by the earlier consultation work described above.

The requirements for affordable housing

- 2.11 The Council will seek on-site affordable housing from all market housing development schemes to meet the identified shortfall of affordable units in the District, and to promote socially inclusive and sustainable communities.

30% affordable housing on all new schemes of 15 or more units in urban locations, and 10 or more units in rural locations.

Applying a sliding scale approach, up to 20% affordable housing on all new schemes of 5 to 14 units in urban locations, and 5 to 9 units in rural locations.

A financial contribution (commuted sum) of up to 10% affordable housing equivalent on schemes of 1 to 4 units (urban and rural locations).

- 2.12 The Council has previously required an affordable housing tenure ratio of 65% social rented and 35% intermediate housing. However, the Housing Needs Survey 2011 acknowledges that an increasing number of households will face real difficulty accessing market housing either because of low incomes or because of the deposits required to secure mortgages. As a result of this, the Survey suggested that the tenure mix for future housing delivery should increase the percentage ratio of intermediate housing to 50%, and this is a clear consideration for future affordable housing negotiations. These recommendations will be formalised and implemented through the Council's Meeting Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which will come into effect in 2013 subject to endorsement. The Council expects that on-site affordable housing will be brought forward and managed through partner Registered Providers.

Development in Rural Areas

- 2.13 In recent years the Council has permitted new rural residential development in 8 settlements that retain 5 key services (a GP, Primary School, Food Shop, Post Office and Bus Stop). The existence of these key services ensures that settlements can support the communities that live there. There are now very few GPs regularly practising within these 8 settlements and on that basis, other rural settlements that retain 4 key services will also be considered.

Housing Revenue Account – opportunities through self-financing arrangements

- 2.14 The Government is implementing a series of social housing reforms, as detailed in the Localism Act 2011, which includes moving away from the previous annual housing subsidy system to a model under which Housing Revenue Accounts must be self-financing from April 2012.
- 2.14 Following the transfer to self-financing, the Council is now in a better, more informed position to consider investment and growth opportunities for its own council housing stock, and it has sufficient financial scope to progress such opportunities. As a result, the Council will consider proposals to increase its housing provision in the future, and to improve and re-configure some of the Council's existing housing stock, particularly around low demand and difficult to let accommodation. In terms of increasing supply, the Council has already approved in principle to invest in new one-bedroom accommodation, as the first call on available reserves. In order to balance the key aims of keeping rents affordable, managing financial risks and supporting housing regeneration, the Council has adopted a medium term rent setting policy which will result in average rents being frozen in 2013/14, with 1% stepped increases in subsequent years – rising to no more than a 3% target increase for 2016/17. This moves away from Government's rent convergence policy for social housing. For the time being, a fairly cautious approach is being taken about the council's opportunities for increasing supply, as with the imminent welfare reforms around under-occupation and the introduction of universal credit, there are more challenges facing the council in collecting the rent due, which could directly impact on any future funding capacity.

Council owned land

- 2.16 A key policy issue, crucial to make the best use of resources and to achieving affordable housing schemes that are viable in the light of reductions in grant levels funded by the HCA, is the Council exercising its powers to transfer ownership of its own land in accordance with its Disposal Strategy, which is due for updating in 2013/14. Lancaster City Council has identified a number of potential housing sites on its own land, and has shared this information with partner Registered Providers in the lead up to the HCA's Affordable Homes Programme 2011-2015 bids being determined. As a result of this, five Registered Providers were successful in securing grant funding for a number of sites identified, subject to the necessary approvals being granted, which would provide between 40 – 60 additional units of affordable housing over the Affordable Homes Programme period depending upon approvals.

Section 106 funds

- 2.17 The Council has directly provided grant funding to partner Registered Providers through monies previously collected through Section 106 contributions from market housing schemes. To date, grants have supported the delivery of 63 affordable housing units across the District, with the potential to provide two further grants to bring forward up to 70 additional affordable housing completions within the 2011-2015 programme period, subject to approvals.

The Affordable Homes Programme 2011 – 2015

- 2.18 The HCA's Affordable Homes Programme framework, was published in mid February 2011. The framework set out the HCA's new delivery model for achieving 150,000 new affordable homes between 2011 and 2015 and invited registered providers to submit offers to help deliver this new supply.
- 2.19 To support this process, the Council published its own Investment Priorities prospectus to capture investment from Registered Provider partners over the four year programme period which set out the Council's area based regeneration priorities, Brownfield land opportunities, the use of Council owned sites, empty homes, the needs of vulnerable members of the communities and stalled sites.
- 2.20 Seven Registered Providers bid for funding and five were successful in securing grant to provide the following schemes, subject to all the necessary approvals. The schemes that secured grant funding are detailed on the next page. Those in red are proposed developments on Council owned land.

TABLE 2 - AFFORDABLE HOMES PROGRAMME 2011 - 2015

Registered Provider	Scheme Details	Total Units	Tenure	Current Status	Start on Site
Adactus	Hornby West End Hornby District wide site	10 units 15 units 10 units 10 units	S/O A/R A/R A/R	Planning approved No approvals No approvals No approvals	Jan 2013 Site not acquired To be determined To be determined
Impact	Lancaster	26 units	A/R	Planning stage	Summer 2013
Guinness Northern Counties	Lancaster Lancaster Lancaster Lancaster	27 units 12 units 7 units 8 units	A/R A/R A/R A/R	On site Planning approved No approvals Planning approved	PC July 2013 March/April 2013 To be determined March 2013
Places for People					
Great Places	Lancaster	24 units	A/R	No approvals	To be determined

HOMELESSNESS CHANGE PROGRAMME

To be determined	Lancaster	18 units	Hostel	No approvals	To be determined
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S/O – shared ownership
A/R – Affordable Rent
NBHB – New Build Homebuy

Quality

3. Quality

The Council's Regeneration Priorities

- 3.1 Lancaster District has its own economic footprint and largely self-contained housing market. However, it does play a wider role in the north Lancashire/south Cumbria area, particularly around Morecambe Bay. This role is likely to grow as the area's cultural and heritage assets are developed and as a result of initiatives such as the "Energy Coast", a £2bn programme aimed at establishing the NW coast as a major national hub for low carbon and renewable energy production. This will inevitably increase demand for housing in areas that are environmentally sensitive.
- 3.2 Whilst energy is currently a significant and developing theme Lancaster District has a number of further key assets that can be developed to complement and strengthen the economy of Lancashire, and the North West region as a whole. By strategically focussing on these assets the Council has identified its current regeneration priorities; these are designed to deliver the spatial objectives of the adopted Core Strategy on accommodating sustainable economic growth within the context of the regional and national agenda.
- 3.3 In particular Lancaster District also has key growth areas related to higher education and information technology, developing the Green economy, and services provided through the public sector. Lancaster District's distinct and widely acknowledged heritage and tourism assets also provide significant opportunities for the growth of economic activities rooted in a positive sense of place.
- 3.4 In terms of housing, the first priority should be to meet the District's needs wherever possible, especially when the housing market is depressed. However, the District's developing role as a sub-regional hub will require a thorough examination of how housing needs in the wider Morecambe Bay area can best be met in the future, this may be influenced by the implications for the Energy Agenda and will be examined in detail at a local level during the preparation of the emerging Local Plan. There is need to continue the regeneration and investment process in Morecambe's West End beyond the extent of current specific interventions.

Morecambe West End Regeneration Programme

- 3.5 Morecambe's West End has been a principal area of focus over the last decade and will continue in the foreseeable future. In partnership with the HCA, the West End Masterplan was produced to guide the regeneration of the area. To date considerable progress has been made with the key housing projects. There has been parallel progress on economic and tourism development, and the prospects of a new nuclear power station at Heysham and new M6 Link Road may prove a further boost.

- 3.6 West End Road has seen several very large Houses in Multiple Occupation (totalling 280m²) have the outriggers removed and lateral conversions to create quality flats. 10 of the 15 target properties have been remodelled improving both the quality of the conservation area and the tenure profile. This project was delivered by Adactus Housing Association in partnership with the Council.
- 3.7 Clarendon Road has seen large HMOs have the outriggers removed, reducing the size of the properties and making them more suitable for single family occupation. 26 of the 38 target properties have been remodelled for outright sale and shared ownership improving both the quality of the conservation area and the tenure profile. This project was also delivered by Adactus Housing Association in partnership with the Council.



Clarendon Road, Morecambe

- 3.8 The former Bus and Illuminations Depots has seen a private developer led scheme to build 83 houses and flats. This was a stalled site but as Harron Homes, the developer, was successful in securing "Firstbuy" funding earlier this year, the development is now continuing.
- 3.9 The re-development of the former Frontierland theme park is a major priority for the West End and is a prominent seafront site in private ownership. The rear third of the site has been re-developed successfully to provide Homebase, Next and DW Sport and Gym. The remainder of the site gained outline permission for a mixed use development of predominantly residential with some leisure and retail development. However, the previous developer bid has collapsed and the development has stalled.

- 3.10 Chatsworth Gardens Housing Exemplar was a flagship masterplan project to positively change perception of the West End through the delivery of an exemplary development. Due to market constraints the developer led new build scheme has failed. A revised scheme is under development and appraisal that aims to provide remodelled family houses that will demonstrate the standard and quality that is attainable in the Masterplan area with existing housing, supported by the HCA's "Cluster of Empty Homes" funding.
- 3.11 Marlborough Road is a completed project that has seen Adactus Housing acquire a former garage and 11 HMOs to provide two new housing developments comprising of 23 units of affordable housing in the form of 12 x 2 bedroom flats and 11 x 3 bedroom family townhouses. Practical completion was January 2012. The scheme was initially intended for shared ownership but Adactus have needed to respond to market conditions and difficulties in accessing mortgage finance and have converted the tenure to a rent to buy initiative whereby the properties are rented on an affordable rent initially and then converted into shared ownership or outright sale subsequently.



Marlborough Road affordable housing scheme

- 3.12 Bold Street is a three phase housing project led and funded by the Council. Cabinet has previously prioritised the limited resources available through the Regional Housing Board to the West End and in particular Bold Street. The first phase was completed last year with a grant aided facelift scheme to 8 villa properties at a cost of £152K. Phase 2 is also completed, and involved substantial remodelling of large 4 storey terraces that included the removal of a storey costing £425K.



Bold Street, Morecambe

- 3.13 With the abolition of the Regional Housing Pot funding, the Council now faces a real challenge in identifying the funding to complete the previously identified regeneration priorities within the West End at Chatsworth Gardens and Bold Street. The only prospect of future external funding has been through the HCA's Affordable Homes Programme. This has necessitated a change in policy direction by creating some affordable rented units as part of the overall mix of dwellings within the project area in response to current market conditions.
- 3.14 The third phase concerns 17 two and three storey terraces of very poor quality and 3 commercial properties to the rear of the 0.27 hectare site. Acquisitions have been made as resources became available, which involves recycling the capital receipts of sold units to advance the necessary acquisitions of the remaining units. Three residential units have now been demolished and it is anticipated that a further six may be demolished in the near future. However, in order to acquire and facilitate a cleared site, the cost is likely to be circa £800k.

- 3.15 Current funding limitations mean that the investment plan for Morecambe is limited to the projects listed, but this is a pragmatic and realistic approach in an uncertain market for the short term. Following successful implementation of the current projects a range of medium term housing initiatives will build upon the achievements and look to realise the Masterplan vision.

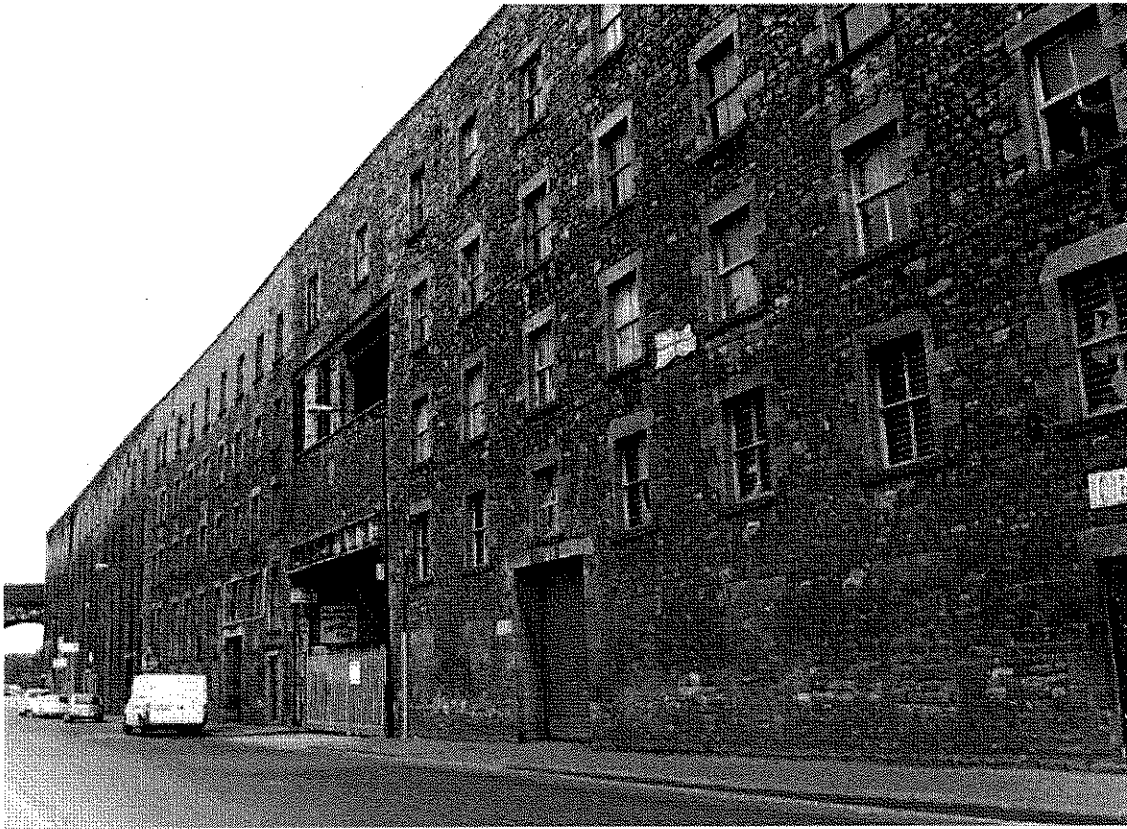
Lancaster City Strategic Development Sites

- 3.16 In Lancaster, there are 2 strategic sites with high priority, in addition to the developments that form part of Morecambe West End regeneration described above, and these are:-
- 3.17 Luneside East is a site acquired by the Council, and is characterised by extensive areas of unused or underused employment land. It requires remediation and site preparation, and the HCA are deeply involved, however the stalled market had left the site in abeyance.
- 3.18 Lancaster Moor North is a large listed former hospital building set in very substantial Brownfield grounds with extensive amenity and recreation areas. The site belongs to the HCA following English Partnerships acquiring it from the NHS. The development had been delayed pending the HCA identifying a suitable developer partner, as once again the stalled market held up progress.

Luneside East

- 3.19 Policy H4 of the Lancaster District Local Plan identified a site on Lancaster's St Georges Quay as a housing opportunity site. To try and achieve a mixed use development on this site, which will extend the successful regeneration work already achieved on St George's Quay, the Council has undertaken a programme of work to assemble a deliverable site, secure the support and funding from public agencies, (the HCA and the North West Development Agency) and the selection of a developer through an open and competitive process, whose proposals best match the City Council's aspirations for the development of this key site.
- 3.20 The Council has been working with developer CTP and Land Securities since 2005. Outline Planning Permission was granted in November 2002 for a mixed use development including employment space and 350 dwellings. A Reserved Matters Approval was granted in September 2007 for Phase 1a which included consent for 23 dwellings. The Outline consent has a condition that obliges the developer to secure the delivery of affordable housing. The Council aims to lease the whole site to the developer to permit the site to be prepared for development.

Significant progress had been made on site preparation; in late 2006 a gas holder was decommissioned and removed by National Grid plc and the Council became the owner of the whole site following the Council making a general vesting declaration under its compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers. All business occupiers vacated the site following the confirmation of the CPO.



Lunaside East development site, frontage to St George's Quay

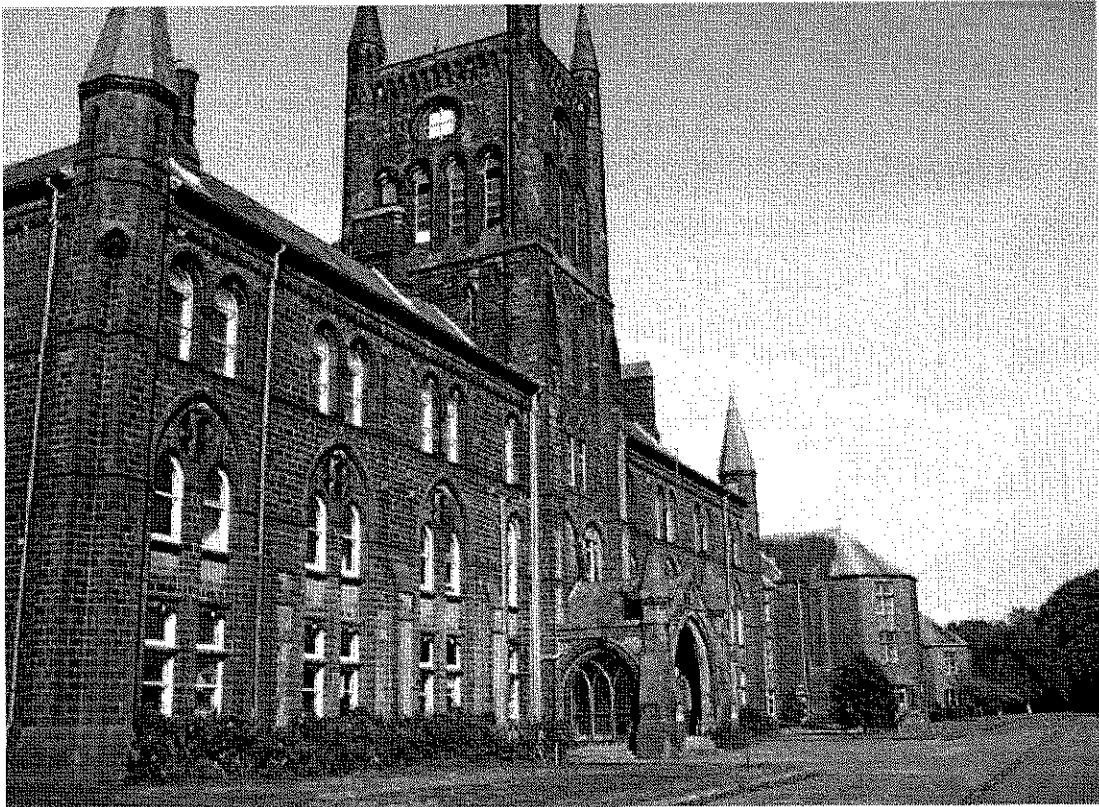
- 3.21 The developer CTP is identifying suitable partners and options to bring forward the site. Terms have been agreed for the remediation of the site (which has now commenced) having secured £4M through Growing Places funding to clear the site and provide the necessary infrastructure for commercial and residential development. The residential development of the site will comprise of a lower density scheme than originally intended which will provide around 150 residential dwellings. The scheme will provide around 20% on-site affordable housing, reflecting the associated site abnormalities and remediation costs involved.

Lancaster Moor North

- 3.22 The Lancaster District Local Plan identified the former Lancaster Moor North Hospital as a housing and business opportunity site. The Lancaster Moor campus is readily visible from vehicles passing Lancaster on the M6 and is close to Lancaster's distinctive Williamson Park and Memorial. The site, previously the property of the Health Authority, is now in the ownership of the HCA. In 2008, the Council granted consent for the development proposal that would see the conversion of the large Listed Annex building to dwellings and the redevelopment of much of the rest of the site, including the demolition of unlisted buildings for residential development. A Section 106 Agreement for the site was signed in June 2008 to secure the provision of a new area of open space within the site; listed building consent for the refurbishment of the annex; a transport contribution and preparation of a travel plan for the

development. Since obtaining permission the HCA has sought to dispose of the site to a developer. Although activity stalled, the HCA undertook a tender process in the summer of 2012 and have appointed P.J. Livesey and Storey Homes to bring forward a scheme of 440 residential dwellings.

- 3.23 Because of the many constraints and extremely challenging requirements surrounding the development of Lancaster Moor North, there has never been any expectation that this regeneration priority could realistically provide an affordable housing contribution.



Lancaster Moor North (main building)

Profile of Lancaster District Housing Stock

- 3.24 The District of Lancaster has a total housing stock of 61,570 dwellings (HSSA 2011). The Housing Needs Survey 2011 confirms that 60.5% of dwellings are either detached or semi detached, 23.5% are terraced houses, 13.8% are flats and the remainder are houseboats, caravans and mobile home properties. The last Housing Stock Condition Survey was undertaken in 2004, which reported that 78% of the stock is owner-occupied, 4% is owned and managed by Registered Providers, 6% is owned by the Local Authority and 12% is private rented. These statistics demonstrate that the District of Lancaster has higher levels of owner-occupation than the national average which peaked at 72.5% in 2001, and lower levels of social housing in comparison to the national average of 17% (English Housing Survey: Housing Stock Report 2009). Historically, accessing market housing in the District was an achievable aspiration of many working households, but with the increase in house prices locally, the economic downturn and impact upon the labour market, as well as difficulties accessing mortgage products, the need for affordable housing products has never been greater. Whilst there is no statutory requirement for local authorities to carry out Stock Condition Surveys, more recent data would provide a clearer picture and comprehensive evidence base around the dwelling stock, but there have been no resources available to commission this work beyond the work done around the Council's own housing stock.

Social Housing Sector

- 3.25 The current level of affordable housing stock (excluding discounted outright sale properties) within the District is 5,938, with the local authority's housing stock being 3,807 dwellings and a total of 2,131 Registered Provider stock across the District. The vast majority of affordable housing stock is social rented accommodation, although in recent years, some Registered Providers have moved towards providing shared ownership, in order to balance the housing market and improve access to housing for those households who would traditionally not qualify for social rented accommodation. The need for shared ownership and other intermediate housing has been highlighted by the Housing Needs Survey 2011, which recommends that future affordable housing provision should contain of 50/50 split between intermediate and rented units; informed by the number and financial circumstances of concealed households across the District who intend to accessing their own housing in the next three years. This recommendation will be formalised in the forthcoming Meeting Housing Needs SPD.

Lancaster City Council's housing stock

- 3.26 The Council is a stock retaining authority which has already achieved the Decent Homes Standard (the minimum standard set by Central Government which it expected all social housing to meet by the year 2010). Furthermore, the Council has developed its own Lancaster Standard, which exceeds the Decent Homes Standard, and includes higher standards than the minimum for individual properties as well as environmental improvements to contribute towards achieving sustainable communities and well managed neighbourhoods.
- 3.27 As mentioned previously, the Localism Act abolished the present housing subsidy system and introduced a new self-financing model from April 2012. The Council took on debt of just over £31M when the current subsidy arrangements ceased, giving the Council greater financial autonomy.
- 3.28 In 2007, Cabinet resolved to develop the establishment of a 3-5 year partnership for the future delivery of the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme. The Council has a long-term investment programme which already identifies the resources needed to maintain a viable 30-year business plan, which has been signed off by Government as being fit for purpose. The programme takes account of the data collected by the 2001 and 2008 Stock Condition Surveys which includes a comprehensive programme to provide adaptations to existing housing stock, energy efficiency works and boiler replacements, kitchen and bathroom refurbishments, external refurbishments, re-roofing works, environmental improvements, rewiring and fire precaution works. In the period 2012/2013 the cost of the proposed improvements is just under £4M. In addition, the Council's Revenue funded works will include other environmental improvements (determined by tenants and residents groups), rota painting, electrical inspections, lift repairs, gas servicing, contract maintenance and miscellaneous work totalling over £1M, which represents £5.274M investment into Council housing stock.
- 3.29 An important piece of work emerging from this Action Plan will be that the Council considers the usefulness and appropriateness of its existing housing stock for older people and formulates a District wide Older Persons Housing Strategy. The Council and other providers of accommodation for older people will need to carefully examine their existing housing provision, and whether this will be adequate to meet the future housing needs of this group, and consider and plan for the future housing requirements of older people, given the demographic change expected due to an ageing population.
- 3.30 In general terms, demand for general needs social rented housing in the District remains extremely high, and with the impact of the welfare reforms, which have already brought about a reduction in the Local Housing Allowance (which is now based on the 30th percentile), and the single room rent being applied to single households under 35, demand is set to increase and may well impact upon homelessness presentations in the future.

- 3.31 In recognition of the importance of maximising the availability of all social housing vacancies, the Council implemented its "Ideal Choice Homes" Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL) in October 2011, and has negotiated with a number of partner Registered Landlords to increase the nomination percentages received by the Council (which is normally 50% of vacancies). Going forward, the CBL will provide opportunities to market all forms of affordable housing, including shared ownership, as well as including private rented accommodation.
- 3.32 A further initiative that the Council is launching is the installation of P.V. Solar Panels at a number of its Category 2 sheltered housing schemes. The proposed installations will not only be benefitting from generating electricity, with "cash back", but will provide an opportunity for the schemes to draw down the free electricity generated to service lifts, washers, dryers, and lighting, which should reduce the service charges payable by tenants over time. Work is scheduled to be completed by the end of the financial year 2012/13.

Registered Providers

- 3.33 The stock profile within the Registered Provider sector has predominantly been developed over the last 30 years, often with a more modern design and layout, except for schemes which have allowed Registered Providers to buy in miscellaneous properties within the existing housing stock. Registered Providers are committed to meeting decent homes standards and maintaining their housing stock across Districts. However, Registered Providers will, on occasion, consider disposing units that are uneconomical to maintain or improve, in order to support their development programmes. Whilst the Council would normally be resistant to disposals, particularly on a large scale, the HCA expect Registered Providers to manage their stock portfolios effectively and use disposals as a means of delivering future affordable housing schemes and maintenance programmes.
- 3.34 The HCA have pre-determined design and quality standards, which Registered Providers must adhere to when bringing forward proposals for new build schemes or through Section 106 negotiated on-site affordable housing. These are described in more detail on page 30 of the document.

Private Sector Housing Stock

- 3.35 Improvements in the private sector housing stock have been largely concentrated in the West End Projects, which has required a mixture of interventions including clearance, new build, re-modelling and refurbishment of the private sector housing stock. The work undertaken so far was underpinned by the West End Masterplan document established in 2002, which aimed to improve some of the worst housing conditions in the District, and balance the housing market and tenure profile of the area by increasing home ownership and owner-occupation. The interventions so far have reduced the number of HMO's in the West End, created larger units of

accommodation, have improved the housing stock in that area and have created a more diverse tenure offer by introducing shared ownership initiatives.

- 3.36 In previous years, the Council received an allocation of Regional Housing Pot funds from Central Government, which was used to support regeneration schemes in the District. From 2011, the Regional Housing Pot funding ceased and external funding for regeneration schemes can now only be sourced through the HCA's Affordable Homes Programme 2011 – 2015.
- 3.37 Notwithstanding this, the Council is still striving to improve the housing conditions to private sector housing stock through enforcement, energy efficiency works, the handyperson scheme, Disabled Facilities Grants, and work around empty homes.

Enforcement

- 3.38 The Housing Standards Team continue to tackle poor housing conditions by effectively using a range of methods to respond to category 1 and category 2 dwelling hazards. Much of their work is around educating property owners but can also include enforcement and legal action.

TABLE 4 – CATEGORY 1 AND 2 DWELLING HAZARDS

Number of properties where a Category 1 Hazards has been removed	
2008/09	154
2009/10	105
2010/11	126
2011/12	118
Number of properties where a Category 2 Hazard has been removed	
2008/09	144
2009/10	127
2010/11	157
2011/12	222
Furthermore, a number of private sector properties have been made decent by the work of the Private Sector Housing Services	
2008/09	73
2009/10	66
2010/11	95
2011/12	80

- 3.39 The Housing Standards Team also encourage responsible renting within the private sector and operate the Accredited Property Scheme with pre-determined criteria depending upon the property type, which includes bedsits, shared houses, lodgings, hostels/B&Bs, self contained flats and houses.
- 3.40 As well as ensuring properties accredited are of a desired standard, the scheme brings benefits to landlords in attracting good tenants, reducing turnover, properties being better looked after, free advice on landlord and

tenant issues, opportunities to find tenants through the Housing Options Team, access to a mediation service and access to benefits advice.

- 3.41 The Council also has a long established Private Sector Landlords Forum, which is an opportunity to engage with a wide range of landlords who operate within the District, with meetings taking place on a periodic basis. The forum provides a mechanism to discuss relevant and topical issues across the private rented sector, and enables the Council to support and promote responsible renting.

Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth

- 3.42 The Council recognises the importance of tackling fuel poverty, not only in relation to the impact upon the housing stock, the health and wellbeing of vulnerable members of the community, reducing excess winter deaths but also as a means of reducing carbon emissions which all remain priorities for central government.
- 3.43 To this end, a partnership was formed in 2011 between the four local authorities of Blackpool, Fylde, Wyre and Lancaster, and the two primary care trusts (PCTs) of Blackpool and North Lancashire, to develop an Affordable Warmth Statement and 10 point Action Plan. Two consultation events took place in 2011 giving an opportunity for engagement with key stakeholders to look at how the action plan can be delivered, and progress is being made in delivering and reviewing the 10 point Action Plan across the partnership.
- 3.44 Whilst keen to engage in this work, Lancaster District already had an established affordable warmth steering group which is a partnership between the Council, the PCT, Lancashire County Council, Help Direct, CAB and LESS. Joint funding from Lancaster City Council, NHS Public Health and the Department of Health currently provides a wide range of affordable warmth measures for vulnerable households to combat fuel poverty and reduce hospital admissions. This service is delivered through the Council's Home Improvement Agency and is available to residents meeting one of the following criteria:
- Over 60
 - Disabled
 - Residents with Long Term Health conditions
 - Families on a low income.
- 3.45 The service offers a wide range of practical assistance to help residents remain warm and safe in their homes over the winter period. The measures available will depend on the resident's individual circumstances, some examples of measures which can be undertaken include:
- General repairs, maintenance and improvements to homes to make it warmer and easier to heat.
 - Repairs or replacement of heating systems, gas/electric safety checks and boiler services,

- Repairing or replacing timers and programmers,
- Provision of temporary heaters until permanent solution found
- Fuel top up cards to maintain a heating supply and assistance with payment of fuel debt arrears
- Electrical repairs required to enable installation of heating systems
- Replacement or repair of old draughty windows and doors.
- Enhanced Insulation and draught proofing throughout the home.
- Fitting cold alarms and carbon monoxide testers.
- Clearances of lofts to allow insulation to be installed.
- Any work which prevents slips, trips, falls and other home safety type works
- Gritting of paths and fitting handrails to prevent slips in icy weather.
- Home safety type work to prevent slips, trips and falls.

3.46 In addition, the council has recently employed a part-time officer to tackle housing conditions around excess cold and damp, through working with private sector landlords and taking enforcement action where necessary. A very recent initiative is the Lancaster Collective Energy Switching Scheme which, along with other Lancashire local authorities, allows residents to enter an auction for the best energy deal.

3.47 Furthermore, LESS, a community interest company has been offering free home energy surveys to residents of the District, across all tenures, to provide a range of advice to residents about reducing their energy bills, providing personalised energy reports which set out recommendations for energy saving measures along with providing information about free and subsidised grants that may be available. Since the new service was launched, LESS have completed over 400 energy surveys and has recruited 45 volunteers for this project. LESS are exploring funding opportunities to enable their service to continue, which has been extremely effective in assisting households to reduce their energy bills.

Home Improvement Agency

3.48 Lancaster City Council has continued to expand its in-house Home Improvement Agency (HIA), which has been supported through funding provided by the Lancashire Supporting People Programme and the PCT by offering a range of services to older people within the District.

3.49 The HIA helps vulnerable residents who are elderly disabled or on a low income to repair, improve, maintain and adapt their homes. This is achieved by providing services and free impartial advice on repairs and maintenance, energy efficiency as referred to above, home safety, getting building estimates, increasing benefits and raising finance to carry out work, independent advice on moving home and providing information on Safe Trader registered contractors.

Handyperson Scheme

3.50 The Handyperson scheme is now a District wide scheme available across tenures, as long as the work required is not the responsibility of the landlord and the tenant has permission to carry out the work. The scheme covers all basic plumbing work and small jobs around the home, and more recently, the handyperson service has been expanded to delivery the security works needed to deliver the Sanctuary Scheme, which has now been rolled out to assist and support victims of serious cases of anti-social behaviour.

TABLE 5 – HANDYPERSON JOBS COMPLETED

Handyperson jobs completed	
2008/09	470
2009/10	736
2010/11	732
2011/12	957

Disabled Facilities Grants

3.51 Providing suitable interventions for older people and those with special needs is supported through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's). The Health and Housing Service operates its own budget to pay for adaptations to Council dwellings, but all other DFGs to home owners or private sector tenants are administered through the HIA.

3.52 Lancaster's approach to providing Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is to undertake the work recommended by an Occupational Therapist. Work includes access to and within properties, kitchen and bathroom alterations, provision of adequate heating and modifications/alterations that allow disabled people to live independently in a safe environment. The maximum grant available is £30,000.

TABLE 6 – DFG'S COMPLETED

DFG's completed	
2008/09	151
2009/10	198
2010/11	162
2011/12	143

Empty Properties

3.53 Bringing back empty properties into use is an agreed Cabinet priority, and a key outcome of this Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan will be to develop an empty properties strategy early in the Action Plan period.

3.54 As part of the Affordable Homes Programme 2011-2015, the HCA have providing three tranches of funding around empty homes: £100M funding to

social housing providers to create affordable housing from empty properties, £30M funding to Community Groups, and £50M for clusters of empty homes.

3.55 The Council has supported Methodist Action (NW), a Preston based charity, to make a sub-regional bid for funding along with Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council. Methodist Action's bid was successful, and this has provided an opportunity to bring up to 20 properties back into use in the Lancaster District. Up to £12K (depending upon the dwelling size) capital funding can be spent on properties that have been vacant for a minimum period of 6 months, and in return, Methodist Action will lease the property from the owner for a 10 year lease period through a social lettings agency, with nominations being provided through the Council's Housing Options Team. The HCA have announced further funding for empty homes which includes commercial properties, and given the good progress made so far with this partnership, Methodist Action intend making a further bid which could provide a further award of funding to bring another 30 properties back into use in the Lancaster district.

3.56 In terms of achievements so far, since the period 2008/09, the number of private sector vacant dwellings returned to occupation has totalled 136 as follows:-

TABLE 7 – EMPTY PROPERTIES BROUGHT BACK INTO USE

Period	Reason for Action	
2008/09	Enforcement	36
	RSL Initiative	28
Total		64
2009/10	Enforcement	8
	RSL Initiative	17
	Accreditation	3
Total		28
2010/11	Enforcement	17
	RSL Initiative	9
	Accreditation	7
Total		33
2011/12	Enforcement	27
	RSL Initiative	2
	Accreditation	4
	Proactive	7
	Demolition	3
Total		43

Quality of new and future housing provision

- 3.57 Local Planning Authorities are encouraged, where appropriate and viable, to adopt nationally described standards and set their own policies in relation to the Code for Sustainable Homes. The draft Local Plan, when adopted, will require new dwellings to meet Code Level 4 subject to viability. It is hoped that by 2016, new dwellings will achieve Code Level 6.
- 3.58 The Council actively encourages any new dwellings to comply with Lifetime Homes standards, even though this is not a statutory requirement at present. Furthermore, all planning applications are scrutinised by the Council's dedicated Access Officer, who will comment and influence all new proposals from a design and access suitability viewpoint, and will make detailed recommended changes to developers, to ensure new housing provision is fit for purpose in the future, and can be easily adapted to meet the changing needs of our communities. This will be particularly relevant to the key findings identified by the Housing Needs Survey's suggested mix and size of future housing provision, to cater for the needs of households under-occupying dwellings across tenures, whose needs could easily change over time.
- 3.59 The HCA expect that social housing providers will produce well-designed, good quality housing to meet identified needs in places where people want to live. The HCA operate a scoring system to assess the design and quality of any new development brought forward by a Registered Provider, whether or not grant is being provided. The scoring system (known as Housing Quality Indicators) is based on a matrix of different criteria around three core performance standards which are:-
- 3.60 Internal environment – size, layout and service provision, which includes, but is not limited to, wheelchair-user housing, higher density family housing, rural housing, housing for older people, supported housing and BME provision.
- 3.61 Sustainability – the code level to be achieved in relation to the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- 3.62 External environment – building for life and creating well mixed and integrated communities with an appropriate balance between private and public open space.
- 3.63 All new dwellings and any dwellings that are acquired by Registered Providers through negotiated Section 106 on site affordable housing, should meet the HCA's design and quality standards which is part of the HCA's requirements through the Affordable Homes Programme contracts.

People

4. People

Meeting the housing needs of all parts of the community

4.1 The Council, as both an enabler and provider, plays a fundamental role in meeting the needs of vulnerable people that live within our community. The term “vulnerable” or “socially excluded” describes groups that are likely to have additional housing needs and will experience poorer outcomes if these needs are not met. These groups include:-

- People with physical and/or learning impairment/disability or mental ill health
- Homeless households
- Troubled families
- Young people
- People suffering domestic abuse
- People with a history of substance misuse/dependency
- People with a history of offending behaviour
- People from BME/Gypsy and Traveller communities
- Older People
- Former Armed Forces personnel

4.2 The Housing Needs Survey 2011 showed that 23% of people living within the District have a disability or support need, which is higher than the national average. Meeting the needs of vulnerable people is very often two-fold. It is concerned with providing suitable housing, and providing the appropriate support needed for people to meet their needs and aspirations.

Supporting People

4.3 The Supporting People (SP) Programme is a Lancashire partnership between Lancashire County Council, the 12 District Councils (excluding Blackpool and Blackburn), Health, Probation and Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Action Team. The programme funds both accommodation based tenancy support related services, such as supported housing, sheltered housing, refuges and hostel accommodation, as well as non-accommodation based support such as floating tenancy support and family intervention projects. Each District/organisation is represented on the Supporting People Commissioning Board, which is the decision making body responsible for the commissioning of services funded through the Supporting People programme.

4.4 Accommodation based services are largely defined as accommodation with on-site staff who directly provide tenancy related support to residents. There are various models of services within the District, which range from accommodation in a communal setting, and/or with some shared facilities, to self contained units of accommodation. Tenancy related support generally includes assessing support needs, support planning and risk assessment, help to maintain occupancy conditions, developing a range of life skills and tasks such as cooking, home safety and maintaining a home, claiming benefits, help with budgeting, reviewing progress, setting targets and

identifying when residents are ready to progress into general needs accommodation, and supporting them through this process. There are a range of accommodation based services that are detailed within this section for a variety of vulnerable groups.

- 4.5 Non-accommodation based services is often described as floating tenancy support, whereby the support is provided by visiting staff, and is often provided by a different organisation than the accommodation provider. A number of years ago, several organisations across Lancaster District delivered floating tenancy support, but in order to rationalise budgets and deliver services in a more consistent way, three contracts were established for the north, south and east locality groups. In 2007, Disc were awarded the floating support contracts for both the north and south localities, and currently deliver the contract locally on a partnership basis along with a number of other organisations, such as Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service, Richmond Fellowship, Inward House Projects etc. This means that the Disc partnership, whilst being procured as one contract, includes a number of specialist providers who have considerable expertise in working with a wide range of vulnerable groups.
- 4.6 The total SP budget for Lancashire in the period 2011/12 was £27.5M, and of this, Lancaster received 11.7% of the County's budget to fund our District's projects. However, the budget has been subject to cuts over the Comprehensive Spending Review period, and possibly beyond, which will inevitably put pressure on services that require supporting people funding. To manage the budget cuts, there are strict rules around the commissioning of new services, and the County has already implemented a series of measures concerned with the payment/capping of hourly rates of service providers and the modelling of support hours to ensure there is equity and consistency in relation to the funding provided by the SP programme throughout the County. Furthermore, in preparation for the issuing of future SP contracts, a series of commissioning plans has been drawn up for each socially excluded group to ensure the most appropriate model of delivery for each service will apply. Another important aspect of the SP programme is around personalisation, which is intended to give service users the ability to exercise real choice over the services they receive, wherever possible.
- 4.7 Of significant importance to the delivery of the SP programme across Districts is that there is no agreed methodology to determine how the grant is currently distributed across the County at the present time. A model that was initially proposed is formula based on 60% deprivation and 40% on population levels for each District. However, a more needs based methodology is being considered which takes account of a more sophisticated range of data including by client group. Further testing around the model proposed has been undertaken and will be applied subject to consultation and agreement through the Commissioning Board. The need for a formal means of distributing the grant has become more acute as the County have to determine a consistent approach to achieving the necessary savings due to budget cuts of £1.4M which need to be achieved in 2015. Once the new

model has been endorsed, the Commissioning Board will need to consider how the necessary savings can be achieved in each district.

- 4.8 Lancaster District is in a unique situation with regard to the SP strategy formation, service provision and governance arrangements because of our geographical position. Lancaster is currently placed within the North Locality grouping along the Districts of Wyre and Fylde (which aligns with the PCT boundaries), but for the purposes of the HCA's Local Investment Plan and funding arrangements, Lancaster forms part of the Mid Lancashire authorities along with Preston, South Ribble, Chorley and Mid-Lancashire, giving rise to the partnership formed in preparation for the Mid-Lancashire Housing Strategy. These groupings may be subject to review in the future.

People with Learning Disabilities and/or Physical Disabilities

- 4.9. The services provided for those with learning disabilities are currently fully integrated with adult services, and are funded and commissioned through separate governance arrangements within the SP programme. Often, people with learning disabilities also have physical disabilities and require very specialist accommodation and care. Both Lancashire County Council and the City Council will need to take account of the aspirations of those with learning disabilities in how future services are modelled. In particular, some service users have a desire to move away from group settings and live independently and there will be a greater reliance upon assistive technology to enable service users to do this. It is critical that Lancashire County Council works closely with the Council to ensure that the future needs of this group are carefully mapped and identified so that there is sufficient provision of suitable accommodation for this purpose. Focus groups across the three localities of the County are planned to look at this in more detail, and any proposed new developments will require endorsement from Housing Benefit Managers, with new housing being provided by Registered Providers under normal circumstances.
- 4.10 Meeting the needs of those with physical disabilities and/or sensory impairment can often be complex, depending upon the requirements of the individual, their care needs and the household composition.
- 4.11 The vast majority of the local authority's housing stock was not built or intended to meet the varying needs of wheelchair users. However, the Council is fortunate in having a dedicated budget set aside for adaptations to Council dwellings. Large scale alterations can be costly and do not always provide a long term solution in some cases. This is why it is so important that new housing is provided to lifetime homes standards, which are easily adaptable to meet changing needs. There are well established links with the Community Occupational Therapy Teams who provide detailed information about the needs and requirements of households where a member of the family has a disability, and joint assessments can be undertaken to check the suitability of any housing being offered.
- 4.12 Through the planning process, and during negotiations for affordable housing, the Council will seek to secure some provision of wheelchair properties as

part of the on-site affordable housing on a site by site basis. Furthermore, any sites which are wholly affordable rented housing will normally include some wheelchair provision where possible.

- 4.13 There are a small number of purpose built wheelchair units across the existing social housing stock, which is generally level access flats or bungalow accommodation, as well as wheelchair properties within some of the sheltered housing schemes. A handful of properties have through floor lifts installed, generally where the family composition is too large for their needs to be met in level access accommodation. All social housing providers should make the best use of these properties when vacant and endeavour to allocate properties to those households who needs best match. A potential area for development would be to consider compiling a register of adapted social housing, which is recognised good practice, to ensure the most appropriate matching of suitable applicants through the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme, with agreement that all adapted properties are advertised through the CBL with appropriate labelling of property attributes.

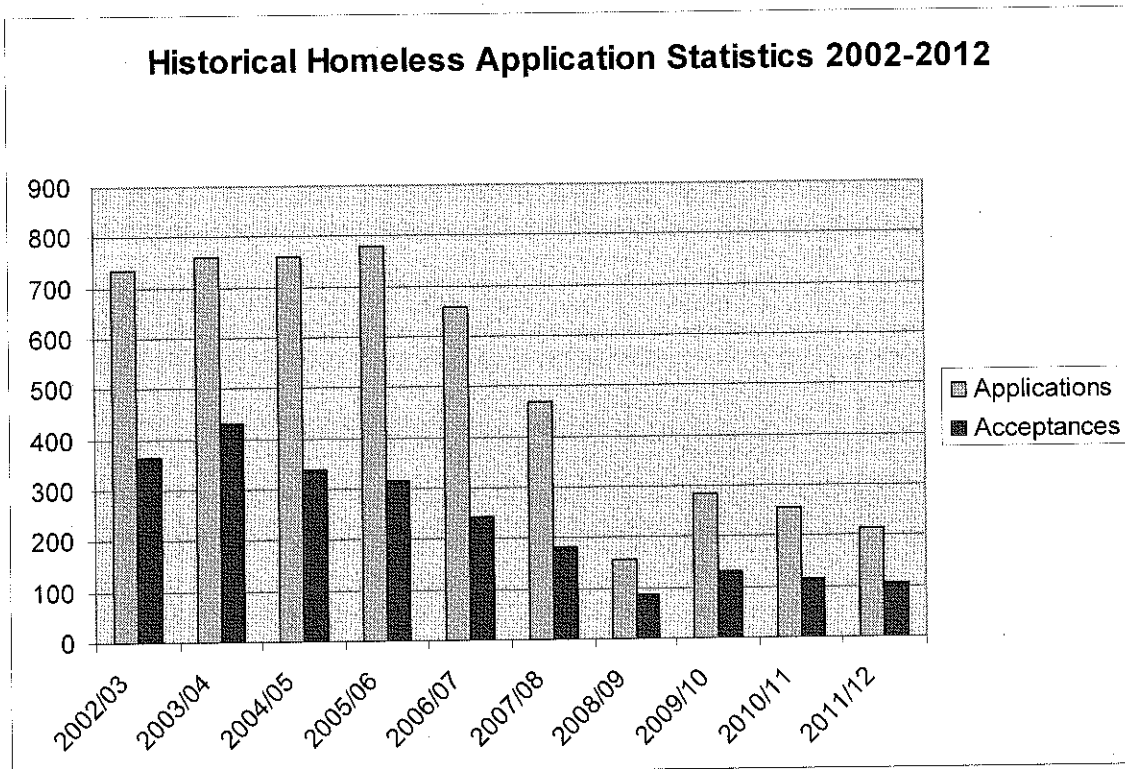
People with Mental Illness

- 4.14 In Lancaster District, Lancashire County Council/Lancashire Care Foundation Trust (LCFT) are responsible for the collaborative (health and social care) commissioning or rehabilitation and supported housing schemes. In this District, there is a range of supported housing models for people who suffer mental illness, depending upon their care needs. Some of these units are owned and managed by Lancashire County Council/LCFT, Registered Providers, who may or may not provide the care/tenancy support, and Private Sector Providers.
- 4.15 A Lancashire wide review is underway which seeks to define a rehabilitation and supported accommodation service model by mapping current provision, commissioning an improved service model within a more robust performance management framework for inclusion in contracts. The aim of the review is to ensure the new model will provide a consistent approach across the County and reduce the disproportionate growth in numbers and time spent in residential, nursing home and out of area treatment placements including secure and specialist services.
- 4.16 There is an acknowledgement that all PCTs and local authorities around the financial constraints imposed as a result of the current economic climate, and this will clearly impact on the resources available to commission future services. The review aims to achieve improved efficiency and effectiveness from the current resources available. Furthermore, there are limited resources to provide move on accommodation for this group, and with the onset of reduced grant rates from the HCA and pressures on the Supporting People Programme budget, have resulted in a much more challenging environment to bring forward new housing provision. The need to make the best use of the private sector is therefore crucial to developing the new model.

- 4.17 There are a number of structures already in place to ensure that there is effective partnership working and dialogue between the relevant statutory organisations and service providers, through the North Lancashire Mental Health and Housing Forum, the Supporting People North Locality Group and Commissioning Board, and, more recently, through the Adult Mental Health Placement Panel, which is represented by Lancashire County Council, LCFT and the Council.

Homeless households

- 4.18 The Council restructured its homelessness and housing needs teams to create a larger Housing Options Service. This coincided with the implementation of the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL), which replaced the previous points based allocation scheme in favour of a simplified banding system. The rationale for implementing the CBL beyond meeting the Government's statutory requirements were to increase the range of properties available within the social and private rented sector. In turn, this would improve the housing options available to a wide range of groups, including homeless households, and in particular, as a tool for homelessness prevention, which extends beyond assisting only those households where a statutory rehousing duty applies. The Council will shortly be reviewing the impact of the new CBL to ensure that the new arrangements are not adversely impacting upon the length of time homeless households are placed in temporary accommodation in the longer term.
- 4.19 The Council has achieved a lower number of statutory homeless acceptances in recent years as detailed below. Furthermore, the Council has met its target to reduce temporary accommodation by 2012. Our target was to reduce the number of temporary accommodation units to 12, but in fact we have reduced the number of units to 7. The Council works in partnership with Adactus Housing Group, who own and manage the 7 self contained (furnished and unfurnished) dispersed units of temporary accommodation for families.
- 4.20 The Council currently receives Supporting People funding to provide a Family Intervention Project aimed at vulnerable households at risk of homelessness. The project provides a much higher level of intervention and support than that provided through floating tenancy support, and generally only supports five families at any one time to ensure the holistic package of wrap around support is provided dovetailing with other relevant statutory and non-statutory organisations. The Supporting People programme will probably not fund this service beyond 2013/2014, due to a new initiative called "Working Together With Families" a new approach around multi-agency working, which will be part of the wider "Troubled Families" framework.



Reducing Mortgage Repossessions

- 4.21 The Council operates a Mortgage Repossession Prevention Fund targeted at households who are at risk of losing their home due to mortgage arrears. The Fund offers small interest free loans following a full financial assessment, and a repayment term will be determined on a case by case basis based on affordability.
- 4.22 Another initiative that has been successful in reducing homelessness in Lancaster District has been the use of the mortgage rescue scheme, which is a scheme that should only be utilised when all other homeless prevention tools have been exhausted. Mortgage rescue is a government funded scheme, launched on the 1st January 2009, to assist households who are struggling to keep up with mortgage payments who could be at risk of homelessness through having their home repossessed. The eligibility criteria mirrors those households who would be owed the full rehousing duty by a local authority i.e. a household with dependant children or an expectant mother, or with someone elderly, disabled or vulnerable in some other way. Household income is restricted to £60K per annum. For the mortgage to rent scheme, a price cap of £135K per property applies in the North West, an upper ceiling on the decent homes work required is £20K per property and the purchase price paid by the Registered Provider cannot exceed more than 90% of the current market value.
- 4.23 To date, Lancaster District has had 15 successful mortgage rescue completions. In the North West and the scheme is currently administered by Plumlife (part of the Great Places Housing Group), who are the HCA's zone agents. Locally, the Council has provided funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau to undertake the necessary financial assessments required for the

scheme, forming part of their specialist housing and debt advice service. Although the government is continuing to fund the mortgage rescue scheme, the funding available and criteria applied has been subject to change, and is less favourable in relation to the funding available and the grant rates that apply to Registered Providers purchasing properties. At the present time, Plumlife/Great Places are seeking to increase the number of Registered Provider Syndicate Partners to purchase mortgage rescue properties, to ensure there is sufficient capacity to take further referrals locally. The Council has been encouraging R.P. partners to support Plumlife in this regard.

Homelessness Change Programme Funding

- 4.24 The Council successfully bid for funding under the HCA's Homelessness Change Programme in the summer of 2011, which, subject to the necessary approvals, will provide an 18 unit hostel accommodation (6 crisis beds and 12 move on units) for rough sleepers/single homeless people over 25. This will be a significant achievement for the District, as there has never been any bespoke provision for this socially excluded group, whose needs are complex and where a very holistic approach to tackling the issues that entrenched homelessness often requires. A report was presented to Cabinet in February 2013 setting out the options to deliver the project, which should result in the hostel being provided by the end of March 2015, to satisfy the HCA's grant requirements, subject to the necessary savings being achieved to provide revenue funding through the Supporting People Programme.

Enhanced Housing Options

- 4.25 From July 2012, the Council will be delivering an Enhanced Housing Options Service, by introducing new arrangements to continue to prevent homelessness in the District. This will build on the work undertaken by the Doorstep Project, delivered by Lancaster YMCA, with the new service being delivered in-house. Two dedicated Homeless Prevention Officers have been appointed who will be providing more detailed assessments and linking in with specialist services around drug and alcohol services and financial assessments with support into training, volunteering and employment opportunities, as well as providing support for those at risk of homelessness and assisting those homeless households to secure accommodation where there is no formal homeless presentation or where there may not be a statutory duty accepted under the homeless provisions.
- 4.26 The Council is now delivering a social lettings agency in the District through Methodist Action North West (referred to in paragraph 3.52 under empty properties). Methodist Action already successfully runs a social lettings agency in Preston, South Ribble and Greater Manchester. The new scheme provides greater access to the private rented sector as MANW will enter into a leasing agreement with landlords and will manage the properties, which will be let by taking referrals from the Council's Housing Options Team. This increases the availability of good quality rented accommodation, as well as offering some certainty to private landlords.

- 4.27 "No Second Night Out", is a recent Government initiative to end rough sleeping nationally. Lancashire authorities are responding to this agenda by adopting a county wide strategy and policy which seeks to reconnect rough sleepers and homeless people who have a connection to another District in Lancashire, where they can access accommodation and/or support networks, and are enabled to return to this area in a planned way.
- 4.28 The Council has drafted its own "No Second Night Out" Policy and Protocol and a complex needs panel has been set up to develop and maintain intelligence and information about rough sleepers, and look at timely interventions, such as fast tracking of detox/drug rehabilitation services. There is one single point of contact for reporting rough sleepers through a dedicated telephone number, better information about incidents of rough sleeping with more regular counts, development of street outreach services in Lancaster and Morecambe, co-ordinating cold weather provision and offering individualised solutions ensuring timely support with a range of outreach and reconnection services. The council is also hoping to set up an interim homeless project for single homeless people and rough sleepers pending the development of the 18 unit hostel, and has very recently secured funding through the Government's Homelessness Transitional Funding in conjunction with the Foxton Centre, a Preston based charity co-ordinating the No Second Night Out initiative across Lancashire, to develop the work to end rough sleeping.
- 4.29 Both Lancaster Homeless Action Service and Morecambe Homeless Action Service provide a day centre for those who are homeless or in housing poverty. More recently, Lancaster Homeless Action Service have changed their remit to more targeted intervention with homeless people who are willing to engage with a support plan and work towards accessing mainstream services and housing. The Council fully endorses this approach as there has been a shift away from traditional day centre models which can often encourage dependency. Most local authorities now operate and embrace the need to ensure day centres do support the use of a more proactive approach to tackling rough sleeping to deter people away from this lifestyle which is inevitably harmful. This should mean that services are only offered to those people who are working towards engagement with mainstream services in order to overcome homelessness and any secondary issues such as offending and substance misuse.
- 4.30 Lancaster Homeless Action Service currently provide the "TLC" Resettlement Service, through crisis funding, which helps single people obtain housing with a private landlord and provide the necessary support for them to settle in and maintain their tenancy. The crisis funding for this scheme ends in March 2013.
- 4.31 As referred to above, Lancaster Homeless Action Service are a partner of DISC, who deliver the North Lancashire contract for floating tenancy support funding by the Supporting People Programme, as they have over 20 year experience of working with the homeless, and were a previous provider of tenancy related support in the Lancaster District.

Young People

- 4.32 The needs of young people experiencing homelessness or leaving care are captured through a framework of services and partnership working in the Lancaster District.
- 4.33 Across Lancashire, there has been collaborative multi-agency working to prevent homelessness in young people aged 16 and 17, prompted by the "Southwark judgement", which clarified the legal responsibilities placed upon children's social care providers and housing providers and set out that the Children Act 1989 takes precedence over the Housing Act 1996. To this end, a Lancashire Wide Housing Strategy Group has been set out to develop and implement a joint working protocol and guideless across the 12 Districts, the development of a Youth Homeless Strategy and the establishment of a county wide prevention project. CLG funding has been secured to deliver projects, which initially set out to identify hotspots, and develop suitable models for implementation across footprints. The interventions include respite accommodation, family support and mediation, welfare rights advice, rehousing and specialist support. The projects are being evaluated by Lancaster University to measure outcomes and monitor progress.
- 4.34 A Young People's Housing Panel has been operating for a number of years, which is a partnership between Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council's Children's Services, the Youth Offending Team and supported housing providers, which are Salvation Army Housing Association and Adactus Housing Association. The panel meets fortnightly and considers the most appropriate intervention for every young individual who is referred to the panel, which can include crisis provision, supported housing, supported lodgings, mediation/ returning to family and progressing into independent accommodation when this is deemed appropriate.
- 4.35 The Council made a bid through the former Places of Change initiative, which funded a new development provided by Adactus Housing Association in the City Centre offering 6 crisis beds at New Road, and 11 self contained flats at Mariners View.
- 4.36 A new scheme was commissioned with Supporting People funding, to provide supported housing for teenage pregnant households, who are often not ready to manage an independent tenancy. However, although the contract was awarded nearly two years ago, there have been difficulties finding suitable premises, which has halted the proposed scheme. The Council is very keen to work in partnership with other agencies to work towards a reduction in incidents of teenage pregnancy, as historically, there have been high incidents of teenage pregnancy in this District. The prevention work undertaken has included engagement work with secondary schools Year 10 pupils along with early intervention work and mediation services for young people facing homelessness.
- 4.37 Salvation Army Housing Association own and manage Morecambe Foyer, which is a 25 bed space supported housing scheme, around a model of 5 x 5 cluster units. Earlier this year, funding has been provided by both the City

Council and County Council to convert one of the cluster units into crisis accommodation, as there was no crisis provision for young people in the Morecambe area, beyond placements in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. This is a pilot project at present funded through SP, but if the crisis provision was to continue in the longer term, alternative funding will need to be identified.

- 4.38 The Council is extremely fortunate to have a robust framework in place for young people, and this is a result of the solid partnerships that are currently in place, the quality and sound management provided by accommodation providers and the funding provided through the Supporting People Programme have all contributed to its success.

Domestic Abuse

- 4.39 Those experiencing domestic abuse have access to a number of services in this District. This includes support and outreach services offered by organisations like Lancaster and District Women's Aid. The Council, through Adactus Housing Association, have two "safe house" units of dispersed family accommodation within the District, and, in 2011, Lancashire County Council commissioned a Refuge for the District, which will be delivered by East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association, a subsidiary of Calico Housing Group and will open in April 2013. This has been a most welcome addition to the services offered to those experiencing domestic violence, as the District has been without a Refuge for several years, and has needed to rely on other Districts to meet this need, in instances where dispersed accommodation is not available or suitable, and also bridges the gap in provision to assist single females. Whilst acknowledging that men also experience domestic violence, previous research and consultation undertaken last year as part of the work undertaken to develop Commissioning Plans, show that the numbers of presentations are too low to merit any specific service being commissioned for this group.
- 4.40 Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership have set aside funding to enhance the current Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) service, which provides high risk victims of domestic abuse with support for themselves and their families in addition to support through the criminal justice system. The IDVA currently operates five days a week, but with this additional funding the service will be extended to 7 days for a trial period of 2 years, so that there is additional support available to victims. Funding is being sought to stabilise the IDVA service and is also being explored around the provision of a children's IDVA service.
- 4.41 The Council currently funds a sanctuary scheme, which improves the safety and security of a victim's property so that they can remain in their own home should they chose to.
- 4.42 There are strategic processes in place to manage the risk posed to individuals of domestic violence through the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) which is attended by a number of agencies, statutory and voluntary. The MARAC ensures that the relevant processes and support is

put in place to effectively manage the risk to victims who are likely to be "high risk" (those at serious risk of being killed or seriously hurt, which is approximately 10% of domestic violence victims).

Substance/Alcohol Misuse

- 4.43 Services that are offered to people with a history of substance misuse are commissioned through Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Team. As well as a range of treatment and rehabilitation services, Inward House Projects provide a supported housing scheme in Lancaster, for individuals who have come through a detox programme and are drug or alcohol free. There are currently only two services in the whole of Lancashire that are specifically provided for this group. In addition, through the Disc floating tenancy support contract, specialist tenancy support is also provided to those with a history of substance misuse.
- 4.44 LDAT engages with a wide number of partner organisations through their Joint Commissioning Group, which meets monthly, and is also represented on the Supporting People Commissioning Board.
- 4.45 One of the barriers identified in relation to people presenting to services, is how to best meet the needs of those with complex needs or dual diagnosis, as at the present time, individuals can fall between services and do not receive the interventions required. Some further work needs to be carried out around this issue, which may require some joint commissioning in the future.

Offenders or those with a history of offending

- 4.46 People with an offending background are often the most difficult to place into suitable housing, because of the risk they are perceived to pose. Many social housing providers, including the Council, have specific allocation policies in place which prevent applicants with unspent convictions being able to access social housing, generally for a set period of time or until the conviction is spent. However, all social housing providers should have processes in place which enable the circumstances of every applicant to be assessed on its own merits.
- 4.47 The National Probation Service are the lead commissioners for the commissioning of services for offenders in Lancashire through the Supporting People Programme, although from a housing perspective, they are not direct providers of housing outside of the approved premises for offenders, which are provided for offenders who are either serving community penalties, on bail awaiting sentence or have been received from prison.
- 4.48 Stonham Housing Association currently own and manage a six bed space hostel at Hubert Place, Lancaster. The hostel is intended to house those in need of supported housing who have a background of offending or are considered to be at risk of offending due to homelessness. Stonham have acknowledged that the existing project does not lend itself to accommodating those offenders who are deemed to be medium risk of offending or above. Furthermore, the scheme has low level staffing, which also impacts on the risk

assessment processes in place when accessing this scheme. There is a gap in provision for offenders who are deemed to be medium or high risk of offending which creates a real problem. This is partly met through the funding provided to resource an intensive floating support service to MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements), but sourcing appropriate accommodation continues to be very challenging.

- 4.49 Further funding has been provided through CRISIS to provide support to offenders who are on Supervision Orders and have a local connection to either Lancaster or Wyre Districts. The scheme is to work with offenders who are motivated to change and they are assisted to secure private rented accommodation and housing related support for up to three months. Due to the success of this scheme, the funding has been provided up to February 2013.

Gypsies and Travellers

- 4.50 The 2007 Lancashire Sub-Regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment provided the Council with an assessment of accommodation need and pitch requirements at an immediate local level. This evidence also fed into the North West Plan Partial Review of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show people. Although this latter work was not issued due the revocation of spatial strategies, it specified the number of pitches / plots required for each local planning authority.
- 4.51 The Council has a statutory duty to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers as part of the wider assessment of housing needs. There are currently a number of privately run sites providing accommodation for gypsy and travellers. An assessment carried out in 2011 showed that through private provision there are 129 permanent pitches, and 2 transit pitches. A further 19 social rented pitches are provided by Lancashire County Council at the Mellishaw Park site, which is currently managed by the Council. The new national planning policy for traveller sites requires local planning authorities to make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning; to work collaboratively; and to develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites. The national policy requirements will be progressed through an assessment of the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers, and of travelling showpeople, engagement with these communities, and the land allocations process for the emerging Local Plan. The Local Plan will also include a criteria based development management policy for proposals for establishing Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites.
- 4.52 The target groups provided for within the existing floating tenancy support contract include gypsies and travellers. Evidence of referrals by client group show that there has been very low take up of this service, despite the perceived size of the travelling community within the District, and the barriers that can exist in this group accessing mainstream services. There needs to be further work around this to ensure that gypsies and travellers can access this service if they need to.

- 4.53 In March 2012, the Government published a new Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, which sets out the framework for assessing the needs of the GRT community in each District, collaborative working to develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through suitable site provision, to promote more private traveller site provision, and to reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments and protecting the Green Belt.
- 4.54 This Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan will need to have regard to the Planning Policy document by:-
- Considering and refreshing the current evidence around need.
 - Identifying suitable deliverable sites as part of the Local Plan to provide five years worth of sites, and developable sites over a longer period.
 - Engagement with the travelling community to inform land allocations and site provision.
 - Investigate the options around who is best placed to provide traveller sites in the District.
- 4.55 To assist with this process, an established group of practitioners, chaired by Lancashire County Council, meets quarterly to look at both the strategic and operational issues around the services provided to gypsies and travellers. Continued joint working with these partner organisations and the GRT community will assist the Council in being able to plan appropriately to meeting the needs of this group. The council is also commissioning some further engagement work with the GRT community in order to identify the most appropriate options.

BME communities

- 4.56 The 2001 census confirms that less than 2% of the population of the District is made up of Black and Minority Ethnic households (BME). However, this census data does not capture the impact of the EU accession regulations and the in-migration that has taken place since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, and subsequently in 2007. Although anecdotally there is evidence that there are well established groups of Eastern Europeans living permanently within the District, largely Polish, the new census data will assist us to properly identifying these groups.
- 4.57 The Housing Needs Survey 2011 found that there were higher levels of overcrowding within the BME communities than elsewhere, and that just under 10% of BME households had a member with a disability. Affordability was cited as the main reason for the BME community being unable to move into suitable accommodation due to the lack of affordable rented housing, and 73% said they were unable to buy a property. The Housing Needs Survey recommends that there is adequate provision of larger units of accommodation for BME communities given the findings.
- 4.58 Through this Action Plan period, the Council will need to properly identify the ethnic make-up of this District from the new census data, and may need undertake some further engagement work to ensure that the needs and

requirements of the BME communities are properly captured having regard to the Housing Needs Survey findings, when considering future housing provision of both market and affordable housing.

Older people

- 4.59 During the period 2008 to 2033, the 65 years plus age group is forecast to grow by 61.8%, with a 138% increase in the 86 years plus age group. This ageing population poses a significant challenge as these households are more likely to have a need for support services, adaptations or specialist accommodation. This means that there needs to be sufficient supply of new specialist and adaptable general needs accommodation as well as ensuring that support and other needs are being met to enable older people to enjoy a good quality of life
- 4.60 The Housing Needs Survey 2011 reports that the future needs of older people will be best met through sheltered housing or independent accommodation with visiting support, and by 2014, the District needs will be circa 2,123 units. Furthermore, the Survey identified that across the social housing sector, there are around 500 properties that are under-occupied by two bedrooms or more, and that the Council would need to develop a strategy to identify the aspirations of existing tenants. Whilst acknowledging this, there could well be other drivers around this given the proposed welfare reforms and cuts to housing benefit, although these will not directly apply to those over pensionable age. However, the Housing Needs Survey strongly suggests that older people, whether occupying market or affordable housing, need to be provided with a good housing offer as an incentive to moving which is not readily available at present, which is why the survey recommends that 60% of new market housing provision is one and two bedroom units, and 50% in respect of affordable housing. Social housing providers may also need to develop incentive schemes to support older people to move into smaller, more suitable accommodation, to meet and plan for their future needs. Great Places Housing Group is already planning for this, and piloted an incentive scheme providing additional support to a targeted group of households occupying family housing, which was successful and may be rolled out.
- 4.61 In order to plan for future projected need, there needs to be adequate provision of home-based support services and adaptations for older people living across tenures, borne out by the Housing Needs Survey. This also fits in with Lancashire County Council's plan to implement changes to the targeting of supporting people funding for older people, which is currently wholly directed towards sheltered housing tenants. Future plans include providing visiting support to all tenures where it is feasible to do so. The proposed model would mean that as part of the letting of sheltered housing vacancies, all new tenants would be assessed before automatically qualifying for a service funded through Supporting People, and for those who do not qualify or need a service, this will create some capacity to deliver services to other neighbouring residents, who could be general needs tenants, private sector tenants or owner-occupiers. This would inevitably mean a change in the way services are currently delivered by existing service providers, including the council.

- 4.62 One of the fundamental pre-requisites to meeting the needs of older people is to undertake a detailed analysis of existing sheltered housing provision across the District, to take account of the total current provision, the standards and facilities available and demand for sheltered housing. Work has already begun around this through the North Locality Specialist Housing for Older People Group (known as SHOP) – a group of providers and commissioners, and a Lancashire wide Asset Survey collating all details of existing sheltered housing provision has been completed, which provides a wide range of information including scheme facilities, local amenities, door entry systems and access arrangements, voids information and rents/service charges. This data will inform future action planning, and, where applicable, may influence decisions around any existing schemes that need to be re-modelled or in fact de-commissioned.
- 4.63 Another area of work to be covered by the SHOP is the provision of extra care sheltered housing, as there are a number of different models that currently operate across the County. There needs to be a greater understanding of the degree of need required given that there is much less provision than in many other areas and a more consistent approach taken to the planning, commissioning and procurement of extra care housing in the future.
- 4.64 In this District, there are two Council owned extra care sheltered housing schemes, at Beck View, Lancaster, and Parkside Court, Morecambe, and a scheme at Millrace Court, Lancaster, which belongs to Places for People. Some years ago, a partnership/steering group was formed between the City and the County Council to designate two existing sheltered housing schemes as “extra care” provision, whereby up to a third of dwellings becoming vacant are allocated to the relevant Adult Care Team within Lancashire County Council. That team collates and prioritises a list of service users who require a care package of 10 hours care or more, and who would nominate suitable applicants upon being notified of a vacancy. Lancashire County Council fund a dedicated care team that are based at each extra care scheme which offers some economies of scale and consistency in relation to the care offered. The partnership was formed around a common desire to reduce the number of older people that were placed into residential care and by offering existing tenants a more desirable alternative to prevent this. The scheme was subsequently rolled out to Millrace Court, Mainway, Lancaster, which extended the provision across three geographical locations within the District.
- 4.65 There was a further plan to provide a new extra care provision at Moor Platt, Caton, a former residential care home. This plan was based around a market housing scheme delivering a complement of affordable housing (both rented and shared ownership) with on-site extra care provision, but due to the change in housing market conditions, the scheme stalled, and a decision was taken not to commission this scheme. Lancashire County Council now plans to sell the site.
- 4.66 The Abbeyfield Silverdale and District Society obtained planning permission to develop 14 units of retirement housing (bungalows and apartments) at Cove Orchard, Silverdale, situated in the grounds of Cove House, a residential care

establishment run by Abbeyfield. Given the scheme's imminent proximity to Cove House, the Abbeyfield Society are able to directly provide a care package to residents at Cove Orchard. Although not obligated to provide them, Abbeyfield have decided to provide two rented units within the scheme, without any financial support or grant in place, in recognition that there will be village residents that are in genuine need but who are not able to purchase properties. There will be eligibility and local connection criteria applied to all properties.

- 4.67 The Housing Needs Survey findings support the need for 362 extra care units across tenures, coming from both existing households and those intending to move into the District. Both the City and County Council will need to examine carefully the current and future provision of extra care accommodation, as well as the most appropriate models, which can only be brought about through effective collaborating working with other relevant organisations, both in developing and delivering an appropriate Older People's Housing Strategy. In recognition of the detailed work that will be required around this, it will be necessary to establish an Older Peoples Task Group, with a number of key stakeholders to develop and deliver the Lancaster District Older People's Housing Strategy early in the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan period.

Student housing

- 4.68 In recent years, Lancaster University has expanded its own provision of on-campus student housing, to meet the current and future demand for student accommodation. More recently, there has been an increase in private sector student housing in the City Centre, to meet the demand. The Council's position is that planning applications to provide or convert buildings into student housing are generally supported so long as the proposed development is of a suitable layout and is located in a sustainable location if off-campus. Lancaster University commissioned some research in 2011 to examine and measure the need for student housing in the District, and the findings could inform future planning policy. The Council has generally supported additional units of student housing because of the increasing number of traditional family housing in the Lancaster south area which is being used for the purposes of accommodating students. The impact of this has been a reduction in the availability of private sector rented accommodation and market housing for sale and it is hoped that additional student housing provision will help to balance housing markets and could create some capacity in the longer term. However, from a planning policy perspective, and in order to deliver the annual housing requirement of 400 dwellings per year, student housing development should not take priority over sites that could otherwise provide residential housing that are identified in the Local Plan as such.

Rural communities

4.69 The Parish Partnerships Project will be a long term project starting in December 2012. The intention is to establish working groups on a parish locality basis with representatives drawn from the parish council, members of the local community who can provide perspectives on housing need, and organisations responsible for housing delivery such as registered providers and residential developers. It is likely that the project will focus on settlements identified by Core Strategy Policy SC3; settlements with fewer local services that have been identified in the emerging Local Plan (Policy OPP5) as settlements with need for additional residential development; and any other settlements where there is evidence of local housing need.

4.70 The intention is for the working groups to work together to identify sites that can help address local housing need and the shortfall in housing delivery in rural settlements. The local housing need will be informed by the 2011 Housing Needs Survey as well other local evidence around housing need where this is available. Lancaster City Council will provide the secretariat support for each working group that will draw in officer support and expertise on a case by case basis. Each working group will need to operate in a way that best responds to the local circumstances.

4.71 Former Armed Forces personnel

Lancaster City Council recognises that serving members of the armed forces may require housing upon discharge, and evidence suggests that this group could be at more risk of homelessness for a number of reasons, including suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. As part of the work undertaken to develop a Lancaster District Tenancy Strategy, which was approved in January 2013, social housing providers are requested to have regard to the needs of armed forces personnel when framing their allocation policies to ensure that this group is not disadvantaged in relation to local connection criteria that may be applied. The HCA have already determined that armed forces personnel should be given preference for schemes such as Homebuy. Lancaster district is fortunate to have designated accommodation for former armed forces personnel, which is managed by the Guinness Partnership at Westfield Memorial Village, with a strict requirement that applicants must either be serving or previously serving members of HM forces.

5.0 Reviewing the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan

5.1 The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan 2012 – 2017 will be reviewed annually and a formal mid term review will be undertaken, which will include key stakeholders, and will be reported formally to members.

Lancaster District Housing Action Plan 2012-2017

DELIVERING THE LANCASTER DISTRICT HOUSING ACTION PLAN 2012-2017

THEME 1: ACHIEVE THE RIGHT QUALITY OF HOUSING

Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale for completion	Resource Implications
Complete and adopt the Local Plan Land Allocations and Development Management DPDs	Achieving 400 dwelling completions p.a.	Planning Policy Team	Ongoing until December 2014	Existing resources
Complete and adopt the Meeting Housing Needs SPD	Achieve 60 affordable dwelling completions p.a.	Planning Officer - Housing and Communities	Completed Feb 2013	Existing resources
Take account of Housing Needs Survey when determining future market and affordable housing delivery	Housing tenure, dwelling types and sizes accord with key findings	Housing Strategy Team/ Development Management Team	Ongoing	Existing resources
Refresh the data from the Affordable Housing Viability Study in the light of any changes in housing market conditions and review policies	Policies and targets are implementable and achievable	Housing Strategy Team	As required	Existing resources
Review key village policy in relation to the development of housing in rural communities and set up the Parish Partnerships Project	To support housing delivery in villages	Planning and Housing Policy Team/ Development Management	Ongoing until 2014	Existing resources

Implement the updated approach to achieving affordable housing	Establish thresholds for affordable housing to maximise affordable housing provision through planning obligations	Planning Officer - Housing and Communities	2013 and ongoing.	Existing resources
Identify and consider use of Council owned sites for the delivery of affordable housing	To meet affordable housing targets	Housing Strategy Team/ Property Group	February 2011 - ongoing	May result in a loss of an existing asset/capital receipt if land is transferred at less than best consideration, but this would be considered in light of the Council's disposal strategy and other corporate priorities.
Support bids made by Registered Providers to provide affordable housing	To meet affordable housing targets	Housing Strategy Officer	May 2011 - ongoing	Existing resources

THEME 2: ACHIEVING THE RIGHT QUALITY OF HOUSING

Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale for completion	Resource Implications
Explore any funding opportunities and work in partnership with Developers and/or Registered Providers around the District's three identified regeneration priorities	Increase the capital resources available to deliver regeneration schemes	Policy and Delivery Team	Ongoing	Existing resources/HCA funding – some further approvals may be required.
Take forward the opportunities presented by the HRA's new self financing arrangements as a vehicle for:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving council housing stock • Re-modelling council housing stock 	Increase the capital resources available	Health and Housing Service/ Financial Services	To be agreed	Use of existing reserves initially. Any further scope would be informed by rent policy etc.
Identify or draw down available funding to increase the energy efficiency of all housing stock including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm Homes Scheme • Cert funding • Green Deal 	Improved dwelling stock/Reduce fuel poverty/Reduce seasonal excess deaths	Home Improvement Agency/ Energy Providers/ Social Housing Providers	October 2011 - ongoing	Existing resources
Pilot the implementation of PV panels on Category 2 Sheltered Housing Schemes	Increase energy efficiency	Health and Housing Service	End financial year 2012/2013	Existing resources

<p>Reduce the number of empty homes within the District by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate enforcement action • Developing an Empty Properties Strategy • Bid for funding through AHP (Community Funds) • Council tax charging 	<p>A higher number of empty properties returned to use</p>	<p>Policy and Delivery Team / Revenue and Benefits</p>	<p>July 2012 and onwards</p>	<p>Additional resources for a dedicated Empty Homes Officer post subject to Budget Council. Others through existing resources, with need for close monitoring.</p>
<p>Increase the number of housing completions that meet lifetime homes standard</p>	<p>More accessible/ada ptable housing stock</p>	<p>Planning and Housing Policy Team/ Development Management</p>	<p>Ongoing and through Local Plan.</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>
<p>Increase the Code for Sustainable Homes to Code Level 4 on new dwellings, subject to viability, following the adoption of the Local Plan</p>	<p>Increase energy performance/ reduce carbon emissions/ reduce fuel poverty</p>	<p>Planning and Housing Policy Team/ Development Management</p>	<p>November 2014</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>
<p>Negotiate for purpose built special needs accommodation as part of planning negotiations and investigate the feasibility of setting future targets for delivery</p>	<p>Increased special needs housing provision</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Team/ Development Management</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>

THEME 3: MEETING THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale for completion	Resource Implications
<p>Consider developing a register of adapted social housing and agree that all social landlords will advertise all vacancies through the CBL</p>	<p>Increase awareness and make best use of specialist housing</p>	<p>Lancaster City Council/ Registered Providers</p>	<p>2013/2014</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>
<p>Map and review existing housing provision for service-users with LD/Mental Illness and identify gaps in provision/future needs and/or re-modelling.</p>	<p>Adopt and implement a strategy for meeting the future needs of specific groups</p>	<p>Lancashire County Council/ LCFT/ Housing Strategy Team</p>	<p>September 2012 - ongoing</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>
<p>Plan and deliver an 18 unit hostel provision for rough sleepers/single homeless households over 25, subject to revenue funding by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying a suitable site and model for delivery • Identifying a suitable development partner 	<p>Provision of suitable crisis and supported housing provision for this group.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Officer/ Principal housing Options Manager</p>	<p>Summer 2012 and ongoing until December 2014</p>	<p>Existing resources but may require a council owned site/HCA capital funding secured/SP revenue funding secured</p>
<p>Create a social lettings agency through a voluntary sector partner and identify an appropriate model of delivery</p>	<p>Increase availability of temporary accommodation and well managed private sector accommodation</p>	<p>Principal Housing Options Manager</p>	<p>Summer 2012</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>

Review the commissioning of the teenage pregnancy scheme and decide whether a new service can realistically be achieved given the delays to date, and the more recent need to achieve savings.	Provide more suitable supported housing and consider wider funding implications.	Housing Strategy Officer/ Principal Housing Options Manager	April 2013	Lancashire County Council's SP budget implications
Establish referral and pathway processes for the Lancaster Refuge with ELWRA and LDWA	To provide a place of safety to victims of DV, to maximise bed spaces and provide a holistic seamless service	Housing Strategy Officer/ Principal Housing Options Manager	March 2013	Existing resources
Investigate options for increasing/improving the crisis and supported housing provision for offenders.	Reduce homelessness and risk of offending	Housing Strategy Officer/ Principal Housing Options Manager/ Probation	December 2014	Existing resources and could be met through new rough sleeper hostel
Undertake engagement work with the GRT communities regarding increased pitch provision and develop possible models of delivery	To provide an adequate number of pitches for the GRT community	Housing Strategy Team	January 2013 and ongoing	Existing resources
Explore any funding opportunities to upgrade and improve Mellishaw Caravan Park	To provide an adequate number of suitable pitches for the GRT community	Lancaster City Council/ Lancs. County Council	To be agreed	Lancashire County Council resources/HCA funding

Take account of the Census data and consider if further engagement work is needed with BME communities to identify specific housing needs and requirements.	To capture the housing needs of BME communities	Housing Strategy Team	Feb 2013 – Dec 2013	Existing resources
Set up a Task Group and develop an Older Person's Housing Strategy which will include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing housing provision, suitability and future options • Investigating ways of reducing under-occupation of market and affordable housing • Considering extra care housing provision 	To ensure there is adequate housing provision for older people which meet varying needs and circumstances	Housing Strategy Officer	February 2013 and ongoing.	Existing resources/provision for remodelling of sheltered council housing subject to Budget to Budget Council.
Implement the "No Second Night Out" Strategy and Policy	Better arrangements for reporting rough sleepers, more data sharing and cold weather provision	Principal Housing Options Manager	December 2012	Existing resources/DCLG funding
Implement the Housing Adaptations Policy for adaptations to council dwellings	Defined policy and procedures/guidance on adaptations	Principal Housing Manager	October 2012	Existing resources
Agree a broad framework with Lancashire authorities to develop a Lancaster District Tenancy Strategy.	To comply with the legal requirements of the Localism Act 2011.	Housing Strategy Officer	Dec 2012	Completed
Consider the implications of the proposed changes to District budgets	To make the necessary savings	Housing Strategy	December 2012 -	Lancashire County Council

through the Supporting People Programme and the impact of future budget savings.	where applicable.	Officer/ SP	ongoing	SP budget. Could be some implications upon Lancaster City Council as a provider of SP funded services
Undertake a review of the Council's Allocation Scheme	To take account of the new code of guidance/Localism Act	Choice Based Lettings Manager	March 2013 and ongoing	Existing resources
Undertake an equality impact assessment on the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan	To ascertain whether any particular groups are disadvantaged and determine what additional measures may be required	Housing Strategy Officer	November 2012	Completed

Consultation

Consultation on the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan 2012-2017

- 7.1 Key stakeholders have been consulted on the Draft Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan as many other organisations will be critical to its delivery. These include the Homelessness Forum (representatives from Health, Adult Social Care, Probation Service, Supporting People Team, Registered Providers of Social Housing – general needs and supported housing providers, Help Direct, Lancaster District Homeless Action Service, Lancaster and District Women’s Aid, YMCA and Citizens Advice Bureau), and Council officers from both the Regeneration and Planning Service, Health and Housing Service and Housing Benefits. The document has also been cascaded to the Affordable Warmth Steering Group, the Health and Wellbeing Partnership, the Mental Health and Housing Forum and the Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Team’s Joint Commissioning Group. A public consultation event also took place at Asda, Lancaster, on Sunday 7th October, with officer and member representation.
- 7.2 A consultation event took place on the 3rd July at the Storey Institute, with 33 delegates from the Homelessness Forum attending. The format of the event comprised of a detailed presentation, covering the content of the document as well as a housing strategy monopoly game, whereby delegates were asked to allocate houses and hotels against a number of themes statements for each section of the Draft Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan. The results of the consultation event are summarised on the next page.

7.4 Conclusions from consultation results.

- 7.5 Quantity** - The results demonstrate that there is a real appetite amongst stakeholders for the Council to do more work around bringing empty homes back into use. This has often been an area that both officers and elected members are very passionate about, but resources to do more strategic and proactive work around empty homes has been very limited historically. In reality targeting empty homes alone will not deliver a sufficient number of housing units, but can certainly be combined and can complement new housing completions. It was pleasing to see that stakeholders support the work we are doing around securing on site affordable housing and they do not see that as a deterrent in bringing forward market housing.
- 7.6 Quality**- The results suggest that promoting sustainable development, tackling climate change and environmental issues are a very important factor and that opportunities to do this through new build housing provision should be a priority for the City Council. Notwithstanding this, in terms of allocating resources, stakeholders did not agree that affordable warmth should not necessarily take priority over bringing empty properties back into use.
- 7.7 People**- The results show that stakeholders believe that the Council should seek to meet the housing needs of a wide range of the community rather than targeting or focussing on any particular group. The Housing Needs Survey suggests that new housing provision should take account of the ageing population and future housing provision should include more smaller units of market housing, but the recommendations for affordable housing suggest there should be an even mix of units, which largely concurs with these findings. What is most surprising is that there was little support for the Council commissioning a new service for rough sleepers, but in the context of this leading to a closure of another service, stakeholders might have been nervous about supporting this without being provided with detailed proposals which set out which vulnerable group could potentially be affected by any reduction in existing services.

Comments on the Draft Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan

8. Comments on the draft document

A number of comments were received about the content of the document as follows:-

- 8.1 Margaret Moore, Community Engagement, Lancaster City Council – requested that the section relating to Domestic Violence in paragraph 4.40 be amended in relation to the bid made to secure DAPHNE III European funding for a children's IDVA, which was unsuccessful.

Response – document updated accordingly and reference to the funding bid was removed.

- 8.2 Helene Cooper, Community Safety & Justice Coordinator, Lancashire County Council – requested amendment to paragraphs 4.39 – 4.42 to accurately reflect the funding of the IDVA service and the description of the MARAC.

Response – paragraphs amended as suggested.

- 8.3 Chris Hanna, Principal Housing Manager, Lancaster City Council – requested very minor amendments to the text within the detailed actions which the Health and Housing Service are included as the lead organisation.

Response – amended accordingly.

- 8.4 Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group – requested 2 clarifications:- the Housing Needs Survey findings referred to in the report around demographic change and population growth, in the light of new census data being received, and whether the Housing Needs Survey accurately reflects need, and reference to Code Level 4 being a requirement for all new dwellings from January 2013, and that there needs to be a policy and action around this.

Responses

The planning policy team discussed with David Couttie Associates the impact of the new census information in comparison to population predictions. The consultants confirmed that the Housing Needs Survey uses household numbers not population numbers to assess housing need. This information was up to date in terms of Lancaster's housing numbers as the information used was from council tax and not the 2001 census. In their experience, the difference the census data would make, when released, would be minute.

The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan has been amended and now states that Code Level 4 will not be implemented before the adoption of the Local Plan, and a new action has been included as requested.

Equality Impact Assessment

Equality & Diversity Assessment:- Lancaster District Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan 2012 - 2017

1. Context

1 a) Lead Officer for the Strategy and their contact details	Kathy Sinclair, Housing Strategy Officer, Planning and Housing Policy Team, Regeneration and Policy Service, P.O. Box 4, Town Hall, LANCASTER LA1 1QR Telephone number 01524 582586 email:ksinclair@lancaster.gov.uk
1 b) What are the aims/objectives of the Strategy ?	<p>The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan sets out the district's housing priorities and actions required over a five year period, within three main sections:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity: achieving sustainable growth • Quality: improving the quality of new and existing housing stock. ▪ People: providing a range of housing to meet all parts of the community including the most vulnerable <p>It further focuses on the detail of the HCA led major Place-based investment priorities and takes account of the council's Corporate priorities, Service priorities, existing and emerging policies and the current regulatory framework around housing provision.</p>
1 c) Who are the main people or groups of people who will benefit from this strategy?	It is hoped that all communities in Lancaster district should benefit, including the statutory groups (Age, ethnicity, disability, Gender, Gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, religion, and also poor white communities).
Date	19 th November 2012

2. Information

2 a) Data, surveys, research, other information What information has been used to support work on this indicator?	Housing Needs Survey 2011 Affordable Housing Viability Study 2010 Draft Local Plan documents 2012
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	<p>Draft Supplementary Planning Document 2012 Government strategic housing data sets, e.g. HSSA, P1E (Homelessness) Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2004 Home Improvement Agency data Supporting People data and commissioning plans/information Fuel Poverty data; Home Energy Conservation Act Lancashire and Ward Profiles</p>
<p>2 b) Stakeholders/Community groups How have different groups of people helped to inform the work on this strategy? (e.g. have focus groups been used? which community groups representing particular people have fed into the work?) etc.</p>	<p>A wide range of stakeholders have been consulted on the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan and were invited to attend a consultation event on 3rd July 2012. The main stakeholders identified were:- Registered Providers Representatives from Health and Social Care A member of the former Older Peoples Task Group Probation Service Supporting People Team Help Direct/Age UK Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service North Lancs. Citizens Advice Bureau Lancaster and District Women's Aid Methodist Action NW YMCA One Voice Council officers from Regeneration and Planning, Health and Housing and Revenues (Housing Benefits) The Gypsy Roma Traveller Practitioner Group Representatives from the BME Communities</p>

3. Impact of the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan 2012 - 2017

		Positive impact –	Negative impact	No impact	Unsure	Explanation
Gender	Women	✓				The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan supports the need for a refuge in the Lancaster district, which is for women suffering domestic abuse. At the time of commissioning the service, there was no local evidence available to support the need for a similar service for men experiencing domestic violence.
	Men				✓	
	Transgender				✓	
Race (census categories)	White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British			✓		The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan should not have a negative impact on any ethnic group. Social housing providers should regularly monitor the data they collect around the ethnicity of all housing applicants, and of those housed, and what tenancy type they have granted, to ensure that there are no particular ethnic groups that are disadvantaged and the percentage of groups who apply for housing and of those rehoused should be disproportionate. Historically, there is no evidence to suggest that there have been disproportionate numbers of those being housed to those who have applied for housing.
	White – Irish			✓		
	White – any other white background			✓		
	Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			✓		
	Mixed – White and Black African			✓		
	Mixed – White and Asian			✓		
	Mixed – multiple ethnic group			✓		
	Asian/Asian-British - Indian			✓		
	Asian/Asian-British - Pakistani			✓		
	Asian/Asian-British - Bangladeshi			✓		
	Asian/Asian-British – Chinese			✓		
	Asian/Asian-British ant other Asian background			✓		
	Black/ African/ Caribbean/Black British			✓		

		Positive impact –	Negative impact	No impact	Unsure	Explanation
	– Caribbean			✓		the BME communities, and recommended that a sufficient supply of larger units of accommodation are provided.
	Black/ African/ Caribbean/Black British – African			✓		An action has been identified to undertake some further consultation work with BME communities to ensure that the housing needs of these groups in order to provide the appropriate type of housing in the right location.
	Black/ African/ Caribbean/Black British – any other			✓		
	Other Ethnic Group - Arab					An action has also been identified to undertake some consultation work with the GRT community in order for the council to meet its obligations within the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites 2012 document to ensure a sufficient number of traveller pitches are provided in the future.
	Other Ethnic Group - Chinese	✓				
	Gypsies/Travellers					The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan seeks to provide a higher level of dwellings that meet lifetime homes standard and are easy to adapt, as well as negotiating for special needs housing on future affordable housing schemes where possible. The creation of a register of adapted properties will assist those with physical and sensory impairments when accessing housing.
	Any other group (write in)					
Disability	Physical	✓				
	Sensory	✓				

		Positive impact –	Negative impact	No impact	Unsure	Explanation
	Learning disabilities	√	√			There are identified actions to work collaboratively with Health and Social Care to map the needs of those with LD and Mental Illness and to identify suitable housing options for these groups. However cuts to SP may result in some reduction or reconfiguration of services.
	Mental Health issues	√	√			
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay and bisexual			√		
Age	Older people (60 +)	√				The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan has a requirement to develop an older people's housing strategy which will include a comprehensive review of older peoples accommodation, and will make recommendations about how the needs of this group will be met in the future. At present, older people have access to a wide range of housing and sheltered accommodation compared to most other groups. There could be some changes to SP funded services leading to some changes to services that are presently delivered.
	Younger people (17-25)	√	√			There are currently a number of robust arrangements and services available to young people, which work extremely well, with a good range of crisis and supported housing provision.

		Positive impact –	Negative impact	No impact	Unsure	Explanation
						<p>Cuts to SP funding may result in a reduction or reconfiguration of services in the future.</p> <p>Single people under 35 are directly affected by the single room rent imposed through welfare reform. The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan takes account of this by delivering the right type and size of housing provided, and through partnership working, but in reality, demand for housing will always exceed supply.</p>
Belief or Religion	Faith Groups			✓		
	Non faith groups			✓		
	Rural communities	✓				The Parish Partnerships Project aims to identify suitable sites in rural areas where there is evidence of housing need.
	Offenders	✓				The existing housing provision of housing for offenders is not meeting all needs but the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan seeks to improve/compliment the range of housing provided
	Homeless households	✓	✓			There is a range of housing options available for homeless households and the council is seeking to increase the support offered to homeless households and housing options available.

		Positive impact –	Negative impact	No impact	Unsure	Explanation
						The provision of a new hostel would bridge the gap that currently exists within the current supported housing provision. The council will seek to discharge its homelessness duties in the private sector where possible, and this may be seen as a negative impact to some homeless households.
	Those with a history of substance misuse	✓				There are specific services in place within the district for people with a history of substance misuse, including supported housing provision, and the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan seeks to increase the housing options available to all vulnerable groups.

Faith groups cover a wide range of groupings, the most common of which are Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, and Hindus. Consider faith categories individually and collectively when considering positive and negative impacts. Non faith groups refer to individuals of groups not associated with organised religions such as atheists or agnostics etc.

The categories used in the Race section are those used in the 2011 census. Consideration should be given to the needs of specific communities within the broad categories, for example, Polish and Eastern European people that do not appear as separate categories in the census.

6. Are key elements of people's lives affected by this strategy for example finance, accommodation, welfare?

Housing has a fundamental impact on people's life and effects their wellbeing

7. Could the strategy discriminate against any group(s) either directly or indirectly?

If yes, please state how.

Some negative and positive impacts have been identified in section 3 of this EqIA as a result. We welcome any comments or feedback on these along with any other impacts not already included.

8 a) If there are any negative impacts, how could you minimise or remove any negative impact?

It may not be possible to remove all of the negative impacts. Cuts to the Supporting People Programme may result in the reduction or reconfiguration of services to a number of groups. Lancashire County Council are reviewing the distribution of the supporting people grant in Lancashire, and as part of that process, a separate equality impact assessment will be carried out. Each district will then need to consider the impact of any changes and what options exist to achieve the necessary savings. Further consultation would be carried out around this.

Welfare reform directly affect some groups, such as single people under 25 and social housing tenants under pensionable age who under-occupy their properties. The Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan cannot remove that impact but will attempt to minimise the impact by making the best use of existing housing, by delivering the right type and size of housing in the future, and by working with partners, such as Methodist Action, through the creation of a social lettings agency, to increase the provision of housing.

8 b) How could you improve the strategy, project or policy's positive impact?

The EqIA will be subject to further consultation and will be amended in line with any suggested ways that the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan can increase its positive impact.

9. If there is no evidence that the strategy, policy or project promotes equality, equal opportunities or improved relations – how could it be adapted so that it does?

We would welcome the views of consultees as to whether or not the Strategy could be adapted to promote equality.

10. What consultation has been carried out on the strategy/policy/project? Please include details of any equality monitoring carried out.

There has already been extensive consultation on the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan, but the final version along with the Eq/A will be re-circulated to stakeholders before going to Cabinet in January.

11. Next steps: Based on your assessment, what changes, if any do you need to make? Tick one of the following and provide an explanation of why this is the action you are taking.

Action*	Tick as relevant	Explanation of action
No major change		
Adjust the policy		
Continue the policy	✓	Subject to improvements suggested during consultation.
Stop and remove the Strategy		